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STUDY OF A MEDIATION PROGRAM IN A
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Dissertation Presented

by

SUSAN K. THEBERGE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1996

School of Education

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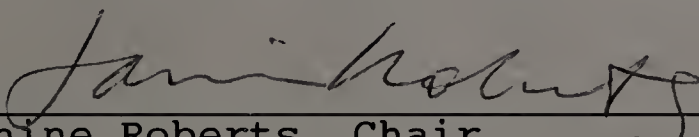
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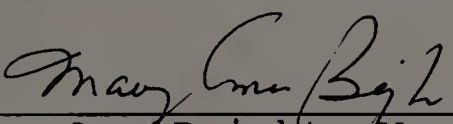
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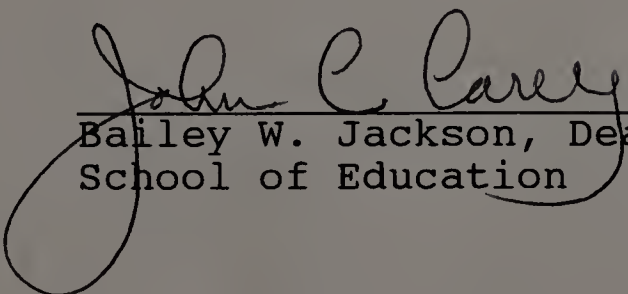
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ABSTRACT

STUDY OF A MEDIATION PROGRAM IN A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MAY 1996

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This research project was a descriptive study of a peer mediation program in a junior high school of approximately one thousand students from 21 different nationalities. The focus was on discovering what factors inhibit and what factors encourage the use of mediation by the students in this school.

Using qualitative methodology, 20 students, 12 faculty members, and eight parents from this school community were interviewed by the researcher. Surveys were filled out by 58 students, 57 parents, and 23 faculty members. The major criterion used in selecting interview and survey questions was whether or not the question contributed to a systemic understanding of the factors that inhibit or encourage students' use of the mediation program. Perspectives from different parts of the system were elicited by asking similar questions of parents, students, and faculty.

After presenting a brief summary of the factors encouraging the use of mediation, the six key factors revealed by the data to be inhibiting the use of mediation

were analyzed. The six factors included students' attitudes, feelings, and behaviors regarding mediation; student methods of handling conflict; attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of students in school; school dynamics; factors related to the mediation of program and societal issues.

Each of these factors was analyzed for emergent themes and was illuminated through the words of the students, parents, and faculty who participated in this study.

The findings illustrate the ways in which conflict resolution within a school is influenced by the climate or atmosphere of the school and in turn influences this climate or atmosphere. The six factors inhibiting the use of mediation in this school were explored within the context of both the climate of the school and the larger society.

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C H A P T E R 1

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

We live in a violent society, especially for young people. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reports in their on-line data base, (January, 1996) that the second leading cause of death in 1991 for young people ages 10 through 24 was firearm injuries, outstripping all natural diseases as the cause of death for adolescents. Between 1985 and 1991, the chances of being killed by a gun skyrocketed at least 77% for adolescents from the ages of 15 through 19. Since the middle of the 1980's there has been a 41% increase in the rate of homicides of young Americans, ages 10 through 24.

Clearly, guns are readily available. One in eight youths and almost two in five young people in high crime neighborhoods report that they carry a weapon for protection, according to a poll of 2000 teen-agers across the country conducted by Louis Harris and Associates during the first week of January, 1996 (New York Times, January 14, 1996, p. 2).

Growing Concern About Increasing Violence Among Young People in Schools

Within this overall context of violence there is much concern about the increasing violence among young people in schools.

Many people contend that teachers are facing more disruptions in classrooms and administrators are dealing with more persistent disciplinary problems. Hallway and playground fights are escalating into more severe school violence. There is a growing realization that basic educational concerns cannot be addressed unless a safe and more productive learning environment is maintained in schools. (Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, p. 1 of Introduction, 1991)

The media highlights stories of weapons in the schools, gang violence, racial tension and violent, even fatal responses to conflicts between students and among students and staff (although media bias towards the sensational cannot be discounted as an aspect of this coverage). Parents worry about their children's safety, teachers and staff experience physical and verbal assaults and many young people have added the threat of peer violence to their already challenging list of worries and fears. This widespread concern has awakened people to the need for alternatives to the violent resolution of conflict within schools and among young people.

Programs in school based conflict resolution and peer mediation are one set of alternatives which growing numbers of school systems are exploring. According to The National Association of Mediation in Education (NAME), over 5,000 schools throughout the United States currently have some type of conflict resolution program in place. This figure includes schools with school wide programs and schools who have at least one teacher or staff person who on their own initiative is working with at least one class on conflict

resolution or mediation. As of April 1994, NAME had a membership of 1084 people. With the growth of school based conflict resolution/mediation programs, an entire industry of curriculums and training programs has sprung into existence and much practical experience has been amassed. As a school counselor, I am flooded with brochures offering conflict resolution and peer mediation curriculums, videos and trainings.

There is a great need for further research on and evaluation of these models and materials. Little formal evaluation has been done on either the impact these programs have had on reducing violence or on the quality of these programs and much of the success that is reported by trainers and by schools is anecdotal in nature (Wilson-Brewer, et al., 1990; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; Kmetta & Berlowitz, 1994; Webster, 1993; Lam, 1988; Miller, 1994). To what degree and under what conditions are these programs successful? What factors maximize the effectiveness of these programs and what factors limit their success? I am particularly interested in what factors currently inhibit students from taking advantage of this non-violent response to conflict.

High quality research can be a factor in convincing school administrators and faculty to adopt and to continue to support formalized conflict resolution/mediation programs as integral parts of school curriculums. The same is true for those who train teachers, administrators and

school counselors at the graduate and undergraduate level. Demonstrated effectiveness is also important in convincing lawmakers and taxpayers to fund these programs. Despite the popularity of these programs today, they run the risk of being treated as fads and eliminated in the future if their effectiveness is not proven. This lack of research also reveals a lack of clarity as to what factors maximize the use of these programs and what factors limit use.

There are two societal issues that I believe are of critical importance in framing a context within which to look at the effectiveness of school based mediation programs. Daniel Webster, writing in Health Affairs in 1993, raises the first of these issues when he talks about the danger of conflict resolution programs serving a primarily public relations function without addressing deeper problems.

Promoting conflict resolution programs may actually hinder violence prevention by diverting attention from social and economic conditions that engender violence, the failure of governments and other social institutions to improve these conditions, and politically contentious issues such as strict gun control...Promoting conflict resolution programs as the solution to youth violence lets politicians off the hook by giving them something to point to when they are asked about what they are doing to reduce violence. (Webster, 1993, p. 137)

The second contextual issue is the way that race and ethnic group impact on the perceived success of mediation programs. As our nation and our schools continue to be enriched by people of diverse backgrounds, programs need to

be scrutinized for their relevance to people with varied perspectives and beliefs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the factors that inhibit students' use of a peer mediation program in one particular junior high school. In exploring this question, the issues of gender, race and one's role in the school system are examined in relation to use/non-use of the mediation program. The setting is a regional junior high school populated by students of twenty-one different nationalities. This school has experienced an increasing class diversity as well. Mirroring the increasing cultural diversity of our society as a whole, this school is a microcosm containing many of the opportunities and the challenges raised by having one community comprised of people who are alike in terms of their age, share a common space and set of activities and yet come from many different backgrounds and perspectives which have an impact to one degree or another on their perceptions of this shared community.

The Problem of Violence in the Community

There is a perception among many townspeople that there is a rising climate of violence and of defiance among students within this junior high school as well as in the local elementary schools and the high school. This

perception was confirmed for me in a private conversation with a senior school system official (March 25, 1994).

For the 1993-4 school year there were 83 internal suspensions and 77 external suspensions for a total of 160 suspensions at this Junior High. The majority of these suspensions (59) were for class cuts and truancy. Twenty-eight were for fighting, 17 were for refusing to participate in class, and 15 for refusal to serve office detention after school. Thirteen were for disruption of class and nine were for harassment and threats against others (source: written memo from the Principal and the Dean of Students, 1994).

For the 1994-5 school year, the year in which this study was done, there was a significant increase in internal suspensions (125) and a small drop in external suspensions (63) for a total of 188 suspensions (source: written memo from the Principal and the Dean of Students, 1995). Data were not broken down by type of offense. The trend towards increasing numbers of students being suspended over this two-year period is apparent but must be looked at in the context of increasing numbers of students in the building.

The local media have been reporting on this perceived phenomenon as well and a committee has been established to look into issues of "discipline and behavior."

The Mediation Program

The mediation program was established in this particular school five years before this research project began. Mediation trainers from the project came in at the request of a group of committed teachers and staff members to set the program up. At that time, they trained a small team of students and staff in mediation skills. During the time this research was conducted there were twenty-five trained student mediators and nine trained staff members. Three of the student mediators were African-American and two were Latino. The remainder were White. At present it is a self-selecting process to become a student mediator. If a student has the time and willingness and fills out an application then, to date, all have been selected to go through the training.

An integral part of this particular mediation training is its bias awareness component, which is woven in throughout the training in both a didactic and experiential fashion. There are two major reasons for the bias awareness component. One is that mediators need to be neutral during mediation sessions, which requires the exploring of their personal biases. The second reason is that mediators need to be prepared to help resolve conflicts that stem from biases pertaining to gender, race, sexual preference, neighborhood or class background.

The mediation program is intended to provide an alternative to violent or emotionally hurtful responses to

conflicts within the school. In order to assess its effectiveness, the trainers who set up the mediation project requested an evaluation. They want to know how effective the program is perceived to be by various members of the school community. To date, no formal evaluation has been done of the peer mediation program.

Focus of the Research

How do members of this diverse school community view the mediation program and its effectiveness as an alternative dispute resolution method? This question is an important one as our increasingly diverse society grapples with the need to resolve conflict in schools, communities and workplaces throughout our nation. The focus of this study is to identify and to analyze those factors that tend to inhibit the use of peer mediation in this school. In this study, the attitudes, feelings and behaviors of students, parents and faculty members are explored. These perceptions are gathered through surveys and interviews allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. In all, 57 students, 58 parents, and 23 faculty members filled out surveys and 20 students, 8 parents, and 12 faculty members were interviewed. The inclusion of students, faculty and family members brings together multiple viewpoints and provides a systemic perspective.

Focusing on one particular school community, this study examined how people in each of these groups perceive the mediation program and its effectiveness. Do they know that the mediation program exists and how it works? Under what circumstances would they use/encourage the use of this program? What do they see as roadblocks to the success of the program? What do they think is most effective and why? What ideas and experiences do they have that can enhance what is already being done? What overall themes can be generalized from these varying perspectives?

Importance of the Study

These findings are potentially helpful to everyone involved in school based mediation. I am often asked when giving presentations on conflict resolution programs in schools whether there is any research regarding the effectiveness of these programs in changing behavior or improving school climate. My hope is that this research will contribute to the still small base of data on this question.

Although I collected some numerical data, my primary intention was to explore questions that are qualitative in nature with most of my effort focused on listening to and analyzing different voices and perspectives from the school community. It is in the synthesis of many voices that a comprehensive understanding of the problem evolves. Therefore, in this study, I listened to students of diverse

races and ethnic groups, teachers, staff members, administrators and parents. Students of varying racial/ethnic groups may have very different comfort levels with and perceptions of peer mediation. Faculty attitudes affect perceptions about and utilization of the program. Parental attitudes come into play as well in terms of encouraging or discouraging the use of peer mediation.

Given the serious nature of youth violence in our society, it is crucial that the opportunities presented to teach alternatives to violence in school settings be utilized to the fullest by providing the most effective programs possible. An in-depth qualitative study of a mediation program in one school that gathers the perspectives of a sampling of key players provides the opportunity to take a penetrating look at one program in one school. The depth of a qualitative study is well-suited to examining which factors inhibit or encourage the effectiveness of school based mediation as an alternative form of dispute resolution. This type of study also provides a basis for making suggestions about conducting mediation trainings, curriculum development and implementation strategies for peer mediation programs and beneficial changes in the design and structure of these programs.

The wholistic, many faceted, rich nature of qualitative research is a good vehicle for gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of this program on its

community and how such programs can better serve target populations. By looking at how different segments of the population view this project, future mediation projects can perhaps avoid some of the current pitfalls and adopt certain aspects of the program to better serve a broader range of needs. Understanding the impact of one mediation program in depth can illuminate the challenges, pitfalls and potential successes that await all of us engaged in this work.

Perspective/Position of the Researcher

I have not been personally involved in setting up or working with this particular mediation training program, however I am experienced in setting up conflict resolution/mediation programs in school settings. Over the past twelve years, I have worked in numerous schools to integrate conflict resolution and mediation into the curriculum both as an outside consultant and as a school counselor. Therefore I have a double advantage; both knowing what to look for in program evaluation and being outside of the system in terms of responsibility for this particular program. Being an outside evaluator solves the problem of having someone who is a part of the system try to step outside of this system to evaluate it. A researcher, who is not actively involved in the project itself, is not a part of the school and whom the interviewees do not have an ongoing school based

relationship with, is in a unique position to gather information and to receive forthright and direct opinions and feelings. This feedback is what will allow growth and learning in this area.

I am not an outsider in a certain sense: I work as a school counselor in an elementary school in this system and my two children formerly attended this school. I also have a history of working to integrate conflict resolution programs into the local elementary schools. These experiences clearly inform my work as they provide a certain intimacy with this school system as a whole. This combination of experiences and roles over the years has allowed me to participate in this system as a parent, a faculty member and a consultant/trainer in conflict resolution skills.

I also live in the community in which this study is taking place and I was familiar with some of the people I interviewed. This may have helped to mitigate the downside of being an outsider; the possibility of being held in suspicion or that people might have been less inclined to disclose to someone they do not know.

An additional twist to my position is that I chose to send my youngest child, who attended this school for one year and would have been an eighth grader in this school during this study, to a private school. This removes me from the emotional impact of being a parent of a child in this

school but may enter into some of my perceptions and responses to the data.

Limitations of the Study

This was a study of one program in one school over the course of one school year; therefore, care must be taken in applying learnings from this study to other schools. However, this is the nature of qualitative research; to illuminate one part of a larger whole rather than to shed light on the phenomenon in its entirety.

Mediation is a confidential process, making it difficult to locate disputants, therefore I interviewed fewer disputants than I would have liked to. Although I provided the mediators with forms to fill out to track numbers of mediations and other statistics these were never filled out due to organizational difficulties inherent in this mediation program. Therefore, these statistics are not available.

Due to the confidential nature of the mediation process I was not able to observe actual mediation sessions in progress. This would have been interesting but was not essential to the research as my focus is on peoples' thoughts, feelings and behaviors in relation to the mediation project rather than the details of the process itself. Although the surveys provided numerical data from many more people than I interviewed, there are many parents who do not feel comfortable and/or motivated to fill out a

survey. There is also a tendency for people who have issues, concerns, and/or strong feelings about a topic to respond to a survey, while those who do not feel strongly tend not to respond. Therefore, the survey data, although interesting and useful, must be looked at with caution, particularly since only 5.8 percent of all families responded.

As one who has developed and implemented conflict resolution programs in a variety of settings, I hold several biases which need to be delineated. A major bias is my belief that conflict resolution/mediation programs are an important, even a necessary component in order to maintain peaceful relations and enhance learning in public schools in contemporary America. This means that I enter this research project with a strong belief in the necessity for these programs to be successfully developed in as many schools as possible. This is balanced by my interest in understanding how we can improve these programs and make them more widely accepted at the highest levels of training and administration.

Definition of Terms

At-risk students: Those students who are not finding success as defined by this school and who therefore are at increased risk for school failure, dropping out and engaging in self destructive or anti-social activities.

Conflict resolution: Solving an interpersonal problem such as an argument or disagreement through the use of peaceful negotiation by the parties involved.

Problem-solving skills: Anger management, listening and communication skills, brainstorming solutions and decision-making skills that help people to generate solutions to interpersonal problems.

Mediation skills training: A process whereby individuals are taught a structured, step by step model to assist others engaged in interpersonal conflict to peacefully negotiate solutions to their conflicts.

Disputants: Those parties engaged in an interpersonal dispute who seek the assistance of mediators to help them to peacefully resolve their dispute.

Verbal harassment: The use of language that hurts, humiliates, demeans or insults another person.

Non-verbal harassment: The use of body language, gestures or touch which hurt, humiliate, demean or insult another person.

Parents: The word parents is meant to include the range of adults caring for children, whether they be guardians, step parents, or other caretakers.

Faculty: The term faculty is meant to include teachers, administrators, members of the pupil personnel services team, and support staff. Terms such as administrator or counselor are not attached to individual

-- responses because of the small numbers and the need to maintain confidentiality.

C H A P T E R 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 2 begins with a focus on the limitations of the research in the area of mediation in junior high school/middle school settings. Next, the effectiveness of junior high/middle school based peer mediation as reported in the research is explored. Studies are reviewed, findings are summarized and limitations are discussed. Third, the key factors that foster or limit effectiveness of peer mediation programs in junior high/middle schools is discussed.

Limitations of the Research

In February of 1990, New York's Carnegie Corporation commissioned the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) an organization in Newton, Mass., to come up with a detailed working paper and to call a national working conference to summarize current knowledge about what is effective in preventing youth violence and to use this information to move the field forward.

To conduct a survey of the state of the art of violence prevention programs, a questionnaire and an initial list of programs were developed, based upon staff experience, a literature search, and recommendations from experts in the field....The instrument was mailed to all identified programs. The 83 violence prevention programs identified were sent questionnaires in April and May of 1990. We believe this list includes the majority of existing programs ...fifty-one of the programs contacted completed and returned the questionnaires, for a response

rate of 61 percent. (Wilson-Brewer et al, 1990 pp. 5-6).

Violence Prevention For Young Adolescents: A Survey Of The State Of The Art, published in 1991, was the written document used for the conference. It included the results of a survey of these 51 violence prevention programs as well as detailed case studies of a smaller sample, reviews of program evaluations and recommendations for next steps in the field.

The authors chose to focus on efforts directed towards 10-15 year olds because of a lack of information about what works best with this age group, a concern that motivated me to focus on this population as well in my study. "Little attention has been paid both to this population and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention efforts designed for them." (Wilson-Brewer et al, 1991, p. 3) .

The survey included elementary through high school programs, community based projects and conflict resolution and gang prevention programs. Only one peer mediation program at the junior high/middle school level was looked at (Resolving Conflict Creatively Program in New York City) which I have reviewed as well. The fact that only one peer mediation program is included speaks to the paucity of research in this particular area and again reinforces the need for a study focused on mediation in a junior high school. The analysis they provide of the research in the overall field of conflict resolution/violence prevention,

which I summarize below, resonates with my findings in the area of middle school/junior high peer mediation programs in terms of limitations.

Wilson-Brewer et al. (1991), point out that widespread concerns about the problem of youth violence have resulted in a proliferation of prevention/intervention programs and curriculums but that it remains unclear either how effective or how widely used such programs and curriculums actually are.

it is impossible to state which types of violence prevention programs or intervention strategies reviewed are most effective. Although respondents supplied a great deal of useful data, more detailed information...as well as more rigorous evaluation are necessary before such conclusions can be reached...process evaluation and program monitoring are most prevalent and outcome evaluation is relatively rare...for the most part, the evaluation component of programs surveyed was either an afterthought or dispensed with entirely because of lack of suitable staff and sufficient funds. (Wilson-Brewer, et al., 1991, pp. 56-57)

Given the finding that no longitudinal studies had been done, Wilson-Brewer et al. (1991) conclude that violence prevention work is based on an assumption that has never been tested, namely that intervention during the pre-teen and adolescent years can influence attitudes and develop skills that will reduce violent behaviors in the future. Only a few of the programs they looked at evaluated participants for even as long as six months after the end of the program. Those that did ran into problems including

lack of both follow-up funding, and people trained in research methodology.

Wilson-Brewer et al. (1991) conclude that the research limitations are primarily due to lack of funding for research and evaluation. Many are local programs set up in response to community concerns about violence. Trying to reach as many people as possible is the major goal of most programs and it is hard enough just to keep funding the work let alone the evaluation. Self-esteem and locus of control are usually used as before and after measures of changes resulting from programs. Research findings are generally not used to design future programs. They conclude that research needs to begin to inform practice and the findings need to be applied to real life situations.

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), funded by the Carnegie Corporation, was established in 1992 with the goal of building a foundation which would bring together research from many disciplines to help increase understanding of and to prevent violence throughout the life span (CSPV, 1994).

In 1992, Patrick Tolan and Nancy Guerra of CPSV put out "What Works in Reducing Adolescent Violence: An Empirical Review of the Field". This document looks at, in the authors' words, "how epidemiological findings can be used to frame an understanding" of the problem of violence. They then review the literature to see what has been found

useful at every conceivable level of intervention including family, school and community.

The rising prominence of adolescent violence among national concerns has prompted demands for efforts to curb this urgent problem. These demands have resulted in a torrent of programs by schools, neighborhood organizations, police, courts, social services, and health agencies. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of few of these programs has been tested. Most have been local community responses, packaged curricula that can be "plugged into" ongoing classes, or attempts to apply programs developed for other problems. Although often based on good intentions and promising ideas, these programs have rarely been subjected to empirical evaluation of their actual impact on adolescent violence. It is not uncommon to find groups claiming the effectiveness of a program simply because it serves a large number of persons or has existed for a substantial period of time or because testimonials have been collected from clients and authority figures....This proliferation of programs without adequate empirical evaluation begs the question: What actually works to reduce adolescent violence? (Tolan and Guerra, 1994, p. 2)

The authors looked at school based peer mediation and conflict resolution programs and discovered that despite their growing popularity over the past 10 years and the enthusiastic reports of teachers and others involved

we could not locate a well-designed empirical study that evaluated behavioral outcomes with adolescents. Although peer mediation has intuitive appeal, particularly in terms of reducing situational and interpersonal violence, its' efficacy has simply not been determined. (Tolan and Guerra, 1994, p. 34)

They point out that this popular intervention has had minimal evaluation, and that those studies that have been done have yielded "mixed results" but due to the potential they hold to reduce violence, peer mediation programs

should receive top priority as an area of research. (Tolan & Guerra, 1994, p. 50). They urgently call for studies that examine the outcome of programs and for making evaluation an expected component of any violence prevention project.

The Center for Peace Education (CPE) was established in the latter part of the 1970's as a non-denominational organization focusing on educational peace and social justice programming for the greater Cincinnati area. In 1992, the Center for Peace Education, along with the Peace Studies Program at the University of Cincinnati began recruiting graduate students to help evaluate the Center for Peace Education's programs in conflict resolution, including a peer mediation project at a high school in Cincinnati (Kmetta & Berlowitz, 1994).

The lead evaluator conducted an extensive literature review to find an 'evaluation model' that could be replicated. The review uncovered that a replicate study was non-existent. Furthermore, it was discovered that the studies for all of the school-based conflict resolution programs, nationwide, are built on less than empirical foundations. Because of the lack of a scientific foundation, it was decided by the evaluators to...establish a pilot study to determine how to best evaluate the Center for Peace Education's conflict resolution programs. (Kmetta and Berlowitz, 1994, pp. 10-11)

In personal conversations with Dan Kmetta (who is the chair of the NAME Research and Evaluation Committee) both at the National Association for Mediation in Education Conference held in Amherst, Massachusetts in July of 1994 and several times afterwards, he reiterated to me his

concerns about the need for effective evaluations of mediation programs.

In an article written by Daniel W. Webster, titled "The Unconvincing Case for School-Based Conflict Resolution Programs for Adolescents" (1993), Webster presents a scathing view of conflict resolution and other school based violence prevention programs. Webster's skeptical perspective can be summarized by the following points made in his article:

Programs that focus primarily on social-skill deficits are likely to be futile if youths are not motivated to use the skills....Aggressive youth tend to believe that aggressive behavior increases status among their peers, particularly in the short term, and provides tangible rewards....Although attitudes about violence often are discussed in conflict resolution programs, brief adult-led curricula cannot be expected to produce sustainable attitude change, particularly because adolescents are in a developmental stage characterized by defiance of adults. (Webster, 1993)

Webster is speaking here to the need for systemic interventions rather than discrete units or programs within schools. This point underscores the importance of looking at the system as a whole in which the program is operating. He states that there is no convincing evidence that violence prevention programs contribute to permanent shifts away from violent behavior. He asks

How likely is it that adolescent conflict resolution curricula, in the absence of changes in families and communities will produce significant reductions in serious injuries resulting from violence? (Webster, 1993, p. 134)

He points out that underlying assumptions about conflict resolution programs and reduction of violence are untested. One example of this is his contention that the assumption behind these programs is that students are similar enough that all will benefit from a standardized program. He contrasts this with the approach of targeting high risk students at an early age. Factors he includes that put students in a high risk category include low IQ, failure in school, a high level of impulsivity, having a large, low income family combining lack of supervision with harsh disciplinary methods and coming from a neighborhood high in unemployment and crime. Preventing violence among this group requires early, comprehensive and intensive interventions including social skills training and family services (Webster, 1993).

Webster adds that "late starters" whose antisocial behavior patterns begin during adolescence usually do not lack social skills. There are distinctly different needs for different types of interventions among adolescents depending on where they fit into the spectrum of early, late starters and "typical" adolescents. He emphasizes that middle/high school is too late to be beginning primary prevention programs which should begin in elementary school. Webster attributes a class and cultural bias to the whole concept of conflict resolution and mediation which are based on discourse and negotiation stating that these

learnings may not be relevant in many of the situations faced by poor urban youth.

