Using Classroom Meetings to Transfer Conflict Resolution Skills

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

© January, 1999
Abstract

This study examined whether daily classroom meetings resulted in the positive transfer of conflict resolution information and skills beyond the formal classroom setting and into the classroom. A control group of sixteen Grade five students received three weeks of conflict resolution training and an experimental group of nineteen Grade five students from the same school received three weeks of conflict resolution training followed by three additional weeks of class meetings. Pretest measures were taken via a scaled questionnaire and short answer questions before the conflict resolution lessons began for the following skills: knowledge of conflict resolution; conflict resolution behaviour; and attitude about using conflict resolution to resolve problems with other people. Posttest measures examined conflict resolution skills following involvement in the study. Students chosen randomly and both teachers were interviewed following the study. The teachers were again interviewed three months after the study. Teacher journal notes rounded out the data.

The results of the study indicated that the Grade five boys who participated in three weeks of conflict resolution training did not increase their conflict resolution skills in any of the areas examined. Girls who participated in three weeks of conflict resolution training did not improve in two areas (i.e., behaviour, knowledge) and became less positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts.

The Grade five students who participated in three weeks of training and three weeks of class meetings obtained different results. The boys improved significantly in their ability to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts and were more positive about verbal mediation. They did not become more knowledgeable about verbal mediation. The girls who participated in three weeks of training and three weeks of class meetings were more knowledgeable of conflict resolution and used conflict resolution to solve problems with other people. However, they were significantly less positive about using these skills to resolve problems.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the encouragement and guidance given to me by Dr. John Novak, and committee members Dr. Richard Bond and Dr. Brigette Harris, the cooperation of the Wellington County Board of Education, and the teachers and students of Westwood Elementary School in Guelph.

Many thanks and love are given to my children, Scott and Jessie, for their understanding and patience throughout every stage of this thesis. I would like to extend a special thank you to my wife, Emily, whose support and love made this thesis possible.

Finally, this work is dedicated to the memory of my father who believed that positive thinking and respect for the ideas of others can overcome any conflict.
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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This quasi-experiment was designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. Classroom meetings will facilitate the transfer of conflict resolution information and skills to the classroom.

2. When conflict resolution lessons are discontinued, in the absence of classroom meetings, transfer of conflict resolution information and skills will be less likely to occur.

This study was conducted to determine whether or not daily classroom meetings resulted in the positive transfer of conflict resolution information and skills beyond the formal classroom setting and into the classroom. It was a quasi-experiment in which two Grade 5 classes from the same school were chosen to participate in daily conflict resolution lessons for three weeks. After the lessons were completed, one class became the control group and the other class became the experimental group. The experimental group participated in three weeks of classroom meetings.

Background of the Problem

It appears that violence is becoming the number one perceived problem in schools in the United States and Canada. In 1983, several of New York City's high schools
stated that they believed that they were besieged by crime, vandalism, violence, truancy, and dropouts (Davids & Porter, 1985). A poll of teachers in the United States reported that educators felt that lack of discipline, fighting, violence, and gangs were the most serious problems in schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994). In 1995 the Wellington County Board of Education in Ontario, Canada developed a set of guidelines to deal with violence in schools because they believed that violence was becoming more pervasive throughout society, including schools, and that violence in schools reflected what was happening in society as a whole. As a result, Wellington County, like many other Boards of Education, initiated a number of strategies in an attempt to deal with this problem (e.g., Zero Tolerance Policy), but educators are becoming increasingly aware that "quick fix" solutions do not effectively alleviate this serious problem. Detentions, suspensions, and expulsions do not address the root cause of aggression, nor do they teach alternatives to violence. Students returning to school after these kinds of punishments remain unable to deal with conflicts effectively. As a result, Conflict Resolution programs and Peer Mediation programs are becoming more prevalent in elementary and secondary schools in the United States and Canada. One report, (Shepherd, 1994) estimated that at least 5,000 U.S. elementary and secondary schools use one of several models of conflict resolution programmes to help students deal with conflicts effectively.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to assess the degree to which elementary school classroom meetings affect the positive transfer of conflict resolution information and skills to the classroom. If classroom meetings effectively generalize important social skills beyond the formal classroom setting and conflict resolution skills do not generalize if classroom meetings are not used, then teachers, administrators, and
parents will be better able to plan and implement effective school conflict resolution programmes.

Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs began in the 1960s (Johnson & Johnson, 1996) but it was not until the 1990s that a large number of evaluative studies examined the effectiveness of conflict resolution or peer mediation programmes in schools. This research suggested that students acquire some verbal mediation skills but it is unclear how this happens, and conversely, it is unclear why some programmes have been unable to facilitate the transfer of skills initiated during formal classroom sessions to other parts of academic life and into the homes of the students. It is imperative to find out what mechanisms initiate and maintain the transfer of these social skills. This study examined one possible idea: classroom meetings.

**Statement of the Problem**

Violence in schools is perceived by many people in the United States and Canada to be a serious problem. Television, radio, and newspapers relate incidences of classroom violence, gangs roaming school hallways, and assaults on teachers and students. Some schools have reacted by initiating conflict resolution and peer mediation programmes. However, it is likely that many of these programmes fail to alter the behaviour and attitude of children because the programmes are not systematically applied with careful thought given to techniques that transfer conflict resolution skills. For example, teachers attempting to modify the conflict resolution styles of students may believe that conflict resolution training should consist of only daily class lessons. It is understandable why teachers "teach and hope" because there are very little data and curriculum available that demonstrate how to successfully encourage students to resolve conflicts by using verbal mediation.
The first hypothesis postulates that class meetings will transfer verbal mediation skills initially learned via formal classroom lessons into the classroom. If this proves to be correct, teachers will be able to plan verbal mediation programmes that include class meetings as an effective way to help students use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts.

The second hypothesis states that when conflict resolution lessons are discontinued and classroom meetings are not initiated, the transfer of conflict resolution information and skills will be less likely to occur. As it becomes clear that class meetings alone do not transfer verbal mediation skills into the classroom, teachers may become more willing to initiate class meetings as part of their school conflict mediation programme.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions have been developed by a careful analysis of the conflict resolution program Conflict Resolution: An Elementary School Curriculum designed by Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan (1990). This program was used during the study to help students develop effective conflict resolution skills. The definitions reflect skills that students developed throughout the program.

Active Listening The process of being able to correctly re-state what a person has said and identify how he/she is feeling.

Brain-storming Ideas and suggestions generated without discussion, evaluation, and debate.

Classroom meetings A time when problems and conflicts are discussed by students. These issues are usually school based but may include problems that have
originated outside of school. The classroom meeting is a place where social skills initially taught in a more formal setting are encouraged and practised.

**Compromise** Establishing a middle ground between two or more positions that is fair and equable for all concerned.

**Conflict** The meaning of this word depends on individual perception. Many view conflict as a negative situation where arguments and fighting are used to attempt to settle disagreements. The conflict resolution process described in this study suggests that conflict merely "is" and may take many forms such as disagreements between friends, internal conflict about what to wear to school or work, or political strife and war. How it is perceived and dealt with determines whether the process is negative or positive. This process may be useful in bringing about positive change.

**Conflict resolution** A process in which two or more people effectively resolve inter-personal/intra-personal conflicts by listening to each other's side of the situation leading to the conflict, brainstorming together possible solutions for the problem, and by choosing a solution that is fair, equitable, and possible.

**Confront** To let another person know how you are feeling about a specific problem in a positive and constructive way.

**Empathy** The ability of a person to understand how another person is feeling in a given situation.

**"I" messages** A verbal message that usually begins with "I feel..." that is used to express how a person feels and why he / she feels that way.
**Mediation** When people involved in a conflict agree to having a neutral third party help them reach an agreement that is fair and equitable.

**Negotiation** When both parties attempt to reach a solution by listening to each other's point of view and then attempting to accommodate the other person's needs.

**Peer mediation** A process where students help other students solve problems by following a prescribed format and by using specific skills. This can take place in a classroom meeting or on the playground.

**Role playing** A teaching tool where one or more people act out problematic situations to practise skills previously learned.

**Self-esteem** The ability of individuals to respect and appreciate themselves.

**Transfer** When behaviours, knowledge, and attitude changes made in a clinical/teaching setting transfer/generalize to other settings.

**You-message** A verbal message that tends to intensify conflict by projecting blame or accusing another person.

**Verbal mediation** This term when used in this study means the same as conflict resolution.
Theoretical Assumptions

It is difficult to determine the theoretical basis for early conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in schools. Johnson and Johnson (1996) believed that this difficulty has occurred because the formation of conflict resolution programs began in the 1960s in the midst of the anti-war movement in the United States. They contended that the anti-war movement opposed conflicts of any kind and that conflict resolution programs that emerged during this period were developed to discourage, not resolve conflicts.

Programs have changed significantly since the 1960s. Modern conflict resolution programs acknowledge that conflicts are a natural part of life and rely heavily on conflict theory and various theories of human development.

Johnson and Johnson (1996) described a number of developmental theories that suggest that verbal mediation training will benefit school-aged children. These are described below:

**Psychoanalytic theory** proposes that, as a person matures, conflicts occur as the result of changing family dynamics. As a result of these conflicts, new relationships are sought outside of the family (Freud, 1958; Blos, 1979).

**Cognitive development theory** (Piaget, 1965, 1971) states that the intellect grows in predictable ways and that its growth depends not only on maturity, but also on the kinds of experiences and social interactions that occur during a person's life. Piaget believed that intellectual development is influenced by exploration, decision making, verbal give and take, and opportunities to experience trial and error. Piaget stated further that these experiences enable people to assimilate and accommodate new information with previous knowledge.
Social interdependence theory expounds that conflict is deep-rooted within all social situations and that conflict can be constructive or destructive depending on how it is managed (Deutsch, 1969; Johnson, 1970; Tjosvold, 1986).

Conflict strategies theory asserts that there are two important concerns when resolving conflicts: an anxiety about achieving a personal goal and a worry about maintaining a relationship with another person. Strategies chosen to resolve a conflict are determined by the relative importance of either of these concerns (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Other theories, not mentioned by Johnson and Johnson, have relevance for conflict resolution and peer mediation in schools. Many of these theories stress the importance of skills that are introduced during conflict resolution training: empathy, listening to others, problem solving, modelling of behaviours, child centred learning, impulse control, working cooperatively, and many others. Deutsch (1949) stressed that a cooperative rather than competitive classroom environment encourages a positive and creative environment that fosters learning. Vygotsky (1962) believed that children want to share problem-solving experiences with adults such as teachers, parents, and peers. Children's own ideas and beliefs can be influenced by what they experience with these significant people. Erikson (1968) discussed adolescence in his theory of human development. He contended that as young people mature they strive to create a new personal identity. They begin to pull away from old beliefs and attempt to make more of their own decisions and to become more responsible for their own actions. Bandura (1977) emphasised that children actively engage in their own learning. Children's beliefs and behaviour are the result of what they observe and model from social situations. Johnson and Johnson (1993) pointed out that when students experience structured controversy they begin to empathize with the view of others. Goleman (1997) stressed that emotional intelligence is as important as cognitive intelligence as a predictor of success. He described emotional intelligence as empathy for other people,
self-awareness, impulse control, and ability to complete tasks. He believed that these skills must be encouraged when children are very young in order to develop these skills throughout the school years. Goleman stated that schools can advance emotional literacy by providing programmes that facilitate the use of these skills. Conflict resolution programmes are described as aiding in this objective. Purkey and Novak (1996) discussed the inviting family school. Inviting schools stress the following: respect for individual uniqueness, the importance of relating to each other as individuals, working cooperatively together, and developing significant relationships. Conflict resolution may flourish in such a setting.

Although programmes for schools that encourage children to resolve conflicts using non-violent methods may have been initially begun without benefit of pertinent theory and research, it is evident that theories of conflict and theories of human development stress the importance of helping young people to develop effective problem-solving and conflict resolution skills and to create an environment conducive to this process. Conflict is viewed as a necessary and inevitable part of human development. Children want to share their thoughts and beliefs with other people. They strive to create a personal identity by watching and emulating what they see. The experiences that schools create for young people help shape this developing identity. Children are ready and able to receive the important skills of conflict resolution and schools must invite children to participate in this endeavour.

Rationale

Peer mediation and conflict resolution programmes, which may include classroom meetings, are a relatively new phenomenon in schools in North America. A perceived increase in school violence may be one of the reasons for this increased use of conflict resolution programmes in schools.
The literature suggests that not all of these programmes are effectively encouraging students to resolve conflicts using verbal mediation. The literature also suggests that it is wrong to assume that social skills will automatically transfer from one setting to another. However, many schools may be teaching verbal mediation skills via formal lessons in the classrooms and expecting that these new skills will automatically be used by students in the classroom and on the playground.

There is little doubt that conflict is a natural part of life and that learning to resolve conflicts effectively will enhance emotional intelligence. Conflict resolution programmes may aid in this process if planned and monitored effectively. It is important, therefore, to determine what parts of conflict resolution programmes encourage the transfer of verbal mediation skills. Once these have been determined it is imperative that teachers, parents, and counsellors use these procedures to promote effective conflict resolution. One of these mechanisms may be class meetings.

Chapter one introduced the problem and discussed the theoretical framework for the study. Also included in Chapter one was the definition of terms used throughout the study. Chapter two reviews the literature in the following ways: theories of transfer of social skills; research of conflict resolution programmes in schools; research of classroom meetings; guides and manuals; and descriptions of existing programmes. The methodology is described in Chapter three. This description includes the instrument that was designed for the study, the t-test used to evaluate pretest to posttest scores, the rubric designed to evaluate written answers, the rubric designed to assess group verbal mediation competency, interviews with classroom teachers, teacher notes, interviews with randomly selected students, and study limitations. Chapter four includes the results and preliminary discussion of these results. Finally, Chapter five continues this discussion and includes implications and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This study assessed the degree to which elementary school classroom meetings affect the positive transfer of conflict resolution information and skills to the classroom. This literature review presents a detailed overview of factors and concepts that have influenced the formation of this study. These include the following: theories of transfer of social skills; research of conflict resolution programmes in schools; research of classroom meetings; guides and manuals; and programme testimonials. When this has been completed, a synthesis of the findings describes how this study will add to the knowledge and understanding of conflict resolution in schools.

Theory of Transfer of Social Skills:

Goldstein and Kanfer (1979) described transfer as the manifestation of treatment gains from one setting to other settings. They stated that the successful transfer of behaviour has occurred when individuals are able to use the skills gained in a clinical setting in other settings over time.

For many years it was assumed that skills learned in a remedial setting automatically transfer to the natural environment. In the 1970s it became clear that social/behavioural skills initially learned in a teaching or clinical setting did not always transfer to natural settings (Kazdin, 1975; Keely, Schemberg, & Carbonell, 1976; Kaufman, Nussen, & McGee; 1977; Stokes & Baer, 1977; Goldstein & Kanfer, 1979; Karoly & Steffen, 1980; & Marlatt & Gordon, 1980).
A number of important transfer techniques were developed a few years before the research indicated that many skills do not transfer into a natural setting. One of these techniques is overlearning in which a technique or skill is repeated many times more than is necessary to produce initial changes. Studies of this procedure include Atwater (1953), Mandler (1954), Cantor (1955), and Underwood and Schultz (1960).

Stimulus variability is another procedure that has been developed to aid in the effective transfer of social skills. A target behaviour is developed and enhanced by using the behaviour in a variety of settings (Callantine & Warren, 1955; Duncan, 1958; Shore & Sechrest 1961; Goldstein, Heller, & Sechrest, 1966; Epps, Thompson, & Lane, 1985). Stimulus variability also seems to help generalize skills if more than one therapist participates in the skill development (Dreikurs, Schulman, & Mosack, 1952; Hayward, Peters, & Taylor, 1952; MacGregor, Ritchie, Serrano, & Schuster, 1964).

Stokes and Baer (1977) discussed a number of techniques to encourage generalization of skills. They wrote that generalization of skills can be encouraged by making the training situation similar to the natural environment. For example, teaching activities should include a variety of different combinations: child with friend, child with non-friend, girl with girl, girl with boy, and low status student with high status student. In this way students are more able to respond effectively with children whom they may encounter in class, on the school yard, and in the neighbourhood. Another procedure discussed by Stokes and Baer is teaching children a variety of responses and examples for each social skill through role playing and behavioural rehearsal.

Finally, mediated generalization is a procedure where individuals self-reinforce, self-punish, and self-instruct (Neilans & Israel, 1981). In this procedure participants are encouraged to monitor personal behaviour as well as the behaviour of others.
The research described above strongly suggests that teaching social/behavioural skills in a formal setting and then assuming that individuals will automatically use these skills in other settings is a mistake. Gains made in a remedial setting do not automatically transfer to new settings. Further, it is evident from the research that new skills may shift to new settings if transfer-enhancing techniques are systematically applied.

Classroom meetings use some of the transfer techniques described above. Meetings encourage students to discuss conflicts with a variety of other children. Verbal mediation skills are repeated many times during each meeting. Students are encouraged to self-correct and in a positive manner reinforce verbal mediation skills for other members of the group. As well, class meetings help children develop different responses for a variety of conflicts.

**Research of Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution training and peer mediation in schools has been increasing since the early 1960s and until recently little data existed that evaluated the effectiveness of the programmes. The programme evaluation results are mixed. Some conflict resolution programmes seem to be working while others are reported to have produced little change in the conflict resolution competence and knowledge of the students directly involved in the programmes. Much of the data are anecdotal and other information is gleaned by asking participants how they believe a specific programme is working. Questionnaires and observations are also used to determine programme effectiveness. Ironically, some teachers and students in some programmes state that they believe a programme is very beneficial while researcher observations do not support these claims. There is evidence, however, that conflict resolution
programmes are able to imbue mediation skills and procedures to school age children. These findings are described in the following paragraphs.

The success of peer mediations programmes in much of the literature is described in terms of numbers of successful mediations. Johnson and Johnson (1996) reviewed the research and described a number of these studies. Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Ward, and Magnuson (1995), found that after training, students were able to resolve 45% of conflicts. McCormick (1988) found that following the introduction of a peer mediation programme the number of students who reported that they were able to resolve conflicts by "talking it out" doubled. Other studies discussed by Johnson and Johnson that report an increase in successful mediations following training include the following: Bradley, (1989); Burrell and Vogl, (1990); Crary, (1992). While these studies are encouraging they fail to describe the mechanisms that influence the transfer of mediation skills.