His last point is that these programs are potentially even dangerous, costing relatively little while consuming many resources and making a profit for those who produce them. The danger lies in turning the focus away from the systemic conditions of class, poverty, unemployment, and racism, which are the root causes of violence, and taking the heat off of the government and other institutions. Promoting conflict resolution programs as the solution to youth violence

provide(s) political cover for politicians, bureaucrats and school officials and distract(s) the public from the structural determinants of youth problems...(letting) politicians off the hook by giving them something to point to when asked what they are doing to reduce violence.
(Webster, 1993, pp. 127-137)

The National Association of Mediation in Education commissioned Julie Lam to summarize the existing research on mediation and conflict resolution programming in schools across the country. The result, "School-Based Mediation Research: Results, Suggestions, and New Directions", was published in 1989. An earlier article, published in The Fourth R, and reprinted in a general packet on evaluation put together by the National Association for Education in Mediation (NAME) points out some of the limitations of the research. Among them are the "fantastic claims" made by program organizers, trainers and participants. Lam points out that although anecdotal evidence is very positive there

is simply not enough of a research base to make these claims. She states:

school mediation program administrators and participants have made fantastic claims for the success of their programs, asserting that students' lives have been changed dramatically, as have school climates. However, as in the early stages of most innovative programs, little attention has been paid to systematic research and evaluation. Anecdotal evidence of program successes are overwhelmingly positive...The few research reports available also tend to report positive findings; these findings, however, are not as overwhelmingly convincing as the more anecdotal remarks. (Lam, 1988, p. 1)...It is generally believed in the field that mediation training makes the student mediators feel better about themselves and contributes to improved school climate, but the basis for these beliefs and the ways training accomplishes those ends are not clearly known. Similarly, it is believed, but not well-documented, that school mediation programs...are effective in resolving student-student disputes. (Lam, 1989, p. 1).

Lam looked at fourteen studies, five of which were peer mediation programs. The results were generally positive, showing at least some impact on the peer mediators, the student body as a whole and the faculty.

She summarized her work by saying that the findings were not conclusive. Studies did not consistently look at impact using the same indicators therefore findings, while specific to one project, were not useful in comparing results with other projects, an important key to building a significant body of research in the field. In my study I address this issue by including attitudes, feelings and behaviors in my research rather than limiting data collection to only one of these categories. I also include

all the key players in the system, not only mediators and disputants but representatives of the student body as a whole, the faculty and the families of students.

Lam questions the validity of the findings, because while the studies usually make enthusiastic claims about the programs, the design of the research rarely makes such claims valid. For example, control groups are rarely used and when they have been used, they have failed to establish that they are comparable with experimental groups. Other influences may be affecting the results including the impact of being chosen as a mediator or the fact that in some programs students nominate themselves to be mediators thus skewing the population (Lam, 1989).

Lam points out that random assignment to treatment and control groups is a better way to conduct research although it is not practical because it makes mediation training and practice mandatory. Contamination of control groups, evaluations of programs that were not fully functioning and the issue of "teaching to the test", i.e., the subtle messages student may pick up on about "correct answers" to give evaluations were other limitations she discovered.

Lam is also concerned about the lack of efforts to use multiple measures of impact which include what students know, what they think, they feel and they actually do in real life situations. One of the keystones of my study is looking at not only attitudes, but behaviors and feelings about the mediation program. In order to get at actual

behaviors and not only "correct answers", I am asking students, faculty and parents to respond to a broad range of factors which include perceptions and observations about themselves but also each other. Lam also raises concerns about the lack of examination of the impact of this work on different populations. This is a keystone of my study. The majority of my data has been analyzed according to gender, role in the school and race.

Dan Kmetta, Chair of the NAME Research and Evaluation Committee, wrote in that organization's journal, *The Fourth R*, (Volume 51, June/July 1994, p. 34) that "Individually, no one evaluation has generated a set of results that can be generalized." Kmetta goes on to point out that a great deal of the research that has been done in the field has focused on how one conducts evaluations of violence prevention, conflict resolution and mediation programs. He echoes the point made by the Carnegie Commission's report on the state of the art of violence prevention that there has been a clear lack of interest until recently on the part of academia to fund and encourage research and evaluation of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in elementary and secondary schools. From his position he sees increasing numbers of graduate students, like myself, beginning to conduct this research, frequently after direct experience in this field as trainers and project organizers.

Edward Miller also points out in the Harvard Educational Letter May/June 1994 that there is

no credible research evidence that peer mediation is able to prevent serious violence. Most evaluations are based on anecdotal evidence or comparisons of suspension rates in which the actual relationship among mediation, suspension and violence is unclear. (Miller, 1994, p. 8)

I did not look for a relationship between mediation and a decrease in suspensions and/or violence because the program, at the time of this study, was small and underutilized.

Clearly the research on school based mediation is in its infancy. All of the authors who reviewed the literature point to the same issues: A lack of long-term and outcome-based studies; weaknesses in quantitative methodology; reliance on anecdotal and other less convincing types of data and the fact that the various studies are asking different questions, thus making it hard to amass a body of knowledge which can be generalized or even compared to other studies. The study that I have designed responds to the first two of these issues. This program is several years old rather than in its enthusiastic start-up phase. I am looking at one outcome based measure, having to do with utilization of the program. Although this was a descriptive study, using a qualitative research methodology, a numerical component is included. This is accomplished through questions on the surveys and, counter to the limited attention to these issues in the research, a

sorting of data by race and, for students, by gender.

Another numerical component is a count of factors affecting the use of mediation sorted by position in the school, race and for students, by gender. Families of students are included as a part of the systemic methodology.

Another consistent observation is that the qualitative data provides more information and more positive results than the quantitative data. This may be partially because the subject area lends itself to the discourse of qualitative data collection rather than quantitative. Mediation in the context of our culture requires a shift in how one views the reality of social interaction; it is not a matter of learning a new methodology as much as learning a whole new way to think about problem solving: a meta-cognitive leap. On top of the cognitive shift, a shift in emotional response as well as behavior under stressful circumstances is called for. This is one of the reasons I chose to use qualitative methodology in my research and to include attitudes, feelings and behaviors.

A major critique of the research to date is that no one has proven that peer mediation decreases or prevents violence. Change in attitude is frequently the focus of research rather than change in behavior. Although I am not taking on the question of whether peer mediation reduces violence, I am looking at a constellation of factors including not only attitudes but also feelings and

perceived behaviors of students, faculty (including administration) and families towards mediation.

From reviewing the literature, I see a need for a systemic evaluation of these programs which includes looking at the systems within which mediation programs operate. These include families, the school and the larger school system, the community and the entire culture within which we all live. All of these components are considered in my research. To do less is to isolate the problem of conflict and its resolution far too narrowly. This is not a problem that is owned by schools alone; conflict and its resolution is an issue that is embedded in the entire context of our lives, including our families, communities, and all sources of socialization from the media to the advertising industry and the socio-economic and political structure of our nation.

Another common theme which emerges from reading the literature is the lack of funding for research as well as the availability of people trained in research methodology. Coupled with the observation that academia has not taken on this area to research, this points to the importance of graduate students using their expertise and the resources available to them to begin to target this important arena and provide the research base so desperately needed.

Studies Done on Effectiveness Programs, Populations, Methodologies and Findings

The second part of this chapter reviews studies of mediation programs that look at effectiveness.

Effectiveness can be looked at in terms of impact on students' behavior in school (for example, decreases in suspensions and other disciplinary actions taken by faculty and reductions in numbers of violent incidents), success rate of the process (usage and reported satisfaction with mediation), and impact on peer mediators as reported by others and self-reported. In this section I examine the issue of effectiveness by reviewing studies of mediation programs at the junior high school/middle school level. Brief descriptions of programs, populations, methodologies and findings are included. Much of the analysis in this area appears in articles and project summaries written by project participants, a concern that prompted me to study a program that I was not involved in either setting up or leading. The following studies were selected for review because they include at least one measure of effectiveness according to the criteria cited above.

Studies Done as Reports Written by Those Who Set Up the Programs

The following studies are all written by people who are involved in the creation or implementation of the project. Most of these studies are reports, based primarily on self-report and anecdotal information. Budgetary

constraints and lack of knowledge about how to conduct research hamper many of these studies. Despite their limitations, valuable information is to be gained from these reports, especially since so little research has been done in this area.

The state of Ohio's Commission on Dispute Resolution was created by the Ohio General Assembly in 1989 to promote dispute resolution in schools, government, and community agencies. A three-year School Conflict Management Demonstration Project, begun in 1990, provided support and evaluated results in 30 Ohio schools, from elementary through high school. Two reports were written, one after the first year and a final report summarizing findings. Data was looked at for each school separately due to differences in the schools and in approaches used by each school to teach conflict resolution/mediation. Similar information was culled from schools without conflict management programs.

In 1993, a final report, written for the general public as an educational tool, was issued by the Commission. There is a brief, non-scholarly section on findings from the demonstration project. The commission collected thousands of student attitude surveys, as well as statistics on disciplinary actions and mediations. Overall findings, which included conflict resolution programs as well as mediation programs and spanned elementary through high school included the following:

Most students "improved their attitudes towards conflict, increased their understanding of non-violent problem solving methods and enhanced their communication skills" (Wheeler et al., 1993, p. 11)

One Ohio middle school reported that suspensions were cut in half the year after a peer mediation program was begun. The three most common reasons for suspensions (fighting, unruliness and truancy) all decreased. Suspensions are reported to have decreased for the entire three years of the study. A similar middle school with no program reported higher suspension rates that continued to increase over the three years.

Another middle school which started a mediation and a conflict resolution program showed only a small rise in students agreeing to stop a fight but a school matched for demographics and size that lacked a mediation program, reported that students' willingness to end fights dropped over the course of a year (Wheeler, et al., 1993).

The majority of the findings section consists of anecdotal evidence for all of the demonstration schools, a common limitation in studies on school based mediation. The two examples cited above were the only concrete examples mentioned of changes in schools with mediation programs. Another limitation is that the researchers looked primarily at changes in attitudes rather than behavior. It would have been helpful to look at some of the same issues throughout

the schools included in the study instead of running discrete studies in each building.

The Santa Monica, California based Dispute Resolution Services set up and evaluated a Peer Mediation Program in a large (806 student), culturally diverse (66% people of color) urban middle school during the 1987-89 school years. Mediators were chosen by the director through interviews to represent a cross section, including bicultural/bilingual students and students classed as "at-risk". The purpose of the study was to look at whether the peer mediation program was effective at mediating conflicts and was having a positive impact on the campus community as a whole. Methodology included a pre/post test given to all faculty and staff, disputants and a random selection of the student body.

Mediation was found to be effective by every criterion in the study. Mediation was reported to be effective in 97% of the 95 cases that went to mediation as reported from two weeks to two months after the mediation occurred. Disputants reported that the process was fair, that they were satisfied with the outcome and that they would recommend it to friends (Crary, 1992).

Evidence that the impact of mediation was felt throughout the student community at large was a "qualified yes". Surveys of students at large did not show a significant reduction in student-perceived instances of conflict. However, faculty responses indicated that they

perceived that instances of conflict had decreased. There was a significant change on the post-test away from pre-test responses that " students do not know where to go for help/no help is available for students in conflict". Another shift was that student referrals increased from zero to 26 out of 107 respondents. The authors conclude that the climate was positively affected by the program and that mediation became a presence on the campus (Crary, 1992). They drew this conclusion from their findings that student disputants were seeking out mediation and from impressions of faculty about student behavior.

When speaking of climate, vague terms were used although it appears that the authors were referring to increased interest in and usage of mediation by students. A great deal of attention in my study is paid to the climate of this school which I see as a much more complex set of variables which includes the attitudes, feelings and the behaviors of students, faculty and parents.

This was a short term study that looked at the program over only one year. The same organization that set up the program also evaluated it, a situation I consciously avoided by studying a program that I was not involved in setting up. The danger in this approach is that positive outcomes are highly desirable if one has been responsible for creating the program; however, it is very difficult to have the detachment necessary to look unflinchingly at one's own work, particularly if funding is on the line.

Two final studies in this section are both reports. The Peace Education Program in Louisville, Kentucky conducted a study of five schools in which they had set up mediation programs, in cooperation with local Chapter 2 Programs, using the Community Board Model from San Francisco. The purpose was to discover whether peer mediation speaks to actual student needs, how appropriate and helpful the program is, and what benefits students and teachers see the programs providing.

Consultants interviewed students and teachers and gave out surveys to students, teachers and mediators regarding student attitudes and behaviors. Teachers were also surveyed about changes in their own attitudes or behaviors. This phase was summarized in a very brief report.

Usage of mediation programs varied from school to school from one to four mediations per week. Ninety to one hundred percent of all mediations were reported to be successfully completed. Teachers felt there was some positive peer pressure towards non-violent solutions to conflicts. Teachers and students indicated that there was less violence and a decrease in putdowns as a result of the program. Mediation was reported to help students take responsibility for their own problems, and to improve the self esteem and leadership skills of the mediators. Of the students, 84% found mediation to be helpful and 83% agreed that it had made them appreciate different perspectives (Schroeder, 1990).

This was a report rather than a research project, utilizing no control groups and basing findings primarily on anecdotal evidence and attitude surveys. Behavior change was based on self-report or teacher report and anecdotal evidence only.

New River Middle School is located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and services a culturally diverse population including many recent immigrant families who live at or below the poverty level. Drugs and violence are serious issues in most of the students' neighborhoods. During the 1990-91 school year, Richard Cohen, Director of School Mediation Associates, set up a "Conflict Mediation" Program, training adult and student mediators.

The report states that the program resulted in a 74% decrease in the number of suspensions for fighting that year. A total of 626 requests for mediation yielded 589 mediations and a total of 549 written agreements signed by 1341 students. In only 40 cases could written agreements not be reached. One month later, follow-up studies found that 90% of the students felt that the agreements were still working. Over 84% of the students said that they would use mediation again (Ringenberger et al., 1991).

Again, anecdotal evidence and self-report were the basis for concluding that mediators increased their self esteem, problem solving abilities and critical thinking skills and that "at-risk" students were frequent mediators.

This report was written by the supervisor of the program, did not provide long term assessment, and was primarily anecdotal.

Studies Done by Outside Evaluators

The next group of studies were done by outside evaluators who were not involved in setting up the programs they evaluated. Some of the evaluators are university based and others are consultants brought in to assess the effectiveness of the programs.

The Clarke County Social Service Neighborhood Justice Center, located in the state of Nevada, utilized a Community Board trainer and model to set up a peer mediation program in two different schools. Each school contained only two grade levels, sixth grade and kindergarten. The sixth graders mediated conflicts of both sixth graders and kindergartners on the playground. One school, Gilbert Sixth Grade Center, provided intensive training for the principal, three teachers, twenty-eight peer mediators and two counselors. All staff were trained in conflict management. The other school, Booker Sixth Grade Center provided the intensive training for only six teachers who then trained peer mediators.

The report stated that staff and students did learn how to manage conflict and that the program decreased the amount of conflict among students on the playground, prevented physical fighting and gave staff more time to pay

attention to more serious student problems. Students became aware of peer mediators and their purpose. Out of 163 conflicts, including conflicts triggered by rumors or gossip, arguments or disagreements, rough play or boy-girl issues, 85% were resolved.

The peer mediators demonstrated a significant increase in their conflict management skills. They experienced increased self-esteem and assertiveness. They also used the skills that they acquired at home and in their activities away from school. (Carpenter & Parco, 1993)

The program appears to have had a particularly positive impact on the mediators themselves. It was the opinion of the school counselors at Gilbert, the school with more intensive training, that the program significantly reduced counselor time spent on minor conflicts. Attitudes of teachers and peer mediators improved regarding ways to effectively handle conflict after the program was completed. Comments indicate that the peer mediators gained skills to handle conflict better in their own lives. Administration and staff at both schools indicated that the program created a safer environment. There was also anecdotal evidence that skills and attributes showed up at home as well (Carpenter & Parco, 1993).

This is one of the stronger studies I reviewed, looking at attitudes and behaviors and including students and teachers in the surveys as well as including outside

observers who talked to students and faculty and observed mediation sessions.

The Social Science Education Consortium evaluated the Colorado School Mediation Project at Panorama Middle School and at Molholm Elementary School in 1985. No data was provided about the populations at these two sites.

As compared to many other studies, at Molner Elementary School students were randomly assigned to be in two control and two experimental groups. All students were included in the Panorama Middle School program, eliminating any control groups. A quasi-experimental design was used, relying on pre and post tests of students, pre and post assessments by teachers of students, classroom observations, student and teacher interviews and surveys. Qualitative data was analyzed using standard coding techniques and content analysis. The purpose of the analysis was to look at how well the four main objectives of the program were being met. These objectives were: to reduce violence, teach communication and conflict resolution skills, encourage peaceful resolution of conflict and prevent attitudes and behaviors leading towards delinquency (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986).

The middle school, which created neither the structural changes nor the context through which students could apply the mediation skills they learned, revealed virtually no impact. Results from the elementary school (fifth and sixth graders) were more positive, according to

researchers. They considered the fact that the faculty at Molner wanted to continue and to expand the program the next year as very encouraging feedback as well as the requests by teachers from different grades that the mediators be assigned to their recess periods (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986.).

Qualitative data, for the most part, strongly supports positive impacts. The quantitative data also shows positive impact but not generally at a level sufficient to be considered statistically significant...There is strong evidence that students developed mediation skills, as well as healthy attitudes towards conflict and conflict resolution. They made statistically significant gains in both rejection of deviant behavior and a variety of other variables that correlate positively with delinquency...(suggesting) that the project had a salutary impact on bonding students to positive societal factors, which has a strong corollary relationship with delinquency prevention. (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986, pp. 1, 16)

The gains alluded to relate to students' responses on a scale assessing delinquent behaviors. Bonding refers to increased involvement with the school and its activities. The scale was not published in the article nor were references given as to where to find it, so it is difficult to evaluate the significance of this measure although it appears to be a measure of attitude. The researchers point out that the survey may have been inappropriate for the students because it was designed for high schoolers and the testing conditions were inadequate with students expressing confusion about questions, crowded conditions in the test area and students looking at each others papers to find the

"right answers". Observed behaviors, as reported by teachers, did not match self-reported behaviors. Student input through interviews with students

substantiates the conclusion that attitudes towards violent behaviors changed...as a result of the project....Numerous students reported instances when they used problem solving techniques at home---with siblings, friends, and even parents. (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986, p. 4)

The authors raise major questions about the validity of the data. Contamination was a major problem as students in the control group (the group not trained in mediation skills) were picking up on and using mediation skills in school. Differences between the two groups, suggest the authors, might have been more significant if this contamination had not occurred.

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) was evaluated by Metis Associates. Begun in 1985, the program was implemented in several school districts as a collaborative effort of the New York City Board of Education, the school district and Educators for Social Responsibility. It was the first time a large urban school district with children from many cultural backgrounds integrated conflict resolution and multi-cultural concepts into its curriculum and included major support for staff development. In 1987, a student mediation program was created in five elementary schools and in one junior high school (Metis Associates, 1988).

Mediation program implementation included introductory training provided by RCCP, two days of training in mediation techniques for faculty advisors and ongoing support from an RCCP Mediation Coordinator to faculty advisors at every school that had a mediation program. The mediation program was evaluated by 150 classroom teachers, 11 school based program advisors and 143 student mediators who were asked about both their personal experiences and their observations about how the program affected classroom and school climate as a whole.

There were 535 successful mediations, with an average of 107 per school, in the 1988-89 school year. Teachers strongly indicated that the program increased self-esteem in mediators, that students were helped through their contact with mediators, that students had learned important life skills in problem-solving and in taking responsibility for resolving difficulties. Mediators felt that their experiences helped them to understand different perspectives and provided excellent skills training. Advisors to student mediators pointed out two main successes of the program: learning mediation skills and bringing children of different grades and backgrounds together. Teachers and advisors said that a more peaceful atmosphere was created and that students discovered peaceful alternatives to conflict. The need for more staff training and parental involvement was cited for the program as a whole (Metis Associates, 1990).

Although impressive, the frequent citing of the mediation program as a reason for improvement in school climate in the data from the teacher survey was belied by interviews with teachers and administrators who pointed to only a minimal impact on school climate. In addition the program was just beginning and only 5-10% of the teachers in each school were even involved with the program.

This evaluation focused on attitudes and perceptions rather than actual changes in behavior and did not include surveys of students who were not mediators. It included primarily elementary schools students; it is not clear from the report whether any evaluation was done with the junior high school students. The group chosen to be mediators is a select sample whose responses may have been affected by many things including the extra attention they received as student mediators and their having a vested interest in the program. Including feelings and behaviors in my study as well as attitudes; eliciting responses from not only mediators but students who have never used mediation and including parents, are all attempts to rectify these limitations by expanding the range and depth of findings in my study.

The Wakefield Pilot Peer-Mediation Program in Tucson, Arizona, using the San Francisco School Initiatives Program, was the first site for a school based mediation program in the state. Wakefield is a primarily low income, bilingual, Mexican- American community with the largest

percentage of Mexican-American students in the Tucson school district. The Community Mediation Program (CMP) exposed all students to mediation, asked for nominations of peers and trained 10 eighth graders and 15 seventh graders to be mediators. Only one "negative" or unreceived (non-traditional or formerly aggressive students that other students look up to) leader was chosen. Five teachers, the counselors, and the vice-principal went through training along with the mediators, although their training was not as extensive. The program was voluntary and mediators met daily for twenty minutes.

The research design included a group of students who were given a pre-test and a post test of attitudes and behaviors regarding conflict, participant observation (primarily informal conversations), a student attitude questionnaire on conflict styles, interviews with teachers and students, open-ended surveys of peer mediators and documentary evidence including referrals for fighting.

The program was reported as being responsible for a 47% drop in officially reported aggressive conflicts and a 51% decrease in the number of physical fights reported by students. The majority of disputants said that they were satisfied with the mediation process. 100% of the agreements worked out for the duration of the semester. Half of the disputants, including two "at-risk" students, said they wanted to become peer mediators after they went through the mediation process. All but one of the 22

disputants said that they would use peer mediation again to resolve their conflicts. The "unreceived leader" who was trained as a mediator and the "at-risk" students who participated as disputants gained in "pro-social" attitudes and behaviors. "At-risk" students who were not referred continued to hold favorable attitudes towards aggressive approaches although aggressive behavior overall dropped slightly. It was felt that more at-risk students should have been selected as mediators. The report concluded that mediation can reduce aggression in schools by replacing aggressive behavior with collaborative behavior and that students can be a powerful force for socializing in this direction (McCormick, 1988).

[M]ost students will not use collaboration (formally or informally) until they have developed the requisite skills or until a structure has been established to assist them. The results from the first semester of the WPMP as well as from other programs around the country can lead to only one conclusion: we can effectively lessen student-to-student aggression in our schools not by adhering to the traditional mass of penalties for in-school aggression, but by properly institutionalizing school-based peer mediation. (McCormick, 1988, pp. 74-75)

This points to the dichotomy or dissonance that is created when schools that operate with traditional punitive disciplinary systems attempt to incorporate discrete programs to resolve conflict based on cooperation, collaboration and inclusion of students as active participants. Mediation programs in schools where students lack understanding and experience in conflict resolution

and where the programs exist in isolation and separate from the culture of the school as a whole will not significantly decrease violence and aggression in those schools.

There were some interesting findings regarding the skill level of mediators as reported by mediators. They had difficulties with motivating disputants to talk throughout the session and to fully participate in brainstorming solutions; mediators asked the same questions over and over; disputants sometimes felt embarrassed when talking about personal problems with mediators surfaced; mediators had difficulties with active listening and impartiality; disputant arguments were cut off and mediators, at times, felt nervous or embarrassed in their role. Personal experience was a significant factor in convincing students and teachers of mediation's effectiveness (McCormick, 1988).

This was one of the only studies that included the feelings of mediators and disputants, a central aspect of my study. Although an excellent study in many ways, limitations of this study include the fact that it measured only the first semester of the program, that it did not use another school as a control group and, as with every other study reviewed, did not solicit parental input, a major focus of my study.

The Dispute Management in the Schools Project (DMSP) was a three-year-long research project of the University of Hawaii and the Hawaii State Department of Education. Two

years of research followed one year of start-up, the theory being that 90% of the success of any pilot project depends on the care taken in the start up.

The research questions included the following: To what extent can mediation programs be implemented in a school? Can mediation as a technique be used to manage disputes between students? What are the attributes of an effective mediator? What are the attributes of disputants? What is the nature of conflicts or disputes that result in the use of mediation?

The site was a high school, a feeder intermediate school and a feeder elementary school in the Honolulu school district. Students identified as perceived leaders voluntarily joined the program, completing 20 hours of training and agreeing to be on call to mediate throughout the day, make up all class work and behave in a supportive manner during mediations. Ongoing training in mediation was provided.

The researchers used a case study methodology. Two different but parallel questionnaires were used, one for administrators, counselors and staff and the second for mediators and disputants. Three parallel sets of interview guide questions were used, one for administrators, one for counselors and one for project coordinators. The project coordinator collected data on types of disputes brought to mediation, and the outcomes of mediation sessions as well as observing disputants' characteristics. A qualitative

approach was used, with triangulation as the measurement strategy.

Of 136 cases mediated during two years, 12 were student-teacher mediations. There was an overall success rate of 92%. Staff, mediators and disputants agreed that mediation is effective in resolving student/student disputes (Araki, 1990). The majority of mediators and disputants reported that gender, grade, ethnic group or going to the same school had no perceived impact on mediator effectiveness nor did knowing the disputants. This raises questions about the manner in which this information was gathered. Was there truly no impact, was this information not elicited, or was it missed or somehow suppressed?

Project leaders observed that disputants tended to listen less, to have a history of both conflict and limited problem-solving skills and to be disengaged from school activities. Significantly more female than male disputants were noted. Eighth graders predominated to a significant degree. Ethnic group distribution reflected the school population as a whole (Araki, 1990).

Among the characteristics of an effective mediator articulated by project counselors and coordinators were the qualities of self confidence and leadership; however this did not mean leadership in the traditional student government way. The traditional helping skills of caring, responsibility and being a good listener, as well as

directiveness and a good grasp of the mediation process were also found to be important (Araki, 1990). Peer mediators improved their academic standing and teachers noted positive changes in attitude. Araki found that student mediators:

were significant empowered and improved academically, especially those with marginal academic grades. Teachers and administrators consistently reported improvements in attitude, especially in volunteering for school activities, by both mediators and disputants. (Araki, 1990, p. 55)

This last finding is similar to Greenwald and Johnson's 1986 finding that a mediation program in one school increased student bonding with the school. If true, this is a persuasive argument for mediation programs in schools and bears further looking at in future studies. Eight major categories or types of conflicts were noted including gossip and rumor (with the greatest number at the intermediate school), verbal arguments, dirty looks, classroom behavior including teachers' perceptions of insubordination and students' perceptions of unfairness, harassment, jealousy, fighting or threat of a fight and invasion of privacy. Among females, gossip/rumors, arguments, and harassment predominated whereas among males it was harassment. Mediation was not offered to those involved in conflicts involving weapons, drugs or assaults (Araki, 1990). This last point raises an interesting question, given the prevalence of these problems in schools today. Clearly, drug involvement needs to involve the

police but is there a role for peer mediation once violence has occurred or is peer mediation only appropriate before conflicts escalate into violence?

One of the strengths of this study is that it looked at the positive impact on students at risk who were selected and trained as mediators. Limitations of this study include the fact that neither parents nor teachers were interviewed. The only students who were interviewed were mediators or disputants who had chosen to go to mediation. Much of the data was based on observations by project organizers. This sets the program up in isolation from the both the school community as a whole and the wider community at large. The inclusion of other members of the school community and the families of the students who attend this school could illuminate larger questions, concerns and benefits. For this reason, families and members of the school community not actively involved in the mediation program are included in my study. To isolate the study reinforces the isolation of the program.

The New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution and the Albuquerque Mediation Center jointly initiated a mediation in the schools project in eight school districts, including five middle schools during the 1986-7 school year. This was a very ambitious and impressive project for a number of reasons. First of all, the administration in each district had to make a commitment to utilize the process throughout the district. Second of all, a majority of faculty in each

building had to vote in favor of the program in order to be included. This process of self selection allowed for resources to be placed where they would be utilized to the fullest by schools whose staff had a commitment to the program.

Another strength was that teachers chose mediators who had been nominated by peers or faculty and criteria included recruitment of negative as well as positive leaders balanced by race, gender and ethnic group. This ensured mediators who were representative of the student body as a whole. A third strength was that teachers and students both received training, bringing in two of the major components of the system. Unlike many programs, including the one I studied, student/teacher and student/administrator disputes were handled along with student/student conflicts. The goal of this project was to teach concrete problem solving skills and to change not only student attitudes, but also student behavior.

A pre-test and post-test control group design was used. Fifty-three students from two of the middle schools were included. Student observation forms filled out by teachers, teacher attitude self-rating scales and student attitude self-rating scales were all used in the testing, eliciting both behavior and attitude change for students and attitude change for teachers.

Based on student surveys and teacher observations, researchers found the most significant results within the

two middle schools, the same age group I am studying. A significant difference was found, using the student attitudes about conflict scale (SAAC), between the student mediators and the control group. Students not trained as mediators declined in all areas measured by the survey, while student mediators improved. The school commitment/attachment scale, which researchers contend is an indicator for delinquency, showed a very large difference between student mediators and the control group with student mediators expressing a stronger sense of attachment to the school and dedication to school activities. This was the third study (along with Araki, 1990 and Greenwald & Johnson, 1986) that cited this positive relationship between mediation and school attachment. The strongest program impact was in knowledge of problem-solving and conflict resolution, which indicates that the communication and mediation skills training was absorbed (Jenkins & Smith, 1990).

Teacher surveys indicate that two of the objectives (decreasing violence in the school environment and shifting responsibility for resolving conflicts from school staff to students) were met. Fourteen percent fewer teachers surveyed felt teachers were the major interveners in disputes in the post test, while 10% more teachers saw students as the major source of resolution for their own disputes. Harassment (verbal and non-verbal) and disruptive behavior were all seen by teachers as less frequent causes

of conflict, indicating a decrease in teacher perceptions of violence as a cause of conflict (Jenkins & Smith, 1990).

It would have been useful to compare the effects of the training by giving pre-tests to the mediators before their training. Tracking differences between "negative" and "positive" leaders would also have been useful. Keeping consistent records among different schools (schools using mediation and not using mediation) of violent incidents and referrals for discipline would have provided useful data about the impact of the program on violence reduction in a study large scale enough to point to emergent patterns. Direct measurement of student behavior (by observing students during mediation or in classroom settings) to discover how students thought about and handled conflict would have provided more behavioral data.

Summary of Findings on Effectiveness

Bearing in mind the limitations of the research described in the first section of this literature review and pointed out in the section on effectiveness, the studies on effectiveness need to be looked at with a critical eye. These limitations include the findings that the research on school based mediation is in its infancy; the paucity of long term and outcome based studies; weaknesses in quantitative methodology; over reliance on anecdotal and other less convincing types of data and the

finding that only rarely do these studies ask the same questions.

A major critique of the research that should be kept in mind when looking at effectiveness is that, although cast as violence prevention programs, to date no one has proven that peer mediation decreases or prevents violence. Change in attitude is frequently the focus of research rather than change in behavior and we cannot yet say that positive attitudes towards mediation will yield reductions in violence. Although I am not taking on the question of whether peer mediation reduces violence, I am looking at how students do resolve conflicts in one school and what factors may be at play in terms of their responses. If they are not going to mediation how are they resolving their conflicts? If they are not choosing to go to mediation what is inhibiting them from this choice?

Another common theme which emerges from reading the literature is the lack of funding for research as well as the availability of people trained in research methodology. Much of the research on effectiveness is in the form of reports based on limited evaluation and was written by overworked program organizers and facilitators. Keeping all of this in mind it is still useful to look at the findings on effectiveness to discover patterns and themes that may be important.

Disputant Satisfaction

If one measures effectiveness purely on the basis of disputant satisfaction with the process of mediation than the success rate of mediation is impressive. A number of studies of peer mediation programs in middle or junior high schools (McCormick, 1988; Araki, 1990; Metis Associates, 1990; Carpenter & Parco, 1993) report high rates of disputant satisfaction, with outcomes ranging from 85% (Carpenter & Parco, 1993) up through 92.6% (Araki, 1990). Metis Associates (1990) reported that 535 agreements in 5 schools (4 elementary) in the district were successfully mediated. Crary (1992) found mediation to be effective in 97% of 95 cases as reported from two weeks to two months after the mediation occurred. Disputants reported that the process was fair, that they were satisfied with the outcome and that they would recommend it to friends.

Changes in Student Behavior in School

Three studies provided statistics about behavioral change. McCormick (1988) reports that one mediation program was responsible for a 47% drop in officially reported aggressive conflicts and a 51% decrease in the number of physical fights reported by students. The report concluded that mediation can reduce aggression in schools by replacing aggressive behavior with collaborative behavior and that students can be a powerful force for socializing in this direction. Kaufman (1991) reported significant

drops in suspension rates in one middle school and a small rise in students agreeing to stop a fight in a school with a mediation program as compared to a school matched for demographics and size that lacked a mediation program. The latter program reported that students' willingness to end fights dropped over the course of a year. Ringenberger (1991) reported a 74% decrease in the number of suspensions for fighting during the year the mediation program was implemented.

Studies Reporting on Changes in Students' Interactions with Each Other

Several studies looked at changes in the patterns of students' interactions with each other. Jenkins and Smith (1990) found that harassment (verbal and non-verbal) and disruptive behavior were reported by teachers to be less frequent causes of conflict. Carpenter and Parco (1993) reported a reduction in counselor time spent solving conflicts. Greenwald and Johnson (1986) found that students appeared to develop mediation skills, as well as "healthy attitudes towards conflict and conflict resolution." Schroeder (1990) reported that teachers felt that peer pressure was beginning to move towards non-violent solutions to conflicts. Teachers and students indicated that there was less violence and a decrease in putdowns as a result. Statistically significant gains were reported in "rejection of deviant behavior and other variables that

correlate positively with delinquency" (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986, pp. 1, 16).

Impact on Peer Mediators

Seven studies looked at the impact on peer mediators and/or disputants and found positive results. McCormick (1988) found that "unreceived leaders" who were trained as mediators and "at-risk" students who participated as disputants gained in "pro-social" attitudes and behaviors while "at-risk" students who were not referred continued to hold favorable attitudes towards aggressive approaches. Jenkins and Smith (1990) reported a significant difference between the student mediators and the control group on the student attitudes about conflict scale. Students not trained as mediators declined in all areas measured by the survey, while student mediators improved. The school commitment/attachment scale, which Jenkins and Smith say is an indicator for delinquency showed a very large difference between student mediators and the control group with student mediators expressing a stronger sense of attachment to the school and dedication to school activities. Carpenter and Parco (1993) reported that peer mediators showed a significant increase in their ability to resolve conflict, and an increase in self-esteem and assertiveness. Students also reported using their mediation skills at home and in activities outside of school (Carpenter & Parco, 1993). Metis Associates (1990) found that teachers reported

increased self-esteem in the mediators. Mediators reported that their experiences helped them to understand different perspectives and provided excellent skill training. Araki contends that the peer mediators "were significantly empowered and improved academically, especially those with marginal academic grades. Teachers and administrators consistently reported improvements in attitude, especially in volunteering for school activities, by both mediators and disputants" (Araki, 1990, p. 55). Schroeder (1990) found that both self esteem and leadership skills of the mediators improved. In the study done by Ringenberger, et al. (1991), anecdotal evidence and self report were the basis for concluding that mediators increased their self esteem, problem solving abilities and critical thinking skills. This research indicates that being a peer mediator may have positive impact on those involved in terms of problem-solving ability, self esteem and feelings of connectedness with the school.

Effectiveness has been looked at primarily in terms of participant satisfaction with the mediation process itself, impact on measures of student behavior such as reductions in suspensions and expulsions and effects on the mediators themselves. One gap in the literature that is closely related to effectiveness is the question of usage. No matter how excellent a mediation program may be, it can only be termed effective if it is utilized. Therefore, a study such as mine, which looks at the factors that inhibit

the use of mediation, will fill a critical gap in the literature.

Factors Influencing Effectiveness

The third section of the literature review looks for the factors that influence the effectiveness of mediation programs. Although only a few of the studies I reviewed explore factors related to effectiveness, I include them here because this is a major focus of my research.

Carpenter and Parco's (1993) evaluation provided a comparison between peer mediation programs in two schools. One program (Gilbert Elementary) was clearly more active, receiving referrals from faculty and staff (23% of referrals at Gilbert came from administration or faculty) and students, involving more students in mediations and successfully resolving more conflicts. The percentage of students and teachers who agreed with positive statements about the mediation program was lower at Booker Elementary, the second school in the study, and no faculty at Booker made any referrals to the peer mediation program.

The authors credit this difference between the schools to three factors: the student body and faculty at Gilbert were all trained in conflict resolution, the program was supervised by the school counselors and there was strong administrative support while none of this held true at Booker.

Additionally, at Gilbert, there was a strong and cooperative relationship between the school and the outside agency doing the training, the principal provided faculty and students with information about the program on a daily basis and an adult, trained in the model, was always available when peer mediators were on duty. At Booker Elementary, where the program had minimal impact, none of these factors held true. In addition, the assistant principal, who was trained and supposed to be in charge, was transferred and his replacement didn't take over until four months later.

Similarly, Greenwald and Johnson from the Colorado School Mediation Program evaluation indicated that the program had little or no measurable impact at one site, Panorama Middle School, while the qualitative data from Molner, the other site, indicated that the program did have an impact in this school.

Factors encouraging effectiveness that are similar to those cited by Carpenter and Parco include strong administrative support and sufficient teacher training. Greenwald and Johnson expand on these themes by stressing the importance of providing adult modeling of the program and of adult willingness to "relinquish sufficient authority (so) that students have an opportunity to practice their skills" (Greenwald & Johnson 1986, p. 12, 13). Both of these points are related to larger issues about the actions and style of the faculty in a building in

terms of relating to students and to each other, a major factor explored in my study. Their latter point about relinquishing adult authority speaks to a radical shift away from traditional adult controlled discipline programs to a system in which students have more power and control, again a focus of my research. Their next finding, the importance of teachers being willing to allow students to come up with their own solutions, is a further extension of this point.

In addition, the authors found that giving mediators the opportunity to use their skills in real life situations is crucial. Including a broad cross section of mediators rather than only the "best students" was found to be important to avoid having the mediators appear to be an "extension of the adult authority structure" thus invalidating them in many students' eyes. The issue of the diversity of the mediators is another factor explored in my study.

Data from Molner, where the program had far less impact, indicate that neither organizational nor structural changes were made to provide students with opportunities to apply their mediation skills, there was only minimal administrative and staff commitment and faculty did not consistently teach and reinforce the lessons in conflict resolution and mediation. (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986)

Further documenting the finding about using a diverse group of mediators from Greenwald and Johnson's study, the

researcher from the Wakefield Pilot-Peer Mediation Program in Tucson, Arizona emphasized that "results from evaluations of successful programs around the country indicate that at least one quarter of student mediators should be "unreceived leaders."

These 'reformed' anti-aggressive role models greatly increase the chance of other students viewing mediation as a viable alternative to less acceptable types of conflict behavior. This is especially important for so-called "trouble makers" who might be more inclined to participate if "unreceived leaders" are involved directly. (McCormick, 1988, p. 43)

Only two "unreceived leaders" were chosen as mediators for the Tucson program while McCormick recommends one quarter of the mediators, eight in this case. She also pointed out the importance of choosing the same ratio of females to males as exists in the general population of the school (McCormick, 1988).

Organizational issues ranked high among issues blocking the success of this program. Coordinators reported that they needed more written materials and adult trainers needed more guidance in their roles. Scheduling and the referral process were assessed as needing to be streamlined. Both teacher/coordinators and mediators reported that more students should and could have been referred to mediation given that the same number of students were referred to mediation as went through traditional disciplinary channels. The program was not well publicized after being set up and not enough teachers had

been educated as to the effectiveness of this process. Due to the practical importance of these matters, the organization of the program is another major factor to be studied in my research.

One controversial finding that the author came up with is that mandatory peer mediation for physical fighting is a positive approach because it provides enough cases to keep the mediation program busy. McCormick says:

If peer mediation was made mandatory for all students involved in aggressive conflicts (whether or not the school also inflicted some form of traditional punishment), the problem of use and promotion would be eliminated.
(McCormick, 1988, p. 56-67)

This idea of mediation being mandatory runs counter to the basic concept of mediation as a voluntary activity in which both participants are choosing to come together to seek resolution. It also places student mediators in the position of providing an alternative model of discipline to their peers. This tension also exists in the program I am studying and is part of what I look at in my research.

Judy Schroeder, project evaluator for the Peace Education Program in Louisville, Kentucky, found two factors were of special importance. The first is that all students in the building need to be involved in conflict resolution/mediation training in order to create an effective mediation program. The second set of factors reflect the importance of organization that McCormick points out in her study. Disputants, according to

Schroeder, must have ready access to mediators who, in turn, have the authority to schedule mediations within a brief period of time. One teacher should function as a "gatekeeper", making referrals and scheduling mediation sessions.

A third factor is teacher involvement. Students reported that teacher involvement with the project in terms of referrals, publicity and educating about mediation was important and that they wanted more of it.

Agreeing with McCormick (1988) and Greenwald and Johnson (1986), Schroeder found that the most effective programs had a diverse cross section of students working as mediators. She found that risk takers, in particular, can bring original insights and helped to strengthen the program.

The research oriented Dispute Management in the Schools (DMSP) project in Hawaii relied on Davis and Porter's (1985) work to glean several essential factors for the success of their program. Hiring a full time, committed, available project co-ordinator who cares about the program was highlighted as essential. Both training and experience in mediation and being a regular staff member in the school district was considered to be necessary. Araki agrees with Carpenter and Parco (1993) and Greenwald and Johnson (1986) that having the strong support of the administration is a crucial factor in the success of a mediation program.

Beginning with a pilot program emphasizing evaluation before setting up a system wide program was seen as integral to the success of this venture. The importance of ongoing training which includes educating everyone in the school about the program is a finding that comes up consistently (Carpenter & Parco, 1993; Schroeder, 1990).

Araki's study is the only one that speaks to the importance of educating the larger community, especially parents, about mediation and taking into account the need for parent approval for mediators. Parents are included as a key part of the system in my study, with their input considered as critical as that of students and teachers.

Taking into consideration the possibility that the administrators and/or teachers may see mediation as a threat to their authority in the school is another of Davis and Porter's guidelines that Araki raises, agreeing with Carpenter and Parco and Greenwald and Johnson on this issue.

DMSP members believe that this program was successful to the degree that it was, in large part because they took into consideration the above issues. They found the year of orientation and planning led by a full-time coordinator with both expertise in mediation and a strong commitment to the program to be crucial. The coordinator worked with leaders within the school system, as well as those who, although not part of the school system, were key players, for example, teachers' union leaders and members of the

Board of Education. Feedback was elicited from people within the school system. The coordinator also educated the faculty as a whole about the program, trained both student and adult mediators, oversaw the many details of the program and served as an advocate within individual schools, throughout the school system as a whole and statewide. Other factors considered vital included regular communication with faculty and parents, coordination with the rest of the school program and ongoing and intensive training (Araki, 1990).

Pilati's analysis of key factors impacting on the success of a mediation program is based on data generated at a NAME institute from people working in the field rather than a study of a program in one school or school system. Creating consistent guidelines for training people who set up mediation programs and building an evaluation component into every program are two strategies this group suggests to better ensure quality.

The importance of infusing mediation programs into the culture and curriculum of the entire school, including the discipline code, is a very significant point raised by Pilati and one that is similar to Davis and Porter's guidelines as summarized by Araki, Carpenter and Parco and Greenwald and Johnson. Agreeing strongly with the importance of this theme I have devoted an entire segment of my study to looking at the culture of the school which surrounds the mediation program I am studying and seeing

how infusion or the lack of infusion of mediation into the culture of the school affects the functioning of this program.

The importance of providing on-going training for students, faculty and staff is another frequently raised theme in the literature that Pilati highlights. He also points out that building support in and communicating with the larger community is a critical point that is often ignored when setting up school based mediation programs. Pilati suggests the recruitment of an advisory group as a way to join with the larger community. (Pilati, 1994).

Pilati (1994) describes three models for creating a school mediation program. The in-house model relies on one or more faculty or staff members for training and facilitation. The consultant model draws on the skills of an outside consultant to train, set up and sometimes to continue to facilitate the program. The school system wide model involves a trainer or consultant who works throughout the school system to train and to organize programs.

The advantages of the "in-house" model are described by Pilati as providing the possibility of designing a program that meet the needs of the particular school, the ability to provide regular, continuous support, cost effectiveness and the relative ease of acceptance of a program run by a familiar colleague. Disadvantages are that "in-house" people often lack experience and training as a mediator as well as access to others in the field and that

other responsibilities may interfere with time to run the program. Recommendations are for "in-house" trainers to join NAME, to communicate with and to work closely with parents and community members, to build and ensure support for the program before training students, to educate the faculty as a whole in conflict resolution and to secure a commitment to ongoing training and support for the program.

Strengths of the consultant model are that outside consultants are viewed as experts and have experience in the field, the school can choose their consultant and look for someone with the experience and background that can best meet their needs, and the fact that consultants tend to be highly accountable to their clients. Drawbacks are that consultants tend to be more expensive, their quality is variable, they are not part of the school culture and ongoing training costs more money and may not be available. Pilati's recommendations include training faculty and staff members to enable them to do the follow-up and infusing the program into as many aspects of the school as possible. (Pilati, 1994).

The school system model is one that operates with support from administration which makes funding less of a problem and increases chances for the program to be integrated into the school system as a whole. The disadvantages are that control is centralized at the top rather than within each school which could mean less flexibility and possible faculty resentment of the program.

Pilati's recommendations are that all faculty receive training and be granted credit for it, that peer mediation become part of the disciplinary process of each school, and that connections be built with larger systems within the community including parents and mental health professionals (Pilati, 1994).

Metis Associates' 1988 evaluation of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, which is an example of the school system model, found that the support and encouragement for this program from the school system as a whole had positive impact. The support, which began at the top with the Superintendent of Schools, included the Community School Board. RCCP avoided the problem of potential faculty resentment of a top down program by only implementing programs in a school after principal request. With this administrative support, teachers were able to take the time they needed to become involved in both training and program implementation. The program included a collegial support network with meetings occurring within individual schools as well as district wide. Staff developers were consistently available for teachers to provide education, mentoring and liaison between the program and the principals. Factors that administrators and teachers felt would improve the program included an increase in time for staff training, more comprehensive parent training and involvement, and an increase in the scope of the program within each school.

Webster recommends that the program content of all mediation and conflict resolution programs be restructured to take into consideration both the risk factors and the developmental stage of the particular group. Webster calls for training in how to deal with put-downs and to cool down potentially violent situations as part of a comprehensive program in resolving conflict peacefully. Social skills training, he argues, should be done with children beginning at ages 4-9. Programs for teachers need to focus on helping them to help their students find success in school and build ties with positive adult role models as well as creating positive activities for at-risk teens to engage in. Webster also calls for more research on the particular factors within situations that tend to lead to violence.

Currently there is more convincing evidence that status attacks and macho posturing are more common precursors to violence than situations (calling for) negotiation skills...The efficacy of such teaching could hinge on the implementation of programs and policies that offer opportunities to build self esteem and of peer led programs to promote non-violent social norms for responding to status attacks. (Webster, 1993, pp. 137-138)

Webster emphasizes that short term interventions with no opportunity to practice new skills are not going to result in behavior change. Students need practice, reinforcement over time and training in a comprehensive program, starting when they are in elementary school if behavior change is to occur.

His final point is that we need to look at the larger systems within which young people live. The total environment of many young people today mitigates against their participating fully and feeling that they have a place as members of our society. Easy access to handguns and lack of investments in schools, families and young people all fan the flames of alienation, unrest and potential violence.

Gleanings from the Literature that Shaped My Study

One of the critical factors emerging from the research is the importance of strong administrative and faculty support to the success of a mediation program. (Carpenter & Parco, 1993; Greenwald & Johnson, 1986; Araki, 1990; Pilati, 1994; Metis Associates, 1988). Administrative support means providing the resources including the financial support, personnel and time to do the job right. It means encouraging the use of the program and taking the lead in promoting it to the faculty, the students, the parents and the wider community. High quality training of staff with time and resources available for follow up training and support as mentioned by Greenwald and Johnson (1986), Araki (1990), Pilati (1994), and Metis Associates (1988) is another form of administrative support that is closely related to the success of a program. Dedicated faculty members who want the program to succeed and who are willing to put in the time, receive on-going training,

train others, encourage their students to utilize the program and educate parents and the community about its worth are critical to the success of a program. Having an advocate from within, someone available, committed and in charge of facilitating the many details of the program is another key component of support (Carpenter & Parco, 1993; Schroeder, 1990; Araki, 1990; Pilati, 1994).

Advocacy

My study looks closely at the issue of administrative and faculty support, exploring not only the attitudes but the feelings and behaviors of faculty through both self report and from the perspective of students and families. Additionally, I look at faculty support not only in terms of their own attitudes, feelings and behaviors towards mediation but also their overall methods of handling conflict, again as perceived by all three groups. This provides a much needed systemic perspective on the issue, rather than the predominantly self reported and/or anecdotal reporting of many other studies.

Greenwald and Johnson expand on these themes by stressing the importance of providing adult modeling of mediation skills and of adult willingness to "relinquish sufficient authority (so) that students have an opportunity to practice their skills" (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986, p. 12, 13). Both of these points are related to larger issues about the culture of the school as a whole and the

degree to which the model is infused into the school, for example, into the relationships of faculty members with students, with families of students and with their colleagues. These issues are explored in depth in my study. Greenwald and Johnson also refer to the larger culture of the school when they talk about the necessity of relinquishing adult authority in order to strengthen mediation programs. This point bespeaks a radical shift away from traditional adult controlled discipline programs to a system in which students have more power and control. This power dynamic is a focus of my research.

A second factor related to success that is brought out in several studies is the importance of training students and faculty as a whole in conflict resolution and mediation skills. The importance of this factor lies in its provision of a context within which mediation programs thrive because the entire school community understands what mediation is and how to use it (Carpenter & Parco, 1993; Schroeder, 1990; Araki, 1990; Pilati, 1994). Again this issue is a focus of my research. The factors that I use to code the data include a number of ways to assess the question of how much students and faculty know about conflict resolution and mediation and how this impacts the usage of the mediation program.

The importance of having a broad and diverse cross section of mediators, including some "unreceived leaders", rather than only the "best students" is brought out in a

number of studies (Greenwald & Johnson, 1986; McCormick, 1988; Schroeder, 1990). The interview format, particularly the interviews I do with students, allows me to get in-depth insight into this question in my study, especially since I take care to interview a diverse group of students. Diversity issues related to mediation is one of the key factors that I look at.

Organizational issues appear from the research to be important in the success of mediation programs. Providing ongoing information about mediation and making the program accessible to students and faculty are all organizational factors mentioned in the literature (Carpenter & Parco, 1993; Greenwald & Johnson, 1986; Schroeder, 1990). I devote an entire section of my research to organizational factors. Because organization is closely related to usage, I ask questions related to organization in both surveys and interviews. Including a broad cross section of the student population, from mediators and disputants to students who have never used mediation provides me with an overall picture of strengths and weaknesses in this area.

Little systemic evaluation of these programs has been done. My view is that mediation happens in a context which includes families, the school, the larger school system, the community and the entire culture within which we all live. All of these components are considered in my research. To do less is to isolate the problem of conflict and its resolution far too narrowly. This is not a problem

that is owned by schools alone; conflict and its resolution is an issue that is embedded in the entire context of our lives, including our families, communities, and all sources of socialization. This includes the media, the advertising industry and the socio-economic and political structure of our nation. Research on the effectiveness of a particular program in isolation is by definition narrow and inevitably will not be informed by these larger issues. A systemic perspective informs my research. This perspective leads me to elicit data from families as well as faculty and students. Families influence student responses to conflict and can also be a force in influencing directions taken by schools in handling issues of conflict. Araki (1990), Pilati, (1994) and Metis Associates (1988) do point out the importance of integrating families of students in their research but this group is too often left unmentioned.

The significance of working with the school system as a whole is raised by Araki, (1990) and Metis Associates (1988). This is one of the areas I track carefully when analyzing data from both surveys and interviews. Several factors used to code my data zero in on the impact of the larger school system's approach to mediation/conflict resolution. Studying a school within a system without an overall conflict resolution program allows me to learn more about the impact of introducing this program during early adolescence. The importance of input from the larger community is raised by Araki (1990) and Pilati (1994). A

section of my study is devoted to the larger societal issues framing any discussion of school-based mediation.

Although peer mediators and disputants have been studied to some degree, one of the areas that does not appear frequently in the literature on peer mediation is an analysis of overall student concerns, worries, questions and feelings about peer mediation. What are the developmental, social, gender based, and interpersonal factors at work that affect students' decisions to use or not to use mediation? This is an area I tackle in my research, again drawing on the perceptions of parents and teachers, as well as listening carefully to the voices of the students themselves. This is a program designed for students and their feedback is of the utmost importance.