Other studies described programmes that effectively transfer mediation skills to participants. Metis Associates (1990) evaluated the implementation of a programme in District 15 in Brooklyn, New York in 1988 and 1989. Gentry and Benenson (1993) investigated the degree to which students in a school-based peer mediation programme transferred conflict management skills learned and practised at school to the home setting. Children perceived a significant decline in the frequency of conflicts with siblings, and, similarly, parents perceived a decline of sibling conflicts. They used an administration survey, a student achievement test for a representative sample of fourth to sixth graders and peer mediation instruments. The programme was found to have a positive impact on staff and students. Dudley (1994) conducted a pretest and posttest study of 198 students from Grades 6, 7, 8, and 9. The treatment group received training in peer mediation/conflict resolution training. Four measures were assessed to determine the effects of the training. The post training asked the following: Will students be more constructive when resolving conflicts? Will students attitudes and
perceptions of conflict become more positive? Will students be able to negotiate a more equitable agreement? Will scores on classroom life instrument be higher?

He found that on all post training measures the treatment group changed for the better, while the control group did not. Brown (1995) evaluated the second and third years of conflict resolution programmes of elementary schools and a secondary schools during the 1991-1992 school year in Toronto. The programmes were assessed through questionnaires in the second year and focus groups and interviews in the third year. The programmes were deemed to be successful in many schools but the authors stress that long-term success depends on expanding the programme to include the school community, (e.g., school discipline, classroom management, and school curriculum). These studies suggested that conflict resolution programmes in schools encourage students to resolve conflicts in a positive way. However, specific techniques that influence the transfer of mediation skills were not identified.

Some studies suggest that peer mediation programmes do not help students acquire verbal mediation skills. Ellsworth (1993) examined how students learn conflict resolution skills and how they use language in a racially diverse intermediate school. Data were collected via ethnographic methods. Results indicated that student mediation did not lower the number of fights and referrals in the first year. Ellsworth points out that these results may reflect an increase in racial tension in the community, a new principal, or a backlash after their vice-principal was injured breaking up a fight. Miller (1994) studied the effects of a peer mediation programme on self-concept, school behaviour, and home behaviour during a twelve-week period. She also investigated the effects of the programme on the number of conflicts that required adult intervention. No significant effect was found on any of the variables measured. Miller suggests that the implementation of a peer mediation programme does not influence overall self-concept or behaviour over a relatively short period of time. Hanson (1994) evaluated the conflict resolution programme in Region Two of the
Dade County Public Schools during 1992-1993. School behaviour indicators registered no significant change, but there were fewer referrals for disruptive behaviour.

Conflict resolution programmes fail for a variety of reasons. Emerson (1991) suggested reasons that some programmes fail while others successfully encourage students to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. He investigated conflict manager programmes at four elementary schools in Oregon. He observed students being trained in conflict resolution and interviewed student conflict managers, students being helped by these children, and parents. Results of these investigations suggest that the amount and quality of the training has an impact on the ability to influence school climate in a positive way. Lieber and Rogers (1994) reviewed the literature and pointed out that not all conflict resolution programmes are successful because of the following reasons: teacher attitudes, teacher burn-out, minority groups, and cultural pluralism.

Other studies report mixed findings. Araki (1989) conducted a three-year conflict resolution programme evaluation beginning in 1986 involving an elementary school, an intermediate school, a high school, and five additional non-project schools. A case study format model was used via questionnaires, multiple interviews, and school profile reports. While most of the participants felt that the project improved the school climate, in most cases the school climate assessments, pattern analysis, and school profile did not indicate any significant change. Payne (1993) evaluated the implementation of the first year of a conflict resolution programme in the New York City Public Schools. On-site interviews with school-based participants in 7 of the 15 schools revealed that the programme was more successful at some schools than others. Ferrara (1995) described from students' perspective how a peer mediation programme became part of one school's culture during the six months of implementation. Students perceived the mediation process as a complex social interaction and, at times, as
adversarial between mediators and other students. Hart (1995) examined the impact of a peer mediation programme on an elementary school environment. A two-year analysis using a non-equivalent control design with two closely matched elementary schools indicated that there were positive changes in students' expectation re: cooperative problem solving, school safety, and support from others for problem solving. However, teachers' results on the same variables were not significant. The incidence of student conflicts declined at the experimental school as did the amount of time off from teaching required to deal with disruptive behaviour.

This research review makes a number of important points. Conflict resolution is not shown to work in all situations; the amount and quality of the training/lessons may affect acquisition of skills; adults and students do not always agree on the success of the programme; long-term success may depend on expansion into the broad school community; many studies measure the frequency of successful mediation, and more research is needed to examine the mechanisms that encourage successful verbal mediation.

**Classroom Meeting**

In some peer mediation programmes, classroom meetings are initiated following completion of classroom conflict resolution training. Students use the skills learned during conflict resolution training to help classmates resolve problems. Classroom meetings are usually modelled from procedures described in *Schools Without Failure* (Glasser, 1969). Glasser suggested that classroom meetings are an effective way to improve communication and solve problems for students and teachers. In Glasser's classroom meetings, students identify concerns and work together to develop solutions that are fair and equitable. Topics for discussion can include social problems, academic concerns, or conflicts originating outside of school. Students sit in a tight
circle so that each student has a good view of all members of the group. Glasser also pointed out that, to be successful, meetings must be held on a regular basis and should be a part of the ongoing curriculum.

Classroom meetings have been shown to enhance self-esteem, decrease argumentative behaviour and physical confrontations, improve behaviour in meetings which carries over into the classroom, and aid in classroom management. Marandola and Imber (1979) evaluated the effects of Glasser's classroom meetings on the argumentative behaviour of ten 11 and 12-year-old inner city, learning disabled boys. Considerable decreases in argumentative and physical confrontations were noted during the classroom meetings. Whether this decrease was evident outside the meetings was not discussed. Sorsdahl and Sanche (1985) investigated the efficacy of providing preventative group counselling to entire classes of children through classroom meetings and attempted to determine whether children's self-concepts would improve as a result of classroom meetings. Ninety-one fourth grade students were involved in the study and the experimental classes participated in general discussion and problem-solving classroom meetings twice a week for twenty weeks. Findings indicated that the classroom meetings were effective in improving children's behaviour in meetings and that this improvement carried over to the larger classroom setting. Significant improvements were noted for many students of the experimental group on self-concept scores. Lecureux (1991) tested a classroom meeting model to aid in classroom management. Experimental groups included one Grade seven science class and one Grade nine law class. For one semester these classes discussed individual and group needs, components of behaviour, and steps for problem solving. The findings of this research indicated that classroom meetings aid classroom management. Lecureux believes that much of this success was because of direct student participation.
Other studies suggested that classroom meetings do not always successfully encourage pro-social behaviour or increase the self-esteem of the participants. Intensity and duration of participation may be factors that affect the success of classroom meetings. Rice-Alford (1984) studied the effects of Glasser's Classroom Meeting on the self-esteem of junior high school students. Meeting topics were selected from Glasser's book. Both the experimental group and the control group demonstrated an increase in self-esteem over the test period. Rice-Alford concludes that exposure to the classroom meeting model may not have been intensive and extensive enough to bring about significant changes. Grimes (1980) tested a treatment package designed to increase peer interaction during recess and the sociometric status of a group of socially withdrawn third and fourth Grade students. Appropriate social skills were taught by various methods, including classroom meetings. Although the subjects showed no significant change in sociometric status, six of the nine subjects demonstrated gains in cooperative behaviour at recess. Solomon (1982) studied the classroom meeting as a tool to improve the perceptions of student teachers for their students and to improve the perceptions of the students for the student teachers. Thirty-three student teachers and 765 pupils participated in the study. Student teachers were taught how to facilitate classroom meetings and were then instructed to conduct classroom meetings three times weekly for six weeks. Solomon found that the classroom meeting procedure, as used in this study, did not improve perceptions of student teachers or their pupils. He suggests that this procedure may be more effective if classroom meetings are used for a longer period of time.

This research suggested that classroom meetings can be a powerful technique to teach important social and behavioural skills. There is evidence that suggests that students, having participated in classroom meetings, generally improved their self-esteem, were better able to control their behaviour, and were more cooperative with other students. Classroom meeting effectiveness seems to be directly related to the
duration and intensity of the meetings. Also, direct student involvement in class meetings seems to encourage the acquisition of social skills.

Guides/Manuals

There are many manuals and guides available for teachers and community organizations that usually include videotapes, training materials, and curriculum guides. There are three types of manuals or guides. The first type of guide describes available resources. The second type are programme guides which describe a specific conflict resolution model. Lessons are included in this type of resource. The third type of guide describes verbal mediation philosophy with suggestions about how to initiate a conflict resolution programme.

A growing array of available resources is available for those interested in starting a verbal mediation programme at school or in the community. Carey (1983) listed resources useful in helping teachers of all grade levels begin conflict resolution programmes. Williams (1991) outlined a number of conflict resolution programmes that train teachers before teaching conflict resolution skills to students. Davis (1984) created a handbook that provides secondary teachers, elementary teachers, and community leaders with resources for teaching conflict mediation skills. Finally, Meek (1992) described mediation techniques and offers resources.

Specific programme models that include curriculum are also available for schools and community members. Williams' (1989) guide provides lessons that help students develop strong conflict resolution skills while encouraging a sense of belonging to a group. Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan (1990) created a conflict resolution training curriculum intended to be used in elementary schools. Basic communication and mediation skills are taught to whole classes or schools. Playground "Conflict Managers" are chosen to receive further training. Also, class meetings are sometimes
initiated following class lessons. Coleman (1992) described the Resolving Conflicts Creatively curriculum that teaches students how to handle their emotions, settle disagreements, and demonstrate caring for others. Laney and McWhirter (1992) encouraged schools to adopt peer mediation training for all schools. Training ideas for staff and students are included. Pryor (1994) discussed the "Creating a Peaceable School" conflict resolution programme. The premise of this programme is that students should not only be taught conflict resolution skills but must also have an opportunity to utilize the skills daily in the community, school, and neighbourhood.

Other resources describe philosophical models and approaches. Rogers (1991) described the curriculum development process involved in the creation of a set of peace education materials developed in Ireland. He contended that successful conflict resolution training programmes will result via the following: teacher workshops; curriculum development; piloting; careful editing; dissemination; and evaluation. Koch and Decker (1993) described a conflict resolution technique for interpersonal negotiation: state positive intentions; discuss the problem; summarize progress; explore alternative solutions; and set a time for follow up. Gallus and Stinski (1994) encouraged a model for conflict resolution training that goes beyond school-based peer mediation programmes. This model includes a process for resolving conflicts between parents, students, staff, school, and community.

Programme Testimonials

The following testimonials of conflict resolution programmes do not include evaluative studies. However, many "suggest" that they are effective in helping children resolve conflicts in a positive way. These include the following: Davis and Porter (1985) discussed school conflict mediation programmes in Hawaii, New York, and California. They believed that students in these schools are better able to solve
their own problems as a result of the newly acquired conflict resolution skills. Arbus (1994) examined a number of conflict resolution programmes in Toronto. She believed that successful conflict resolution works when effective curriculum, peer resolution, and administration work interdependently. Morse and Anderson (1994) discussed a conflict mediation programme in upstate New York. In this programme students learned to deal with anger effectively, communicate feelings without using violence and abusive language, think creatively about alternative solutions, and agree to win-win solutions. Lantieri (1995) described the Resolving Conflict Creatively Programme (RCPP), a peer mediation programme begun in 1985 for New York City Public Schools. He contends that the programme has resulted in intergroup understanding, alternatives to violence, and creative conflict resolution between students, teachers, parents, and administrators. There are many more such testimonials.

Summary of the Literature Review

The majority of the literature concerning conflict resolution and peer mediation programmes are manuals and guides to help educators and community members initiate conflict resolution programmes and descriptions of existing programmes in the United States and Canada. A growing array of recent studies suggest that students, having participated in a conflict resolution training programme, are more able to ask for help to solve personal problems or help others solve problems. Most conflict resolution programmes address similar social skills: active listening, cooperation between disputants, acceptance of each other's differences, prescribed problem-solving format, I-Statements, eye-contact, voice control, and other important social skills. Also, it appears that conflict resolution programmes are widely used in many types of
schools and that the programmes are viewed as a way to deal with a perceived increase in school violence.

Conflict theory and theories of human development, although not the basis for early conflict resolution programmes, suggest that conflicts are a normal part of daily life and that learning to deal with conflicts effectively will almost certainly result in a more successful life.

There are a number of successful techniques that encourage the transfer of social/behavioural skills beyond the teaching/clinical setting. Class meetings seem to embody many of these techniques and may be an effective way to transfer verbal mediation skills beyond formal classroom lessons.

Chapter three describes in detail the methodology and procedures used for this study. This description includes the instrument that was designed for the study, the t-test used to evaluate pretest to posttest scores, rubrics designed to evaluate verbal mediation competency, interviews with selected students, interviews with teachers, teacher journal, and study limitations.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Overview

This quasi-experiment was designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. Classroom meetings will facilitate the transfer of conflict resolution information and skills to the classroom.

2. When conflict resolution lessons are discontinued, in the absence of classroom meetings, transfer of conflict resolution information and skills will be less likely to occur.

A multi-method approach was used to assess the hypotheses. It was a quasi-experiment in which two Grade 5 classes from the same school were chosen to participate in daily conflict resolution lessons for three weeks. Before the lessons began students were given a questionnaire designed to determine their conflict resolution competence in three areas: knowledge, behaviour, and attitude. Upon completion of the lessons, students in one class began daily classroom meetings and students in the other class did not participate in classroom meetings. This second class, although they did not participate in classroom meetings, were encouraged by their teacher to use the new conflict resolution skills when working in class, while on the playground, and at home. At this time the second class again completed the questionnaire. In three weeks, when the classroom meetings had concluded, the first class again completed the questionnaire. Interviews were held at the completion of the
posttests with both teachers, and five randomly selected students. Teachers were asked to keep a daily journal. After three months teachers were again interviewed.

Research Design

Administration

First, a letter was sent to the Wellington County Board of Education requesting permission to conduct the experiment at an elementary school in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. A brief presentation was made to the Wellington County Board of Education Ethics Committee and permission was granted to proceed with the study at a large elementary school in Guelph. Letters were then drafted and presented to the principal and appropriate classroom teachers at this school. Shortly after the letters were received, a detailed presentation describing the experiment procedures was conducted at the school for the principal, teachers, interested staff, and interested parents. The following information was conveyed at this time: expected starting and completion dates of the study; dates and expected time necessary for pretesting and posttesting of students in the experimental group and control group; dates for formal interviews with teachers and students; selection process for students who would be interviewed; frequency and duration of conflict resolution training and later class meetings; a brief description of the conflict resolution curriculum; identification of teachers who would give the training and selection process for the teacher who would participate in classroom meetings; and an outline of the teacher training. The teachers and principal gave their approval during this meeting to proceed with the experiment. Another letter was sent to the parents of the students in each of the Grade 5 classes. In this letter parents were asked to give signed consent for their child to be involved in the study. The letter also provided a brief description of the study.
The conflict resolution curriculum training for the teachers at the school participating in the study was delivered by me in two separate two-hour sessions. In the first session the skills and concepts that would be taught to the Grade 5 students were introduced and discussed. During the second session the teachers participated in role-play activities that encouraged them to use the verbal mediation skills introduced in the first session. During the second training session classroom meeting procedures and expectations were discussed.

Teacher training continued while the study was proceeding. Both teachers were phoned and visited at the school throughout the study. At these times teachers were encouraged to ask questions about the curriculum or describe any difficulties. Comments and questions posed by one teacher were communicated to the other teacher.

When the study was half completed and students had participated in three weeks of verbal mediation training, the teacher of the experimental group received further training. This teacher viewed a classroom meeting at my school and received further training conducting classroom meetings.

**Independent and Dependent Variables**

This quasi-experiment was designed to determine the effect that class meetings (i.e., the independent variable) had on the transfer of conflict resolution skills (i.e., the dependent variable).

**Population and Sample**

The population considered in this study was Grade 5 boys and girls attending a public elementary school in a medium to large city in Ontario, Canada. Two classes participated in the study.
Nonprobability sampling was used to select the sample for this experiment. Grade 5 students were selected to participate in the experiment. The public school involved in the study is located in Guelph, Ontario and has an enrollment of about 600 students. This school was chosen because it had two Grade 5 classes and because the school draws from a variety of neighbourhoods: large single family homes, Ontario Housing, townhouses, apartment buildings, and small single family homes. There were twenty students in one class of which fifteen participated in the study. There were twenty-six students in the second class of which nineteen participated in the study.

Instrumentation and Analysis

**Questionnaire: Scaled Questions**

Before conflict resolution lessons began and after the completion of the experiment students completed the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire asked students to evaluate their conflict resolution competence in three areas. These areas were: knowledge of conflict resolution, use of verbal mediation skills to effectively resolve conflicts, and attitude about conflict resolution. A Likert scale (i.e., Always, Usually, Sometimes, Hardly Ever, Never) was designed to generate data used for index construction. Each question (i.e., response categories) was given equal intensity and each was scored from 0 to 4. A "4" was given to "Always" for positive items and "Never" for negative items. A conflict resolution competency score for each of the three areas for each member of each group was determined by adding scores in each area. A dependent samples t-test was performed to detect the presence of significant differences between the means of pretest and posttest scores for each skill for each group by gender.

Initially a scale using three faces was evaluated as a possible instrument for this study (e.g., smiling, neutral, frowning). This format, although possibly useful for
younger students, was rejected because it was felt that older children would have reacted negatively to small, "cute" faces. As well, a scale with three responses was rejected because three choices did not render the range of choice that a larger scale could offer. It was believed that ten and eleven-year-old children, when reflecting about their behaviour, attitude, and knowledge of verbal mediation, would be able to choose from a larger range of responses.

Most Likert scales use adult language (e.g., agree, strongly agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). Because adult terminology may have been misunderstood by ten-and eleven-year-old children, the language used in this study was modified to be more readily understood by children. For this study the scale was: Always, Usually, Sometimes, Hardly Ever, Never. To test this scale I asked students in my Grade 5 class to respond to the following statement: I do my homework. They were asked to answer by choosing one of the five responses that I had created. They were able to complete this activity successfully. As well, they had no difficulty explaining the differences between each response.

Although the scale was modified to suit the needs of junior elementary school children, there remained a concern that students would not be able to complete the activities properly because it was a new and untested questionnaire. This problem was resolved in two ways. First, the questionnaire was piloted with my Grade 5 class at another public school in Guelph. Demographically, this class closely resembled the classes at the school used in the study. As well, the boys and girls in my class had six weeks experience in conflict resolution and classroom meetings. To aid in the evaluation of this pilot, space was provided on the last page of the pilot questionnaire for students to evaluate individual items as well as the overall questionnaire. Secondly, when the pilot study had been completed, changes had been made, and the document was ready to be used in the study, a practice questionnaire was given to the students involved in the study one week prior to the beginning of the study. This
practice sheet did not ask questions that were included in the larger questionnaire intended for use in the study and did not ask students to answer questions related to conflict resolution.

**Questionnaire: Written Answers**

The second section of the questionnaire asked students to respond in written form to five questions. These questions were designed to gauge student knowledge, behaviour, and attitude concerning verbal mediation. A rubric was designed to assess each group. Using the rubric each group (i.e., control girls; control boys; experimental girls; experimental boys) was rated following the pretest and again after the posttest. Pretest and posttest results were compared. Figures were developed to display the results of this analysis.

A rubric is a scoring tool that lists criteria for a written answer or behaviour. It demonstrates gradations of quality for each criterion from excellent to poor. According to Marcus (1995) rubrics are powerful tools for assessment.

The rubric was designed to test group knowledge and use of the verbal mediation skills taught during the class lessons. The rubric had five levels of verbal mediation competence. A designation of "Excellent Skills" meant that most of the students in a group listed three or more verbal mediation skills in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most students included three or more verbal mediation skills in each of Questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Questions 2, 3, and 4 asked respondents to describe how they would resolve conflicts with other people. Finally, a rating of "excellent" was given when most students agreed in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). To receive a designation of "Good Skills," most of the students in a group listed two verbal mediation skills in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most students included two verbal mediation skills in each of questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Finally, most students agreed in
Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). A rating of "Satisfactory Skills" meant that most of the students in a group listed one verbal mediation skill in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most students included one verbal mediation skill in each of questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Finally, most students agreed in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). A "Weak Skills" designation meant that most of the students in a group listed one verbal mediation skill in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most of the students did not include one verbal mediation skill in each of Questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Finally, most students did not agree in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). The lowest level "Very Weak Skills" meant that no verbal mediation skills were listed in any question and most students believed that students should not help other students resolve conflicts.

**Teacher Log Book**

Because classroom teachers delivered the conflict resolution curriculum, it was essential that each teacher had an opportunity to comment each day about various aspects of the study. Each teacher was given a log book which had one page for each day of the study (i.e., 30 pages). Each page had three headings which were as follows: knowledge, behaviour, and attitude. Each teacher was asked to write a comment for each area each day following class lessons and classroom meetings.

**Pilot Testing of Questionnaire**

A pilot study was conducted with my Grade 5 class of twenty-seven students from a different school. This class had participated in class meetings for approximately six weeks. They were asked to complete all parts of the original questionnaire and then complete a brief survey that asked them to evaluate the questionnaire.
A majority of the students had difficulty answering a question that asked them to state the number of problems or conflicts that they had experienced during the previous week. Two answered that they had been involved in a few conflicts. Two students put question marks in the space reserved for a number and two placed an equal sign in the space. This part of the test was omitted from the final questionnaire because it was apparent that each student would have a different perception about the concepts of "problem" and "conflict." There would be no way to know if each student was talking about the same idea.

Most students completed the questionnaire in ten to fifteen minutes. One English as a Second Language student (i.e., E.S.L.) and two Learning Disabled students took about twenty minutes to complete the test. Two of these students stated that the questionnaire took too long to complete.

In the section that asked students to respond in written form, most of the participants wrote at least one full sentence. Four students wrote only one or two words. Two of the students who wrote only one word were Learning Disabled students. One student stated that the questionnaire was too easy and one student felt that I should have done a better job when initially explaining how to complete the questionnaire.

Most students seemed at ease with most of the questionnaire and completed the questions in a reasonable time. They easily completed the portion of the questionnaire that asked them to choose from five possible answers. Some wrote afterwards that this section was the "most fun" to complete. Only the section which asked students to estimate the number of recent conflicts was omitted from the final questionnaire.

**Practice Questionnaire**

Students from both classes involved in the study were given a short practice questionnaire one week before completing the research questionnaire. The practice
test resembled the real questionnaire and contained four scaled questions and one short answer question. Topics on the test included the following: sports, reading, math, and homework.

**Conflict Resolution Training**

Although there are many excellent programmes that address important concepts related to conflict resolution, the programme *Conflict Resolution: An Elementary School Curriculum* designed by Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan (1990) was the curriculum used in the study to teach these skills. In this curriculum a number of lessons have been identified by the authors as essential. The teachers that participated in the study were given only these lessons.

After the pretest questionnaire was completed each class received thirty minutes of conflict resolution training each day for three weeks. This training was given at the same time each day for each class. The following is a detailed outline of these skills:

**Section # 1 Conflict in Our Lives**

The initial section helped students appreciate that conflict is a normal part of daily life and subsequent lessons helped students approach conflicts in a more positive way. They examined the following topics via role play, group discussions, art work, and individual work: why some conflict resolution styles create further conflicts; how denial and aggression may lead to further problems; the positive value of conflict, problem solving, and other issues related to conflict. As well, students were introduced to the concept of brain-storming. This section required three thirty-minute periods.
Section #2 We're Not All Alike: Appreciating Ourselves and Others

Students were encouraged to appreciate other people for their differences. Concepts were taught via group discussions, role playing, interviews, and individual work. These concepts included: how differences lead to conflict; a discussion of how being different and viewing situations differently can help solve conflicts; and how a person feels about himself/herself can affect the outcome of a conflict. Three thirty-minute periods were needed for this section.

Section #3 Understanding Feelings

Two thirty-minute lessons were required to introduce the following themes: identification of feelings; how to identify how another person is feeling by reading body language; and identification of degrees of feeling. Art, role play, music, and group discussions were used to teach these ideas.

Section #4 Talking Clearly

Barriers to communication, I-messages, communication style, when to communicate ideas to others, and how to communicate thoughts and feelings when angry, were presented to the students via role play activities and class discussions. Two thirty-minute lessons were scheduled to complete the objectives of this section.

Section #5 Listening to others

Students were taught that anger can be diffused by carefully listening to other people. Also, students practiced important skills related to listening. They included the following: active listening, restating, non-verbal responses, and active listening guide-lines (i.e., tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture). Two lessons were scheduled for these topics.
Section #6 Resolving Conflicts

The final section integrated the skills learned in the initial sections. Students were introduced to and then practised a scripted resolution process:

Step 1: Both students agree to the ground rules.
Step 2: Each person tells his/her side of the story using I-messages. Each person must state how he/she feels, what happened, and what he/she wants.
Step 3: Each person restates what the problem is for the other person and how she/he feels.
Step 4: Both people suggest possible solutions.
Step 5: Both people agree on a solution.

As students role-played and solved hypothetical conflicts using the skills outlined above, they were encouraged to seek solutions that were realistic and balanced for all involved in the dispute. This final section required three thirty-minute periods. This section marked the end of the first part of the study.

Determination of Experimental and Control Group

The classroom lessons were completed after three weeks. At this time both teachers were present when a coin was tossed and the class of twenty-six students became the experimental group while the other was designated the control group. The experimental group then participated in three weeks of classroom meetings.

Posttest Questionnaire for the Control Group

Upon completion of the formal conflict resolution training, the control group was again administered with the questionnaire. Results were compared with the pretest.
The teacher was asked to stop formal conflict resolution lessons with the control group but to continue to encourage her students to use the skills that they had recently learned during conflict resolution class.

Classroom Meetings

The experimental group was told by their teacher that verbal mediation skills learned during conflict resolution class would be used during daily classroom meetings and that these meetings would help people solve conflicts. The experimental stimulus (i.e., classroom meetings) was administered to the experimental group for three weeks. Classroom meetings occurred at the same time period and for the same length of time as the recently completed conflict resolution lessons. Meetings were facilitated by the teacher of the experimental group.

As discussed in chapter two, the concept of classroom meetings was originated by Glasser (1967) in his book, *Schools Without Failure*. A classroom meeting is a daily gathering of the whole class to discuss problems and conflicts that have occurred in class, on the playground, or at home. For this study, during meetings, students used the verbal mediation skills that were initially taught during formal lessons. These meetings were held at the same time each day.

During the first meeting students were directed to sit in a circle either in chairs or on a carpet. Together, the teacher and students then developed a small number of specific classroom meeting rules. These rules were clear and simple so that they were easily understood and easy to enforce. They were posted in a prominent place in the classroom. These rules were as follows: No interrupting, no name-calling, no put-downs, and what was said during each meeting was confidential.

Each meeting began when the teacher or a student read the classroom meeting rules. Then students were asked by the teacher if they had a problem or conflict that they wished to discuss. A student initially presented a problem/conflict to the group
via an I-Statement. A typical I-Statement was as follows: I feel... When you... Because... And I would like... For example, a student left out of a game of soccer might make an I-Statement in the following way: I feel mad and sad when you did not let me play in the game of soccer because you let other people play and I would like to play next time there is a soccer game during recess. The student being addressed then re-stated what was said to him/her by his/her classmate and then identified how the other was feeling. Then this student had an opportunity to state his/her interpretation of the problem by using an I-Statement. The other child restated and identified how the other was feeling about the problem. Next, both students suggested possible solutions until a solution that was mutually agreeable was reached. If a suitable solution could not be reached, other class members were asked to suggest possible solutions. When an agreement was achieved, each student was congratulated for working hard to solve the problem. The teacher, although not a direct participant during this process, ensured that the mediation was conducted in a fair and equitable fashion.

**Posttest for Experimental Group**

The experimental class was again given the questionnaire after three weeks of classroom meetings. Results were compared with the pretest.

**Student Interviews**

Five randomly selected students from the control group were interviewed after completion of the conflict resolution lessons and five randomly selected students from the experimental group were interviewed following the completion of the classroom meetings. Students were asked to reflect about the training and describe the best and worst part of this training. They were then asked to describe a recent conflict in which they had participated. Further questions asked students to state what caused the
conflict, how they dealt with the conflict, how they felt after the conflict was resolved and how the other person/people felt when the problem was resolved. A rubric was developed to rate the verbal mediation competence of students using information gathered during this interview process. Students from both the control class and the experimental class were compared following this analysis. Figures were developed to display the results of this analysis.

**Rubric for the Student Interviews**

The rubric was designed to assess the verbal mediation competency of each student who was interviewed. After careful examination of the interview data, each student was given a rating from "Most Competent" to "Most Incompetent." A rating of "Most Competent" was given to students who demonstrated a thorough understanding of verbal mediation (i.e., used active listening, I-Statements, Conflict Resolution Script) and whose mediation, described in the interview, was very successful. "Very successful" meant that all people involved in the conflict participated in the mediation and solutions developed from the mediation were equitable for all people involved in the dispute. A rating of "Competent" was given to those students who demonstrated a good understanding of verbal mediation (i.e., used two of the following: active listening, I-Statements, Conflict Resolution Script) and whose mediation described in the interview was successful. A rating of "Weak" was given to those students who used some verbal mediation skills when attempting to resolve a conflict but the mediation was unsuccessful. "Unsuccessful" meant that the people involved in the dispute did not reach an agreement that was equitable for all people involved in the dispute. A rating of "Incompetent" was given to those students who did not use verbal mediation skills when attempting to resolve a conflict. Attempts to resolve a conflict were unsuccessful. "Unsuccessful" meant that the people involved in the dispute did not reach an agreement that was equitable for all people involved in the
dispute. A rating of "Most Incompetent" was given to those students who did not use verbal mediation skills when attempting to resolve a conflict and the mediation was very unsuccessful. "Very unsuccessful" meant that physical aggression was used in an attempt to resolve the conflict.

Teacher Interviews

The teacher from the control class was interviewed after her class had completed three weeks of conflict resolution lessons. The teacher from the experimental class was interviewed after her class had finished the three weeks of conflict resolution lessons followed by three weeks of classroom meetings. Each teacher was asked if verbal mediation skills taught in class were being used by students to resolve conflicts. If the response was "yes," they were then asked to describe how the skills were being used and how this use of verbal mediation knowledge differed from the way students resolved conflicts before the lessons were introduced to the class. If the answer was "no," that students were not using verbal mediation skills in class, they were asked to explain why they believed students were not using the skills. The final question invited the teachers to ask any questions or state any thoughts or concerns about the training that had taken place in their classroom. Results from these interviews were compared with teacher logs, student questionnaires, and student short answers.

Interview with Teachers after Three Months

Three months after the study was completed both teachers were again interviewed. They were asked to discuss the verbal mediation competency of their students as well as their own use of these skills in class.
Limitations

A number of limitations may have affected the study of conflict resolution and classroom meetings. These potential difficulties included the following: design limitations; population problems; possible negative influence of the media; teachers inexperience regarding conflict resolution; immensity of the topic; and challenges encountered when using a new questionnaire and new assessment tools.

Grade 5 students were the population considered in the study. Grade 5 students are generally between nine and eleven years old. Students in this age group can experience a number of social, emotional, and physical changes which may affect individual perception of conflict resolution. For example, during the study some students may have been preoccupied with establishing and maintaining specific relationships, others may have worried about facial blemishes, and others may have been insecure about recent physical changes. Students may have believed that learning about and using new social skills was unimportant when contrasted with these very personal concerns. Despite these potential problems, Grade 5 students are a unique group to study. They are some of the oldest children in elementary school and, as Erikson (1968) pointed out, children of this age are beginning to experience strong internal conflicts as they work to develop a new self-concept. Grade 5 students, unlike younger children, may have been ready to accommodate conflict resolution into their growing repertoire of beliefs and skills.

In addition, there were a number of limitations inherent in the design of this study. This was a nonequivalent pretest to posttest control group design. Students for the study were not chosen by random sampling. Rather, a sample of convenience was drawn from available classes at a large elementary school in Guelph. Therefore, the two classes that were studied may have been different in a number of characteristics that may have affected the dependent variable (i.e., acquisition of verbal mediation
skills). Although this problem may have persisted throughout the study, it must be noted that the students involved in this study seemed to be an adequate representation of Ontario youth. They attended a school which drew enrollment from a mixed demographic neighbourhood. As well, according to the school principal, classes at this school are created each June to ensure a balanced make-up in terms of ability and social competence. Also, baseline conflict resolution competency skills were obtained for members of each class before conflict resolution skills had been taught. Final competency skills were measured after each class completed participation in the study. These new scores were then compared to baseline scores and the differences were noted. The amount of change for each group from pretest (i.e., baseline) to posttest scores was used for comparison purposes. In other words, students were assessed by how much progress was made from the beginning of the study to the end of the study and were not judged by initial skill levels. However, random sampling was used to select five students from each of the classes to interview after the final questionnaires had been collected.

Two rubrics were designed to gauge student verbal mediation competency levels. The first rubric was used to rate group skill level. Each group (i.e., control girls; control boys; experimental girls; experimental boys) were rated from written responses collected from the pretest and then compared with data collected from the posttest. The second rubric was used to gauge the verbal mediation proficiency of students who were interviewed following completion of the lessons and classroom meetings. The validity of these results may be suspect because I created the rubrics and I also rated each student and group using these rubrics. The results obtained from the rubrics may have been more valid if another person, aware of the contents of this study and who had a strong background in verbal mediation, had rated students and groups. However, I am very confident that each group and student was rated fairly and equitably according to the criteria developed in each rubric. It was very difficult to
find a person knowledgeable in this field who was available to rate these students. I believe that given the time restraints and my expertise in verbal mediation, I was the best candidate to complete this task.

Conflict exists everywhere. Newspapers, television, the computer screen via the Internet, and many other sources of information quickly bring important, and sometimes sensational, news into our homes and schools. Local newspapers and news stations often describe robberies, thefts, and strikes. Other news sources may relate political unrest in Canada or in other areas of the world where political conflicts are often resolved in dramatic and horrific ways resulting in violence and death. These particularly vicious circumstances may have influenced student perception of conflict resolution in a negative way. Students, realizing that many adults in the world seem unable to solve conflicts in a positive and meaningful way may have decided that participation in the study was not worthwhile. To overcome this potential difficulty teachers were advised to use world events and local news stories as learning opportunities. They were encouraged to ask students questions such as, "What would you have done to solve the problem?" or, "Now that the mistake has been made, what would you do to fix the situation?"

Before this study was undertaken, the curriculum and procedures were carefully outlined for the educators who were about to teach the conflict resolution skills during two two-hour training sessions. Although this training may have been sufficient for the teachers to initiate class lessons, student internalization of skills and behaviours may have been negatively affected if the instructors appeared unsure about the curriculum or were unable to answer questions effectively or deal with problems as they arose in class. I attempted to allay this potential problem by visiting or phoning each teacher every day after school. During these times curriculum ideas and teaching strategies were reviewed and problems were discussed with both teachers.
Conflict resolution in schools is a very large topic and this study examined only a very small fraction of the many factors that may influence the transfer of conflict resolution skills. For example, parent attitude about conflict resolution and parent conflict resolution style may have influenced a student's ability to internalize and then practise these skills outside of classroom meetings. Also, friends outside of the classroom may have influenced a student's ability to practise conflict resolution skills. A more advanced study would have examined more of these variables and would have included students from more than one grade level in more than one school.

Likert Scaling method was used to examine variables. With Likert Scaling the overall score based on responses to many items must provide a reliable measure of the variable. It was important that questions included in the questionnaire reflected variables that were being studied. To alleviate this concern the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a sample of individuals who closely resembled the population that was used in the actual study. Results of the pilot-test were used to modify the questionnaire.