C H A P T E R 3

METHODOLOGY

Description of Research Methodology

This research project was a qualitative descriptive study using interviews and surveys as the primary methodology. Interviews with students, faculty and parents were a source of both qualitative and numerical data. Each interview was coded for key factors that inhibit and encourage the use of mediation and was then sorted by race, position in the school and in the case of students, by gender. The surveys were also a source of both numerical and qualitative data, as open-ended questions were included along with the response choices. My hope was that the numerical data would provide the broader brush strokes while the qualitative data would illuminate details and nuances. My focus was on understanding what factors inhibit or encourage the students in this school from utilizing the mediation program available to them. Qualitative research is used because I studied a complex phenomenon that is perceived differently, depending on who is describing it and what their relationship is to it.

Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities--that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. (Merriam, 1988, pp. 16-17)

This was a descriptive study, drawing out the subjective impressions, personal experiences and beliefs of a wide variety of people. As I organized and sought to make meaning of this data, my focus was on the search for overall themes and the clarification of questions from many angles rather than identifying an "objective reality". A qualitative perspective is well suited for the highly subjective nature of these questions.

Qualitative measurement has to do with the kinds of data or information that are collected. Qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts...The data are collected as open-ended narrative without attempting to fit program activities or peoples' experiences into pre-determined standardized categories such as the response choices that comprise typical questionnaires or tests...a qualitative approach to measurement seeks to capture what people have to say in their own words...Qualitative measures permit the evaluation researcher to record and understand people in their own terms. (Patton, 1980, p. 22)

As noted in the literature review, one of the critiques of much of the literature on mediation in the schools is the paucity of quantitative research. Although quantitative methodology is not used, numerical data are included in this study.

The specific phenomenon studied is a mediation program located in a diverse junior high school in a mid-sized town on the East coast. The school has a population of approximately 1000 students which includes young people of 21 different nationalities. The school

encompasses grades 7 through 9. Six area elementary schools feed into this junior high school.

Research Design

Many people were consulted in the process of developing the surveys and interview question. A needs assessment was conducted with the outside community mediation agency that initially provided the training for faculty and students in mediation and established the mediation program in this school. It is this agency that requested the study. Several conversations were held with the program director in order to elicit her questions and concerns. As reported in the literature review, most mediation training programs run on extremely limited budgets and do not have money earmarked for research and evaluation. The option of having a graduate student available to do research for the organization provided a way to have the program evaluated at no cost. Given that the outside agency was not funding this research and the fact that the primary purpose of the research was to complete the requirements for a doctorate, the director did not provide specific parameters for the evaluation. She raised the issue of bias awareness and whether the emphasis that was put on bias awareness in the training had significantly affected the program but she made it clear that any information that might shed light on the

effectiveness or utilization of the program would be helpful.

A needs assessment was also conducted with two of the most active faculty members of the mediation program at the junior high school. This needs assessment consisted of several informal meetings in the spring preceding the academic year in which the research was conducted, as well as in the fall of that year. This group expressed concern about the underutilization of the mediation program and was interested in any information that might clarify this situation.

These conversations confirmed for me the potential usefulness of utilizing both survey data, to gather more limited information from larger numbers of people, and in-depth interviewing, to gather more information from a smaller number of people. They also clarified that a primary focus of the research needed to be an exploration of the problem of underutilization of this program.

First drafts of the survey and interview questions were then developed and circulated among both the program director and the two faculty members. At a meeting I held with all three, the questions were reviewed. The major change was to cut back the open questions on the surveys and to add short answer or choice questions, based on concerns that people would find the surveys too time consuming to fill out. Minor changes were made in wording as well. These drafts were then reviewed with the

instructional director at the junior high school, who was particularly helpful with wording the student questions in age-appropriate language. The student interview questions and survey were piloted with a student and the instructional director reviewed the faculty interviews and surveys. This process provided feedback resulting in wording changes. The interview questions and surveys were reviewed by a parent who suggested additional categories for types of conflict. Final drafts of interview and survey questions were circulated to parents, the chair of my committee and colleagues for additional feedback, at which point changes in wording were finalized.

As a whole, the questions were designed to shed light on what factors inhibit the use of mediation and what factors encourage it. The major criterion used in selecting interview and survey questions was whether or not the question contributed to a systemic understanding of the factors that discourage (and encourage) students' use of the mediation program. Perspectives from different parts of the system were elicited by asking similar questions of parents, students and faculty so that a composite picture emerged reflecting all three perspectives. A systemic perspective was also elicited by asking questions about the larger context within which this mediation program exists. For this reason, contextual questions focusing on, for example, the kinds of conflicts people experience at this school, concerns about conflict and/or the threat of

violence and the strategies that students and faculty currently use for resolving them were included.

As well as being interested in how the students are perceived by the adults, I am interested in how faculty members and the school are perceived by students and parents; therefore I included several broad, open questions which provided an opportunity for people to comment on any perceptions they might have on "roadblocks" to mediation, ideas or experiences they might have to improve the program and suggested changes.

Having discovered from my review of the literature that much of the research focuses on attitudes, I included questions in both the surveys and the interviews designed to elicit and/or leave room for feelings and behavioral descriptions as well as attitudes. Another area that is neglected in the literature is the perspective of parents and guardians of the students. Surveys and interview questions designed specifically for parents were included, in order to include the families of students as an integral part of this study.

The experience as a consultant and school counselor involved in conflict resolution and mediation training that I bring to this work informed my choice of questions as well. An example of this is the question focusing on the types of conflicts faculty and staff would consider sending to mediation. This was included because I have experienced faculty and staff members holding different views about

whether, for example, students should be allowed to use mediation to resolve conflicts that have erupted into physical fights. These differences of opinion have important ramifications for a mediation program.

Selection of Subjects

Parent surveys were distributed to each student in the school by his or her homeroom teacher who had been instructed to tell students to bring surveys home to their parents. Parents were given the option of returning the anonymous surveys to a collection box in the office or mailing them to me at my home. Approximately 5.7% of the roughly 1000 surveys (57 in all) were returned to me. It is unclear how many of these original 1000 surveys reached the parents as I relied on the teachers to give them out, the students to bring them home, and the parents to receive them from backpacks and bookbags. The parents then had to fill them out and take the initiative to return them. This complicated process for receiving surveys meant that there was a certain accidental aspect to who ended up receiving the surveys and returning them to me. It was a self-selected group as well, and may have been over-represented by those with strong concerns.

Faculty surveys were distributed through their mailboxes in the school office. Out of approximately 120 surveys, 23 surveys (19.16%) were returned, again either to a box in the school office or mailed to my home.

In order to get a mixed representation of socio-economic class, race and academic performance level, surveys were administered to students in three different required classes. One was an eighth grade science class combining students at different ability grouping levels and two were ninth grade social studies classes, one an academically advanced class and the other a basic/standard class. Surveys were given to a total of fifty eight students, all of whom filled them out in the presence of the researcher and the classroom teacher.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 students, 12 faculty members, and eight parents. Given that the faculty is primarily White, I worked with the instructional director to compile an initial list reflecting a balance of gender, race and representation from administration, pupil personnel services and teachers. The final list was somewhat different due to time restraints on the part of several people but a balance of position, race, and gender was achieved with three teachers of color and five females interviewed.

In order to interview an appropriately diverse and balanced sample of students, subjects were recruited through visits to required classes. These included four physical education classes (required of all students every semester) which included students in grades seven through nine and a seventh grade mixed ability English class. During the first visit to these classes all student

volunteers were given permission slips to be signed by parents. Those that returned signed permission forms were interviewed. Nine students were recruited in this way. Additional subjects were needed to increase the diversity pool. Four students were recruited through suggestions from teachers, including a music teacher, an art teacher and a Chapter One teacher. The nine students recruited through physical education and English classes were interviewed in groups of three. The two students recruited through the Chapter One teacher were interviewed together. The two students recruited through the music and art teacher were interviewed individually as they were from separate classes with different schedules. A gender and racial balance was achieved through this method with five students of color and seven females out of a total of thirteen students. All participants at peer mediation meetings were invited to be interviewed. Five white peer mediators volunteered and all were interviewed.

Since mediation is a confidential process, disputants could not be recruited directly. Requests were made to student mediators during their meetings to ask disputants to volunteer as subjects. One subject was located in this way. The second subject was found through a chance meeting before speaking to the physical education class. Both were white and one was a female.

Parent interviewees were recruited through an announcement in the parent newsletter mailed to the home of

all parents. Parents were invited to contact the researcher if they were willing to be interviewed. In order to increase the sample size and to achieve a balance of gender and race suggestions were solicited from guidance counselors and the ESL teacher. Eight parents were interviewed including five parents of color and four females.

Data Collection and Recording

All interviews took place during the 1994-5 school year. Locations were at the convenience of those being interviewed, which was most often a classroom in the school building. I also met with people at the public library, at their homes, workplaces or other location of mutual agreement. Interviews varied in time from approximately one half hour to one interview that was over an hour and a half. All interviews were tape recorded and guided by a series of pre-planned questions (see appendices, pp. 236-246).

I used a semi-structured interview approach focusing on the list of questions to cover while remaining flexible about the exact wording or order of the questions and taking my cues from the interviewee(s). I left some time at the end for open discussion. All interviews were tape recorded for transcription. Questions varied slightly depending on category which included student mediators, student disputants, students from the general population,

faculty and parents. The interviews were professionally transcribed onto a computer disc.

Data Processing and Analysis

The overall organization of the research reflects the main question this study seeks to answer: what factors inhibit the use of mediation in this school? All data was evaluated using the two dimensions of this question (inhibiting or encouraging) as coding criteria.

I transcribed the interviews from tape to a written narrative on computer. I then read the interviews line by line to assess the data for examples, themes or expressions of enabling/supportive factors and inhibiting/discouraging factors. I gave each of these two themes a code number and identified statements that express one or the other criteria by writing code numbers on surveys and interviews. From reading the coded data I identified the most salient factors contributing to encouraging or inhibiting the use of mediation. I organized this data on factors into a computerized data base by type of respondent (student, faculty or parents). Care was taken to note race for all groups. Gender for students was recorded as well, as so much of the analysis was focused on student attitudes, feelings and behaviors. The factors and themes emerged from this process.

Numerical data were obtained through the questionnaire filled out by 58 students, 23 teachers, and 57 parents. The

purpose of this questionnaire was to discover the perceptions about and experience with the mediation program from a broader range of members of the school community. While survey research does not allow for the nuances and subtleties of qualitative interviews it gave me a broad and rich base of opinions from which to work.

Analysis of Factors

A systemic level analysis yielded the major factors used to code the data. Each of these factors was then analyzed for emergent themes which are enumerated in chapter four. The methodology used in delineating these factors was drawn from a systemic perspective which focused first on elaborating the levels of the system. These levels were delineated by paying attention to the structural aspects of the system including hierarchy and position. The structural analysis revealed students, parents and faculty to be the key groups of people operating within the larger framework of the school itself and the school system of which it is a part. The mediation program appears as a smaller system operating within the school. The socio-economic-political system emerges as the context within which all of the other levels function.

These levels were further delineated into separate factors by paying attention to the language of those interviewed and surveyed. By listening to this language, certain key concepts were identified as being repeated with

regularity on the surveys and in the interviews as they were read over numerous times. What began as nineteen discrete factors inhibiting the use of mediation and 23 discrete factors encouraging the use of mediation finally evolved to six inhibiting factors and 13 encouraging factors. This condensing of factors occurred as patterns emerged that indicated a need to group separate factors together.

A great deal of attention was paid to students in this study as they are the utilizers of the mediation program. Three separate inhibiting factors were analyzed including students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding mediation; students' methods of handling conflict and the attitudes, feelings and behaviors of students in school.

The fourth inhibiting factor included all data related to the school. Faculty attitudes, feelings and behaviors were included here as was all data relating to race, class and diversity issues, perceptions about conflict, violence and how people interact with each other in this school. Although originally coded as a separate factor, the organization and structure of the school related to conflict, including overcrowding and time pressures and the discipline system was also included within the overall factor of school dynamics; it became too subjective a judgement to determine which of these two categories the data belonged in. Any comments on the school system as a whole were also included in this factor. Therefore all

school related data inhibiting the use of mediation was centralized into this one factor.

At the level of the mediation program, the fifth factor, the four original discouraging factors included little or no previous knowledge and experience with mediation and conflict resolution, the organization and structure of the mediation program; concerns regarding confidentiality and diversity issues. These categories made more sense when grouped together as one factor with these latter as themes emerging from the larger factor of the mediation program itself.

Societal issues, the sixth inhibiting factor, included civility, the impact of the media, societal values and social inequity.

Data on encouraging factors was much more limited. Although thirteen factors were coded, only four factors had significant enough data to include. One factor covered all aspects of the mediation program seen as encouraging including the peer helping aspects of the program; the quality of the peer mediators (and the high quality of the training for the mediators themselves); the usefulness of the skills in the mediators' own lives and the fact that mediation is a confidential process. Student, parent and faculty attitudes, feelings and behaviors added up to three more positive factors.

Coding

A chart was created assigning a number for each factor. Data from the interview transcripts and surveys were coded according to these numbers (see Appendix, pp. 264-267, for a sample). At this point, there was an enormous amount of data; far too much information to be processed in one dissertation. In reviewing the data and the literature, it became clear that by focusing on the factors that inhibit students from using mediation a void in the literature would be filled. Far more of the data emerging from this study illuminated the inhibiting factors than the encouraging factors and this data was richer and more complex. To create effective school mediation programs, it is important to understand what prevents them from being successful in order to overcome these limitations. For all of these reasons, I chose to focus on the inhibiting factors.

Numerical data were elicited in two different ways. The interviews and the open ended questions on the surveys were coded by factor. For each interview and for each survey a notation was made for each factor raised; this data was then entered into the computer and sorted by race, position and, for students, by gender. For example, if an Asian female student commented on student methods of handling conflict as a discouraging factor for the use of mediation then this information was entered into the computer. Responses to yes and no questions and questions

asking respondents to check off choices were also sorted in this way.

Qualitative data was obtained by coding all of the open ended responses on the surveys and all of the interviews by factor. The-open ended responses were typed into the computer keeping track of the subject. Data from the interviews, which was already on the computer, was separated out by factor and put together, also keeping track of the subject. For example, all of the data related to student methods of handling conflict from all of the interviews was copied verbatim onto a separate file so that it could be read as one document. All of the data from the surveys related to all of the factors was put on three separate documents: student, parent and faculty. This method enabled the researcher to analyze all comments made in either interviews or surveys about student methods of handling conflict as an inhibiting or encouraging factor. Then this factor was analyzed for emergent themes, illustrated by relevant quotes and written up in chapter four.

A pseudonym was chosen for each interview participant. No names were used for survey participants. Whenever a first name is used, the comment was made in an interview. Comments without names attached represent responses to surveys. Some respondents are not described by race or by cultural or ethnic group. In these cases, the respondents did not provide this information. Whenever a respondent is

quoted in Chapter 4, I used their own description of their race, cultural, or ethnic group.

Methodological Assumptions

In this study the theory emerges through the voices of the participants. From a systemic perspective, it is crucial to pay attention to voices from different positions of the system therefore parents, students and teachers are all included and their various perspectives taken into account. The factors used to code the data emerged from a structural analysis of the system and the words of the participants.

The researcher's involvement in the field of mediation and conflict resolution, although not in the particular program being studied, is an important aspect of the study allowing familiarity without enmeshment.

In summary, this research project was a descriptive, qualitative study using survey research and interview methodology. Interviews and surveys with students, faculty and parents provided both numerical and qualitative data. The primary focus of the project was on understanding what factors discourage or prevent the students in this school from utilizing the mediation program available to them. An exhaustive process led to the delineation of six factors which inhibit the use of mediation in this school. These factors are analyzed in Chapter 4.

I see this research project as an opportunity to further understand how people of different backgrounds can work together to resolve differences in one school community. I explored what is presently working well, where the obstacles lie and how we can better overcome them so that our schools can become training grounds for living peacefully in a nation of people with many perceived differences.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter contains an analysis of six key factors revealed by the data to be discouraging the use of mediation. Each of these factors is analyzed for emergent themes and is illuminated through the words of the students, parents and faculty who participated in this study. The analysis of the discouraging factors is preceded by a summary of the factors encouraging the use of mediation in this school. The chapter ends with a compilation of suggestions from the people who were interviewed and surveyed about how to encourage increased usage of mediation in this school.

Analysis of Encouraging Factors

Although the emphasis of this study and the predominance of the data focus on those factors which inhibit the use of mediation, encouraging data emerged as well. In terms of factors (qualitative data collected from interviews and open ended surveys) the encouraging data included students, parents and teachers attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding mediation as well as aspects of the mediation program itself including: the peer helping aspects of the program; the quality of the peer mediators (and the high quality of the training for the mediators themselves); the usefulness of the skills in the mediators'

own lives and the fact that mediation is a confidential process.

Unlike the discussion format of the interviews which asked a direct open question about effectiveness, the survey format elicited thoughts and feelings about mediation primarily through a series of responses rather than open-ended questions. As only open-ended questions were included in the coding for factors, parent respondents would have had to initiate a positive comment, most likely in response to the question "Is there any other information that you think would be helpful to us in evaluating the current mediation program?" to have it counted as part of a factor. Faculty and student respondents had two other survey questions: "What is most effective about the mediation program?" and an "any feedback" question from which data for these factors could be drawn.

The first factor, students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding mediation, revealed that 70% of the twenty students interviewed and 39.66% of the students surveyed expressed positive sentiments about the process of mediation as a way to resolve conflicts.

Of the 12 faculty members interviewed, 75% indicated positive attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding the process of mediation while only 21.74% of those surveyed mentioned this factor.

For parents, 100% of those interviewed expressed positive attitudes, feelings and behaviors towards mediation along with 8.7% of those surveyed.

Data analysis for the mediation program itself as a factor encouraging the use of mediation revealed that the peer helping aspects of the program; the quality of the peer mediators (and the high quality of the training for the mediators themselves); the usefulness of the skills in the mediators own lives and the fact that it is confidential were the most highly rated aspects. Of 58 students surveyed, 51.72% along with 70% of the 20 students interviewed found positive things to say about the mediation program. Of the 20 students interviewed, five of them were mediators and thus knew a great deal about the program and had a vested interest in it, which might explain the higher percentage for the interviews.

The survey format elicited 57 parents' thoughts and feelings about mediation. Only 5.26% of parents surveyed included a positive comment about the program itself, perhaps indicating lack of information. Of parents interviewed, 87.5% made positive comments about an aspect of the mediation program. Of the 23 faculty surveyed, 52.17% along with all of the 12 faculty interviewed included positive comments about the mediation program itself.

Aside from the four positive factors that stood out in the data, a number of interesting trends emerged from the

quantitative data. Of all parents surveyed, 68.42% said that they know about the program and the same percentage, 68.42% said they would encourage their children to use it indicating a high rate of parent support. When presented with specific types of conflicts, across the board, more parents said they would encourage the use of mediation than said they would discourage the use of mediation (See Table 1).

Forty-eight out of the 57 parents interviewed (84.21%) said that they would like to see a portion of the curriculum focused on conflict resolution, mediation, and/or ways to handle anger and frustration.

Of all teachers surveyed, 100% said that they know about the program and the same percentage, 100%, said they would encourage their students to use it, indicating universal teacher support in terms of attitudes. However, only 52.17% of faculty said they have referred students to mediation, indicating a gap between attitude and behavior.

When presented with specific types of conflicts, across the board, teachers were highly supportive of the use of mediation.

Out of the 23 faculty surveyed, 56.52% said that they would like to see a portion of the curriculum focused on conflict resolution, mediation, and/or ways to handle anger and frustration.

Table 1

Types of Conflicts which might Result in the Use of Mediation

PARENTS	Spread Rumors	Name Call	Threats	Physical Fighting	Harassment	Arguing	Fighting girl/boy	Other
TOTAL 57	33	43	28	31	36	35	27	0
% OF TOTAL 100%	57.89%	75.44%	49.12%	54.39%	63.16%	61.40%	47.37%	0.00%
FACULTY	Spread Rumors	Name Call	Threats	Physical Fighting	Harassment	Arguing	Fighting girl/boy	Other
TOTAL 23	22	22	18	13	19	21	18	0
% OF TOTAL 100%	95.65%	95.65%	78.26%	56.52%	82.61%	91.30%	78.26%	0.00%
STUDENTS	Spread Rumors	Name Call	Threats	Physical Fighting	Harassment	Arguing	Fighting girl/boy	Other
TOTAL 58	20	24	29	28	35	24	13	1
% OF TOTAL 100%	34.48%	41.38%	50.00%	48.26%	60.34%	41.38%	22.41%	1.72%

Of all 58 students surveyed, 94.83% said that they know about the program although only 8.62% said they have used the program. When presented with specific types of conflicts 40% or more students said that they would bring name calling, threats of fighting, harassment and arguing to mediation.

Out of the students surveyed, 55.17% said that they would like to see a portion of the curriculum focused on conflict resolution, mediation, and/or ways to handle anger and frustration.

Eric, a White male mediator, grade 9, gave an indicator of both the promise and the challenge of creating a vital mediation program in this school with this comment about his experience trying to convince his friends to use mediation.

Well, I've encouraged a lot of my friends to use mediation... a lot of kids think you know, this is beyond mediation... this is something that can't be resolved by mediation. You know I just, I just tell them, I say, I say well, I mean peace, world peace is being solved by mediation, you know, like, like whatever countries are using mediators, the baseball strikes use mediators. And they say, "no this is different, this is something beyond mediation." And you know, I just, I just stress the fact that mediation does work and I do use it with a lot of my friends.

Analysis of Inhibiting Factors and Emergent Themes

All conflict resolution occurs within a context; the climate or atmosphere of a school is its' primary context. Climate infuses all aspects of a system and, paradoxically, the participants and the structure of a system in turn

shape the climate. All of the factors that we analyzed in this chapter are related to and have an impact on the climate of this school.

Folger et al. (1993) speak in their book, Working Through Conflict, about the interaction of many elements that combines to create the climate of an organization such as a school. According to their research, climate or atmosphere is affected by how power is distributed, the level of support that people feel from each other, the way decisions are made and to what degree people experience themselves as interconnected with each other and as a part of a larger community. All of these climactic conditions have an impact on how people choose to resolve their conflicts.

As themes emerged from the data, they provided illumination about how people within this particular school building think, feel and act about issues related to the climate of this school and to the resolution of conflict within it. Some of these themes are quantifiable. Others, more subjective, appear as nuances and subtleties best described in the language of emotion and perception. All of these themes are affected by a constellation of characteristics including, for example, one's role or position, race, class and gender.

How do faculty members perceive students in this building and how do students perceive faculty? What anxieties, fears and projections exist and how do they

impact on peoples' perceptions of each other? How do messages from home affect students? What are students telling their families about this school and its' climate? How do adult fears and images of adolescence color behavior and attitudes? Developmentally, young adolescents are entering a time of separation from adult controls and experimentation with new identities. What happens when they enter an environment tightly constructed around rules, regulations and compliance with adult authority? What issues emerge for parents as their children transition from the generally more protected environment of elementary to secondary school?

These questions point to the complexities that underlie any analysis of school climate and the resolution of conflict within it. Here the researcher must hold fast to an awareness of the multiplicity of perceptions that exist or risk getting caught in a fruitless search to discover an underlying reality. The climate of this school is a very different one depending on whether one looks through the eyes of faculty, students or parents. Individuals within these groups perceive the climate very differently, depending on a combination of variables including race, ethnicity, gender, social/economic class and personal experiences such as the degree to which they are an "insider" (finding success as defined within this system) or an "outsider". Exploring students' perceptions is one way to begin to explore the climate in this school

and the resolution of conflict within it, particularly the use of mediation.

Factor 1: Students' Attitudes, Feelings and Behaviors Regarding Mediation

Peer mediation is a process that depends on the active participation of students, both as mediators and as disputants. Junior high school students, being highly sensitive to peer pressure, tend to take their social cues from each other, particularly from their friends and those they look to as representatives of prestigious or high status groups. This peer pressure can serve to encourage or to discourage the use of mediation. In this school peer pressure appears to be a discouraging force. Although 94.83% of students surveyed say that they know about the peer mediation program in their school, only 12.07% of all students surveyed report that they or people they know use peer mediation as a way to resolve conflicts. The figure is even lower, 8.62%, when students are asked whether they have ever used peer mediation. Parents agree, with only 5.26% of those surveyed saying that students use mediation to resolve conflicts, although 68.42% say that they know about peer mediation as an option. These figures contrast sharply with the faculty surveys in which 58.82% of all respondents note peer mediation as a way that students resolve their conflicts. Faculty members may be more aware than parents that mediation exists as an option (all of those surveyed agreed that they know about peer mediation)

but parents are more accurate in their assessment of student choices in this matter.

Students in this school perceive their peers' attitudes, feelings and behavior as major deterrents to the use of mediation. All 20 of the students interviewed and 74.14% of the 58 students surveyed mention this factor as a discouraging one. Adults who were surveyed perceive this issue very differently, with the largest gap existing between parents and students. Only 15.79% of the 57 parents who filled out surveys raised this issue. Faculty members found a middle ground with 52.17% of the 24 surveyed perceiving this factor as discouraging. This points to an interesting gap between parents and children as well as between faculty and students. The adults surveyed do not realize the degree to which students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors are inhibiting them from using the mediation program. The in-depth discussion format of the interviews resulted in a different picture with half of the eight parents and 10 of the 12 faculty members interviewed seeing this factor as discouraging the use of mediation.

Half of the six bi/multiracial students, 83.33% of the six students of color, and 76.32% of the 38 White students surveyed, saw this factor as inhibiting the use of mediation, indicating that this is an issue that crosses racial lines. There was general agreement between the genders as well with 77.78% of the 27 males and 70.97% of the 31 females raising this issue.

Themes emerging from surveys and interviews indicate that when looked at more closely there are several specific issues raised by students and/or pointed out by adults that inhibit students from using mediation.