Another concern was that students would be unable to complete a questionnaire that asked them to choose from five possible answers. This potential difficulty was resolved in the following ways: The questionnaire was pilot-tested and students were observed as they completed all parts of the test. Few difficulties were noted as these students completed the test. Also, the questionnaire was reviewed with both classroom teachers before it was presented to the students in the study. Finally, one week prior to the real questionnaire, students from each class were given a practice questionnaire with sample questions.
Summary of Chapter Three

A multi-method approach was used to test the hypotheses. Two classes of Grade 5 students from the same school participated in daily classroom meetings for three weeks. One of the classes then participated in three weeks of classroom meetings. Pretest and posttest questionnaires were administered to both classes. Five randomly selected students from each class were interviewed. Rubrics were designed to evaluate the questionnaire and data generated during the interviews. The teachers kept daily logs. The teachers were interviewed at the end of the study and again three months later.

In chapter four the results of this study will be presented and interpreted. The first section will present quantitative data produced from the first section of the questionnaire. Significant differences between the means of pretest and posttest scores for each skill for each group by gender will be discussed and interpreted. Also, a rubric designed for this study will analyse data produced from written responses. As well, one teacher journal will be examined and teacher interviews will be discussed. Interviews with randomly selected students round out the data. A rubric will analyse interview responses. Finally, chapter four will compare each section of the data (i.e., qualitative, written answers, interviews, and journal notes).
In this thesis two Grade 5 classes participated in a study designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. Classroom meetings will facilitate the transfer of conflict resolution information and skills to the classroom;

2. When conflict resolution lessons are discontinued, in the absence of classroom meetings, transfer of conflict resolution information and skills will be less likely to occur.

One group, later to become the control group, had fifteen students of which eight were boys and seven were girls. The other group, later to become the experimental group, had nineteen students of which eight were boys and eleven were girls. Both groups participated in three weeks of conflict resolution training, and one group then participated in three weeks of classroom meetings.

Before the three weeks of lessons began both groups of students were asked to complete a questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire asked students to rate their conflict resolution competency in three areas. These areas include the following: knowledge, behaviour, and attitude. A Likert scale (i.e., Always, Usually, Sometimes, Hardly Ever, Never) was designed to generate data that were used for index construction. Each question (i.e., response categories) was given the same intensity as the other questions and each was scored from 0 to 4. A "4" was given to Always for positive items and Never for negative items. The other section of the questionnaire
asked students to write down responses for various questions related to their attitude, behaviour, and knowledge of conflict resolution.

The teachers, prior to the study, received four hours of training in conflict resolution and classroom meetings and received the curriculum they were to use with their students. Each teacher was asked to complete a daily log for each day that his/her class participated in the study.

Both groups then received daily lessons concerning conflict resolution. After three weeks both groups had completed the lessons. By a toss of a coin the group of fifteen students was declared the control group and this group of students again completed the questionnaire. Five students, chosen randomly from this group, and the teacher were interviewed at this time.

The other group of nineteen students was designated the experimental group. This group then participated in three weeks of classroom meetings. Upon completion of these meetings, five students, chosen randomly, and the teacher were interviewed. Also, the teacher daily log was collected. Teachers were again interviewed three months after completion of the classroom meetings. The following is a compilation of the data collected from both of the groups and the teachers.

Analysis of Practice Questionnaire

Students from both groups were given a short practice questionnaire one week before completing the larger study questionnaire. The practice test resembled the real questionnaire and contained four Likert-style questions and one short answer question. This practice questionnaire did not include questions related to conflict resolution. Students were asked to rate their feelings and behaviour about sports, reading, math, and homework. The final part of the questionnaire requested that students write down problems that were encountered when completing these questions. Directions were
given about how to answer the questions. Extra time was spent explaining how to complete the rating scale.

Students from each group were able to successfully complete all parts of this questionnaire. Questions from students before and during the test were as follows: "Do I sign it?"; "Can I print?"; "This is easy." There were no comments on the final portion of the questionnaire. The students seemed to enjoy using the Likert scale and were able to successfully choose from among five possible answers.

Results of Study Questionnaire: Mean Differences Across Scores

**Knowledge (Figure 1)**

The first section of the questionnaire asked students to rate their knowledge of conflict resolution skills by responding to six statements. Each statement was scored from 0 to 4. A "4" was given to Always for positive items and Never for negative items. The highest possible score for each statement was four points. The highest individual possible total score was 24 points. A dependent samples t-test was performed to detect the presence of significant differences between the means of pretest and posttest scores for this skill for each group by gender. The statements were as follows:

Conflicts should end with everyone winning.
Making eye contact helps to resolve conflicts.
Interrupting during an argument helps to solve the problem.
Listening helps to resolve conflicts.
Feeling angry is ok.
Conflicts are bad.
Figure 1. Knowledge of Verbal Mediation
Control Group: Girls

The control group girls in the pretest had the following scores: (for measuring knowledge of conflict resolution) 20, 15, 21, 20, 14, 16, 17. The mean score was 17.6 and the standard deviation was 2.8. Following three weeks of conflict resolution training, this group of girls was again asked to complete the questionnaire. On this occasion the girls of the control group obtained the following scores: 20, 14, 21, 21, 18, 17, 16 respectively. The mean score was 18.4 and the standard deviation was 2.5. There appeared to be no significant relationship between three weeks of verbal mediation training and improved knowledge of verbal mediation for the girls of the control group (p < .10).

This finding supported the second hypothesis. It appeared that verbal mediation training without classroom meetings does not increase verbal mediation knowledge of Grade 5 girls.

Control Group: Boys

In the pretest the boys from the control group had the following scores: (for knowledge of conflict resolution) 19, 20, 11, 17, 13, 14, 14, 16. The mean score was 15.5 points and the standard deviation was 3.1. Following the conflict resolution training, the boys of the control group obtained the following scores: 17, 17, 16, 16, 16, 10, 21, 19 respectively. The mean score was 16.5 points; the standard deviation was 3.2. There appeared to be no significant relationship between three weeks of verbal mediation training and improved knowledge of verbal mediation for the boys of the control group (p < .212). Boys of the control group did not increase their verbal mediation knowledge after three weeks of training.

This finding of this section of the study supported the second hypothesis. Verbal mediation knowledge does not transfer into the classroom for Grade 5 boys when the skill is encouraged by class lessons alone.
Experimental Group: Girls

The girls from the experimental group on the pretest had the following scores: (for conflict resolution knowledge) 18, 20, 14, 14, 14, 18, 19, 16, 19, 17, 18. The mean score was 17.0 points and the standard deviation was 2.2. After three weeks of conflict resolution training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings, the girls in the experimental group were again asked to complete the questionnaire. On this occasion the girls obtained the following scores on the section that measured knowledge of conflict resolution: 23, 15, 22, 18, 20, 21, 20, 18, 19, 19, 19 respectively. The mean score was 19.5 points and the standard deviation was 2.2. A significant relationship was found between the mean of the pretest and the mean of the posttest for the girls of the experimental group after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings (p < .02). Girls in the experimental group increased their verbal mediation knowledge after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings.

The finding of this section of the study supported the first hypothesis. Verbal mediation knowledge transfers to the classroom for Grade 5 girls when the skill is encouraged by verbal mediation lessons and classroom meetings.

Experimental Group: Boys

In the pretest for knowledge of conflict resolution, the boys from the experimental group had the following scores: 13, 16, 22, 20, 12, 20, 16, 13. The mean score was 16.5 points and the standard deviation was 3.8. Following the conflict resolution training and the classroom meetings, the scores for the boys were as follows: 16, 16, 20, 18, 18, 22, 16, 15 respectively. The mean score was 17.6 points and the standard deviation was 2.4. There appeared to be no significant relationship between three weeks of verbal mediation training plus three weeks of classroom meetings and
improved knowledge of verbal mediation for the boys of the experimental group (p < .138). Boys of the experimental group did not increase their verbal mediation knowledge after three weeks of training.

The finding of this section of the study did not support the first hypothesis. Verbal mediation knowledge does not transfer to the classroom for Grade 5 boys when the skill is encouraged by verbal mediation lessons and classroom meetings.

**Behaviour (Figure 2)**

The second section of the questionnaire asked students to rate their behaviour when resolving conflicts by responding to six statements. Each statement was scored from 0 to 4. A "4" was given to Always for positive items and Never for negative items. The highest possible score for each statement was four points. The highest individual possible total score was 24 points. A dependent samples t-test was performed to detect the presence of significant differences between the means of pretest and posttest scores for this skill for each group by gender. The statements were as follows:

I help other people solve problems.

I call people names during an argument.

I hurt other people when I am angry.

I threaten other people when I am angry.

I stay away from people who are different.

I try hard to make sure that everyone wins when resolving conflicts.
Figure 2. Verbal Mediation Behaviour
Control Group: Girls

On the pretest the girls in the control group had the following scores: 19, 16, 19, 18, 21, 16, 24. The mean score for this group was 19.0 points and the standard deviation was 2.8. Following conflict resolution training the scores were as follows: 20, 19, 21, 19, 18, 16, 22 respectively. The mean score for the control girls was 19.6 points and the standard deviation was 2.5. There appeared to be no significant relationship between three weeks of verbal mediation training and improved use of verbal mediation for the girls of the control group (p < .228). Girls of the control group did not increase levels of verbal mediation behaviour after three weeks of training.

Control Group: Boys

The boys of the control group on part of the pretest that measured conflict resolution behaviour achieved the following scores: 22, 14, 20, 8, 15, 17, 17, 19. The mean score for this group was 16.6 points and the standard deviation was 4.3. Following training this group had the following scores: 22, 15, 20, 7, 16, 18, 18, 20 respectively. The mean score for these boys was 16.9 and the standard deviation was 4.6. There appeared to be no significant relationship between three weeks of verbal mediation training and improved use of verbal mediation for the boys of the control group (p < .225). Boys of the control group did not increase levels of verbal mediation behaviour after three weeks of training.

Experimental Group: Girls

The girls in the experimental group in the part of the pretest measuring conflict resolution behaviour had these scores: 15, 17, 16, 18, 13, 17, 23, 18, 18, 20, 16. The mean score was 17.4 points and the standard deviation was 2.6. After conflict resolution training and classroom meetings on the questionnaire the girls scored as
follows: 18, 20, 16, 17, 13, 20, 22, 19, 24, 20, 16 respectively. The mean score was 18.8 and the standard deviation was 2.9. A significant relationship was found between the mean of the pretest and the mean of the posttest for the girls of the experimental group after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings \((p < .025)\). Girls of the experimental group increased their use of verbal mediation after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings.

**Experimental Group: Boys**

The boys of the experimental group on the part of the pretest rating conflict resolution behaviour had the following individual scores: 19, 15, 21, 17, 14, 15, 13, 12. The mean score was 15.8 and the standard deviation was 3.1. On the posttest at the completion of the classroom meetings the boys in this group had these individual scores: 17, 17, 19, 22, 22, 18, 16, 15 respectively. The mean score was 18.5 and the standard deviation was 2.6. A significant relationship was found between the mean of the pretest and the mean of the posttest for the boys of the experimental group after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings \((p < .035)\). Boys of the experimental group increased their use of verbal mediation after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings.

**Attitude (Figure 3)**

The third section of the questionnaire asked students to rate their attitude when resolving conflicts by responding to six statements. Each statement was scored from 0 to 4. A "4" was given to Always for positive items and Never for negative items. The highest possible score for each statement was four points. The highest individual possible total score was 24 points. A dependent samples t-test was performed to
detect the presence of significant differences between the means of pretest and posttest scores for this skill for each group by gender. The statements were as follows:

Being different is ok.
The feelings of other people are important.
Respecting feelings is important when resolving conflicts.
I like myself.
I am able to help other people solve problems.
I like it when other people have fights and arguments.

**Control Group: Girls**

On the pretest the girls in the control group had the following scores: 22, 23, 23, 19, 21, 23, 24. The mean score for this group was 22.1 points and the standard deviation was 1.7. Following conflict resolution training the scores were as follows: 20, 22, 22, 19, 19, 22, 24 respectively. The mean score was 21.1 points and the standard deviation was 1.9. A significant relationship was found between the mean of the pretest and the mean of the posttest for the girls of the control group after three weeks of verbal mediation training (p < .009). In this case the girls of the control group were significantly less positive about verbal mediation.

**Control Group: Boys**

The boys of the control group had the following scores: (for attitude) 22, 24, 20, 23, 20, 22, 22, 22. The mean score was 21.9 and the standard deviation was 1.4. Upon completion of the classroom lessons the boys scored as follows: 20, 20, 19, 23, 14, 23, 23, 22 respectively. The mean score was 20.5 and the standard deviation was 3.1. There appeared to be no significant relationship between three weeks of verbal mediation training and improved use of verbal mediation for the boys of the control
group (p < .08). The boys of the control group did not become more positive about using verbal mediation.

**Experimental Group: Girls**

The girls of the experimental group in the part of the pretest measuring attitude had the following scores: 21, 22, 23, 22, 23, 22, 24, 23, 20, 22, 20. The mean score was 22.0 points and the standard deviation was 1.3. On the posttest the scores were lower: 20, 21, 24, 21, 22, 21, 23, 21, 18, 22, 21 respectively. The mean score was 21.3 points and the standard deviation was 1.6. A significant relationship was found between the mean of the pretest and the mean of the posttest for the girls of the experimental group after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings (p < .019). In this case the girls of the experimental group were significantly less positive about verbal mediation. This finding did not support the first hypothesis.

**Experimental Group: Boys**

On the part of the pretest measuring attitude, the boys in the experimental group scored lower than their female classmates. The scores were as follows: 19, 15, 21, 17, 14, 15, 13, 12. The mean score was 15.8 and the standard deviation was 3.1. On the posttest, after the classroom meetings were completed, the boys improved their scores. They were as follows: 17, 17, 19, 22, 22, 18, 16, 15 respectively. The mean score was 18.3 and the standard deviation was 2.6. A significant relationship was found between the mean of the pretest and the mean of the posttest for the boys of the experimental group after three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings (p < .036). The boys of this group were significantly more positive about solving problems using verbal mediation.
Summary of Results: Scaled Questions

The findings of this section of the study generally supported the study hypotheses. Class meetings seemed to transfer some verbal mediation skills while there was no indication that verbal mediation skills would transfer if students did not participate in classroom meetings. A summary of these findings are listed below:

1. Verbal mediation skills do not transfer to Grade 5 boys in the absence of class meetings.
2. Verbal mediation skills do not transfer to Grade 5 girls in the absence of class meetings.
3. Two verbal mediation skills transfer to Grade 5 boys who participate in classroom meetings (i.e., behaviour, attitude).
4. Two verbal mediation skills transfer to Grade 5 girls who participate in classroom meetings (i.e., knowledge, behaviour).
5. Grade 5 boys who participate in classroom meetings do not increase their knowledge of verbal mediation.
6. Grade 5 girls who receive three weeks of verbal mediation training followed by three weeks of class meetings become less positive about resolving conflicts by using verbal mediation.
7. Grade 5 girls who receive three weeks of verbal mediation training become less positive about resolving conflicts by using verbal mediation.

Results of Study Questionnaire: Student Written Responses

The questions in the final part of the student questionnaire were designed to gauge student verbal mediation skills. A rubric was created to assess verbal mediation
competency for each group. These groups included the following: control group girls; control group boys; experimental group girls; experimental group boys. Using the rubric, each group was rated using pretest information and again using posttest information. Pretest and posttest results were compared. A figure was developed to display this information. The rubric is again summarized below.

The rubric was designed to test group knowledge and use of the verbal mediation skills taught during the class lessons. The rubric had five levels of verbal mediation competence. A designation of "Excellent Skills" meant that most of the students in a group listed three or more verbal mediation skills in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most students included three or more verbal mediation skills in each of Questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Questions 2, 3, and 4 asked respondents to describe how they would resolve conflicts with other people. Finally, a rating of "excellent" was given when most students agreed in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). To receive a designation of "Good Skills," most of the students in a group listed two verbal mediation skills in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most students included two verbal mediation skills in each of questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Finally, most students agreed in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). A rating of "Satisfactory Skills" meant that most of the students in a group listed one verbal mediation skill in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most students included one verbal mediation skill in each of questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Finally, most students agreed in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). A "Weak Skills" designation meant that most of the students in a group listed one verbal mediation skill in the first question (i.e., knowledge). Also, most of the students did not include one verbal mediation skill in each of Questions 2, 3, and 4 (i.e., behaviour). Finally, most students did not agree in Question 5 that students should help other students solve conflicts (i.e., attitude). The
lowest level "Very Weak Skills" meant that no verbal mediation skills were listed in any question and most students believed that students should not help other students resolve conflicts. (Figure 4, 5)

Pretest

Control Group: Girls

This group was able to suggest a number of strategies for resolving conflicts. In the first question that asked them to describe how people "should" resolve problems they responded as follows: negotiation, talking, gathering information, and compromising. These appeared to be very good ideas because negotiating and talking are certainly more effective ways to deal with conflicts than fighting and arguing. However, these ideas were not very specific. More specific skills that described how to compromise, listen, and talk were lacking in the responses.

The other questions asked students to describe how they would resolve problems with other people. These answers did not reflect the positive strategies described in the first question. Rather than talk and negotiate as they stated in the initial question, they stated that they would resolve problems with others as follows: be scary, ignore, rely on the power of authority figures, would go away, or would not be a friend any more. The discrepancy between what they believed "should" be done to resolve problems with others and what they stated they "would" do were apparent.

Three of the seven girls in the control group stated that students should help other students resolve problems. Five students wrote that students should not help because they did not want to get involved, they did not like to hear fighting, and because others might get mad if they intervened.

The girls of the control group on the pretest received a rating of "Weak Skills."
The boys of the control group displayed few verbal mediation skills.
The girls of the control group displayed few verbal mediation skills.

The boys of the control group showed no significant use of verbal mediation skills.
The girls of the control group showed no significant use of verbal mediation skills.

Figure 4. Control Group Verbal Mediation Competency Derived Written Answers.
Experimental Groups

Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level V</th>
<th>Level IV</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Girls

Boys

The boys of the experiment group on the pretest displayed few verbal mediation skills. The girls were able to demonstrate a limited use of verbal mediation skills.

Experimental Groups

Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level V</th>
<th>Level IV</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Girls

Boys

The boys on the posttest demonstrated a significant increased use of verbal mediation skills. The girls on the posttest demonstrated a significant increased use of verbal mediation skills.

Figure 5. Experimental Group verbal mediation competency derived written answers
Control Group: Boys

The boys from the control group on the pretest, when measured using the rubric, were given a rating of "Weak Skills." In the initial question which asked members of this group to describe how people "should" solve problems with another person, almost all of the respondents stated that talking would be the best method. Not stated in the answers, however, were how they would talk and what strategies they would choose to initiate verbal mediation discussions.

The next section asked respondents to declare how they would resolve a future problem with another person. Instead of "talk" to resolve a conflict, members of this group declared that they would "tell" others what to do. They would tell others to shut-up, to leave them alone, or to stop or they would tell a parent or a teacher to intervene.

Four of the eight boys from the control group stated that students should not help other students resolve conflicts because people should mind their own business and because the situation might become worse.

Experimental Group: Girls

The girls of the experimental group on the pretest also received a verbal mediation skill rating of "Weak Skills." They stated that people "should" resolve conflicts with other people by talking, listening to both sides, and apologizing. They did not state "how" to talk, listen, and apologise when involved in a dispute. Perhaps because they did not appear to have concrete plan to resolve conflict situations, they stated that they expected that they would resolve future conflicts by avoiding, yelling, ignoring, and by relying on adults.

In the final question, four of the eleven girls stated that students should help other students. Three were ambivalent and stated that only in very specific circumstances should students help other students. Four of the experimental group girls declared that
students should not help others resolve conflicts because helping might initiate another fight, helping would be being nosy, and matters might become worse.

**Experimental Group: Boys**

The boys from the experimental group on the pretest were given a rating of "Very Weak Skills." When asked to state the best way to solve problems between two people, they stated that people should deal with their own problems or that combatants should be held until help arrives. The remaining students wrote that people should tell a friend or teacher, let others decide, and "don't know."

When asked to state how they believed they would handle conflicts with others in the future, some answers included the following: punch him, walk away, yell, call names back, leave the scene of the conflict, ask an adult to resolve the problem, and tell them to shut up. There was no indication that these students intended to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts.

Seven of the eight boys from the experimental class agreed that students should help other students resolve problems. Most of those who agreed stated that if students helped other students resolve problems the school and classroom would be a safer place.

**Discussion**

Three of the four groups being studied in this thesis on the pretest displayed rudimentary verbal mediation knowledge. One group, the boys of the experimental group, evinced weaker knowledge of verbal mediation. All four groups did not describe verbal mediation skills when they stated how they would resolve conflicts with other people. The majority of the boys of the experimental group stated that students should help other students resolve problems. The majority of the students
from the other groups stated that students should not help other students resolve problems.

It was possible that students were unwilling or unable to resolve conflicts by listening, talking, and brainstorming because of two reasons. The first was because they did not want to use methods for resolving conflicts that have been suggested by adults. They may have preferred to use ideas that other students have modelled (i.e., arguing, telling a teacher or parent to intervene, assault, and insult). The second was that, despite being able to state a few verbal mediation concepts and agreeing that students should help each other, they lacked the skills to mediate successful resolutions for problems. The obvious question is as follows: Will students use verbal mediation skills to resolve conflicts if they have control of the mediation process (i.e., classroom meetings). Posttest results indicated that this was a feasible explanation.

Posttest

Control Group: Girls

Responses by the girls of the control group on the pretest were very similar to answers given on the posttest. On the first question they stated that people should resolve problems by talking, listening, and making an I-Statement. Although verbal mediation language was now being used (i.e., make an I-Statement, make eye contact, talk, respect feelings), responses remained incomplete. It was as if every member of this group was able to state a part of one of the verbal mediation skills but none was able to piece them together.

As in the pretest, the posttest answers in the other questions that asked respondents to state what they would do when in conflict with various people did not reflect answers given in the first question and no verbal mediation terminology was used. Students stated that they would ignore, ask an authority figure to intervene, walk
away, or ask why. Again, no step-by-step plan was described by these students. The number of students who believed that students should help other students remained at three out of seven girls. This group was again given a rating of "Weak."

Female students of the control group did not significantly improve their willingness to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts with other students. The discrepancy between how they believed problems "should" be resolved and how they believed they "would" resolve conflicts remained the same. Attitude regarding verbal mediation remained low.

**Control Group: Boys**

There were no significant changes for the boys of the control group from pretest to posttest. On the first question that asked the students to state how people should resolve conflicts, very few verbal mediation concepts were evident. Verbal mediation skills that were stated in the posttest were sketchy and lacked detail.

On the questions that asked students to state how they would resolve problems with a friend, a stranger, and a family member, no verbal mediation skills were evident. They listed the same kinds of behaviours that were recorded previously in the pretest. Avoidance, verbal aggression, and name-calling were the methods of choice for this group. Only two of the eight boys declared that students should help other students resolve conflicts. This was a drop from the pretest where four boys believed that students should help others resolve conflicts.

Three weeks of conflict resolution lessons had very little effect on the male members of the control group. Because they stated that they would continue to resolve conflicts in the same manner from pretest to posttest and because their attitude about verbal mediation remained low, the control group boys again received a rating of "Weak Skills."
Experimental Group: Girls

It was exciting to note that this group was able to transfer many of the skills that they described in the first question to potential real-life scenarios as asked in the other questions. When asked how they would respond when in conflict with other people, many of the experimental group girls group stated that they would make an I-Message, state the problem, and try to solve the problem. Only a small number of this group declared that they would ask an authority figure to intervene or ignore the other person. However, only five out of eleven students stated that students should help other students resolve conflicts.

The girls of the experimental group received a rating of "Good Skills" on the posttest. This was a significant improvement from the pretest where they received a rating of "Weak Skills." However, group attitude about resolving conflicts using verbal mediation remained low as less than half of the eleven girls believed that students should help others resolve conflicts.

Experimental Group: Boys

In the pretest the boys from the experimental group received a rating of "Very Weak." On the posttest this group improved two levels to "Satisfactory." On the posttest a number of verbal mediation skills were listed, and the most common response was "Make an I-Statement." Skills listed on the posttest lacked detail but displayed more verbal mediation knowledge than on the pretest.

In other sections of the questionnaire, when asked to describe how they intended to deal with strife in the future, some of the group members declared that they would use some of the ideas taught in class and used in classroom meetings. However, these suggestions contained less detail than answers to the first question.
Seven of eight boys from the experimental group wrote that students should help other students resolve conflicts. This was an improvement from the pretest of six students.

These results were encouraging. The boys from the experimental group on the pretest declared that hitting, pushing and yelling were the methods of choice for resolving conflicts with others. After three weeks of training followed by three weeks of classroom meetings they were able to describe some of the verbal mediation script and stated that they were willing to try some of the ideas when involved in a future conflict. Attitude about verbal mediation seemed to have improved from pretest to posttest.

Discussion

The first hypothesis of this study stated that classroom meetings will facilitate the transfer of conflict resolution information and skills to the classroom. The results of this section of the study generally supported this supposition. The girls of the experimental class who received three weeks of verbal mediation training and three weeks of classroom meetings displayed an improvement in two of the three verbal mediation skills examined. Over time they seemed more able to successfully resolve conflicts and displayed more knowledge of verbal mediation. The boys of the experimental class who received three weeks of verbal mediation training and three weeks of classroom meetings displayed an improvement in all three verbal mediation skills. They were more positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts, were more knowledgeable about verbal mediation, and used verbal mediation more often to resolve conflicts.

The second hypothesis of this study predicted that when conflict resolution lessons are discontinued, in the absence of classroom meetings, transfer of conflict resolution information and skills is less likely to occur. Again the findings of this section of the
study supported this hypothesis. The boys from the control class who received three weeks of verbal mediation training but did not participate in classroom meetings did not display improvements in any of the verbal mediation skills examined. Their knowledge and use of verbal mediation to resolve conflicts remained the same over time. However, they appeared to be less positive about using verbal mediation over time. Like their classmates, the girls from the control class who received three weeks of verbal mediation training but did not participate in classroom meetings did not display improvement in any of the verbal mediation skills examined. Their knowledge, attitude, and use of verbal mediation to resolve conflicts remained the same over time.

Interviews with Selected Students

Five students from the control group and five students from the experimental group were randomly selected to be interviewed. The interviews for the control group occurred after three weeks of class lessons. The interviews for the experimental group occurred after three weeks of class lessons followed by three additional weeks of classroom meetings. Students were interviewed at school during class time and lunch time. The interviewer talked with each student separately while the teacher worked in another part of the room. Questions were asked in sequence beginning with number one.

Students were asked to talk about a recent conflict by responding to the following statement: Please try to remember the last conflict that you had. Describe this conflict. Probe questions included the following: What caused the conflict? Please tell me what you did about the conflict? Other questions explored personal feelings and the feelings of others involved in the dispute.

A rubric was designed to assess the verbal mediation competency of each student who was interviewed. After careful examination each student was given a rating from
"Most Competent" to "Most Incompetent." A rating of "Most Competent" was given to students who demonstrated a thorough understanding of verbal mediation (i.e., used active listening, I-Statements, Conflict Resolution Script) and whose mediation described in the interview was very successful. "Very successful" meant that all people involved in the conflict participated in the mediation and solutions developed from the mediation were equitable for all people involved in the dispute (i.e., win-win). A rating of "Competent" was given to those students who demonstrated a good understanding of verbal mediation (i.e., used two of the following: active listening, I-Statements, Conflict Resolution Script) and whose mediation described in the interview was successful. A rating of "Weak" was given to those students who used some verbal mediation skills when attempting to resolve a conflict but the mediation was unsuccessful. "Unsuccessful" meant that the people involved in the dispute did not reach an agreement that was equitable for all people involved in the dispute. A rating of "Incompetent" was given to those students who did not use verbal mediation skills when attempting to resolve a conflict. Attempts to resolve a conflict were unsuccessful. "Unsuccessful" meant that the people involved in the dispute did not reach an agreement that was equitable for all people involved in the dispute. A rating of "Most Incompetent" was given to students who did not use verbal mediation skills when attempting to resolve a conflict and the mediation was very unsuccessful. Conflicts were resolved using verbal or physical aggression. A figure was designed to display the results.

The interviews were designed to assess individual verbal mediation skills. The interviews were also designed to compare the verbal mediation skill development of the control group and experimental group. The three verbal mediation skills (i.e., knowledge, behaviour, and attitude) were not individually analysed. The following is a description of these findings (Figure 6).
Figure 6. Group verbal mediation competency derived from student interviews
Control Group

Three boys and two girls were selected by random sampling to be interviewed. These students had received conflict resolution training for three weeks but had not participated in classroom meetings. During the interviews students from this group seemed anxious to conclude the discussions and much encouragement was needed to elicit answers.

Student A

This student's most recent conflict concerned a dispute about a cup. The boy became upset as he described the following incident: The class had recently designed paper cups and the boy being interviewed had put a great deal of effort into the decoration of his cup. Another student who was described during the interview as a "stupid guy" took the cup from his desk, placed it on the floor, and then destroyed it by stepping on it. The student being interviewed felt that the incident was unprovoked and that the other student probably destroyed the cup because "he just thinks he's funny." The student being interviewed said that he became very angry, put the broken cup into the garbage, and at the next opportunity tripped the student who had broken his cup. After tripping the other student, the boy continued to feel angry and upset. He was not sure how the other student was feeling after the incident was over but suspected that he was feeling "fine."

Student A received a rating of "Most Incompetent" because he exhibited no verbal mediation skills. Instead, he chose to resolve the conflict that he described by resorting to revenge. The student tripped his classmate and the conflict was not resolved.
Student B

This girl described a "little fight between friends" that had occurred at school. A friend had complained that Student B had ignored her all morning at school. Student B and the friend began to argue and in a short period of time they began to "call each other names." Eventually, both girls went their separate ways and Student B joined another group of girls. The friend played by herself.

The problem that initiated the conflict between Student B and her friend remained unresolved. However, later in the week the friends again played together. Student B stated that she felt much better when she and her friend again played together. She believed that her friend felt the same way. She stated that the issue of ignoring was not discussed when the girls again played together.

Student B could not identify exactly what or who had initially caused the conflict between her and her friend. She guessed that "one of my friends" had done or said something to cause the problem.

The problem between Student B and her friend could have been resolved if they had discussed the conflict together using verbal mediation terminology as soon as Student B had become aware of the problem. A brief discussion may have identified the cause of the problem and then may have generated possible solutions. Instead, arguing and name-calling resulted in an escalation of the problem. Because no solutions were developed, it is unlikely that the girls will be able to prevent the problem from happening again.

This student received a rating of "Incompetent" because no verbal mediation skills were used to resolve the problem. Although the girls again played together after a few days and Student B said that she and her friend felt positive about the way the conflict seemed to resolve itself, the problem that initiated the conflict did not appear to have been resolved.
**Student C**

Student C described a recent conflict with his same-age cousin. At school Student C had received a "fancy pencil" from his teacher. While visiting at his cousin's home he lost this pencil. The cousin found the pencil and claimed it as his own. Student C demanded that his cousin return the lost item and an argument began between the them. Eventually, the cousin "yelled" for his mother to intervene. According to Student C, his cousin's mother did not ask him what had occurred but arbitrarily awarded the pencil to the cousin. When this happened the cousin began to brag about his new possession.

When asked to reflect about what had caused the conflict Student C was unable to give an answer. However, he reiterated that he was "very angry" when the pencil was awarded to his cousin and was still very angry as he related the incident to me. He believed that his cousin was very happy when he first got the pencil and was still happy about what happened.

This student displayed no knowledge of verbal mediation. His response when his cousin had his pencil was to argue and yell. The problem was given to an authority figure who arbitrarily gave the pencil to her son without allowing each child to state what had occurred. Only one person appeared to have benefited from the resolution of the conflict. For these reasons Student C was rated as "Incompetent."

**Student D**

Student D described a recent conflict that occurred between her and her younger brother. The girl's brother had given her permission to wear his favourite hat. However, the brother, according to the girl, changed his mind and "grabbed it." A heated argument ensued and the brother took and hid the hat from Student D. The girl spent a great deal of time looking for the hat.
When asked to identify what had caused the conflict, Student D stated that she did not know. She said that during the conflict and for a period of time afterwards she felt "very disappointed" and believed that her brother felt "satisfied" because he was able to get his hat returned to him.

Student D did not use verbal mediation skills to negotiate the return of a hat that was wrongfully taken away from her. She received a rating of "Incompetent."

**Student E**

Student E stated that the best part of the class lessons about verbal mediation was answering the questions during class because it was "fun." However, he also pointed out that he disliked all of the writing portions of the programme because they were "boring."

Student E described a conflict he had recently experienced with his older brother. The boys had been engaged in a game of street hockey for a short period of time when Student E had declared that he wanted to play tennis instead. His brother did not agree and insisted that they resume the game of street hockey. An argument resulted and, according to Student E, both brothers became very angry.

Student E explained that he dealt with the conflict by quitting the game of street hockey and walking away from his brother. His brother "yelled" at him as he walked away and called him names.

This boy was unable to decide what had caused the problem. He identified his feelings during the conflict with his brother as "very angry." He stated that he was still angry about the problem with his brother. He believed that during the conflict his brother was "frustrated."

Student E received a rating of "Incompetent." Verbal mediation skills were not used during this conflict between Student E and his brother. Neither boy was satisfied about the outcome of the conflict.
Experimental Group

Three boys and two girls from the experimental group were selected by random sampling to be interviewed. These students had received conflict resolution training for three weeks followed by three weeks of participation in classroom meetings. This group of students seemed more relaxed during the interview, were willing to spend as much time as I needed, and seemed excited when describing their experiences.

Student F

Student F described a recent conflict with his younger brother. His brother had messed-up his room and, when asked, had refused to clean-up the room. Student F felt that the conflict was caused by his brother who made the mess. He dealt with the situation by making an I-Message to his brother. Student F then asked his mother to help resolve the conflict. His mother did not discuss the situation with the brothers but "told" the brother to clean the room.

Student F stated that his younger brother should have cleaned up the room because he had made the mess and that this was the cause of the conflict. Student F said that he felt "good" after the problem was resolved and believed that his brother probably felt angry because he had to clean the room.

Student F received a rating of "Weak." He was able to use one verbal mediation skill at the onset of the conflict but the mediation process was unsuccessful because only one of the disputants was happy about the outcome.
**Student G**

Student G stated that his most recent conflict concerned his duties as a student safety patroller at his school. He worried each day about whether or not he was on duty. He was unable to explain why he worried about his patrol duties.

Student G explained that he resolved his conflict by listening very carefully to the school morning announcements to find out if he is on duty. The boy stated that he felt "important" after he had found a solution to his dilemma.

Student G was rated as "Competent." Although this student did not demonstrate verbal mediation skills that were taught in class, it is evident that he used "self-talk" to effectively solve his problem about his duties as a school safety patroller.

**Student H**

Student H described a problem she had that week with a boy in her class. This classmate had teased her about a shirt she was wearing and had made fun of her name. She asked him to stop and had then walked away. The boy continued to tease her.

She resolved the problem by discussing the problem with the boy during a class meeting. She made an I-Statement and then both students listened to each other's "side of the story." Together they were able reach a resolution and the teasing stopped. The girl said that after the meeting she felt "kinda-good." She stated that because the boy also liked the solution to the problem "he probably felt good but a bit embarrassed."

Student H received a rating of "Most Competent" because she was able to use three verbal mediation skills to successfully resolve a conflict.

**Student I**

Student I explained that until recently he tripped and pushed a lot of students in the classroom and on the playground during recess. He was not sure why he behaved this
way but knew that he initiated a large number of conflicts. He did nothing to resolve these issues until his classmates discussed his behaviour with him during a few class meetings. I-Statements were made by his classmates and together Student I and his classmates negotiated a number of solutions to help him stop tripping and pushing other students.

Student I explained that he felt "relieved and happy" since the recent class meetings and since these meetings had not pushed and tripped other students. He also felt good when he noticed that his classmates treated him respectfully during the class meetings. He said that he had a few more friends.

It was difficult to judge the verbal mediation skill level of this child. It is likely that his level was "Most Incompetent." However, his classmates appeared to have worked in the Competent/Most Competent range. Because of their willingness to use the skills to help him, Student I seemed more able to control his behaviour. It is possible that he may have chosen to resolve future conflicts during class meetings.