Mistrust of Mediation. Many students appear to lack trust in peer mediation. One aspect of this lack of trust is that many students do not feel comfortable with the process of mediation itself, describing it as "too threatening", "corny", "stupid" or "a joke". For example, Mike, a White male seventh grader said, "You just want to feel comfortable, you don't want to feel...out in the spotlight and not knowing what you are doing." More directly, as a 9th grade Latina said "They think its stupid." And, of course the ultimate adolescent fear as expressed by a 7th grade White female, "I just don't feel comfortable with kids because who knows if it's a problem and they go and spread it around the school. I just don't, like, trust it." Or as Tom, a mediator says,

There's the attitude that mediation isn't cool. It's not a real way to solve a fight. Even that it doesn't work. And that prevents people from going to mediation who know about the program... and know that it's effective...it's something that's very hard for me to recommend to kids. I always feel like they'll say mediation is dumb or think I'm making a joke.

Part of the lack of trust in the process is that students say they do not think it will work. One young man who had used mediation was adamant in his insistence that mediation would not work for him. Using a superhero

metaphor he said, "It has no effect on me. I am invisible to it. I am 'peer mediator immunity man'." Another former disputant, a 9th grade Caucasian male said, "I had to use it after I knocked a classmate out. It was no use. It doesn't work."

There are some people who think it's fine and everything...most of those people don't get in fights and stuff all that often. So they don't have a cause to go down to mediation. But people who do, tend to think negatively about it,

said a White female in the 7th grade." "The people that have bad attitudes or something think its just even worse to go to this mediation thing", agrees a 7th grade White male. An African-American/White teacher adds:

The present student perception is that mediation -just going to mediation-is admitting fault. If I did nothing wrong, I don't need to go to mediation. He or she, (the adversary) is the one that needs help. Mediation is seen as punishment, entering it as admission of guilt.

A second aspect of the lack of trust in mediation is a lack of trust in the mediators themselves; a fear that the mediators might laugh at the disputants, that they might take sides instead of being neutral or that the mediators might be trying to curry favor with the administration. Some are reluctant to tell their problems to a stranger. One parent said her child felt it was unfair to ask kids to patrol other kids. A White male 7th grader describes his fears "...if its peer mediation and you'd feel ...like at any point the mediator could like start laughing or something with no teacher around". "They are probably

scared that they will feel stupid arguing in front of mediators because they might laugh at them behind their backs after the mediation meeting" points out a 9th grade female White/Native American.

Her concern is validated in this comment from Fred, a White mediator in the ninth grade:

I wouldn't feel that someone would break my confidentiality, but I would be more afraid that they themselves would be laughing at me , cause I know sometimes when I do a mediation when you're mediating people who are two years younger than you, you really feel a difference and you really feel these people are really immature and I always feel like I'm laughing at these people because they're so stupid and I'm always afraid that if I had to go to a mediation they would be laughing at me. And, so it's not confidentiality, but it's just like what they think of you.

Similar examples or reasons for mistrust are stated by other students: "One thing that like bothers me...is that it's a stranger. Someone you don't know so that they don't really know anything about you" says a White female 7th grader.

The rest of the people who are mediators are like good students...other people might think that they're just like "goody-goody"...that most of the mediators will suck up to the teachers or something,

from a White 7th grade female. A parent concurs, saying, "Kids view mediators as 'elitist' and 'know it all' type. Very difficult for young people to trust others enough to have confidence in resolutions."

A third aspect related to mistrust in the mediation process is worry about the other disputant; a fear that he

or she might take the mediation as a joke, refuse to participate or somehow get the other disputant into trouble. For example, "...the person you have a problem with will tell the school that you tell on people," worried a 9th grade White male. And, "...if the other person doesn't want to go to mediation with you, then you'll feel stupid," said an African-American female in the 8th grade.

Preferring to Solve Problems Autonomously. A second issue underlying student attitudes, feelings and behaviors that discourage the use of mediation is that students appear to prefer and/or feel more comfortable solving problems by themselves.

The first aspect of this issue stems from the belief, frequently encountered in our society at large, that individualized, privatized solutions are preferable to asking for/needing help. In the "real world" people do not use mediation. This is related to the overall cultural belief that one "wins" at the expense of another's loss rather than looking for possible "win/win" solutions to problems.

This belief system was expressed by students in several ways. "Most people believe they should solve their own problems", says a White male 9th grader." I think people think that they don't need somebody's else's help in dealing with their problems" writes a 9th grade White female. "They think it is easier to try and work it out between themselves", stated a 9th grade White/Native

American female. "I think people have to handle their own problems cause when we get out into the world the real world isn't going to be "peer mediation" reported a 9th grade multi-racial female.

A White female 7th grader says:

I think people...can learn how to deal with their own problems and not have anyone solve it for them. I don't really like it because in the future there's not always going to be mediation. So, I think they should just, like, stop it because, I mean, if in college or something when they have problems they can't go to mediation. They have to deal with it themselves.

Another White female, grade 7 adds:

I wouldn't want to go to it because really if it's my problem, I really wouldn't want to get anyone else involved, the person that's doing the mediation, because I just think its better to work it out among your friends, rather than go to mediation.

From a 9th grade White female mediator:

They don't want to have to admit to being wrong and I think that like that goes along with what our whole society, you know, doesn't condone, talking about your problems and you know, saying let's sit down and you know just talk about it

A second aspect of solving your own problems is a reluctance to let others know that you have a problem that you need help with or can't solve by yourself. Related to this is a discomfort with allowing others, particularly peers, to know your personal problems. It also ties into a belief that by admitting you need help you are showing a weakness or vulnerability that is somehow dangerous or puts you at a disadvantage with your peers:

By going to mediation you are admitting to yourself and others involved that it is really a problem you want help with (from a 9th grade White female).

They are embarrassed and just don't have the courage to face up to and discuss openly their problems (from a 9th grade female).

... or perhaps its the fact that no one wants to be helped by someone the same age as you because it makes you feel inferior (from a 9th grade White female).

Or it's like I don't want other people getting into my business. That one other person. Even though that they're qualified to help you work out your problems. And you know that. You still say to yourself I don't want to give out all this information...about like my business. To me I think it's because they're not used to talking about their problems (from an 8th grade male African American).

Most people don't want their peers, the people they see in the hallways, the people they have classes with, to...know their problems (from a 9th grade White female).

These comments are illuminated by Robert, an African-American faculty member:

Another reason why kids are reluctant, I think, is that it's viewed somehow as an admission of weakness and in these times, now more than perhaps at other times, it's not good to be perceived as weak. You have to be tough. You have to be able to take care of your stuff. So, turning it over to someone or admitting that you could use help from someone else is contrary to that and so folks are reluctant to admit it. Even when they go through life, it's hard for them to say 'yeah, I'll accept help with this'. They would rather stay mad and be enemies.

Even a mediator expressed this feeling saying:

I would...feel very strange...being involved in a mediation about a problem with myself and also I just have problems admitting when I have done something wrong.

Debby, a White faculty member provided a developmental perspective on this when she stated that:

....the more mature, the more competent...the leaders, those with the charisma are much less likely to avail themselves of that, they are more likely to become the mediators. If they have a certain social consciousness. But, it's as though, "I will be the helper, but I don't need help".

A third aspect of the issue of wanting to solve problems by oneself is that developmentally, junior high school students are moving towards independence and prefer to solve problems by themselves. The following analysis by Debby speaks to the developmental issues very clearly:

One of the major things that is going on with kids is that they are trying to become independent. And, what we are asking them to do, is to allow others, even if they are peers, to intervene and be helpful in a way, that to this point, adults have been for them. So, in rejecting the adult model, I'm not sure they are able to pick up the peer model. Because, as you fight for your self-esteem and want to feel like a competent individual, you don't want to have to go to somebody else to negotiate your problems. Sad, if there is any validation to that thought. It's not autonomous, if somebody else is doing it.

And as Edward, a White male faculty member, put it:

The urge to join in a program which after all is adult sponsored and adult couched becomes less and less attractive as you leave the ages of 8, 9, 10, and starting to get 11, 12 years old. At this stage, mediation, formal mediation is not seen as a first or second level of resort. So that mediation at this stage is more prompted by some of the savvier kids or adults, referring for mediation. Kids rarely will bring their own problems without prompting to the mediation table.

Mediation Isn't Cool. A third issue negatively impacting the use of mediation is a concern for what others will think; a belief that going to mediation is not "cool", a fear that people might make fun of you and a concern about protecting your reputation. Consider the following examples of comments by respondents. George describes the awkwardness involved in taking on this new role.

It's actually setting itself up to do something that nobody in your peer group is (doing).... But that's a tough time to step into that role... a stranger (comes and does a)...presentation... saying 'come be weird. Come be different from all your peers. Take on a role that you haven't seen anywhere else in the society or among your peer group, while you're trying to fit in to this new school.

Several students validated George's perspective with their descriptions of mediation as "uncool". "It's sometimes considered wimpy not to fight and go to mediation" said a 9th grade bi-racial male. "They think it is corny or nerdy to try and work it out by talking it out instead of working it out by fighting" was the reply from a White male grade 8. Sara, a White 9th grade mediator, talked about the influence of peer groups.

(You are) so influenced by your friends or by just your peer group that you think that it's so uncool, and that you'll be branded if you do it. And so you won't participate, and you'll just sit there like "get me out of here, get me out of here".

I'm afraid of people probably making fun of you of going. Like saying" you didn't solve your conflict. You didn't have a fist fight with this person" or something like that. " You didn't fight them out. Instead you went to mediation"

said an African-American male in the 7th grade. Rob, an African-American 8th grade male, thinks that: "If they (friends) hear that you are going to mediation they going to go, 'Man, why you punk out man, why you go down like that?'"

This concern appears to be related to gender. "Boys aren't supposed to talk about feelings; its not cool for boys to go to mediation" is a subtext of the concern about being cool. "It should be 'cool' to be a mediator. This is not the case--especially among boys--a separate appeal should be focused on the boys," wrote a White parent. "It might be something especially true about boys, I don't know about girls, but I think...talking about your problems is not...supposed to happen," agreed Fred, a White male mediator in the ninth grade.

"To some people it might be embarrassing, that they will have to protect their 'rep' that their not going to go to mediation...They need to protect their 'rep'," pointed out a White female 7th grader. "Maybe people think if someone goes there they're bad or something. Like the Dean might see them in mediation or something and think they are bad," worried Bob.

You Don't Think of it When You Get in a Fight. A fifth issue is that mediation is not integrated or modeled for many students in the rest of their lives and a number of students said they simply don't think of it. "You know you don't think of it when you get into a fight with a person,

should I take mediation with him first or not," said a White male grade 9. Even a mediator reported that it never occurred to her to encourage two of her friends involved in a conflict to go to mediation.

It just made me realize that I just thought of a big problem that two of my friends are having. And I really, I never even thought you know. I mean I was talking about it today and I was -----in the same like paragraph I was talking about how I was coming here this afternoon, and it didn't even click in my mind, to just go up to them and say why don't you try mediation. You know, I mean it just, it isn't occurring to us.

Is it Really Confidential?. As they struggle with the nuances of relationships, students may feel confused about what information it is appropriate to share with others and what needs to be held in confidence. Many students are concerned, perhaps as a projection of their own lack of comfort with this issue or perhaps because of experience with peers betraying confidences in the past, that peer mediators may not be trustworthy enough to maintain confidentiality.

Sara, a White mediator in the ninth grade said, "The biggest problem I think is that people feel the mediators might not keep their secrets...people don't understand that it's what's that...confidential".

Robert, an African-American teacher, pointed out "They haven't learned how to keep confidentiality with friends" and Brian agrees, saying "...a lot of the mediators are just friends of yours and you know they've told lies before, so how are you supposed to believe them now?"

Concerns about confidentiality are related to the heightened self consciousness and sensitivity about what others think that is typical of this age group. A fear of rumors leaking from the mediation session and being circulated throughout the school and destroying one's reputation seems to be an inhibiting factor. As Gary, a White seventh grader says:

I know how they say everything's going to be confidential. But you still have a feeling one little rumor could go around and I mean like your reputation or something could be ruined. And you feel like you are putting yourself out like on the stage and anything could happen to you. You know like people could throw tomatoes at you or something. And you know, like you're out there and you feel like you're, there's nothing to protect you from being insulted. Just their word. And a lot of peoples word around here doesn't mean that much at all.

Sara, the ninth grade mediator agreed:

The biggest problem I think is the people feel the mediators might not keep their secrets... I've talked to people who say I don't want to go tell people about my problems, what if they go tell other people...in Social Studies class the other day these two kids got up in the middle of class and the teacher gave them a pass. She was like 'yeah I think it's great you guys are going to mediation'...everybody just stared at them.

One teacher says the problem is:

I don't think kids really realize that it's confidential and that it's with peers. I mean I think as much as we say that, they still think somehow adults are involved... there's not yet really a clear picture that this is just with your peers and that nobody tells... I think they've heard it but it hasn't sunk in.

Students, in particular, as well as a number of teachers and parents, provided rich insights into the ways in which student attitudes, feelings and behaviors about mediation inhibit them from using it. Students are wary of mediation, a process they have little experience with, don't really understand and rarely consider when they are in a conflict; they have internalized social messages about the importance of solving one's problems on one's own rather than seeking help from others; they are very influenced by peer pressure and perceive mediation as "uncool" in the eyes of their peers and a threat to their well-being if rumors should leak from their sessions and destroy their reputations. Introducing mediation at this particular juncture in their development, during a time of adjustment to a large new school and amidst the tumultuousness of adolescence is a major challenge. This ties into the next section which looks at how students handle conflict.

Factor 2: Student Methods of Handling Conflict

How students currently resolve their conflicts is intimately related to their use or lack of use of mediation. Of the 58 students surveyed, 31.03% raised this as an issue, along with 34.78% of the 24 faculty members surveyed, again with close agreement between these two groups. Parents raised this in only 7.02% of the 57 surveys. The lower numbers for parents may have to do with

their lack of daily contact with the student body as a whole and thus their unfamiliarity with how students actually do resolve their conflicts in school.

Eighty-five percent of the 20 students interviewed, 91.67% of the 12 faculty, and 50% of the eight parents raised this as a discouraging issue, indicating strong agreement between faculty and students that the ways in which students resolve conflict is not conducive to mediation.

Gender issues emerged among students, with 41.94% of females surveyed seeing student methods of resolving conflicts as discouraging the use of mediation, as compared to only 18.52% of males.

Race differences emerged as well, with only 28.95% of White students perceiving this factor as discouraging as compared to 83.33% of the bi/multiracial students. Of the students of color surveyed, 33.33% reported that student methods of resolving conflict discourages the use of mediation.

Student and teacher interviews were particularly rich in describing how students resolve conflicts. A continuum of responses emerged from the data; from passive responses such as withdrawal and submission through aggressive responses including verbal assaults and physical violence. Included in this continuum is a middle range of responses that could be classified as active or assertive responses to conflict. Any responses that do not include utilizing

the mediation program are considered discouraging, in the context of the research question, although they may, in themselves, be positive and appropriate responses to conflict. However, in this study the focus is on the factors discouraging students from using mediation and a student who, for example, ignores conflict or carefully avoids it, is not likely to choose mediation. In this section the continuum of student responses to conflict is explored (see Table 2).

Passivity and Avoidance. The continuum of student responses to conflict begins with what can be described as passivity and/or avoidance. Passive and avoidant responses include ignoring, submission, backing off from the conflict and "being nice". Since mediation requires active acknowledgement of the conflict and a willingness to work it out with the other person, avoidant or passive responses are not likely to lead to mediation.

When asked how they resolve conflicts, 79.31% of the 58 students surveyed said they ignore them and 55.17% said they stay away. These two passive/avoidant responses were the most frequently cited ways of responding to conflict of all of those listed on the survey. Faculty are in general agreement, 82.35% reporting that students ignore conflicts and 64.71% that students choose to stay away. Many parents (68.42% of the 57 surveyed) also see ignoring as a major

Table 2

How Do Students Respond to Their Conflicts?

PARENTS		Ignore	Physical Fight	Peer Mediation	Stay Away	Friends Help	Go to Adult	Threaten	Name Call	Talk it out
TOTAL	57	39	5	3	24	19	20	1	2	14
% OF TOTAL	100%	68.42%	8.77%	5.26%	42.11%	33.33%	35.09%	1.75%	3.51%	24.56%
FACULTY		Ignore	Physical Fight	Peer Mediation	Stay Away	Friends Help	Go to Adult	Threaten	Name Call	Talk it out
TOTAL	23	14	14	10	11	12	10	14	15	6
% OF TOTAL	100%	82.35%	82.35%	58.82%	64.71%	70.59%	58.82%	82.35%	88.24%	35.29%
STUDENTS		Ignore	Physical Fight	Peer Mediation	Stay Away	Friends Help	Go to Adult	Threaten	Name Call	Talk it out
TOTAL	58	46	16	7	32	29	8	13	13	24
% OF TOTAL	100%	79.31%	27.59%	12.07%	55.17%	50.00%	13.79%	22.41%	22.41%	41.38%

method of handling conflicts although less agree about staying away (42.11%). These findings are reflected in the following statements by Edward, a White faculty member:

Well, I see conflicts, not necessarily resolved, but conflicts that become adjusted to another arena, either to a fight or to a submission basically. I mean, lots of conflicts end up with a kind of submission, bullying behavior.... Another resolution is because of boredom... new targets, new problems take the place of the old one. Sometimes kids themselves will resolve by just backing off, they get in too deeply and they recognize it.

I think there's still some kids...that would rather bury the issue and not deal with it.. How do I know it's not going to get me into a bigger mess, going through (with it), you know

said Charles, a White male faculty member, and Anne added:

Avoidance is the number one response in most kids, particularly when it deals with the different class levels. I mean, a seventh grader is petrified when they come and I think in many cases they probably carry that here through most of the year. So, when they come in contact with older students, I think very often, they're more likely to let it go.

A White female in the 9th grade points out that

They think they can resolve their problems on their own without mediation or think it will go away without mediation or by itself.

Jasmine, an African-American female in the eighth grade describes it this way:

Like sometimes, especially if it's with a friend, you had an argument or something, you don't talk for, like, a day or sometimes, like, for a week or whatever and then just eventually you'll start talking. And sometimes, like, the other person gets somebody else to tell you sorry or whatever.

Gina, a White faculty member, added:

Yeah, I think there's a lot of avoidance. I think a lot of kids are intimidated both physically and verbally. I see a lot of someone shouting something and the kids just drop it, they just keep going ...and unless it touches them really personally, they just forget it.

Gary, a White 7th grade, said:

And so like a lot of times, sometimes if you don't want to insult somebody back, you just walk away. And then normally they see that you are not paying attention to what they are saying and they will just ignore you anyway. Cause they see, that they're not gonna get you...

Naomi reinforced this sentiment when she said of her daughter, a 7th grader,

So I think she would rather withdraw from something that felt unsafe rather than be involved to the point where it felt conflictual to her.

Anne summed it up well when she said that there is

...a general expectation that a certain amount of battering will take place and that's the nature of the institution or the nature of the age. Sometimes I'll ask a child, why do you put up with this, "well, that's life...Maybe rather than say a revolution of rising expectations, we have (a) revolution of declining expectations."

Anne's words are striking. What she is saying is that students in this school and perhaps young people today, in general, accept and even expect to experience a certain amount of mistreatment and cruelty at the hands of their peers. If students feel this way, it is no wonder that many are hesitant to place their faith in their peers and enter the process of mediation.

Some students reacts passively to conflict, harassment and aggression, others react with more assertive responses. The next place on the spectrum of responses to conflict is an active or assertive approach.

Active/Assertive Responses. Neither avoidance nor escalation, active/assertive approaches involve talking it out, or seeking help from an adult or a peer. Of students surveyed, 50% said that friends help them to work out their conflicts and 41.38% said that they talk it out. Only 13.79% of students said that they seek adult help. Totals from faculty surveys are different, particularly concerning going to an adult for help (58.82%) while 70.59% think friends help work things out and 35.29% believe that students talk it out.

Approximately one third (35.9%) of parents surveyed think that students go to adults for help and 33.33% think that students go to friends while under one quarter (24.56%) think they talk it out. Students appear to rely more on their peers than on adults to help resolve their conflicts and to a degree greater than the adults realize, although the adults still play a role in helping them to resolve conflicts. As Sharon, a White seventh grader says:

But, I wouldn't go to it (mediation) because really if it's my problem, I really wouldn't want to get anyone else involved, the person that's doing the mediation, because I just think it's better to work it out among your friends, rather than go to mediation... I just talk with my friends because me and my friend...we have, we have fights all the time, but we solve it.

Jennifer, also a White seventh grader, would consider seeking out adult help if she couldn't work it out with her friends by herself rather than seeking mediation.

I would probably just go the dean or something, if I was having a real problem...I just talk it out with my friends and if that doesn't work, then just, kind of, like, be nice to the person. Mainly, I just try to work it out and I really don't have any problems with my friends. If I did I would tell them and I would talk it out..Just, can we talk about this. This is kind of bothering me and I'd like to talk about it.. I don't think I would use the mediation program. I think I would go to the dean. And if he requested it, I would probably only go then.

Henry, an African-American seventh grader, is also still willing to rely on adults. "Usually you either tell a teacher or something like that. Most of the time I do."

Many other students try to resolve the situation by themselves. Bob, a White 7th grader responded when asked what he does when he has a conflict with someone "Ah, I just ignore him or something or try to solve it myself first. Like during passing period or something." Gary, a White 7th grader says he has a strategy for resolving conflicts with friends by himself without outside help.

...if I had a conflict with a friend... I'd see what I could do, myself...to make it better. And then I'd see if they'd want to do something like go hang out somewhere or do something....Like ...when we were getting along better, that we had fun doing.

A White female in the ninth grade agrees, saying

Some people would rather talk it out alone than with two other people who have nothing to do with it.

A 9th grade White female said that she sees that a lack of initiative on the part of students prevents them from going to mediation.

Kids often need someone else to tell them what to do so if they are having a conflict they need someone to tell them to go to mediation or they will probably not take the initiative themself[ves].

Pre-Assaultive and Assaultive Responses. Next on the spectrum are pre-assaultive responses. This is a category that includes all those behaviors that have passed beyond the active/assertive mode and contain elements of aggression and attempts to maintain one's status and power at the expense of another, but have not escalated into open, all-out verbal or physical assault.

Threatening and name calling as a response to conflict are two examples of this type of behavior. Both of these responses were cited by 22.41% of students as ways that they and people they know resolve conflicts. Faculty report much higher percentages. Threatening was mentioned by 82.35% of all faculty surveyed and name calling was cited by 88.24%. Parents report significantly lower percentages. Only 1.75% think that students threaten each other and only 3.51% believe that students engage in namecalling. Given that faculty members report so much more threatening and namecalling than do students, the differences in figures may be related to the fact that students were asked "how do you and people you know resolve conflicts?" Students may not perceive their own or their friends behavior as either

"threatening" or "namecalling" while this same behavior may be perceived that way by adults.

Pre-assaultive behaviors can easily escalate to the next stage, assaultive behaviors. Among these behaviors are revenge seeking; attempts at dominance; impulsive or face saving responses to being harassed, threatened or attacked; and polarization between the friends of both parties. All-out verbal or physical assault is at the most violent end of the continuum. There was a large discrepancy between students and faculty in their perception of physical fighting as a response to conflict. While 82.35% of all faculty surveyed think that this is a way that students resolve conflict, only 27.59% of students report that they or people they know resolve conflicts through physical fighting. Only 8.77% of parents report physical fighting as a method students use to handle conflicts.

Charles, a White male faculty member said of students in conflict:

Neither of them have the defusing mechanism - the ways of backing down or - they don't have ways to really deal with some of the things...immediately the response was to punch him or hit him, to react violently to it because it's such a violation that that's only proper, that's the only response, and there didn't seem to be, like, within moderation, like well I'd do this first or that first, it was just immediately going to that aspect, that's the mode of resolving. It's, you know, might makes right...if someone calls me a name and I'm stronger, then I'm just going to beat the living hell out of them... because you lose face and then you have to either take it to that other level or ...I don't know what happens if you don't respond in some way.

A faculty member states that there are "many concerns. (Among them an) overall attitude that problem solving through one-upsmanship or escalation is the only way-very automatic."

Two African-American eighth graders, describe the fine line between assertive and pre-assaultive behavior. Rob says:

I don't get into fights with my friends, like, somebody I don't know I'll get into a fight with. (over) stupid stuff....we'll be playing basketball and, like, and something will happen and you just start fighting.

Jasmine adds, "But you would talk it out and everything," but then says, "It depends who the person is." Rob explains,

I would, if you was, like, my cousin, I would, like, argue with him but then we wouldn't fight. We would, like, argue and argue and then we would, like, talk. We wouldn't, like, be mad at each other and then forget about the whole thing.

Jasmine says, "That's like your friends, too, but if it comes down to, like, somebody that you really hate and you don't really know them." And Rob chimes in. "I would fight. I'd fight." Then Rob describes his response to being attacked:

If he hits me, I will go off, you know, because if I didn't hit him he should have no right to hit me and I'll go off...If that person hits me first, I would have to wreck him. I would have to hit back because, he doesn't have a right to hit me, like, if I didn't hit him...I would just be mad. I can't, let somebody hit me without hitting back. I don't care how big they are. They hit me, I have to hit them back because I ain't going out like that.

Jasmine emphasizes: "But, if it's your friend you just forget about it" and Rob agrees:

If you were playing basketball and it's your friend and you're fighting over whatever, you just continue playing and you calm down and you just forget all about it. And then it's, like, another new day and you're like friends, and best friends again.

Debbie, a White faculty member describes revenge seeking this way:

Kids are remarkably sneaky and manipulative when they want to be vengeful. The kind of note passing, that's another way of handling it, you crank up everybody in your group. You interpret your way, and get on the "airwaves" first. That is probably a pretty major communication tool. I'd like to have a nickel for every note that's passed in this school...It's the "spin" they put on it, exactly. It's probably that verbal kind of spin you put with the group as well as the note writing, that's probably the dominant mechanism that kids have for jostling social relationships their way. I think when that doesn't work, people can get frustrated, excited and then they began to take on more openly verbal, or physical forms. But, if you can ostracize someone from your group by the power of your written or spoken word, then you have no need to go further than that.

Joseph, an African-American faculty member talks about impulsive and assaultive responses:

It's impulsive reaction. If they get hit, they're going to hit back. If they get harassed or provoked, they want to challenge that person, they want to meet the challenge.

A female 9th grader who describes herself as Black/Dominican/Jamaican explains:

Because if you get heated up you're not gonna want to talk about it you're gonna want to do something about it. I've got a short temper. I would rather fight than talk.