**Student J**

Student J's most recent conflict happened the last time she read with her reading buddy from a primary class. The two students were playing a reading game and the younger student decided to show her some work that had been recently completed. The older child told her reading buddy calmly that they would look at the work after the game was finished. The younger child agreed and the game was finished. Student J explained that she was happy with the way the conflict was handled. She knew that the younger student was pleased also because he was laughing.

Student J resolved a potentially difficult situation with a younger student by calmly resolving the problem by suggesting a resolution that satisfied both children. Student J received a rating of "Most Competent."
Summary of Results of Interviews

The interviews highlighted the verbal mediation skill differences between the control group and the experimental group. Members of the experimental group exhibited a wide range of verbal mediation skills and were able to successfully mediate conflicts. Members of the control group displayed no verbal mediation skills during the interviews and none of the conflicts described were successfully resolved. These findings seem to support the two theses hypotheses that class meetings encourage the transfer of verbal mediation skills to the classroom and verbal mediation lessons without class meetings do not encourage verbal mediation to the classroom.

Most members of the control group, during the interviews, were given a rating of either "Incompetent" or "Very Incompetent." These ratings were given because none of the conflicts described by the students resulted in a win-win scenario and because arguing, yelling, hurting, and intervention by an authority figure were the methods chosen by most control group members to resolve conflicts.

Most members of the experimental group, during the interviews, were given a rating of "Competent" or "Most Competent." One student was rated as "Weak." All conflicts described in the interviews with the experimental group resulted in win-win scenarios. Verbal mediation skills were used by most students to initiate resolution of conflicts. Class meetings were used by students to mediate a solution for a classmate who was behaving aggressively on the playground. A summary of the findings from the interviews with students are as follows:

1.) Class meetings promote the use of verbal mediation skills.
2.) If class meetings are not initiated following verbal mediation lessons, verbal mediation skills do not transfer to the classroom.
3.) Some students attempted to initiate verbal mediation but were unable to complete the mediation.

4.) Students used class meetings to help classmates control their behaviour.

**Analysis of Teacher Journal Notes**

Both teachers were asked to make brief journal entries following each lesson or class meeting. The journal was divided into four sections as follows: knowledge: (students ability to demonstrate understanding of the process); behaviour: (students using verbal mediation skills); attitude: (student feelings about conflict resolution), and other comments. At the end of the study the teacher working with the control group was unable to find her notes. The teacher working with the experimental group made entries following each of the first ten lessons and wrote a brief summary about classroom meetings after the three weeks of class meetings had concluded. However, she did not follow the page headings (i.e., knowledge, behaviour, attitude) but wrote freely each day. The following is a summary of these notes.

**Teacher of the Experimental Class**

**First Lesson**

Students were very reluctant at first to participate in the conflict resolution classroom lessons. Students' answers to questions were very simple and they had difficulty linking ideas together. The majority of the class felt that conflict was negative and associated it with yelling, hitting, and being mean. Students were fidgety and tapped their feet on the floor. Constant reminders were needed to enforce class behaviour expectations. Near the end of the meeting students seemed to realize that conflict can be neutral or positive. According to the teacher, the examples of conflicts
that students gave were superior to the examples listed in the curriculum. The meeting ended on a positive note. She believed that the meeting picked up when the students were guided to focus on the positive and neutral aspects of conflict. She wrote that the kids were "in the groove" and eager to talk by the end of the lesson.

**Second Lesson**

In this lesson the teacher explained that successful resolutions must result in a win-win for both people involved in a conflict. The students had difficulty understanding this because they were much more comfortable with the concept of win-lose. For example, students were presented with a picture of a bully intimidating another boy. They were asked to find a way that the frightened boy and the bully could both win. The students could not find a solution that would result in both boys being successful. She pointed out that the students were more "high" this day because participation and anticipation were high. There was less fidgeting during the lesson and students exhibited more self-control.

**Third Lesson**

This lesson used pictures and discussion to introduce the concept of empathy and that most conflicts had more than one point of view. Most students were enthusiastic and positive about the lesson. Some students were restless and one "identified" behaviour student occasionally withdrew from the group. According to the teacher, this was typical behaviour for this child. The lesson went longer than planned but "it was worth it as they were enthusiastic." The students had mixed opinions about the positive/negative traits of Red Riding Hood, the Wolf, and Granny but after hearing the story from the Wolf's point of view, they were more able to understand that conflicts often have many different points of view. The teacher wrote that she was becoming more comfortable teaching the lessons.
Fourth Lesson

This lesson helped students consider the effects of name-calling. The teacher had difficulty during this lesson keeping the group focussed because "they all had something to say about the topic." Because there were many interruptions, the session was stopped before the end. The teacher wrote that it was too difficult to keep control.

Fifth Lesson

This lesson continued the discussion about feelings and how knowing how another is feeling during a conflict aids in the effective resolution of the conflict. The students enjoyed the brain-storming activity and most of the students were very focussed, very calm, and displayed appropriate behaviour. The teacher wrote that the accurate role playing by students seemed to indicate that they were beginning to realize that being aware how another feels can help the resolution of a problem. She stated that this was her favourite lesson to date.

Sixth Lesson

Understanding how another is feeling by reading body language was the next lesson. The teacher began by reviewing the previous lesson. A few of the students were fidgeting and the "identified" behaviour student had to be removed. The majority of the students were fairly responsive and were able to focus throughout the lesson. Role-playing activities where students displayed various feelings went well. At the beginning students had problems understanding some of the terms. By the end of the lesson they were able to understand most of the terms.
Seventh Lesson

I-Messages were introduced and practised via role-playing activities. The students were very excited throughout the lesson and did an excellent job when formulating I-Statements. The teacher stressed that this was the best and most productive lesson to date. Two students asked if they could resolve a "real" problem using I-Statements. They resolved the issue very well in a win-win fashion. The lesson was extended because other students also wanted to resolve problems in this fashion.

Lesson Eight

During this lesson students used role play to express wants and needs in an assertive and non-threatening manner. The teacher chose students the day before to prepare skits that were presented this day in class. The class response to the skits was "reticent." The teacher felt that this reaction occurred because other class members were also expecting to perform I-Statement skits but were not given the opportunity. Understanding of the concept of lose-lose through a "You-Statement" versus a win-win by an I-Statement was evident by most of the students. A student who played Anita during a You-Message skit diverged from the intended flow of the role play and inserted her own I - Statement to resolve the problem. As well, an impromptu I-Statement was made by a boy to his classmates. He had been left out of all of the practise groups he tried to join the day before. He began with "I feel..." and told his classmates how he felt and why he felt that way. The class responded with apologies and offers that he could join them next time. The class was very excited that the I-Statement worked so well and were eager to use one themselves.
Lesson Nine

This lesson demonstrated how tone of voice can communicate different feelings. Teacher notes stated only that the lesson went well and that the role play activities were successful.

Lesson Ten

This lesson was designed to help students describe behaviour specifically and objectively. Students worked with an entire I-Statement script which was as follows: I feel... when you... because... and I want... Students had difficulty at first putting the steps together. They tended to respond more as an "injured party." The teacher re-taught parts of the lesson and coached students through each practise activity. She also pointed out that the same students tended to answer questions and that she made an I-Statement to the students about this. She felt that her class was a difficult group to teach most days. She also pointed out that some days she did not want to continue the lessons because of the lack of seriousness of some of the students.

Remainder of Lessons

There were no more daily comments about the remaining six lessons. She wrote that she did not have enough quiet time after each lesson to think clearly to make comments.

At the end of lesson fifteen this class was chosen to participate in three weeks of classroom meetings. The teacher was invited to watch a classroom meeting with my class as part of the training.
Classroom Meetings

The teacher did not make comments after each classroom meeting. Written comments were made after the fifteen classroom meetings were completed. These comments are as follows:

After watching the classroom meeting at my school the teacher felt confident about initiating a daily meeting with her students. The first meeting went well and her students became more comfortable with it each day. Her students began to ask each morning if a meeting was to be held that day. Outside of a scheduled class meeting two students approached her to make an I-Statement. Together the students and the teacher resolved a conflict. The teacher wrote that she felt very positive about the conflict resolution programme and would recommend it to any teacher. She recommended the programme to her school principal and suggested that she think about using it next year throughout the school. Her concluding comments were as follows: "The thing I found to be so great was that the kids could get their feelings out and be listened to by each other. The kids were very accepting. I wish it was that easy with adults."

Teacher Interviews

The teacher from the Experimental Group and the teacher from the Control Group were interviewed. They were asked if verbal mediation skills that were taught in class were being used by students to resolve conflicts.

Teacher from the Control Group

1. Please describe the lessons that you believe best facilitated the learning of conflict resolution. Why do you feel this way?
The teacher was not sure which lessons or parts of the programme seemed to best teach the skills. However, she concluded that students enjoyed the lessons where drama was used and when they could get out of their seats. She stated that they also liked the lesson where the "Big Bad Wolf" tells his side of the story.

2. Please describe the lessons that you believe least facilitated the learning of conflict resolution. Why do you feel this way?

Again she was unable to decide what lessons or sections did a poor job. She stated that many of her students enjoyed all aspects of the programme and seemed to pick up the skills while others seemed unwilling to participate in any of the lessons. In general, her class did not respond well when she was required to do most of the talking or when students were required to put their thoughts into writing.

3. Following the lessons do you believe that students are more able to successfully resolve problems in class? Please give examples or reasons why you feel this way.

The teacher believed that while the lessons were taking place some of her students were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the skills. For example, many students were able to successfully make I-Statements. As well, they could identify feelings when looking at pictures of students involved in conflicts. Although she encouraged students to use the skills in class while the lessons were in progress and after the lessons had been completed, they were unable or unwilling to resolve conflicts as prescribed in the programme. After a short time the teacher stopped coaching the students and resumed handling classroom and playground problems and conflicts in her usual way.
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

She stated that she was glad that she had participated in the study and had learned a new perspective about children's problems. She agreed that children must sometimes be encouraged to solve their own problems. She also requested that I return in the new year to help her begin classroom meetings.

Students in the control class, according to the teacher, were interested in many of the concepts and strategies introduced during the three weeks of conflict resolution lessons. In particular, they enjoyed lessons that were hands-on and not teacher directed. However, when students had a chance to use these skills, they did not choose to resolve conflicts using methods taught in class. Lessons alone did not appeared to encourage students to resolve conflicts by verbal mediation. Old conflict resolution styles seemed to quickly reassert themselves.

**Teacher of the Experimental Class**

1. Please describe the lessons that you believe best facilitated the learning of conflict resolution. Why do you feel this way?

   In this group the students seemed to enjoy lessons that were activity-based such as role playing. Also, students became excited when they formulated I-Statements and then role played them to others. She believed that her students seemed more able to correctly demonstrate skills that were practised using active learning techniques. I-Statements, she felt, were enjoyed by students because it was an opportunity for students to put together all that they had learned.

2. Please describe the lessons that you believe least facilitated the learning of conflict resolution. Why do you feel this way?

   Students sometimes seemed bored and misbehaved during lessons that were more teacher directed. These problems were experienced mostly at the beginning of the
study when students were initially introduced to the programme. These difficulties also occurred when students were initially asked to identify feelings and how feelings relate to problem solving. She added that these problems did not necessarily mean that specific lessons were not effective. It was possible she concluded, that the misbehaviour evident in some lessons was because students felt uncomfortable about lesson themes and activities.

3. Following the lessons/classroom meetings, do you believe that students are more able to successfully resolve problems in class? Please give examples or reasons why you feel this way.

The teacher was emphatic that the lessons followed by classroom meetings resulted in a number of successful conflict resolutions. According to the teacher, all of the following examples occurred after classroom meetings began: The students, once introduced to classroom meetings, seemed to enjoy the experience each day and quickly began to seek advice about personal problems during these sessions. Students would "save" conflicts that occurred at recess to deal with during class meeting. On a number of occasions outside of class meetings, students had asked the teacher if they could make an I-Statement. When given this opportunity, students quickly resolved conflicts. She gave two examples: A student had used another person's eraser and someone was being disturbed by another student during class. Also, the teacher reported that the class seemed calmer and easier to manage after classroom meetings had begun. The teacher described an experience during which a student made an I-Statement to her. She felt very uncomfortable when this happened, but the conflict, of which she had been unaware, was quickly resolved. Each morning her students began by asking if they were having a meeting that day. The teacher stated that she felt very positive about the programme. She explained that she would continue to use
classroom meetings and had strongly recommended it to other teachers and her school principal.

Conflict resolution lessons followed by classroom meetings seem to encourage students to resolve problems by verbal mediation according to this teacher. As well, her attitude about classroom meetings as a way to resolve conflicts was very positive. This teacher's attitude may have had a significant effect on student attitude and performance during classroom meetings. Success during meetings seemed to encourage students to resolve problems outside of the formal meeting environment. The problems that were resolved seemed to be real and significant situations. Perhaps this resolution of real problems was a major factor contributing to the positive transfer of verbal mediation skills to the students and teacher. Because students were saving conflicts during the day to be discussed later during classroom meetings, it was evident that student attitude and behaviour were modified by the lessons and meetings.

**Analysis of Teacher Interviews**

A number of important ideas emerged from the teacher interviews. The first was that the information generated from both of the teacher interviews supported the two hypotheses of this study. The students of the experimental group participated in three weeks of class meetings and were able to use verbal mediation skills to resolve conflicts during class meetings and during class time. The students of the control group did not participate in classroom meetings and were not able to use verbal mediation skills in class.

Secondly, the teacher interviews suggested a few reasons why verbal mediation skills are transferred via class meetings. The teacher of the experimental class explained that her students were excited about class meetings because it afforded them
a chance to solve "real" problems. The teacher of the control group declared that she was unable to coax her students to use verbal mediation skills to resolve problems. Perhaps being able to solve "real" problems helped students internalize verbal mediation skills. Another possible reason that verbal mediation skills transferred was because class meetings became a part of the daily routine. The students, according to the experimental teacher, became very upset if she suggested that a class meeting be cancelled. Perhaps when meetings become part of the daily class routine students "save" conflicts that occur on the playground and in class.

A third idea that emerged from the teacher interviews was that teacher attitude about verbal mediation may be affected by classroom meetings. Perhaps as teachers see real issues being resolved and note that class management becomes easier, they "buy" into the programme. As teacher enthusiasm increases, student enthusiasm may be affected. The control teacher stated that she attempted to encourage her students to use verbal mediation. However, she was not as enthusiastic about students using verbal mediation to resolve problems as her peer in the experimental class.

Teacher Interviews after Three Months

Three months after the study was completed both teachers were again interviewed. They were asked to discuss the verbal mediation competency of their students as well as their own use of these skills in class.

Teacher from the Control Group

The teacher from the control group was not as positive about her continued experiences with conflict resolution. She felt that her class no longer used any of the verbal mediation skills that were introduced during the three weeks of training. Instead, they resolved problems by methods that were used before conflict resolution
was introduced to her class. These included yelling, name calling, and aggressive behaviour.

She believed that verbal mediation skills did not transfer to the students in her class because the lesson were only taught to her class for a very short period of time and because it was too difficult for her to insist that her students use these skills when problems arose. This teacher stated that she now handled problems in class as she had done for years.

The teacher of the control group liked the ideas and methods introduced to her class during class meetings. However, it was too difficult to continue teaching the skills because students would not use the skills to resolve conflicts.

**Teacher from the Experimental Group**

The students in the experimental group continued to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts that arose on the playground and in class. Usually, students saved problems that occurred during the day and attempted to resolve them during classroom meeting. Occasionally, students asked to resolve problems during other times and this was allowed if the session did not infringe on other subject areas. Students who wished to resolve a problem outside of class meeting asked if they could make an "I-Statement" to the other person.

The teacher felt that students continued to use class meetings and impromptu problem-solving sessions because they were very comfortable with the process and because real conflicts had been resolved. Having meetings every day at the same time seemed to help students save problems, according to the teacher.

The teacher from the experimental group continued to be very excited about classroom meetings. She felt that her students also liked class meetings and became upset if a meeting was cancelled.
Syntheses of Results

This section pulls together the different parts of the study to determine if the thesis hypotheses were correct. These sections include the questionnaire (i.e., scaled questions and short answer questions), interviews with students and teachers, and teacher journal. Data concerning each group will be discussed.

Control Group

Quantitative measures taken before and after participation in the study revealed that the boys of the control group displayed no significant increase in verbal mediation knowledge, behaviour, and attitude. Short-answer questions taken before and after participation in the study also demonstrated that boys of the control class did not improve their knowledge of verbal mediation skills over time. The male students who were interviewed were rated as having incompetent or most incompetent verbal mediation skills. The teacher interview revealed that boys in the control group did not use verbal mediation skills to resolve conflicts. The teacher interview, after three months, supported this notion. She reported that all students who had received three weeks of verbal mediation training did not use verbal mediation skills to solve problems.

The girls of the control class showed no significant improvement on the quantitative measures taken before and after participation in the study. Written answers supported these findings. The girls at the start of the study on the written answers were rated as having weak verbal mediation skills. After the training, the girls again received a rating of weak skills. Girls who were interviewed were rated as having incompetent verbal mediation skills. The teacher interview agreed with these
findings. She reported that the students in her class, at the end of the study, and three months after the study did not use verbal mediation skills to resolve conflicts.

Another significant finding emerged from the data concerning the girls of the control group. Data from the scaled questions and the short answer questions suggested that girls, after receiving three weeks of verbal mediation training, became less positive about resolving problems via verbal mediation. Although the teacher from the control group did not discuss the skill level of the girls specifically, she pointed out that her students did not use verbal mediation skills at any time.

The data supported the second hypothesis. Verbal mediation training alone does not encourage students to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. No significant improvements were noted in any of the measures taken.

**Experimental Group**

The boys from the experimental class on the quantitative measures demonstrated a significant increase in attitude and willingness to use verbal mediation skills. Group scores from the short answer section supported these findings. On the pretest, the boys were rated as having weak skills. Later, on the posttest, they were awarded a satisfactory rating.

The boys who were interviewed were rated as being most incompetent to competent. However, the boy who was rated as most incompetent was assisted by his class to resolve a number of serious problems. This suggested that many members of this group were working at a competent\most competent level. The teacher interview suggested that many children in the experimental group were resolving problems during and after the study was completed. Teacher journal notes supported these findings.

The girls of the experimental demonstrated significant improvement on two of the skills analysed in this study. Written answers and scaled questions suggested that
these students improved their knowledge and behaviour of verbal mediation. Girls who were interviewed were rated as either competent or most competent. The teacher interview suggested that students in the experimental class used verbal mediation to resolve problems. Class meetings and impromptu "I-Statements" resolved a number of conflicts.

Girls of the experimental class displayed a significant decline in attitude about verbal mediation. Scaled questions and written answers suggested that girls, having received three weeks of verbal mediation followed by three weeks of class meetings, became less positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. Teacher interviews and student interviews did not indicate that the girls were less positive about verbal mediation.

The data supported the first hypothesis. Verbal mediation training followed by class meetings encourages students to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. Significant improvements were noted in most of the measures taken.

In chapter four the results were discussed. The major thrust of these discussions were that classroom meetings seem to promote the transfer of verbal mediation skills while participation in verbal mediation training only does not encourage students to use the skills to resolve conflicts. Chapter five continues this discussion and includes recommendations and implications.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Summary

This study was conducted to determine if daily classroom meetings resulted in the positive transfer of conflict resolution information and skills beyond the formal classroom setting and into the classroom. It was a quasi-experiment in which two Grade 5 classes from the same school were chosen to participate in daily conflict resolution lessons for three weeks. After the lessons were completed, one class became the control group and the other class became the experimental group. The experimental group participated in three weeks of classroom meetings.

A questionnaire was administered to each group before the verbal mediation lessons began. The questionnaire was again given to the control group following the verbal mediation lessons and the experimental group after three weeks of class meetings. A t-test was used to evaluate pretest to posttest scores of both groups. Rubrics were designed to evaluate written answers and to assess interviews with randomly selected students from both classes. Both classroom teachers were interviewed at the end of the study and one teacher completed a daily journal. Both teachers were again interviewed three months later.

Results from the study indicate that boys who receive three weeks of verbal mediation training but do not participate in class meetings do not acquire any of the verbal mediation skills that were examined. Girls who receive three weeks of verbal mediation training but do not participate in class meetings do not increase their knowledge of verbal mediation and do not use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. However, these girls become less positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts with other people.
Boys who receive three weeks of verbal mediation training followed by three weeks of class meetings become more positive about using verbal mediation to resolve problems with others, use these new skills to resolve problems with others, but do not increase their knowledge of verbal mediation. Girls who receive three weeks of verbal mediation training followed by three weeks of class meetings are more knowledgeable about verbal mediation, use these skills to resolve conflicts with others, but become less positive about using these to resolve problems.

Conclusions

Two hypotheses are addressed in this study. The first hypothesis proposed that verbal mediation skills will transfer into the classroom after three weeks of verbal mediation lessons followed by three weeks of classroom meetings. Data collected during this study seem to support this first hypothesis. The boys who received three weeks of verbal mediation training and three weeks of class meetings increased their ability to resolve conflicts in two out of three skills examined in this study. Short answer questions, scaled questions, student interviews, and teacher interviews supported this finding. In one case, one of the boys was helped by his class to stop hurting other people. He stated that "during a class meeting people made an I-Statement that they didn't like what I was doing. I stopped hurting others at recess.... I feel happier because I have more friends now."

Girls who receive verbal mediation training and class meetings became more knowledgeable about verbal mediation and were able to use verbal mediation to resolve conflict with others. However, after participating in class meetings, they were less positive about solving problems by talking and listening.

The teacher of the experimental group agreed that a large number of real conflicts were resolved during and outside of class meeting. Three months after completion of
the study her class continued to resolve difficulties using verbal mediation. She stated that, "they even started asking if we were going to have a meeting when they came to class in the morning."

The second hypothesis contended that verbal mediation skills will not transfer into the classroom after three weeks of verbal mediation training. Scaled questions and short answer questions strongly support the notion that lessons alone do not transfer verbal mediation skills. Students who were interviewed following the verbal mediation lessons described conflicts that were unresolved or were handled using verbal aggression. The classroom teacher of the control group explained that verbal mediation training did not transfer skills to her classroom. She stated, "I tried to get my students to use the conflict resolution skills but they would not. After a while I just dealt with problems the way I always had." It is apparent that children in Grade 5 who receive three weeks of conflict resolution training retain very few verbal mediation skills.

The literature review in chapter two points out that conflict resolution programmes are widely used in many types of schools and that the programmes are viewed as a way to deal with a perceived increase in school violence. However, the review also suggests that participation in student conflict resolution and peer mediation programmes does not guarantee that students will use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts.

Most studies concerning student conflict resolution programmes examine variables such as the number of successful resolutions and the percent of conflicts resolved successfully via student and adult "reporting" of successful resolutions, and interviews and observations. Very little data was available that describe the specific parts of conflict resolution programmes that encourage the transfer of verbal mediation skills beyond the formal teaching environment.
This thesis has added to the literature by suggesting that class meetings are one of these mechanisms that encourage the transfer of verbal mediation knowledge and skills beyond the formal teaching environment. However, further questions have emerged. Why do class meetings promote the use of verbal mediation? Why do girls who have participated in verbal mediation training and class meetings become less positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts? Why do girls who have participated in verbal mediation training become less positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts? Why do boys who have participated in verbal mediation training and class meetings become more able and willing to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts but do not increase their knowledge of verbal mediation? Why do verbal mediation lessons alone not transfer verbal mediation skills? Are verbal mediation lessons that occur before class meetings necessary?

**Implications**

**Implications for Theory.**

Until recently very little data existed regarding the effectiveness of conflict resolution programmes in schools. Recent research suggests that some programmes may encourage children to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts but it is very difficult to determine why programmes work, or, more precisely, what parts of programmes encourage children to use verbal mediation. The study in this thesis is a departure from other studies concerning conflict resolution in schools. This study did not attempt to discover if specific conflict resolution programmes work but rather, was designed to examine one strategy that is sometimes used following verbal mediation lessons (i.e., class meetings).

It appeared that class meetings are a powerful tool to transfer conflict resolution skills. After receiving three weeks of verbal mediation training and participating in
class meetings for three weeks students are able to recall a number of verbal mediation strategies and, in many cases, use these skills to resolve conflicts with other people. These findings are very encouraging and it may help to review the transfer-enhancing techniques, discussed earlier, to discover why class meetings transfer verbal mediation skills.

Atwater (1953), Mandler (1954), Cantor (1955), and Underwood and Schultz (1960) have shown that overlearning promotes the transfer of behaviour from one setting to another. Overlearning is when a technique or skill is repeated many times more than is necessary to produce initial changes. This technique is evident during class meetings. Students use a scripted resolution process that is repeated many times during each session.

Stokes and Baer (1977) discovered that behavioural skills will generalize to new situations if participants are given opportunities to practise the new skills in situations that reflect the natural environment. For example, students will generalize new skills if they use these skills in a variety of situations with friends, non-friends, boys, girls, high status students, and low status students. Class meetings seem to be an ideal place to encourage this kind of interaction. During class meetings, conflicts and problems are resolved by the participation of all students, and during meetings students are encouraged to resolve conflicts with any member of the group. This may encourage students to resolve conflicts with other students in other settings such as in the classroom during other subjects.

Behavioural rehearsal is another technique described by Stokes and Baer (1977) and is similar to overlearning as described above. In this procedure individuals practise a skill over and over in one setting until they are able to use it in other settings. Again, class meetings may encourage this type of learning. During class meetings verbal mediation procedures are repeated many times. It is possible that as students repeat the verbal mediation process during numerous meetings the skills may
become memorised by members of the group, easily recalled, and then used in other settings such as in the classroom. For example, the experimental group in this study used "I-Statements" outside of class meetings with other students and with the classroom teacher.

Stokes and Baer (1977) also believe that role play is an effective strategy to learn new social skills. Role play activities are usually contrived practice scenarios which students are asked to "act out." It is believed that when situations similar to those rehearsed during role-play are encountered outside the practice environment, individuals will be able to repeat the rehearsed behaviour. Participants seldom partake in role-play activities during class meetings. However, during class meetings specific behaviours are expected (i.e., verbal mediation script, I-Statements, active listening, and others). Using these behaviours in the relatively safe environment of the class meeting may be similar to rehearsing a behaviour through role play. When students learn how to resolve conflicts during class meetings they may then be able to use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts outside of class meetings.

Neilans and Israel (1981) have found that mediated generalization is an effective method to promote the transfer of behaviour skills from one setting to another setting. This method encourages individuals to self-reinforce, self-punish, and self-instruct. A modified version of this technique may occur during class meetings. Although individuals probably modify their own behaviour during meetings, it is also likely that the behaviour of individuals are regulated by other members of the group. The reader is asked to recall the interview described in chapter four. A member of the experimental group described how his classmates helped him to stop hurting others. As a result of these class meetings he was able to discontinue this hurtful behaviour and make a few friends. His behaviour was modified by his classmates in one setting (i.e., class meeting) and he was able to alter his behaviour in another setting (i.e., playground). The reader is also asked to recall the experimental group teacher's notes.
She described an incident when a student in her class made an "I-Statement" to her and together they resolved a problem.

Class meetings seem to transfer verbal mediation skills via techniques and strategies described above. However, other factors not described in the literature may be influencing the ability of students to retain skills. The following are new ideas or theories that may provide further insight into what happens during verbal mediation training and class meetings:

For most classroom activities students are passive receivers of knowledge, rules, and discipline. Traditionally academic subjects such as math and language arts are presented to the class by the teacher. Students are expected to complete specified activities according to the dictates of the teacher. Likewise, students present problems and conflicts to the classroom teacher or the principal who often resolve these difficulties without student participation. They assume that students will modify their behaviour following these arbitrary decisions. Class meetings rely less on adult intervention by encouraging children to assume ownership of the mediation process. For example, children develop their own class meeting rules, suggest possible solutions for conflicts, and discipline group members by talking about and offering solutions for behaviour that is considered inappropriate by group members. As well, group members appeared to help deal with class management problems (the reader is asked to recall the teacher from the experimental class who stated that class management difficulties were alleviated due to problem solving that occurred during class meetings). In time, group members "own" the process of mediation. Mediation skills may transfer because the skills that facilitate successful mediations are also "owned" by all members of the group.

Girls who receive training but do not participate in class meetings do not increase their ability to resolve conflicts and are significantly less positive about verbal mediation after the training. The question that emerges from this finding is: What
happens during the training that causes girls to become less positive about verbal mediation? One possibility is that girls are excited at the start of the conflict mediation lessons about the potential opportunities to resolve problems by talking and reflecting about the issues that influence conflicts. Thomason (1993) agrees and has found that girls are more focussed than boys on task completion and are more able to reflect during episodes of conflict resolution. At the conclusion of the lessons, girls may become embittered when they realize that the new verbal mediation skills will not be used to resolve real conflicts.

Another possible reason for a decrease in confidence in verbal mediation by girls who participate in verbal mediation lessons only may be that male classmates, who also receive training but do not participate in class meetings, may have a negative effect on the attitude of their female classmates. It is possible that during the lessons boys dominant role-play activities, discussions, and other activities. As a result, girls, enthusiastic participants at the beginning of the lessons, may become less active during ensuing lessons and activities. As their direct participation during lessons is decreased, girls may become less positive about verbal mediation.

Verbal mediation knowledge and verbal mediation behaviour skills improve significantly for girls who participate in verbal mediation training and then class meetings. However, like girls who participate in verbal mediation training only, over time this group becomes significantly less positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. What happens to the girls during class meetings that encourages them to know more about conflict resolution and develop better verbal mediation skills and yet feel less positive about the process of verbal mediation?

It is possible that again male classmates may be the cause of the girls' decrease in attitude about verbal mediation. Initially girls may display a very positive attitude about verbal mediation and possess better verbal mediation skills than do boys in their class. As a result, girls probably participate enthusiastically during the first few
meetings. Their ability to reflect about problems and willingness to use meetings to resolve problems probably encourages them to dominate the initial group sessions. The boys, less skilled during the initial classroom meetings and less enthusiastic about resolving problems by talking, listening, and problem solving, probably participate very little during these initial classroom meetings. As the girls model appropriate classroom meeting behaviour and demonstrate the effectiveness of verbal mediation, the boys may become more involved in daily meeting discussions. As participation by boys during class meetings increases, girls may lose control of the meetings. As female participation in meetings decreases because of the growing participation of the boys, female enthusiasm about resolving conflicts using verbal mediation may diminish.

There is another possible explanation. Ten-year-old girls may prefer to resolve conflicts within small groups or cliques. When asked to discuss problems in a large group setting that may contain other students who are outside of a regular circle of friends, girls may feel uncomfortable and unwilling to participate in a large group situation.

Why do boys become more enthusiastic about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts after participation in lessons and meetings? Perhaps this phenomenon can be attributed to the development of oral language skills. Boys tend to resolve conflicts using non-verbal methods. Thomason (1993) found that boys more often than girls are involved in physical contact, are more likely to use resolution strategies expressing the "will" of the child without any reflection re: the other child's point of view, and are more tense during interactions. Boys may choose these kinds of conflict resolution methods because they lack the language skills to successfully mediate resolutions. As boys are exposed to a variety of ways to listen, talk, and problem solve, they may acquire language skills that enable them to talk rather than fight. Class meetings may encourage this acquisition of skills through daily discussions where effective verbal mediation is modelled by group members.
Another explanation is as follows: Boys traditionally have had a very powerful position in the classroom. They tend to exert this power in a variety of ways including being the doers while the girls are the watchers. As boys realize that classroom meetings are another way to exert control over others, they become more involved. As they begin to appreciate that class meetings are a powerful force for change and control, the boys may become more willing to participate in class meetings (i.e., behaviour) and eventually more positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts (i.e., attitude).

Implications for Practice

This study was undertaken primarily to assist educators, parents, and others to implement effective conflict resolution programmes in schools and the community. The findings of this study suggest that class meetings are a powerful tool to promote the transfer of skills initially taught in the classroom. The findings also suggest that skills will not be generalized to other parts of school life if students are given only verbal mediation lessons. Teachers planning to begin a conflict resolution programme at school or in their classroom must be encouraged to use class meetings or other transfer techniques at the end of the lessons to help students internalize the verbal mediation skills.

Girls who participate in class meetings are more knowledgeable about verbal mediation by the end of the study and successfully use verbal mediation to resolve conflicts during class meetings and in class. Ironically, they also become less positive about using these new skills to resolve conflicts. Possible reasons why this happens were outlined in the previous section of this study. The following are ways that may help girls remain positive about using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. First, teachers must make sure that male students do not monopolize lesson time and later class meeting time. Both girls and boys must be given equal opportunity to participate.
in role play and other activities during the lessons. Later, during class meetings, all students must be encouraged to express their opinions and offer solutions. This can be achieved by establishing class meeting routines that promote equal access to class meeting time. Second, all participants must trust that their conflicts and subsequent resolutions will be respected during and after class meetings. This can be achieved if the teacher or facilitator creates a climate during class meetings that respects the needs, abilities, personalities, and gender of all students. The teacher is crucial if this is to be achieved. He or she must enforce class meeting rules and expectations. (The reader is reminded about the rules that were generated by the students of the experimental group. They were: No interrupting, no name-calling, no put-downs, and what was said during each meeting was confidential.) When a rule is broken during a class meeting (e.g., when someone has "put down" another student during a group discussion), the meeting should stop, the issue should be discussed by members of the class, the difficulty then should be resolved, and, finally, the meeting should continue. In this way all students will trust that they will be treated with dignity and respect.

Third, all students must be encouraged to participate fully. The teacher may encourage a student who is reluctant to participate in meetings by sitting near her during meetings, by making eye contact as she speaks, and by asking her for an opinion when resolving problems. These opinions should be acknowledged via positive verbal feedback and positive body language from the teacher and group members. Finally, girls and boys should be afforded equal opportunities to be "in charge" during lessons and meetings. They could set up the chairs, read the meeting rules, and possibly help teach the lessons or lead class meetings.

Classroom experiences that occur outside of class meeting may also encourage girls to view class meetings and verbal mediation as a positive method to resolve conflicts. By promoting a democratic classroom environment that is free of gender bias, the teacher can ensure that during class meetings all students will receive equal
opportunities to speak, offer solutions, and lead discussions. As well, girls and boys must be encouraged to participate equally in all class and extracurricular activities. During these activities gender-free language and behaviour must be expected from all students and staff.

Class meetings are one technique that effectively transfers verbal mediation skills. However, there are a number of other techniques that may also encourage the transfer of verbal mediation knowledge, behaviour, and attitude into the classroom, schoolyard, and home. Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan (1990) suggest two of these procedures. Using student "Peacemakers" or "Conflict Managers" to resolve student problems that occur on the playground at recess is one idea described by the authors. These student "Peacemakers," when resolving conflicts with others on the playground, follow a prescribed script that is similar to that used during class meetings and are usually part of a school-wide conflict resolution programme. Another idea suggested by Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan is a "Quiet Corner," where students experiencing conflicts with one another during class can go to talk about the problem. Prominently displayed near this corner are rules and procedures for resolving conflicts. These rules and procedures are similar to those used during class meetings.

Another way to encourage students to learn verbal mediation skills was described during the study by the teacher of the experimental group. She explained in her journal notes that on a number of occasions students made impromptu "I-Statements" during class. These "mini-meetings" resolved conflicts quickly as they arose in class.

This study examined the effects of class meetings by immersing a group of Grade 5 students in verbal mediation training and class meetings for six weeks. By the end of this relatively short time many of the verbal mediation skills were transferred to students of the experimental group. If important skills are transferred after six weeks of training, it is exciting to imagine the verbal mediation competency students could achieve after many more weeks of participation in class meetings. Therefore, teachers
must be encouraged to make class meetings a part of the daily routine throughout the school year.

Most teachers will have little difficulty teaching the verbal mediation lessons because each lesson is well organized and follows procedures generally used when teaching other subject areas (i.e., objectives, duration, materials, procedure). However, due to a lack of training and inexperience, teachers may hesitate to embark on class meetings following the completion of the lessons. It is not a skill taught in Faculties of Education and there is little curriculum available to help teachers initiate class meetings. Also, teachers may be concerned that, if run incorrectly, class meetings may become "blaming" or "tattling" sessions. If this happens, meetings will become counterproductive and may emotionally hurt children who are being scapegoated or threatened.