Some people are concerned about an increasing threat of violence: "I find that there are more students choosing to settle disagreements through violence rather than finding other solutions," says Anne, a White faculty member. Nuk, a female Cambodian student in the 8th grade comments on one motivation for fighting: "...they think that if they fight and they win that they will be popular and stuff, I don't know." A White faculty member adds:

I'll see many instances of physical jostling and "pretend" punching especially among the boys. I feel there are a number of students who will react unpredictably to this. Many times I've witnessed something that looks innocent enough get out of control. I have a definite concern about threats of violence. Conflict is evident daily.

When asked on the survey about concerns regarding conflict or the threat of violence in the school, one White faculty member responded with, "The presence of guns, knives, and other assault weapons." "A good deal of "pseudo-violence", pushing, shoving, etc., that may start in jest" is a concern of another faculty member who worries that "student fears may lead to more arming with weapons."

Other faculty members saw it differently. "I think the threat of violence is more an outgrowth of unresolved minor conflict than a mainstay of the population," said a White faculty member.

I believe that as in any situation that involves large numbers of people working in close proximity for extended periods there are conflicts ...relative to many schools in Mass.

and across the country... (This school) provides a very safe, positive learning experience,"

said a White female faculty member.

Another faculty member sees fighting and other assaultive behaviors as more of a normal adolescent behavior pattern stating that the "...potential for escalation (is) always a concern with this age group." A White parent wondered whether reports of fighting at this school may be either blown out of proportion or minimized, and asked

. . .to see some stats on the "fighting" that really goes on. Is there a lot or a little? Is it blown out of proportion to what really goes on there? Is it not reported on at all for fear parents will overreact?...My child won't use the restroom facilities for fear of what might happen.

Robert, an African-American faculty member, describes a variety of pre-assaultive responses and how they can erupt into all-out physical or verbal assault:

...by getting, say, polarized from the person they're at odds with so that they separate themselves from them and then be sort of like enemies that talk about one another. Sometimes it goes to the next level which is real conflict and what happens a lot is that the conflicts that develop are sort of like stones in a pool in that they send out ripples and people then are put in the position of sort of taking sides. I'm against Joe X so all of my friends have to be against Joe X, his friends have to be against me, so that the circle expands and occasionally it generates to more active negativity, i.e., physical fighting. Those are not really that common considering the numbers.

Robert then makes an observation relating broader societal shifts to escalation of conflict within this school.

....I think perhaps people (today) are somewhat quicker to take offense and more quick to get to the enemy. Well, people take things more personally more quickly. Whereas before, there might have been more of a tendency to just blow it off and not really respond to it too much. Now it seems that things require a response. Maybe that everybody's nerves are a little bit shorter and their sensitivities to conflict are a little more heightened as part of the societal drift.

Where does mediation fit on this continuum? When asked how students in this school resolve their conflicts, only 12.07% of 58 surveyed reported the use of mediation. This figure was the lowest percentage given for any of the ways in which students resolve conflicts, even less common than going to an adult for help (13.79%).

According to David, a disputant from the ninth grade, mediation holds a place on the continuum after pre-assaultive and assaultive responses. He says that "...usually these conflicts in school result in fights, usually it's a fight before mediation."

An Asian/White male in the 9th grade adds:

In some schools the threat of a gun or knife being drawn hangs over their heads and they'd rather mediate, Springfield, for example. Here, that threat isn't as great and people are willing to fistfight, etc. It's sometimes considered wimpy not to fight and go to mediation.

How students currently resolve their conflicts is intimately related to their use or lack of use of

mediation. Approximately one third of all 58 students and 23 teachers surveyed raised student methods of resolving conflicts as a factor inhibiting the use of mediation as well as 85% of the students interviewed, over 90% of the faculty and half of the parents. Only 7.02% of the 57 parents surveyed raised this issue indicating that parents may be less aware about how students resolve conflicts. Passive and avoidant responses appear to be prevalent which would indicate that students frequently feel intimidated by the conflicts they encounter. Active/assertive responses in the form of relying on friends to help or talking it out with each other are often employed. Pre-assaultive and assaultive responses such as namecalling, threats and physical fighting as a response were cited by 22.41% of students as ways that they and people they know resolve conflicts while faculty report much higher percentages (82.35% for threatening and 88.24% for name calling). Parents report significantly lower percentages. Only 1.75% think that students threaten each other and only 3.51% believe that students engage in namecalling. Given that faculty members report so much more threatening and namecalling than do students, the differences in figures may be related to the fact that students were asked "how do you and people you know resolve conflicts?". Students may not perceive their own nor their friends behavior as either "threatening" or "namecalling" while this same behavior may be perceived that way by adults. Pre-assaultive and

assaultive responses such as namecalling, threats and physical fighting to conflict are more common than is the use of peer mediation which appears to be the least employed of all of these approaches to resolving disputes.

Factor 3: Attitudes/Feelings/Behaviors of Students in School

The larger context in which mediation and other forms of conflict resolution occur is the daily behavior and interactions of students; their efforts to define who they are in the midst of changing bodies, fluctuating hormone levels, and the struggle to carve out an identity for themselves. All of this is occurring in an often tumultuous environment, in a building filled with one thousand other students all going through variations on this theme. What impact does this larger context, the attitudes, feelings and behaviors of the student body in school, have on students' use of mediation?

This is a contextual issue and was not asked about directly on the surveys. However the surveys supplied rich data on a number of related questions (see Table 3).

When students were asked which types of conflicts they see occurring at school, the highest percentages given were: 94.83% "name calling" and 89.66% "spreading rumors". Faculty responses were similar for name calling (100%) and for spreading rumors (95.65%). Parents agree that name calling (54.39%) and spreading rumors (42.11%) are the two most frequent types of conflicts but perceive these two

Table 3
Kinds of Conflicts Students Have at School

PARENTS		Spread Rumors	Name Call	Threats	Physical Fighting	Harass- ment	Arguing	Fighting girl/boy	Other
TOTAL	57	24	31	15	14	17	0	15	4
% OF TOTAL	100%	42.11%	54.39%	26.32%	24.56%	29.82%	0.00%	26.32%	7.02%
FACULTY		Spread Rumors	Name Call	Threats	Physical Fighting	Harass- ment	Arguing	Fighting girl/boy	Other
TOTAL	23	22	23	20	19	17	22	20	0
% OF TOTAL	100%	95.65%	100.00%	86.98%	82.61%	73.91%	95.65%	86.96%	0.00%
STUDENTS		Spread Rumors	Name Call	Threats	Physical Fighting	Harass- ment	Arguing	Fighting girl/boy	Other
TOTAL	58	52	55	33	40	28	44	19	0
% OF TOTAL	100%	89.66%	94.83%	56.90%	68.97%	48.28%	75.86%	32.76%	0.00%

types of conflicts as well as all other types of conflicts listed on the survey as occurring less frequently than do teachers and students, perhaps because they do not observe students in school on a daily basis.

Given that one of the big concerns students report about using mediation is that rumors will leak from the mediation session the fact the rumor mongering is such a major issue would appear to discourage the use of mediation.

Of all students surveyed, the figures for other types of conflicts are as follows: 75.86% "arguing", 68.97% "physical fighting", 56.9% "threats", 48.28% harassment and 32.76% fighting over boyfriends/girlfriends. Faculty see more fighting over boyfriends/girlfriends and threats (86.96% for both), more physical fighting (82.69%) and at 73.91%, their figures are higher for harassment. Faculty and students may differ in what each perceives as definitions for some of these behaviors; what may seem like physical fighting to an adult could be seen as playful interactions by students. On the other hand, a behavior that may be accepted or shrugged off by a student could be correctly recognized as harassment by an adult.

Figures given by students for harassment, although somewhat lower, than for other types of conflicts, revealed an interesting pattern with only 39.47% of the 38 White students mentioning it, as compared to 83.33% of the people of color and 66.67% of the six bi/multiracial students.

While only 33.33% of the 27 males checked off "harassment", 61.29% of the females checked off this type of conflict. Clearly the women and non-White students surveyed see harassment as a much more frequent occurrence than do the White and male students.

During the in-depth process of interviewing, more data about the impact of student attitudes, feelings and behaviors on the use of mediation was revealed. All of the 12 faculty interviewed raised aspects of student attitudes, feelings and behavior that were classified as discouraging the use of mediation as did 5 of the 8 parents and 11 of the 20 of students.

Developmental Issues. Developmentally, junior high school students are struggling with the need to define themselves and to fit in with their peers. "...the names that people use, they want to fit in, they want to be accepted, that's what's really happening with kids," says Joseph. Debby described it this way:

The junior high kids, as they try to find their independence and who they are, need to establish themselves in some sort of hierarchy. I think it has much more to do with one's sense of self. As kids develop their sense of self, they are trying to find where they fit in the school around them..in a junior high, it really focuses on peer group.

Another issue is the volatility of early adolescence. Changing bodies and hormones, emotional ups and downs; all of these changes create an ever-fluctuating inner climate and set the stage for dramatic shifts in personal

interactions. "There aren't a lot of controls and processes in twelve and thirteen, fourteen year olds, emotions are very immediate," said Debby.

There's an awful lot of jockeying for emotional position as well as confusion about one's presentation of one's self, you know. And hormonal impulsivity. Hormonally based impulsivity.

said a faculty member. Paul, an African-American parent captures this upheaval with these words:

And then junior high school being the place where you've got kids with hormones running bananas...and they don't know what the hell is happening to their bodies and their minds. It it's tough...It's hard to negotiate sometimes or mediate or even compromise when you're not quite sure of what's happening to you. You know? Where do you fit in to all of this?

Gina, a White teacher, described what she sees happening when students experiencing these inner changes and tensions interact with each other.

They either get physical or verbal and really what they want to do is they want attention from each other but they just don't know how to do it so it ends up producing conflict that really is supposed to be something else. I mean they really want to communicate, they really don't want conflict, but it ends up being conflict because it's inappropriate...This age group is very... soap operaish. There are people waiting to just soak up who said what and whatever and there are all these people who just hear half things but... they just seem to thrive on that.

Mike, a White faculty member, sees that adult intervention in the complex interactional rituals of early adolescence can sometimes lead to escalation of conflict.

...sometimes intervention by an adult can make it into a much worse problem because kids have egos, boys in particular, I hate to make this sexist, but they don't want to look bad, they don't want to be humiliated publicly in the hallway and they're not about to have some teacher dress them down in front of their friends. They're going to have to confront.

Interpersonal Dynamics. Dynamics among students occupy center stage at this time in their lives. Frequently, these dynamics manifest as power imbalances and the ensuing struggle to find a way to maintain one's equilibrium and/or to assert power and dominance over another person. Two areas of interpersonal dynamics stand out clearly in the data as major sources of conflict: victim/victimizer dyads or group harassing and teasing of a victim, and boy-girl social conflicts. Both of these dynamics contain one or more people with more power or control and one person with less. Power imbalances can inhibit the use of mediation. It may be difficult, intimidating or frightening for those in the less powerful, one-down position to take steps to seek mediation. On the other hand, those in the more powerful one-up position may have little motivation to act to change the situation. The first dynamic, that of victim-victimizer is described by Anne, a White teacher.

I think there are some kids who stir things up...you have to watch them very carefully because they're hard to catch. What you catch is the person they've stirred up...I think some kids project the image of being weak or vulnerable and for this age child, that's an open invitation for peers to move in and reinforce that opinion, and so we have to try to be alert to stop that. At least to make clear that children understand that that's not behavior that's acceptable here.

Debby, a White faculty person, comments on the reciprocity between victim and victimizer that can fuel this dynamic.

...I think kids have a remarkable ability to identify victims, or to pick out people who are different from themselves, and then, to figure out how to crank those kids...I've watched some very expert victims, crank their peers, deliberately, to get the victimization...So, there is a reciprocity that is of interest to me too, it is almost as though the victim has that need also. So that the conflict happens and is generated both ways...It is not just that this kid is in a lower socio-economic status and he needs to for his own self worth, find somebody lower than he is. So, he finds a victim who is handicapped in some way, who is whatever. But, it is also, that the victim has a need to receive the victimization.

Parents and faculty had a lot to say about the issue of victimization on their surveys. One area of concern is teasing, particularly when it crosses the line from friendly to hurtful or threatening. "Teasing for fun by friends which leads to disagreements when the teased isn't having fun anymore" is a concern of a White faculty person. A Latino parent states: "My concerns right now are about name calling and teasing because this would be the beginning of violent incidents."

Other parents worry about bullying, harassment and the safety of their children. A White parent described how threatened a child can feel by a particular group of children. "Unfortunately she does not necessarily feel safe staying after school for any reason because the group that beat her often hang around the school."

In other instances the threat seems to occur more randomly. "A too large minority of kids behave unsatisfactorily and bother not only each other but innocent kids," adds a second White parent. A White/African American/Native American parent explains that "a lot of other kids initiate taunting behaviors-pushing hard at the water fountain, cutting in line, threatening if you look at them, hitting with towels." "Some kids chronically hassle others or pick fights" says a White parent. An Asian parent writes: "Older students push and shove younger (7th grade) students when passing in the halls or leaving gym." Another White parent says:

We have very serious concerns. Our child has been the object of "bully" behavior that has left him feeling on the alert for random, out of control behavior. The first time it seemed an oddity of a troubled child, the third time it seemed like a...pattern of children without proper guidance or a sense of right or wrong appropriate for this age. The problems were with children my child didn't even know.

Fighting, aggressive behavior and the potential for violence are other concerns. "It seems to be getting harder to 'keep a lid on' aggressive behavior," reflects a faculty member.

Concerns about conflict are less than the concerns about violence and threats of violence. My daughter was beaten up at the beginning of this school year and she continues to feel frightened at school

said a White parent.

My child is small for her age and has been roughed up a bit by kids who like to tease. I

have asked my daughter to be very careful in parts of the school that are isolated. Even getting to her locker can often be a challenge,

said a parent. A White teacher said: "Peers encourage threats and violence as a recourse in disputes." Bob, a White male in the seventh grade, provided an example of this behavior: "a lot more kids like to see, like fight, fight, fight." Jane Marie agreed with this description, saying, "most people in the school think that their 'rep' is awesome if you get into some fights. And beat the crap out of people," but was quick to add "but it's not."

A White parent described mixed feelings when talking about how learning to survive has had its cost. "I feel my child has 'adjusted' to a menacing atmosphere and has learned who and what to avoid-but has paid a price for this learning."

A second area of interpersonal dynamics is the fluidity of social relations especially male/female ones; an area that is tied to social prestige, another form of power. Said Debby, a White faculty member:

They're grouped in nature, usually. And, they have to do with that constant formation and reformation of social relationships. And, for young women it is as though we had come nowhere, in fifty years. The kids at this age still, a majority of their social conflicts are around the male/female relationships....It's almost, hurt, in a relationship is too big, when you're talking about relationships that last from one to three days, but that's the model. And, I expect the hurt has more to do with the rejection...and so there is a sexual rejection there. All those hopping hormones.

Respect. One contextual concern emerging from the data revolves around the issue of respect. Teachers were concerned that students are becoming increasingly peer oriented and that adults have less influence over their behavior and their overall development. They comment on a growing lack of respect for adult authority. As Gina, a White teacher said:

...kids this age don't necessarily know appropriate behavior and...courtesy and respect isn't something that kids come into this building with or are born with, so they need a lot of modeling and they need a lot..(of) "can you say that differently?" or "that's not nice" or "that's not appropriate," they need that consistently.

Jean, a White faculty member added that even students who fit the traditional parameters of "success" in this school are exhibiting a growing lack of respect towards adults and to other students as well. She linked part of this to societal changes, saying that in general, young people today are not receiving clear messages about appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Jean spoke of a growing sense of entitlement so that even when students know they doing something wrong, more of them will continue even after adult intervention. She saw this behavior having an impact on student to student relations as well, pointing out that unkind behavior is on the increase.

The good kids are disrespectful sometimes and there's less of a clear message to all of our kids about appropriate behavior in our world...But, what I will say has shifted is that I think that in terms of disrespect, more kids are behaving disrespectfully...in terms of

adult/child, it's more kids are saying to teachers, you know, in your face, why make me, or using inappropriate language in front of teachers and thinking, well I have a right to say what I want... They clearly know that it's wrong, I mean punching another kid in the face is wrong, but if the teacher says stop it, the teacher could well be ignored... that behavior was there, it's just that more kids are behaving that way...In terms of kids to kids, like I said, maybe that lack of disrespect translates into being more inclined to vicious rumors...I see that cruelties and disrespect are on the increase.

Debby, a White faculty person, attributed part of this disrespect to the absorption with peer relations at this age.

But, I think that also has to do with that absolute focus on their peers....And, it's eyeball-to-eyeball like this, "you talked to my boyfriend the other night, and that's not okay, and I'm going to beat your ass!" Ms. B. out here doesn't mean "squat," in that altercation. But, I also cannot physically do anything. All I can do is interpose myself in the space. I have been hit, once I got clocked on the jaw... It was probably the only thing that would've stopped the boy though, he took a swing and when he hit me instead of the other boy, he dropped his hands immediately, and said, "I am so sorry!"

One of the mediators also spoke of a lack of respect among students towards teachers and each other. Eric, a White 8th grader said, "lots of kids do have a lack of respect...kids need to respect teachers." A White teacher agreed saying, "Students have few boundaries...Civility is not a common, core value...."

The issue of disrespect seems to involve students behavior towards each other, towards teachers and according to one faculty member, towards themselves. "Disrespect for

self, peers and adults" was a concern for this White faculty member.

Mary, a White 9th grade mediator, made a very interesting comment about the cycle of disrespect in which students act in ways that appear disrespectful to teachers and in turn teachers respond by having an expectation of being mistreated and therefore acting in ways that seem disrespectful to students.

I think that kids are really, they're often really disrespectful both to teachers...To teachers and to other kids and just not thinking about the other person. And I think that it's kind of you know, what came first, the kids' disrespect for the teachers or the teachers' disrespect for the kids...And eventually if all these kids are totally goofing off and not respecting the teachers and not trying or doing anything, then the teachers are automatically gonna come in with an attitude towards each kid.

A White parent worried about the impact of this lack of respect on the teachers themselves, isolated in their classrooms with acting out students and said: "Initial kindness hardens into rigidity when the testiness of disrespectful students pushes teachers into lonely corners."

Carlos, a Latino parent has seen this behavior but had a different analysis of it. On the one hand, what adults define as disrespect may not be interpreted that way by students who have a culture of their own and may see this behavior as actually showing respect. On the other hand, he agreed that students frequently cross the line between the "fashionable insult" and actual cruel and hurting remarks.

...lots of times what these kids are doing is giving each other respect by being rude. In other words, if respect is investing in a person and making them feel like they matter, sometimes that means saying yes ma'am, because that's how you choose to be talked to. Sometimes it means, "hah butthead" because that's what they like....The youth today have a negative way of expressing positive emotion and at this age it's downright ugly, you know, that's why they do it... I think, on the other hand, they don't really know what respect means and so there is a fine line between the fashionable insult as a way to build status in yourself and others and the actual hurtful remark where you gain status by putting somebody else down... So, I think that in a way, that's how they are and in a way it breeds more wounding and disrespect. I think they need to be educated about it.

Anne, a White faculty member, thought that the biggest change over the years she has been teaching, was that students are less and less connected to the adults in their lives and depend increasingly on each other for their cues and sense of how to be in the world.

... we're increasingly getting children who don't have any real sense of structure - authority in their lives... they simply don't recognize adults as having any natural authority...It's not necessarily that children are trying to be bad...(they)just don't hear us when we're talking to them....I've had parents say to me, and I don't remember it ever being said before as much, "my child is not affiliated with adults"... we're not talking about children coming out of stress, stressful situations, we're talking about privileged kids in some cases, but they do not affiliate with adults, neither do they affiliate with their parents...If you do not depend on adults to help you, and you're depending on your peers for your clues and your aid, you have a limited resource ...

Jean, a White teacher, said that while it is easy to target the media and other influences, the adults in young

peoples' lives need to take responsibility for setting limits.

Right. It's hard to say. I mean, it's so easy to blame, you know, outsiders and media influences. That's an easy target because it's very concrete and we can all picture something that horrifies us in the language of music or the violence on T.V. or the permissiveness and so on, but it's too easy to blame it all on that. I think we have - I believe that the adults in this country, and certainly in this community are very - the culture of adults is one where it feels tough to take a stand as an adult, and how do we encourage independent thinking and creative expression in our children while enforcing rules and somehow - that's a problem, and I think access. Our kids have access to everything. Access to all information. Access to all things that used to be understood to be what you do at 20. Our kids think they have every right to do at 13 what anybody that is 20 or 40 - that somehow we have given them the message that there are no differences. A thinking person can make decisions no matter how old that thinking person is.

Clearly, the issue of students' lack of respect resonates with many people. Interpretations vary, but there seems to be agreement that more students treat teachers and each other with less respect than in the past. Part of it is related to youth culture and peer orientation, but some people also speak of an increasing disconnection between adolescents and the adults in their lives who traditionally have taught appropriate behavior and set clear boundaries for young people. One group of young people stands out in this school as on the extreme of the continuum of disrespect and acting out behavior. This group includes those students described as having chronic negative behavior patterns.

Students with Chronic Negative Behavior Patterns.

Some adults were very concerned about what they perceive as a small portion of students who appear to be almost exclusively peer affiliated, unresponsive to adult interventions and exhibiting behavior perceived as chronically negative. As they described it, nothing seems to matter to these students except the approval of their peers. Debbie, a White faculty member said:

But, I think the thing that has changed radically in the last decade, for me as an educator, is the fact that I no longer exist for kids. I don't exist. My voice does not interrupt what they are doing, usually. I have to physically interpose myself without physically touching, in situations, I didn't have to used to do that. Actually we are talking about that smaller portion of kids in school, who react in assaultive ways.

Charles, a White teacher, works with a few students who he said do not accept his authority.

I see that sort of behavior with, not all kids, but an isolated number of kids...They don't understand if I go through a discipline hierarchy with them about giving them a warning and then eventually sending them out - you're stupid, why are you doing that?

Carlos, a Latino parent, talked about the five percent of the student population that continually acts in resistance to the demands of the system and who appear impervious to the discipline system in this school.

The problem that I see is that there is a segment of the population, maybe five percent of the kids...who are chronic discipline problems, who don't respond to this negative air-tight controlled, you know, if you wear your cap you get this, if you chew gum you get that, if you do

this again, you know, the fighting and all that. So that small percentage of the population is chronically offending the same way. They are cutting classes, they are violating the rights of others, they are disrespectful to teachers, they are not working. They have serious discipline problems. And the negative discipline and the controlling discipline to keep the building safe doesn't work, it doesn't help them. Since they are there and they see no reason to be there, they have nothing better to do than to cause trouble in the building, outside the building, after school. They just know how to play the system so that they avoid, they will take an "F", they won't do the work and they will get to look good in front of their peers and they will go play. That's what they are there for every day... The school system fault part of that (is that)... they've got to pass the kid, they've got to get him through the course. They've got to somehow with enough reminders and pushes and crutches get him through and out of the building, graduated or whatever. So these kids just play the system.

George's perception was that many of the students who feel alienated from the school are students of color and he is very concerned about that.

...there are any number of students who are..alienated from the school...and don't buy into the school as an institution which is hopeful to them or that they are really a part of...or that meets any of their goals. And the thing that very much concerns me is the impression I get from my son...that a large...percentage of the students of color fall into that description...and that concerns me a great deal. Both about what we as a town are doing to serve those students all through the school and also, what kind of message does it means my son gets as a result about students of color, about relationships among the races, about any number of things.

Daniel Webster of the Injury Prevention Center at Johns Hopkins in his article in Health Affairs (1993) agrees with Carlos, when he talks about students who are

chronic behavior problems gaining status among their peers by resisting the system. Webster said:

aggressive youth tend to believe that aggressive behavior increases status among their peers, particularly in the short term, and provides tangible rewards....adolescents are in a developmental stage characterized by defiance of adults. (Webster, 1993)

This segment of the population is one that while perhaps most likely to be involved in conflict is paradoxically among the least likely to choose to avail themselves of it, seeing it as one more arm of the school. What these adults are describing matches this analysis by Hocker and Wilmot in their book Interpersonal Conflict and helps to explain why these students would not be likely to choose to go to mediation.

When one reaches the stage where "nothing matters" (you cannot attain your goals through accepted means), violence or despair is spawned. It is the person who feels powerless who turns to the last resort--giving up, aggression or violence. {Richmond, et al., 1984; Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkerson 1980; Falbo and Peplau 1980}. Too much losing does not build character; it builds frustration, aggression or apathy. (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995, pp. 83, 85)

A number of issues were raised regarding the negative impact of students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors in school on the use of mediation. Name-calling and spreading rumors occur with the most frequency of all types of conflictual behavior. Given the concern students report about rumors leaking from mediation sessions this would appear to discourage the use of mediation. Female and

non-White students in this school saw harassment as a much more frequent occurrence than did White and male students. Interviews with teaches, students and parents revealed more data about the negative impact of student attitudes, feelings and behaviors on the use of mediation.

Developmental issues that negatively impact on the use of mediation include the volatility and impulsiveness of early adolescence, particularly in the area of social interactions and students discomfort with waiting for resolution. Peer pressure is another developmental issue which in this school inhibits the use of mediation as do power imbalances, such as those in victim-victimizer relationships. A small group of students with chronic negative behavior patterns, appears to hold little investment in this school as a source of success for them and therefore appears to be less interested in utilizing resources of the school such as mediation. This group while perhaps most likely to be involved in conflict is among the least likely to choose to avail themselves of mediation, given the status that accrues to them from rebellion and their alienation from the school.

Factor 4: School Dynamics

School dynamics that emerged from the data as inhibiting the use of mediation include faculty methods of handling conflict; the ways in which relationships between students and faculty are perceived, particularly regarding

the issues of respect and the need for more adult guidance of students; feelings of safety and well-being or lack of it in the building, including issues related to race, cultural group and gender; the system of discipline; the options available for resolving conflicts and pressures of time and space.

Of all 57 parents surveyed, 70.18% brought up an issue related to school dynamics; 76.19% of all White parents, 75% of all bi/multi-racial and 50% of all parents of color indicating concern among all races of parents. Of the 8 parents interviewed, all of them raised issues related to school dynamics. Faculty responses were similar with 73.91% of the 23 faculty surveyed and ten of the twelve faculty interviewed (83.33%) raising issues related to school climate. Of the faculty, 70.59% of the White and 100% of the multi-racial faculty raised this factor (there were only White and multi-racial respondents). Only 8.62% of all students surveyed mentioned school dynamics while over half of the students interviewed (55%) raised this point. This figure includes 6 of the 7 students of color and five out of the 13 White students. The adults are the ones expressing concern about the dynamics of this school, perhaps because this issue is more abstractly related to the issue of mediation.

This over-crowded junior high school, with its rich mingling of many cultures, and its intense concentration of early adolescents exploring their personal, sexual and

group identities is a challenging place to teach. Parents, many of whom are highly educated, can be very critical of teachers, administrators and staff who in turn are burdened with over-crowded classrooms, high student-teacher ratios, too little time, too many students with complex needs and too much to teach. With this many people crowded together in one building, conflict is inevitable. Tension has risen as passing times to and from classes have been shortened and halls have become more crowded. In this atmosphere, issues of safety and control are critically important.

Faculty Methods of Handling Conflict. With limited resources for dealing with the range of adolescent emotions and behaviors (there are only three guidance counselors to serve over 1000 students) there are inevitably going to be limitations in how effectively the faculty responds to daily conflict; however faculty methods of handling conflict when it arises are significant determinants of how effective a mediation program will be.

Given the lack of a system wide mediation program, students are not generally knowledgeable about mediation skills when they enter this school nor have faculty as a whole ever been trained. Although faculty described themselves as supporting mediation (see the section on encouraging factors) questions were raised about how much the adults in the building actually use and encourage the use of mediation as a way of resolving conflicts. To the

degree this is true it reflects a discrepancy between attitude and behavior.

The first aspect of faculty attitudes, feelings and behaviors that arose from the data was the perception that, according to a number of respondents, this school has not yet created a "culture of mediation" among the adults; an atmosphere in which mediation is consistently taught, modeled and encouraged. The following comments by parents and faculty all speak to this issue. Jean, a White faculty member explained:

...we use other ways of dealing with conflict all the time...and there are some quicker ways to deal with conflict...So, unless it's within our culture, as adults...just because it's a student mechanism, sometimes we forget that we're the adults here and these are children and unless we do it... it ain't gonna work.

Another White faculty member said:

Students need to see demonstrations of it. Adults need to use it for students to use it. I'm not sure there has been real active support of the technique.

Diana, a Latina parent wondered how much the administration trusts, actively encourages or uses mediation saying:

if the whole administration is not using it, not practicing it...you know to be a good sponsor you have to really believe in it. So I don't know how much that happens. I feel that... the whole administration is not that much into it. It's like it has to be backed up by the whole school administration...And I don't know if the adults in the school really trust the process. Or use that kind of process. I am not that familiar with it. But the times that I have been mediating for my son...in issues and things that have happened

at school...I feel that that's not the whole scope of the administration.

A number of parents called for more encouragement and expansion of the mediation program. "The mediation program needs to be much bigger; mediation between angry students and the principal and Dean; parents and staff..etc," wrote a White parent. Another White parent said:

Encourage teachers and principals to provide mediation as a first step in conflicts instead of giving out punishments. If parties to a conflict can come to agreement in mediation (and abide by it), punishment is avoided.

A White parent who would prefer to see mediation offered as an option rather than adult escalation of the conflict said:

Kids are much more comfortable and orderly if they feel that adults are in control and will be rational. I think that administrators need to present mediation fairly to students as one option available. Too often it sounds as if they just get angry and hand out detentions all around. This often just increases the hostility between parties and adds new anger at the school or at adults.

George, a White parent, also brought up the importance of creating a high visibility culture of mediation in the school, beginning with the administration using mediation with the staff.

...thinking about creating a culture of mediation...one of the questions is what's the style of the administrator in the building...when there are conflicts amongst staff. Is it a mediating type of style or not? What experiences the adults in general have with mediation... I'm sure affects the kind of culture around which adults do or don't think of suggesting it to

students... Well, I think for students to sort of expect to think of mediation or to turn to it...that it needs to be very visible. And they need to be reminded of it frequently. So that I would assume in order for it to work, it would have lots of adults frequently suggesting that it is a possibility...and I don't know whether that happens or not, I've never heard of that happening.

Paul, an African-American parent, would like to see mediation expanded among parents and faculty as a way to explore concerns about school wide issues.

I think that mediation with regards to the Jr. High needs to take place at several different levels. I don't know that it necessarily needs to be only be a program designed for the young. I think that it would be more worthwhile actually, if some of the families in school, administrators, and teachers begin to speak about this whole issue of climate.

A White faculty member agreed with the need for change beginning at the top and pointed out that students pick up on the degree of adult commitment to the program:

Until adult attitudes change the kids never will...administrators need to be more honest in their assessment of the value of mediation. We need to truly create a workable program, then blanket staff and students with it... Kids read adults very well. They clearly know that this is not a true mediation school. The changes in understanding, training etc. must occur top down or the hypocrisy of the program will continue to the benefit of none.

Edward had a different perspective, questioning whether it was even appropriate for the school to embrace a "culture of mediation" and the ideological changes that go with it.

It's not an end in itself and it cannot replace the culture of wellness...Mediation must not be part of a ideological package, which unfortunately it often is.

A White parent described this school as having, not a culture of mediation but a "culture of conflict" and stated that until more use of positive discipline and conflict resolution occurs on the part of adults there is little hope for a successful mediation program. In this parent's words

The junior high is a culture of conflict...Many teachers deal with minor misdemeanors in an authoritarian manner. Kids see the difference with teachers who respect them and attempt more positive ways to resolve disputes. I don't hold out much hope for significant effects of mediation until the culture changes to support it...Most conflict my child experiences is with teachers who seem to us not to understand or attempt to help instead, imposing rigid rules.

Maria, a Latina parent, thought the reason that mediation is not used more in the school is that the administration does not want to relinquish power to the students. She says:

I think the administrators still want to be in charge of what's going on in the school...And I think that they should know that they should also let students take responsibility. I don't think they want to do that.

A parent of Asian/Indian descent worried that conflicts are "hushed up" rather than dealt with openly, which would discourage the use of mediation, since mediation requires open acknowledgement of conflict.

There is a feeling among students that the adults in school do not support them in their conflict resolution...there is a feeling of always hushing everything and not openly discussing it and solving it.

George, a White parent, said that a key element of mediation and of conflict resolution is the act of listening to the other person's point of view and wanted to see more listening on the part of the adults responsible for discipline. He said:

...mediation involves listening. And that seems to me to be a central element of what's needed in conflict situations. And I might add, is not always provided by the adults responsible for discipline at the Jr. High School.

Eric, a White mediator in the ninth grade, agreed that often the student perspective is not listened to and said:

Teachers having problems, don't always solve the problems, they just assign detentions and things like that. And it doesn't really help the problem. They don't really work things out with the kids and let them tell their sides of the story all the time.

A second aspect of faculty attitudes, feelings and behaviors discouraging the use of mediation is that there has never been a school wide training in mediation or conflict resolution skills. Students were not generally knowledgeable about mediation skills when they entered this school nor had the faculty as a whole ever been trained.

Comments about a lack of faculty training in and understanding of how mediation works were cited by a number of faculty members. Some typical examples selected from

surveys include the following comments: A White faculty member wrote of "frustrating responses from uninvolved and uninformed staff". "Neither the administration nor staff understand or truly believe in the process" was the response of a second White faculty member. "Teachers need to be trained or believe in the concept...use it in their classrooms when possible" added a third White faculty member.

A White parent pointed out that teachers need training and support in order to handle the challenges of their job.

Great teachers have a lot to share. The stresses of junior high can turn good teachers, like students, into defensive, even offensive people...The administration needs to be realistic about how to help the teachers help the students. It is a hard job that needs specialized training-something teachers, especially secondary teachers are rarely given.

High quality training of staff with time and resources available for follow up training and support is mentioned by Greenwald and Johnson (1986), Araki (1990), Pilati (1994), and Metis Associates (1988) as a form of administrative support that is closely tied to the success of a program. The lack of specialized training in mediation is clearly a discouraging factor in terms of the overall success of the program.

Teachers face time pressures to cover their subject matter and are alone in the classroom with 28 or 30 students. Limited time and the privacy to guide students to mediated solutions to problems is a third aspect of faculty

attitudes, feelings and behaviors that discourages the use of mediation. Rick, a White faculty member thinks that teachers

trudge in dealing with problems. I don't think I look for troubles because I don't have a lot of time and I don't necessarily want to be pulled into a problem. I mean if it's something that I can address right away, but if it means leaving my class of maybe 28 students and taking two or one student down to the Dean, because the phones generally don't work, and leaving these kids up here for who knows how long, not having anybody to talk to, I'm not about to do that....now if something gets really blatant, you have to address it, but if it's a marginal thing where "hey stop running in the halls," that's as far as you go with it ... sometimes that's the appropriate response in my opinion. I think some teachers take things too seriously and they make a small mole hill into a major mountain where kids really, I think, sometimes aren't trying to kill each other. They aren't.

"I don't think there's enough time to promote it and utilize it the way we should. I think that we should take more time," said a second White faculty member. "Tough because of time restraints" added a third White faculty member.

Although the attitudes of faculty were overall very encouraging towards the use of mediation their behavior within the context of the school was not perceived as supporting the use of mediation by a number of respondents. Faculty and parents expressed the feeling that this school had not yet created a "culture of mediation" among the adults; one in which mediation is consistently taught, modeled and encouraged. Active support and encouragement of the use of mediation is cited by Carpenter and Parco

(1993), Greenwald and Johnson (1986), Araki (1990), Pilati (1994), and Metis Associates (1988) as necessary to the success of a mediation program. By this definition, the behavior of the faculty appears to have a discouraging effect on the use of the program. The need for more training in mediation as well as the time and space to address these issues combine with the lack of a climate of mediation to hamper the effectiveness of the program.

Respect Revisited. One theme that emerged from survey and interview data about school climate was a concern about the issue of respect. Respect, while a concern for students, faculty and parents, was viewed differently depending on which group responded. Many faculty members perceived a growing lack of respect on the part of many students towards adult authority figures as reported in the previous section on students attitudes, feelings and behaviors in school. There were parents and students who were equally passionate in their comments about what they perceived as a lack of respect towards students on the part of faculty.

A White parent commented on the tone set by the administration:

Does the school administration set an example for students by dealing with them in a respectful manner and getting them to express their opinions? I think not, and this sets a tone that is not conducive to fostering mediation.

A second White parent raised a concern about the "lack of respect for students and their ability to behave

responsibly. "I feel the kids often aren't shown respect anywhere in society including school, which leads to conflict and violence at school and the situation is escalating" added a third White parent.

Some parents were upset about what they described as the use of "intimidation" by adults in the building as a way to maintain order. A White parent expressed strong feelings about how intimidation negatively affects the fragile self confidence of adolescents.

This use of intimidation is reinforced by the example set by staff and administration, many of whom use intimidation... to lower student self image in order to keep them under control. ...My child's ego suffers most at the hands of his teachers. I am more concerned with adult behavior than teenagers... Try to encourage staff to understand the fragile nature of the teenage ego. Set an example of kindness and patience and the students will be much more likely to follow. Help kids take responsibility for their actions rather than trying to intimidate them into doing so. My child is a normal, well adjusted kid who seems to be in a system that is determined to make him into a miserable, self conscious child. Being a teenager is hard enough-why have a system that makes it harder?

"I am also very concerned about the inherent creation of conflict in using intimidation as a way to solve problems," echoed another White parent. A White/African-American faculty member called for the school to "create a culture where authorities (teachers) are not perceived as enemies forcing kids to do what they don't want." Fred, a White mediator in the ninth grade agreed with this perception that students and teachers are in

conflict, saying, "Ever since I came into this school I've been feeling like it's been kind of kids against teachers."

One parent acknowledged the pressures that faculty are under while articulating concerns about teacher respect for students.

Teachers need to adhere to the same standards of social appropriateness expected of students. Students are hyper-alert to double standards. Teacher swearing, sarcasm, insulting comments about children's work and shouting have been experienced by my children in a few classes. Teachers need to find ways to deal calmly with the sometimes difficult, challenging behavior of students. This is not easy

wrote a White parent.

The issue of respect speaks to Folger et al.'s analysis which opens this chapter. Folger et al. (1993) points out that the level of support that people feel from each other is an integral part of the climate of a school; the context within which all conflict resolution occurs. Feeling intimidated and wondering whether you are respected as a person can have a dampening effect on the use of mediation if it leads to students feeling less comfortable and safe in school and therefore less likely to risk opening up in front of others. One way for adults to connect in a positive way with students is to be available to listen to students' problems and difficulties and to provide guidance. The need for more adult guidance is another issue that parents, students and faculty brought up as a concern.

More Adult Guidance Needed. To what degree are the adults in the building able to be available to listen to student problems, build one on one relationships with and serve as resources to students in their daily struggles outside of the academic arena? The following parents all called for a stronger sense of connectedness and community and wanted the adults in the building to be more connected to the student body.

I wish the junior high could develop (a) stronger sense of community so students saw faculty and administration as resources when they felt troubled

wrote a White parent. "Maybe school staff needs to cultivate more personal relationships with students through which they can encourage mediation," echoed a second White parent. "If a child does not get into trouble he or she never meets the Dean of students or a counselor. All students should be given more personal contact with teachers" was the observation of an Asian parent. "I don't feel that students feel supported in any way and that they don't feel comfortable approaching ANYBODY in the school," adds a parent of Asian-Indian descent. According to a parent of American-Indian descent:

There is no ongoing student discussion with adult support to help find out what are daily issues that need attention. No rapport. No camaraderie. A climate of hostility exists in this school.

Sara, a mediator in the ninth grade, wanted a place to go and get some support during a difficult day when personal issues spill over into her learning. As she said:

For example, if you're having a problem at home ... you can't go sit in the bathroom and cry without getting a detention, you know, and sometimes things go on that are more important... that you consider more important than school... and it just interferes and they don't have any way to deal with it yet.

A bi-racial faculty member worried that with no place to work out their difficulties, students would turn this energy against themselves or others and says:

My greatest concern is that kids have no opportunity to work out their conflicts so they get bottled up...creating explosions or neuroses.

With large classes, limited support services, jam-packed schedules and many students with complex needs, the adults in this school have real limitations in terms of time, space and energy to relate one on one and provide out of classroom support to students; a situation that can be as frustrating for faculty members as it is for parents, given that teachers usually enter this field to relate to young people in a positive way. Mike described the pressures from a teacher's perspective:

If a kid walks into your room obviously looking upset, I don't think as many teachers are willing enough now to take one minute, and not leave your class...but just watch the doorway out of kids earshot and say "is there something up?" And, I think that many times just by doing that you can defuse what could potentially become a larger problem if a kid just gets to vent it, and you might not even make a suggestion, you might just,

you know, listen...we're all in such a rush to get in to teach our material.

Rick added,

Well, we're being told to be out in the hall, teach your class, do this, I mean, you know, it's just not possible. Kids, I think kids, we all want someone to listen to us. We're always talking. I know I'm guilty of it all the time. We like someone to just hear us.

"It could just be that five second thing," added Mike.

According to Folger et al.'s (1993) research, climate or atmosphere is also affected by the degree to which people experience themselves as interconnected with each other and as a part of a larger community. All of these climactic conditions have an impact on how people choose to resolve their conflicts. The comments in this section speak to their point about connectedness and community and indicate clearly how much these relationships affect the climate of the school and the resolution of conflict within these walls. People want more time to connect, more opportunities for the adults to provide guidance and nurturance for students, more time to talk, listen and be there for each other. What these respondents were talking about is a culture of mediation.

Concerns about Conflict and/or Threats of Violence.

The choice to use or not to use mediation is affected by the larger context of relationships and interactions that exist within the school. The level of safety versus fear,

comfort versus intimidation that people experience is a factor in whether they are willing to address conflicts and to bring them to mediation. Some parents reported few or no concerns about conflict and/or the threat of violence while others were very concerned. Most of the following responses came from parents, who are not regularly in the school observing and therefore are interpreting the situation based on what their children and children's friends tell them or what they hear in the community. The first set of comments are from those surveyed who had few or no concerns about conflict or the threat of violence.

"My child has not spoken of violence in the school this year nor has he expressed fear of it on a personal level," said one parent. "Relatively few (concerns)," wrote another parent, "I am not more concerned about (this school) than any other school. I think my children are pretty well prepared for any but the most random violence," said a White/African-American parent. "None really," was the comment from a White parent. "None with respect to my child," was the response of another White/African-American parent. "No immediate concerns (my child is a 7th grader)...so far has had no problems in this area," a White parent reported.

Many more comments came from those concerned about what they perceive to be conflict and/or the threat of violence. The following comments were selected as typical of many of the responses to the survey question asking if

parents had any concerns about conflict or the threat of violence. "Conflict is evident daily. There seems to be constant, thoughtless violence occurring at the school," was the response of a White parent. Another White parent said, "My impression is that conflicts/threats of violence occur frequently." An Asian parent wrote, "I am very concerned. I have heard of many violent incidents." A concerned White parent said, "My daughter has related several incidences of threatening encounters...some directly involving her and some she has witnessed."

Tying conflict at the school to conflict in the larger society, a parent summed it up by writing of a concern, "that students are increasing their use of violence as are the adults in the world around them." Wrote another parent: "Conflicts and threats of violence exist in terms of differences in religion, race, gay/lesbian relationships, etc." Another parent pointed out that fighting is often a spillover from adolescent fun that goes too far, and wrote:

It is always a concern-of course we want the safest-healthiest environment for our youngsters. The boundary between playful rough housing and unkind/malicious teasing and rough physical contact is often hard to determine and often crossed.

Another parent wrote of a concern about violence, intimidation and threats happening daily.

I'm very concerned about actual violence taking place such as fighting. I'm equally concerned about the non-verbal and verbal intimidation that goes on. I think the actual acts of violence or threats of some type of violence happen on a daily basis.

The growing diversity of the population adds a richness and energy to this school that is very exciting but which also creates challenges. Issues of class and racial differences/tensions as a source of conflict were raised as a concern by a number of respondents from different perspectives. A few White parents expressed concerns about harassment of White students by students of color. Both White parents and parents of color raised concerns about racism. Another aspect of diversity is the variation in social groups, with some groups having more status and power than others. Several people spoke of the separateness of different groups in the school and of segments of the school community who they perceive as feeling disconnected from the mainstream.

Ann, a White faculty member, described the increasing class differences that she has observed over a long career in education and the impact that this has had on the students with the least class privilege and those with the most:

Well, the class issues are getting much more dramatic. That's another thing I've seen in twenty years is that we're losing a middle and that middle used to be pretty extensive here and what's happening is a narrowing of the middle and a ballooning of the - at least the lower end. But there's certainly a larger distance between the classes....and you can imagine how this child feels also in the classroom with kids who have computers, tutors, books, trips, clothes, whatever....and I think it's scary for the children who have and who look at those who don't have.

Maria, a Latina parent, reported that some students feel excluded from school activities that they would like to participate in because of class differences and said:

some students do not feel a part of what's happening in the school... I have talked to kids who would probably be very interested in being a part of something there ... but don't feel welcomed...in any school activity...Because they might not be a part of the group, or they'll feel left out because they're at a lower end of the student population...not being part of the crowd in a group that's running the activity.

Other people spoke of feelings of exclusion by peers.

"My child experiences the general tone of criticism of peers, exclusion (and) discrimination on an institutional level," said a White parent. Another White parent described what she sees as a preponderance of cliques saying:

I have heard it said by many students...that there are too many cliques and this makes things difficult for independent thinkers. People don't integrate, there's the "Homey G" group, the "preppies" and the "grunge". These groups don't mix and it's making the school segregated,

agreed a White female in the eighth grade, pointing out a type of cultural diversity based on identification with one aspect of youth culture to the exclusion of others.

The issue of race was addressed from several different perspectives indicating that this is a major issue but one that evokes very different responses in different people. Some faculty members pointed out that the mix of race, class and nationality has not brought about understanding or respect for differences. A White parent agreed and wrote

of her distress that many of the cliques in the school are racially divided saying:

I find it very sad, too, that many of these groups form along lines of race. With all our hard efforts... the African-American kids, in particular, seem to separate themselves.

A White parent wrote of concerns about a group of Latino students threatening White students. The concern in this parents' words was about "threats of (an) Hispanic gang against White/White students." "I'm especially concerned about race issues and gang issues" said a White/Native American parent.

A multi-racial parent described taunting and threatening behaviors directed against White students by African-American students and worried about how to bring up this issue without being called a racist. In this parent's words:

A lot of other kids initiate taunting behaviors-pushing hard at the water fountain, cutting in line, threatening if you look at them, hitting with towels. This is often Black kids towards Whites. What do we do? How do you react without being called racist? Very troublesome and very real problem.

Another parent wrote about how stunned her White child was to encounter harassment by students of color and the mixed emotions it stirred up in him:

I am very concerned about violence and (the) threat of violence. Since my son entered the junior high there has been harassment by Blacks and Hispanic groups. He, who is very aware of racism, was shocked to learn how harassed the White children are. He'd come home daily with stories saying "its crazy, this makes you hate

kids different from you." There would be teasing and no recourse because it would be made clear that the gang would get you after school.

A White parent, concerned about "intolerance" in a town with growing diversity said that:

There is a growing mix of a wide variety of economic and ethnic background students who have come to a small college town of "White, well educated people" with big city behaviors and this is not fully addressed.

Paul explained the sense of urgency he felt as an African-American parent to intervene when there is a conflict involving his son:

I am at school immediately...To make certain that there is at least some sense of equality in how we look at what occurred. Because there have been too many situations where assumptions were made just simply based on who was involved.

A multi-racial parent wanted the issue of discrimination to be addressed from an historical perspective.

The issue of racial discrimination is one of the main conflicts that needs to be addressed in different ways, e.g., its roots, the role of other races besides the White Europeans in the past and present time.

A White parent had "concerns about racism" and feared "structural or systematic violence". Martin, an African-American student in the eighth grade wondered why there is so much hate and suspected that students bring it from home into the school. In Martin's words:

There's a lot of hate in the school. I don't know why. But it's more or less problems that might

have been brought from home. Kids are still mad about that or things that happened a while ago.

Martin described the dynamics among Whites, Latinos and African-Americans as a "triangle". The image of a triangle implies instability and tension among these groups. "With the student population at school becoming more diverse, the conflicts are on the increase", agreed a White faculty member. A White parent expanded on this point, upset that her son was acquiring a "racist" perspective based on his experiences at school and asked "What can we do about children like my son who are actually harboring racist views due to what he sees at school?" This parent then went on to ask what can be done to create a climate of full acceptance in this school, asking "If what he sees is what's going on, how can we make this a school where each and every student feels accepted and valued?" Another White parent worried about a perceived escalation of conflict across racial lines.

It seems violence and conflict are increasing. Kids don't know how to deal with it, are becoming increasingly racist and reverse racist and it forebodes a frightening future....My concerns are that violence seems to consistently cross racial lines, on a few occasions weapons (i.e., knives) have been involved and the situation is escalating.

How much of this perceived conflict is based on and fueled by misunderstandings and misread cues among people of different racial and ethnic groups? Another White faculty member is concerned about "cultural connections/

miscommunications." Jean, a White faculty member, spoke to the need in this school for more understanding of the meaning behind the language, attitude and behavior of those different from oneself:

The increased diversity has contributed to increased misunderstanding and increased differences in attitude and behavior that is culturally based and therefore not understood by people of another culture.

Carlos, a Latino parent had a different analysis about students fighting with each other. He saw this fighting as a symptom of a larger conflict between the students and the administration.

And what we're getting when kids fight each other is a symptom, it's a reflection of...the kids who conform verses the ones who don't---and the ones who don't kind of resent the ones who do--- because they're making it. It's a symptom and you are constantly dealing with a symptom.

The range of responses to this question reveals that a wide spectrum of feelings exist in this school regarding feelings of physical and emotionally safety. Parents were particularly outspoken about this issue; some parents had few or no concerns while many had major concerns about conflict and/or violence. The data further illustrate how perceptions in this school vary with individual experience. It may well be that some students do not feel threatened while others do; certainly a six-foot-tall basketball player in the ninth grade would be more likely to feel safe than a bookish seventh grader who hasn't hit his growth stride. Another issue that surfaced is a concern about

increasing racial tension which some attribute to misunderstanding and misreading of cues and meanings by people in different racial and ethnic groups. To those who feel the climate is unsafe, that feeling operates as an inhibiting factor for the use of mediation. This is because people who feel threatened or intimidated (the one-down position in a relationship) are not likely to initiate mediation. Another aspect of school dynamics that emerged from the data as an inhibiting factor, also related to feeling one-down in relationships, is the system of discipline and rules.

System of Discipline and Rules. The system of discipline implemented by a school has an impact on the climate and thus on the use of mediation. According to Folger et al.'s (1993) analysis, climate or atmosphere is affected by how power is distributed and the way decisions are made.

A number of respondents commented on the "rule orientation" of this school, referring to the tightly structured code of conduct and the consequences resulting from behavior straying from this code. Others described it as a "punishment oriented discipline system", in which the assumption is that given a problem, the student is at fault unless he or she can prove otherwise.

The context for this policy dates back to a period of time when there were widespread and serious concerns in the community about a lack of safety in this school. A strong

administration was brought in to resolve this problem and this tightly constructed disciplinary system has remained in place ever since.

A number of parents commented on the emphasis on punishment and rules in this school. The following comments were typical: "Tone set by the administration, as gleaned from the student handbook and newsletters is one of guilt and blame", wrote one parent. "There is more violence than I would like to see but I don't believe punishment and more rules are the solution" said another parent. "...administrative response is punitive and ineffectual. I feel the (school) has an atmosphere in which students are considered bad unless proven otherwise," stated a White parent. A White faculty member explained it from his perspective "we don't mediate between adults and kids. Adults are right unless their facts are proven wrong."

Carlos, a Latino parent made a strong plea for the disciplinary system to be less rule oriented and punitive and to provide more opportunities for students.

The teachers and the administration could start to be less rule punitive in their approach to discipline and have... opportunities for mastering control because what I see there is that the administration has this iron-fist ...It's like a person who is juggling ten things at once...And they are saying don't mess with what I'm doing because the whole thing will come down...They feel like they've got to take care of every little episode with every little rule enforcement about baseball caps and chewing gum and petty things just as forceful(ly), because otherwise they will lose the respect of the kids....The system that they have, which is all based on punitive negative discipline... doesn't work for a certain percentage of the population.