Teachers can be encouraged to successfully facilitate class meetings in many ways. Workshops and seminars should be made available for people interested in using class meetings as a way to encourage the transfer of verbal mediation skills. These sessions must include role-play exercises and visits to classrooms where successful meetings can be viewed. Curriculum must be made available that assists teachers to run effective meetings. In this curriculum, the appropriate lessons should be clearly outlined and classroom meeting procedures precisely stated. Universities should offer undergraduate and graduate courses in conflict resolution. Faculties of Education should make courses in conflict mediation and class meetings part of the teacher education curriculum. Workshops, seminars, and courses could be offered for interested educators and parents. Finally, an association of teachers who use class meetings in their class should be formed. These people could meet regularly to compare ideas, problems, and successes.

One of the findings of this study was that verbal mediation lessons alone do not encourage the transfer of verbal mediation skills. Therefore, are verbal mediation
lessons that precede class meetings necessary? Although verbal mediation skills do not transfer as the result of this training, it is possible that the training has a number of important functions. The training gives students and teachers time to learn verbal mediation nomenclature and the conflict mediation script. Without this initial foray into new language and new way of resolving conflicts, class meetings may flounder, become unproductive, and then may be discontinued when conflicts remain unresolved. Lessons may also act as a safe place to first practice what will be used later in the meetings. "Made-up" scenarios that students are asked to resolve will begin the acquisition of verbal mediation skills in a non-threatening environment where students and teachers can make mistakes that will not harm the self-esteem of others. Perhaps the most important function of the lessons is to legitimatize the process of verbal mediation and class meetings. If class meetings begin without students and teachers being accustomed to the new vocabulary and conflict resolution philosophy, problems may occur. For example, the teacher from the experimental group explained that during the lessons her students experienced difficulties understanding the concept of win-win outcomes. If students begin class meetings believing that win-lose is the only possible outcome resulting from a conflict, it is unlikely that class meetings will be successful. Therefore, although the verbal mediation lessons alone do not appear to facilitate the transfer of verbal mediation skills, they may nonetheless be an important part of the transfer process. Teachers should not begin class meetings until they have successfully completed the verbal mediation lessons.

**Implications for Further Research**

The results of this study indicate that classroom meetings have a positive effect on the retention of verbal mediation skills in the classroom and possibly on the playground and at home. However, because the sample was small and the study examined only the effects that participation in class meetings has on retention of verbal
Mediation skills within one Grade 5 classroom, it is difficult to generalize results to other grades and other schools. A more comprehensive analysis is needed.

While students of different backgrounds share common problems, it is possible that cultural and economic differences may affect the way students are able to incorporate verbal mediation skills into the school and home. A greater range of socio-economic and ethnocultural representation is needed and this can be achieved by including a wider range of schools from different cities.

An analysis of different schools within different cities must also investigate how class meetings affect the transfer of verbal mediation skills at different Grade levels. If it is established that classroom meetings have a positive effect on children of all ages, class meetings can be used as an effective way to teach children of all Grades to resolve conflicts by using non-violent measures. Johnson and Johnson (1995a, 1995b) agree and state that conflict resolution curriculum could be reorganized as a "spiral curriculum" in which students begin training in kindergarten and continue each year until the end of Grade twelve. They suggest that each year the training should increase in complexity and sophistication.

After three weeks of lessons followed by three weeks of classroom meetings, positive effects were noted. A study that examines the effects of class meetings over a longer period of time may demonstrate different results. It is possible that extended participation in class meetings may transfer skills to other aspects of student life including the school playground and at home with siblings and parents. Teachers may also be affected by extended participation in the programme. The teacher's role may become less important because students may begin to perform some of the classroom meeting teacher duties such as beginning and ending meetings. As well, girls and boys may alter their approach during meetings because established groups may become more cooperative, where boys and girls share equally class meeting responsibilities such as pre-planning and leading meetings.
This study used the conflict resolution curriculum, *Conflict Resolution: An Elementary School Curriculum* developed by Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan (1990). The authors divided the curriculum into two kinds of lessons. The first are lessons that are considered essential by the authors because they concentrate on major verbal mediation concepts and skills. There are about fifteen of these lessons for each age group and they take about three weeks to complete. The second kind of lessons described by the authors are intended as supplementary work and may take a further three to four weeks to complete. These secondary lessons do not introduce new information or skills but review skills taught in the initial lessons. An interesting study would evaluate the effectiveness of verbal mediation lessons after all of the lessons were completed (i.e., about six to seven weeks).

Gender appeared to be an important variable when teaching verbal mediation. It is evident that in some ways conflict resolution training affects girls differently than boys. For example, girls appeared to possess a positive attitude about verbal mediation before training. During class meetings they became more knowledgeable about verbal mediation and used these skills to successfully resolve conflicts. However, after participating in class meetings girls became less positive about using these new skills. Boys have a much lower score regarding attitude before the lessons and meetings but improve in this area by the end of the meetings. They also became more willing to use class meetings to resolve conflicts but do not improve their knowledge of conflict resolution. Future research may examine why boys became more positive about verbal mediation and why girls became less positive. The results of such a study will affect the way class meetings are used to teach verbal mediation skills.

A future study should examine the effectiveness of other techniques that may transfer verbal mediation skills. Schoolyard Peacemakers is one of these methods. Research questions for this study could be as follows: Do verbal mediation skills transfer to student Peacemakers? In other words, do student Peacemakers use verbal
mediation to resolve conflicts at school when not on duty and at home? Also, as peacemakers model effective conflict resolution on the playground, do other students emulate this behaviour and begin to resolve problems on their own by using verbal mediation?

It must be determined if classroom meetings transfer verbal mediation skills beyond the classroom to the school yard and home. Although this was not directly examined in this study, it appeared that this may happen. Examples where this occurred were cited earlier in the thesis. A more comprehensive study that examines the school yard and home may discover the factors that contribute to this transfer of skills. Strategies can then be developed that will further encourage this process.

Although the classroom teachers were interviewed at the end of the study and again three months after completion of the study, teacher acquisition of verbal mediation skills was not directly examined. An interesting study would examine how teachers resolve conflicts in class and on the school yard after they begin class meetings in their classroom. The study could address the following research questions: Does facilitating class meetings alter teacher attitude, behaviour, and knowledge about verbal mediation? Will teachers use class meetings in subsequent years? Do teachers, having facilitated class meetings, believe that students are more able to resolve conflicts? Will teachers resolve conflicts differently on the playground and at home as a result of participation in class meetings?

**Recommendations**

In chapter one it was pointed out that at least five thousand schools in Canada and the United States are using conflict resolution programmes to deal with a perceived increase in violence in schools. The literature points out that not all of these programmes are helping students learn effective verbal mediation skills. The review
also makes it clear that skills taught in a clinical setting will generally not transfer to other settings unless specific measures are taken. Further, the findings of this study suggest that class meetings affect the transfer of verbal mediation skills while lessons alone do not. Efforts must be made to ensure that teachers intending to implement a conflict resolution programme in class or throughout the school include techniques that encourage verbal mediation skills to transfer into the classroom and beyond.

Teacher training must focus on the acquisition of skills that are used during class meetings and they must learn how to successfully facilitate class meetings. Training methods should include observations of students successfully participating in class meetings, internship with a teacher who is successfully facilitating meetings in his or her class, and mentorship with this teacher following internship.

An internship would be appropriate for teachers who have limited experience facilitating class meetings. The inexperienced teacher could co-lead a few class meetings with a teacher who is successfully using class meetings with his/her class. Experience gained co-leading a group would help the novice teacher/facilitator begin class meetings in her/his own class. The experienced teacher/mentor would then be available to assist and offer advice as needed.

Parent participation may supplement the training that students receive during class meetings. If parents are thoroughly informed about class meetings and verbal mediation training and offered workshops or training sessions, they may support the skill development initiated in class by encouraging their children to use verbal mediation at home.

Although it appeared that teachers can successfully implement conflict resolution programmes in a single class, a school-wide programme would support the skill development of all students. This milieu approach would present students with opportunities to use verbal mediation skills throughout the school and on the playground.
Chapter one explained that this study was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of class meetings as a tool to transfer conflict resolution skills. Schools in Canada and elsewhere were described as using student conflict resolution training to deal with a perceived increase in school violence. Although school boards promote the use of conflict resolution programmes, this type of training is seldom included in mandatory elementary school and secondary school curriculum. More effective conflict resolution training will occur if conflict resolution programmes, designed using many of the principles described in this study, are implemented system wide. In this way many more children and their teachers will be better equipped to deal with the increasing problems that seem to be afflicting modern schools.

Johnson and Johnson (1989; 1994) have found that most schools are dominated by competition. They point out that competition discourages conflict resolution because competition is based on scarcity and few achieve the success or rewards that are available. Rather than encourage students to resolve conflicts, this system tends to create conflicts because, in a competitive situation, individuals work against each other to win (i.e., win-lose) rather than work together to win (i.e., win-win). The authors suggest that conflict resolution training, including class meetings and other transfer enhancing techniques, will work best if supported by a school environment that is conducive to communication and cooperation. Cooperation, they claim, tends to foster trust because individuals work together to resolve problems and conflicts. They refer to Deutsch (1962; 1973) and Johnson and Johnson (1989).

Purkey and Novak (1996), in their book, Inviting School Success, describe how a school can encourage cooperation among students and staff. Schools that adopt this approach promote the belief that all children are able, valuable, and responsible. Students are encouraged to take ownership for their education, and teachers and students work together to achieve the greatest potential of students and teachers. Basic tenets of this belief are that the way things are done in school will affect the
outcome, that a great deal of human potential is untapped, and that everything and everyone in a school affects the development of human potential.

Conflict resolution and peer mediation programmes will flourish in the kind of school environment described by Purkey and Novak. When children are invited to participate with their teachers to create a cooperative atmosphere that encourages all children to achieve their greatest potential, children will be able to use verbal mediation skills in class and on the schoolyard.

Finally, will conflict resolution programmes in schools that use class meetings to encourage the transfer of verbal mediation skills reduce the incidence of violence in schools? The results of this study seem to suggest an affirmative answer. In the short term, conflicts between students and students and conflicts between students and teachers can be quickly resolved if discussed during class meetings. Successful conflict resolutions generated during class meetings may be an alternative to violence.

In the long term, participation in class meetings will encourage the development of important life skills that may be used in school, at home, and elsewhere. Future generations may acquire positive verbal mediation skills from parents who have participated in class meetings while at school. These children may take their place in the classrooms of Canada and the United States equipped to resolve problems by talking, listening, and problem solving.
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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Brock University
Graduate Department
Faculty of Education

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Using Classroom Meetings to Transfer Conflict Resolution Skills

Researcher: Nelson Keane
Supervising Professor: John M. Novak

Name of Participant: ____________________________________________

I understand that this study that I have agreed my son / daughter may participate will involve an introduction to skills related to conflict resolution, involvement in classroom meetings, and completion of questionnaires pertaining to conflict resolution.

I understand that the participation of my son / daughter in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

I understand that there is no obligation for my child to answer any question / participate in any aspect of this project that I consider invasive.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my child's name is not associated with his / her answers. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data.

Parent Signature ____________________________________________ Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact Nelson Keane at (519) 763 - 5880 or Professor Novak at (905) 688 - 5550, extension 3361.
Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available during the month of January, 1998, at Westwood Elementary School, Guelph. A written explanation will be provided for you upon your request.

Thank you for your help!

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to student volunteer and his/her parent(s).

__________________________________________
Researcher Signature

__________________________________________
Date
Appendix B
Letter to Parents

Nelson Keane
Master of Education Candidate
Graduate Studies
Faculty of Education
Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2S 3A1

Dear Mr. and Mrs.

I am a Master of Education student at Brock University in St. Catharines planning to do research on conflict resolution in Elementary Schools. I am also a Grade 5 teacher working for the Wellington County Board of Education. I will be examining how junior elementary students learn to resolve conflicts. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this study.

Grade 5 students at Westwood Public School in Guelph will be participating in this four week study. They will be asked to complete two short questionnaires regarding conflict resolution, participate in conflict resolution lessons, and use conflict resolution skills in classroom meetings. Lessons and meetings will last twenty minutes each day for four weeks. The questionnaires will remain anonymous and confidential and will be shredded at the completion of the study. Some students and some parents will be asked for an interview at the end of the study.

Conflict resolution is a very important life skill which must be carefully researched to determine the best way to implement it in our schools. Your participation and the participation of your child will be greatly appreciated. Please contact me at Dr. William Tytler Public School (822 - 9271) or at home (763 - 5880) if you have any questions or concerns about this study.

Please find attached a Brock University Informed Consent Form. If you wish to have your son/daughter participate in the study please fill it in and return it to your child's classroom teacher.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours truly,

Nelson Keane
Brock University,
Graduate student
Appendix C

Questionnaire

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete these questions. If you have any questions while you answer the questions please ask your teacher and she will be pleased to help. Please remember that this is not a test and you do not put your name on the paper. When you are finished your teacher will collect it from you.

Please begin by answering the questions on this page. Next, carefully follow the directions on the following pages and answer all of the questions. Thanks again!

(Please answer each question carefully).

Are you a boy or girl? _______________ <---------- Place answer here.

How old are you? _______________

What grade are you in? _______________

Are you the youngest, oldest, oldest, or in the middle? _______________

Thank you! Please turn the page to answer more questions.
(Please place an X on the line that best answers each question).

This is an example to show you what to do.

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<thead>
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<th>Homework is important.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<th>Never</th>
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NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO PLACE YOUR X.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Being different is ok:</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
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<tr>
<th>The feelings of other people are important.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respecting feelings is important when resolving conflicts:</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like myself:</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am able to help other people solve problems:</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like it when other people have fights and arguments:</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Please place an X on the line that best answers each question).

This is an example to show you what to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like the Blue Jays.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly</th>
<th>Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I help other people solve problems:</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I call people names during an argument:</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hurt other people when I am angry:</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I threaten other people when I am angry:</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stay away from people who are different:</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try hard to make sure that everyone wins when resolving conflicts:</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Please place an X on the line that best answers each question).

This is an example to show you what to do.

**I like tests.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO PLACE YOUR X.**  Have fun!

**Conflicts should end with everyone winning:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Making eye contact helps to resolve conflicts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Interrupting during an argument helps to solve the problem:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Listening helps to resolve conflicts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Feeling angry is ok:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Conflicts are bad:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Questions: Students

1. Write down the best way to solve problems between two people.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What would you do if a friend started to yell at you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. What would you do if a student you do not know called you names?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. What would you do if someone in your family started to bother you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. Do you think students should help other students solve problems? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Do you have anything else you want to say about problems with other people?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

Practice Questionnaire

Please place an X above the answer that matches how you think about each statement:
The first one is an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After school I play sports.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before going to sleep I read.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School is fun.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homework is easy.</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer this question in your own words:

Why do some people like math?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Please write down any problems you had when completing these questions:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Appendix E

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Do you feel that students in your class are using skills taught during conflict resolution class?

2. If yes, please describe how they use these skills and how this differs from six weeks ago.

3. If no, please explain why you think your students are not using these skills.

4. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the conflict resolution training that has taken place at your school this past six weeks?
Appendix F

Student Interview Questions

Students will be asked to reflect about the training and to demonstrate that they have / have not generalized conflict resolution skills.

1. Please think about all of the things you did during conflict resolution training. Please tell the best and the worst things about the training. Tell me why you feel this way.

2. Please try to remember the last conflict that you had. Describe this conflict.

3. What caused the conflict?

4. Please tell me what you did about this conflict.

5. How did you feel after?

6. How do you think the other person felt after the conflict was over?
Appendix G

Teacher Interview Questions After Three Months

1. At this time, are students in your class using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts? If yes, please describe how students in your class are using verbal mediation to resolve conflicts. If no, please describe how students in your class resolve conflicts.

2. Why do you think students in your class resolve conflicts the way you have described above?

3. Do you have anything else to say about how your students' resolve conflicts?
Appendix H

Teacher Journal

Date: ___________________________  Teacher: ___________________________

Please complete at the end of each day.

Knowledge: (students' ability to demonstrate understanding of the process)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Behavior: (Students' using the skills)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Attitude: (Students' feelings about conflict resolution)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Please write any other comments on the following lines. Thank you very much.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Very Weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed three or more verbal mediation skills in the first question.</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed two verbal mediation skills in the first question.</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed one verbal mediation skill in the first question.</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed no verbal mediation skills in the first question.</td>
<td>Most students listed no verbal mediation skills in the first question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed three or more verbal mediation skills in each of questions 2, 3, and 4</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed two verbal mediation skills in each of questions 2, 3, and 4.</td>
<td>Most students in the group listed one verbal mediation skill in each of questions 2, 3, and 4.</td>
<td>Most students in the group did not include any verbal mediation skills in each of questions 2, 3, and 4.</td>
<td>Most students listed no verbal mediation skills in questions 2, 3, and 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Most students agreed that students should help other students resolve conflicts (Question 5).</td>
<td>Most students agreed that students should help other students resolve conflicts (Question 5).</td>
<td>Most students agreed that students should help other students resolve conflicts (Question 5).</td>
<td>Most students did not agree that students should help other students resolve conflicts (Question 5).</td>
<td>Most students did not agree that students should help other students resolve conflicts (Question 5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix I**

**Rubric for Written Answer Assessment**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Most Competent</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
<th>Most Incompetent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of Verbal Mediation Skills</td>
<td>The student used at least three verbal mediation skills to resolve a conflict.</td>
<td>The student used at least two verbal mediation skills to resolve a conflict.</td>
<td>The student used some verbal mediation skills to resolve a conflict.</td>
<td>The students did not use verbal mediation skills to resolve a conflict.</td>
<td>The students did not use verbal mediation skills to resolve a conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of Mediation</td>
<td>All involved in the conflict participated in the mediation and solutions were equitable for all.</td>
<td>All involved in the conflict participated in the mediation and solutions were equitable for all.</td>
<td>The mediation was unsuccessful.</td>
<td>The mediation was unsuccessful.</td>
<td>The mediation was unsuccessful. The conflict was resolved using verbal or physical violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix J**

*Rubric for Student Interview Assessment*