And they are spending a ton of resources and time and money putting out meaningless fires....it's like a dictatorship over the system, which just doesn't go with the times, it doesn't work.

George, a White parent, saw a contradiction between a "rule orientation" in which problems are defined as existing between a student and the rules of the institution and the concept of mediation, which is based on the idea that conflicts are between people. George saw mediation as "counter to the culture at the Jr. High School."

From reading the Jr. High... hand book...it seems to me that there's a sort of rule orientation toward managing behavior. And a rule orientation tends to leads to a perception that problems are between a student and the school or a student and the rules. Mediation is more based on the notion, as I understand it, that underlying problems or conflicts are between individuals...if I punched somebody, I've broken a rule. And they can deal with me about breaking the rule. Or you can say "what was the conflict between me and the person I punched?" ...The general response to behavior as "you broke a rule therefore we deal with you as a rule breaker"...is a major roadblock toward using mediation.

Mary, a White mediator in the ninth grade, understood the need for keeping the large student population "in line" but pleaded for relying more on mediation as an antidote to relying on rules and punishment.

Everybody's always setting rules on you and not respecting you as a person. I think if you have more kids dealing with other kids' problems it'll work a lot better...a lot of people aren't terribly kind and considerate. And I think that if mediation isn't a big deal, just a part of every day life, that people go to and use a lot, I think it would help, because sometimes the school seems really...authoritarian because there's so many kids, you know trying to keep them in line, like these are the rules and this

is what you have to do. And you know people are always... called to the Dean for doing all this stuff.

A White parent would like to see clear limits but less "repressive" restriction which could ultimately create a backlash.

My major concern is that the response of the school is to tighten up every rule and regulation so that the school feels ever more restrictive and repressive. This can lead to more resentment, anger and violence on the part of kids. Limits are essential but military law is not.

The issue of power imbalance is an underlying theme in many comments, especially from parents. As conflict tends to illuminate any power imbalance in a relationship, any discussion of the mediation program in this school inevitably comes to this discussion of power. As Hocker and Wilmot say in their 1993 book Interpersonal Conflict

Conflict behaviors high-light different levels of power and allow participants to see the discrepancy (Rummel, 1976; Dahl, 1963; Rollins & Bahr, 1976) in Hocker and Wilmot (1993).

Paul, an African-American parent, described his perception of the power imbalance succinctly. "Where there is fear, there is no mediation...Where there is fear, there won't be any negotiation." Other parents touched on this issue in the following comments: "I think it is hard for mediation to co-exist with a punishment-oriented disciplinary philosophy," said one parent. Another White parent wrote:

I feel a mediation program won't be successful unless...(there is a change in) the direction or attitude of the school. As long as students aren't respected and discipline is a priority over learning then changes will not occur.

Bob, a Latino parent, was worried that the power asymmetries inherent in a punitive, guilty until proven innocent approach to discipline may contribute to acting out behavior on the part of some students.

Just because somebody is in a certain position, it shouldn't mean they have the right not to listen to somebody else or oppress them because there is a parallel process. If I'm in a position of power and I treat you in a way that you feel not listened to and pushed around and hurt by and I have no recourse, I'm going to act out. If I don't have any more maturity than these kids do, I'm going to either break a glass somewhere, or steal a radio, or take it out on a kid, or take it out on a dog. It's going to go somewhere.

As Bob pointed out, power imbalances inhibit the use of mediation. Power imbalances are an inhibiting factor due to the mutual mistrust and fear that may be engendered under these conditions. For those who have power there is always the fear of losing it. For those who chafe under feelings of powerlessness there are many ways to undermine the powers that be. Hocker and Wilmot point out that those in the one-down position do have access to sources of power which reverberate throughout the system. In their words:

If one party has more power than the other, the conflict is unbalanced; many of the choices the parties then make are attempts to alter these imbalances. Keep in mind that power is always a relative judgement--each party has sources of power even during times of imbalance. Such power asymmetries have predictable effects on both the higher and lower-power parties, and the imbalance

produces systemwide effects on the relationship.
(Hocker & Wilmot 1993)

McCormick, whose work is cited in the literature review, points out that students will not use conflict resolution and mediation skills until they have internalized them and experienced them as part of the overall school structure. School mediation programs need to be institutionalized to work effectively in reducing aggression. He goes on to say that mediation programs in schools where students lack understanding and experience in conflict resolution and where the programs exist in isolation and separate from the culture of the school as a whole will not decrease violence and aggression in the schools.

Most students will not use collaboration (formally or informally) until they have developed the requisite skills or until a structure has been established to assist them... we can effectively lessen student to student aggression in our schools not by adhering to the traditional mass of penalties for in-school aggression, but by properly institutionalizing school-based peer mediation. (McCormick, 1988, pp. 74-75)

Concerns were raised, primarily by parents, about what many perceive as the "punitive, rule oriented" discipline system in this school and its negative effect on students. One of these effects, it was pointed out, is a sense of fear and/or powerlessness among some students which is not conducive to the use of mediation. Fear does not always

ensure control and some students may act out in unhealthy ways in an attempt to redress power imbalances.

Overcrowding. Overcrowding of the building is another significant issue adding to stresses among people and contributing to conflict. Joseph, an African-American faculty member described the relationship between these crowded conditions and the potential for conflict in the school.

The hallways are very crowded. People are very excited to see one another...So, the hallways can be extremely congested and, you know, as the day goes on and as people become a little itchy and touchy and it's crowded and everyone's trying to continue that socialization-type concept that we got here, it can create a hazardous situation, particularly if one student ran down the hallway, okay, or the corridor doors being open and shut... if one instance, one case of conflict ever breaks out in the hallway, you automatically have a circle of people, on-lookers. It's extremely important for teachers to be out doing a change of class or step in the corridor so that students can visibly see that there is supervision there and that's very, very important...it can be a hazardous situation...if one person just ran down the hallway, then it becomes a safety issue.

Many parents expressed concerns about the overcrowding of the building. A sampling of their comments:

"Overcrowding... must be eased dramatically-it's a recipe for increased irritation, impersonalization, petty fighting etc.," said a White parent. Another White parent said

My concern is that with large numbers of kids crammed together that an atmosphere is created that might foster violence or at least, heightened aggressiveness.

"Classes too large in a school too large to properly meet the needs of puberty age kids" was the comment of another parent. A teacher added, "We're a crowded building. We have a mixed population. There are going to be stresses. There's going to be strains in that situation." Rick, a White faculty member described the impact of tight schedules and everyone being in a rush, on the level of conflict in the building.

Well, you know, a lot of the conflict occurs in hallways and lunch periods. Everybody in this building is in a hurry. We're all rushing to get somewhere. Even teachers can't stop to deal with a problem in the hallway, they'll be late to a class. So kids who have problems - oh, I've got to get to class, I'll beat you up later or something, you know. I think that's part of the problem.

In this building, time is at a premium and incidents can happen quickly in crowded corridors while rushing to class. Overcrowding and tight schedules can inhibit the use of mediation as they contribute to a feeling of pressure which is not conducive to the measured pace of the mediation process. Mediation takes time and thought.

Six major issues related to the dynamics of the school emerged from the data as inhibiting the use of mediation. Issues related to faculty include the need for more training and education and the very real limitations of time and space. An overarching limitation is that this school at present does not have a culture of mediation infused throughout the system in which the use of mediation is modeled and encouraged at all levels.

While faculty members reported a growing lack of respect on the part of students towards adult authority figures there were parents and students who were equally passionate in their comments about what they perceive as a lack of respect towards students on the part of faculty. Parents and faculty want to see the adults in the building become more available to listen to student problems, build one-on-one relationships with and serve as resources to students creating more connectedness and community.

Concerns about conflict and/or threats of violence and the current system of discipline are also emergent issues. A number of respondents perceive a conflicting agenda between the current rule oriented disciplinary system and the mediation program. Issues of physical safety, with large numbers of adolescents crowded into a too-small building, have resulted in a tightly developed disciplinary system based on negative consequences for infractions. When rules are broken, safety as well as adult control are threatened. As the school has grown, the complexity of problems that students bring to school has grown as well. The disciplinary system, which was well received at a different time in this community's history, has outgrown itself according to many, but not all, of the respondents. Numbers of chronic offenders have increased as has their resistance to rules and consequences. Together these factors affect the school climate in dramatic ways. According to many respondents, rather than a "culture of

mediation", a rule oriented, tightly structured disciplinary system appears to set the dominant tone.

Factor 5: Structure of the Mediation Program

Limitations related to the structure of the mediation program revealed by the data include three aspects. The first is lack of information about how to access and utilize the program, the second relates to the organization of the program and its relationship to the rest of the school and the third relates to issues of diversity.

Of all 23 faculty surveyed, 78.26%, along with 51.72% of the 58 students, said that structural aspects of the mediation program inhibit students from using the program. Only 26.32% of the 57 parents surveyed mentioned this issue, not surprising given that parents are not well informed about the program. Nineteen out of the 20 students interviewed (95%) raised this point as did 10 of the 12 faculty members (83.33%) and all of the 8 parents interviewed. Clearly the way that this program is organized and structured within the school provides inhibitions to its use. A major reason is that people lack information about and do not know how to access this program.

I Don't Know How It Works. A major reason why people don't go to mediation, according to many students and faculty members, is the lack of information about the program: how it works, how you go about getting mediation and what is involved. Four typical examples of what many

students had to say about this point are: "I think very few use it because they don't know a lot about it," from a White eighth grader. "I don't have much info on the program...I would use it...it's just I don't know about it" written by a Latino eighth grade student. A ninth grade female who described herself as Middle Eastern/American was mystified by the whole process. She said:

It's hard to find out how to do it (when, where, how)...If mediation was suggested more and more known about...I don't know who to talk to and I don't know where it is held.

A White female in the ninth grade wanted to know what types of conflict are appropriate to bring to mediation, how quickly the program can be accessed and what the process is.

It's not well known. I don't quite know how to use it -if somebody calls me a name, what do I do? Is it a big enough deal? When can/should I use it? When I'm in a fight I like to work it out right away-how soon can we mediate?...Show us real situations of how it is useful. Show us how to do it. Show us what are good situations. Tell us the benefits of it. Make it known how and where we do it-what's the process? What exactly could our peer mediators do to help us in conflict?

A White teacher said that the mediation program needs a "higher profile...Hey, just how and who is contacted?" A White faculty member attributed its limited use to meager information about the mediation program and said that it is "still in (its) start up phase (and it) needs a clear route." A White faculty member wanted statistical and

practical information about the program. In this faculty members' words:

I have not heard anything about the number of mediations done, reasons for mediations etc...I know it exists from flyers and announcements and a demonstration done two years ago, perhaps, by teachers at a faculty meeting.

Parents indicated an interest in the program but said that they lacked information. As one Latino parent said:

I can help to evaluate if I know what the program is all about. Should be more info for the parents about the mediation program so we can discuss it at home.

Students, faculty and parents spoke of not having enough information about the mediation program and all three groups asked for more information about how to access it and for data about how effectively the program was working. There is no doubt that lack of information about how to access the mediation program is an inhibiting factor as people cannot use a program if they lack information about how to access it and how it works. This lack of information is directly related to the organization of the program.

Organization of the Mediation Program. Several organizational issues came out in the data analysis. An Asian female in the 8th grade pointed out that students want to go through other students and not through teachers.

If teachers make the appointment and are the ones receiving the sheets you fill out then that makes students not want peer mediation. I think you should have students do that.

Jasmine, an African-American eighth grader, is concerned that it would make her look "bad" to the Dean to ask for mediation.

And also, don't you have to go to somebody to get a mediator? Because the Dean before was telling somebody to get a mediator. So, then he (the Dean) would think that you did something bad...I don't like that.

A number of faculty members agreed that it was unclear who to contact for mediation and that the process seemed to be too cumbersome. Typical responses included the following: "Process (requests for mediation) for immediate referral." One faculty member pointed out the tension between students wanting immediate resolution of their conflicts and the need for the mediator to attend classes.

The process seems complicated and is not immediate enough. These kids don't want to wait for anything. Peer mediator's are not immediately available. I'm not sure this can be addressed adequately without having an adverse effect on the mediators' education.

"Difficult to arrange time for it", agreed a White faculty member and another White faculty member said that students: "haven't got the habit yet." Another White teacher pointed out that it is easier for teachers to refer students to the Dean's office than to mediation, which encourages a punitive rather than a problem solving response. A Latino student, grade 9, echoes several of the above comments in his response.

You have to go through a whole process to get mediation. You have to fill out forms and see teachers, etc. Stop making it so hard, find a way

so that people can get mediation as soon as possible and with the least amount of work.

Mary and Sara, White mediators in the ninth grade complained about not having enough opportunities to use their skills because there were not enough mediations.

Most people have forgotten all their mediation skills because we never got to use them...And that's one of our problems with the mediation team taking off, is that there needs to be mediations #1, there needs to be people doing mediations #2, and then that will all connect together and get more publicity and a group going. A real team going.

Oh, I'm yeah, I'm forgetting everything...I could probably go and do mediation but I'd be focusing more on the mediation itself than the problem.

The fact that mediation is handled through the Dean's office which deals with discipline and behavior problems is another sensitive issue raised by Mary, a White mediator, who would rather see it handled through the guidance office. She described being paged to go to the Dean's office every time she does a mediation.

I also don't think that you should have to go to the Dean to do a mediation, I think you could work through guidance. Because guidance is to guide and the Dean is for trouble, to deal with problems. Right. If someone's called to the Dean, you say, what did you do?...Whether that's true or not, so I have to tell people, so they don't think I go to the Dean like all the time...It should be through guidance because guidance is about making...yourself better.

At the time of this study the administration had initiated a policy of giving students, in certain cases, the option of going to mediation or receiving an internal

or in-house detention. This change provided the mediators with more cases to mediate but created a fundamental shift in the nature of the process. Students were not necessarily going to mediation on a voluntary basis. Rather, they were choosing "the lesser of two evils," that is to go to mediation rather than receive in-house detention. The mediators I spoke with found it confusing and counter to what they had been taught as well as a change that made their jobs more difficult. One mediator felt that mediation was being used as an "alternative discipline" rather than as a form of conflict resolution. On the other hand, this change provided the mediators with a source of disputants and the opportunity to use and refine their skills. Rick, a White faculty member, hoped that this change would increase the number of mediations while providing alternatives to suspension yet worried that this approach undermines the voluntary nature of mediation.

We're looking for ways to get kids into mediation and one way is giving them alternatives, potential suspension or mediation. So, you might start to see more of that kind of reason to take mediation - it's not voluntary....If a student is suspended - let's say there's a problem between other students, the condition for re-entry is maybe mediation...But...that's against all the ideal settings that mediation talks about...But it's also partly being done because we're trying to help our student mediators have mediations, so we have to almost resort to this. Maybe if things picked up as they would in the ideal world, that wouldn't happen. So, it might just be a temporary fix.

Mary, White and in the 9th grade, provided a mediator's perspective on this issue, expressing her

frustration at attempting to mediate behavioral problems and questioning the use of mediation as an "alternative punishment."

I've been to mediations where people say "I don't want to be here"...that's one of our rules, if you really don't want to be here, you don't have to be, and we went and talked to the Dean, and he said, no, they have to do mediation or they're going to be suspended....his only choice was to be there or have an internal, and obviously he chose to do a mediation...And he was not open to working with the problem....when kids get into a fight, I think it's the major reason why there's mediation, there's not many requests....he was not cooperative at all....It was a behavioral problem, and mediation was not gonna solve it. And we had to do it, what, two or three times before we finally gave up and told the Dean, we can't do this....it's not used as a conflict resolution but as a way, an alternative punishment...Mediation punishment is totally different.

Eric, a White mediator in the eighth grade agreed with Mary that mediations done through the Dean's office can be awkward and counterproductive.

I think that the misuse of mediation kind of gives mediation a bad reputation because I did a mediation..there wasn't a problem, the kids got into the fight, they talked about it, and they resolved the problem right then and there. After they resolved the problem they got blue slips, went down to the Dean and had a mediation and the problem was really already solved.

Despite Mary's criticisms she could see some usefulness in this approach in that some people, although initially pressured into doing a mediation might realize that it works.

I think sometimes you have to make people who don't want to do mediations do it because it's gonna really help them. So there should be a

certain amount of "say you guys have to go to mediation."...but, you can't do that to everybody. Because sometimes it just won't work.

At the time of this study there was no room set aside for doing mediations and mediators worked in the library, the cafeteria or wherever they could find space. The mediators spoke of only limited support for the program and expressed frustration about it. Mary, who had a lot to say about being a mediator, was particularly upset about the issue of not having a mediation room.

If there was a separate room, like a mediation office and all of the teachers were really educated about mediation, then....if they saw people having a problem, they wouldn't have given them a blue (detention) slip....They could say "go to the mediation room"...we don't have a permanent room because it changes all the time, they don't have room for us in school and it's not a priority in the school therefore they haven't made the room for mediation. We take whatever room is left over and if there's none at the time... there's just no room in the school and there's no place where we can have our headquarters, and so we end up doing it in the cafeteria ...And you'd have to stop, because kids would come down for lunch. ..it just really interrupts the mediation because we had to extend it over a couple of days because there wasn't time...It causes problems with it not being a priority in our school.

Eric also complained about this problem.

I've done a couple of mediations in the library and I really didn't feel comfortable... there's people listening... the room, I think, affects it a lot.

At the time of this study teachers were leading the program voluntarily, as an extra-curricular activity on top of their full load as faculty members. They were

responsible for all aspects of the program, including training, outreach and publicity, administration/organization of the program and providing leadership to the students. Several of the mediators spoke of wanting more adult support in organizing and building the program. Mary, again, had several comments, this time about the need for adult leadership of the program.

I think it's necessary to keep going to the meetings if we want the program to keep alive and it's just really hard for us to do everything when we're not in charge, yet we have to take all the control...It can't be up to the students. We can only take on so much of the responsibilities because we are only the students in this school....

Mary was upset because the teachers in charge were also responsible for training the new mediators, a large responsibility, and at times a conflict with running the existing program.

And they (the teachers leading the mediation program) were really involved in the training and they couldn't do meetings and I kept asking "when are we gonna have a meeting?"... And it's just really tough because the students are willing to do things. I mean we could have a really great program if we just got someone to take control of it.

Fred agreed with the need for more adult leadership, particularly in arranging large events like assemblies.

Last year we didn't start a publicity campaign until half way through the year. I mean we always say "well we need an assembly." Our grade has never had an assembly about mediation...But the thing is that, I, I feel like they should be going in there and saying we have to have an assembly and they should be doing it the first thing the 7th Graders get there.

Diversity and The Use of Mediation. Given the diversity of the population at this school, an optimal situation for the mediation program would be for the mediators to reflect this diversity. In the start-up phase of the project, there was a more diverse group of mediators. During the time of this study the mediators were primarily female and White, with five students of color and three males out of approximately 35 mediators. This lack of diversity among mediators was of concern to many teachers, parents and students that were interviewed. Robert, an African-American faculty member, says that students of color are not using the mediation program because of this.

We haven't had enough diversity in the pool of students who were trained so that those segments of the community which are not taking advantage of it (are not) because of some bias and suspicion issues. I think initially when the training started there were some other kids, some students of color, who were trained but they graduated from here and went to the high school....Yeah, but we need more here. I think there was an active attempt to get some folks involved and for whatever reason not enough people came forward.

Rick, a White faculty member, also worried that mediation is seen as a "White thing" and spoke of trying unsuccessfully to recruit students of color.

I thought that there were people who were beginning to see this as a "White" thing... .that the Afro-American kids, the minority kids, weren't seeking out mediation because it was "White" and if you look at our mediators right now, we haven't had a lot of minority kids. We tried this year to really coral kids and we had a few and they slipped through our fingers and that's what I'm afraid of.

Megan, a White mediator, wanted to see increased diversity among mediators because it allows for more sensitivity about the impact of race and gender on conflict.

Look at ...the ratio of girls to guys in the mediation program. There's ...five.... male mediators....I agree that it's important to have mediators of different races and backgrounds. Because I think that for some people who might be really sensitive about who is what race and how it made them act towards each other, it might make them feel better if one of the mediators was African-American if they were, of their own race, because you don't want anything in mediation to seem like us against them. And if somebody is used to a race difference being a big difference then it might seem like that. And having, just having mediators from all different races, just like there are people from all different races in the school, I think it's a good idea.

Anne, a White faculty member, agreed that the lack of diversity can contribute to "distress" on the part of students of color, and related this to the "polarization" present in both the school and the larger society. She was concerned about her perception that students believe they need a mediator of their own race in order for the process to be fair.

(This issue) is more reflective of the general polarization of this society and the school community... If you're Black do you go to a Black mediator? If you're Hispanic do you get a Hispanic mediator and so, and in general, an unfortunate belief that you have to have someone of your cultural or racial background in order to have someone who would be fair and that's sort of a troubling idea, but I think it's there.

Maria, a Latina parent, thought that the program would be utilized more if a more diverse body of students were included in mediation. She spoke of the need to include students who feel less a part of the school as well, as they might better understand some of the issues brought to mediation.

It could be more effective if there was a diversity of students...doing the peer mediation. But I think that some of the students who do participate (in mediation) feel like they are part of the school. And feel obligated to the school. And I think that some of the kids who don't feel like that would be much better mediators (and) would probably understand a lot of the issues going on.... I think that if there was a diverse (group) of students doing the mediation...and students that are familiar to some of the minority students... it would be utilized more. Students would be able to say "well I know this person who's in there and I trust them."

Paul spoke eloquently about the connection between race and the use of mediation. Drawing on his own experiences growing up in this culture, he described what it is like for him as an African-American parent to raise a male in this society and in this town and described the caution with which he approaches the use of mediation for his son, although he is open to the process of mediation, itself.

There's a piece to how you raise a little Black boy, that is significantly different...he is not a very valued part of society. And you've got to be really careful with what happens in terms of mediation. You've got to be really careful about who's mediating... you've got to be careful about what you've given up... I was once a little Black boy and am now a Black man. And I have a very tainted view of society based on how it treated

me as a child, it treated me as an adolescent and how it treats me as a man...And as he turns 13 and is again, approaching that issue of manhood, the attacks upon him as a human being are going to increase. Simply because of the way he dresses and simply because of the color of his skin. And I need to be certain that he is aware of that. But aware of it in a manner that doesn't hurt him but makes him feel good about himself....one would normally say "you need to take advantage of this option over here."...I may say "you need to talk to me about that".... So that my sense is that there are other parents of, not just little Black boys, but little Asian children, little Cambodians, people of Latino background (that) may in fact be viewing it in the same way.....If a little 11 or 12 year old kid is using racial [epithets] or things of that nature...he didn't just wake up one morning and decide to say these things. He heard them from somewhere. The safest assumption that I'm going to make is that he heard them at the dinner table and therefore I have to be very cautious about the fact that simply because this is peer mediation...that could be just as destructive as anything else. So I am very cautious about allowing the mediation process to be the end all. I am not cautious about allowing him to participate in it.....But if it (mediation) does not represent the cross section population in the town then you can't expect it to be used by the entire population of the town.

Paul also talked about how mediation is not a concept that is familiar in the cultures that some students at this school were raised in.

You're also dealing with a cultural thing. You have kids coming from cultures where...there is no negotiation. Or you come from cultures where negotiation takes on almost a ritualistic kind of a pace. And there are certain people who are allowed to act as mediators and others who are not...you have not arrived at a point where you have the right to even do that. So that kids then get two messages. They're getting a message at home that speaks to the culture from which they were raised and then they get the culture of the school which is...a hodgepodge of many different pieces. And that can be somewhat confusing.

There is No System Wide Program in Place to Teach Mediation Skills. There is no school district wide program in place to teach mediation skills and conflict resolution although individuals have taught these skills to students in some classrooms in the district. Faculty as a whole have never been trained in this area although some faculty members are knowledgeable and experienced in this field. Several respondents pointed out the importance of beginning in the early years to teach these skills. Robert pointed out that the training needs to begin in elementary school.

It's not part of their (students) regular lexicon of skills. It's, unfortunately, still a fairly new concept for them, although I understand some elementary schools have worked at it. That's when it really needs to begin, as soon as possible.

A White parent wrote of the importance of beginning in the early grades to teach these skills, integrating the lessons into the life of the school at every level including classroom behavior and incorporating parents and young children into this process.

The most effective curriculum is on-going, starting in pre-school. Large blocks of time devoted to mediation at the JH and HS levels can backfire. Weave the skills into the every day life of the school with some introductory sessions...(Introduce) early intervention programs for parents and very young children to learn positive ways of guiding children along respectful social paths and for forming a strong foundation of language skills that they will need to find success in school and in social interactions. Problem solving, fairness and self control evolve slowly over the 12-13 years it takes to get to (the junior high). When stronger children arrive in grade 7, the more effective verbal mediation will become...A strong elementary and secondary social program that

focuses on fair and mutually respectful classroom behavior (is needed). Such a social underpinning for school interactions will teach how to behave, will set standards of behavior and will nip in the bud substandard behaviors before they become behavior patterns.

This perspective is backed up by Daniel Webster, quoted in the literature review, who emphasizes that brief interventions with no opportunity to practice new skills will not result in behavior change. Students need practice, long term reinforcement and training in a comprehensive program, starting when they are in elementary school, if we are to be successful in creating behavior change (Webster, 1993).

Sheila, a White parent, thought that junior high was too late to begin teaching these skills. She wanted to see it made a priority throughout the school system because she sees these skills as ones of lifelong importance, particularly on the job.

But see to me Jr. High's too late.... I think that we make decisions on what to teach kids based on some sense of priority somewhere...and that mediation hasn't hit that list....even when you finish graduate school and go to work and come to an office as lovely as mine with people as lovely as the people I work with, there are times that we run into conflict and we don't always know what to do about it...because we haven't been trained. So what if we started at an early age giving kids these kind of skills?...I don't remember how to do trigonometry. But I talk to people every day. It's a very a compelling need I think.

"Not enough education for students around conflict resolution," agreed a bi-racial faculty member. Gina, a White faculty member said, "We need a lot more training in communication. Again, that should start in kindergarten...it depends on what people value." Martin, an African-American 8th grader thought students need to be prepared in junior high school for what they must deal with in junior high school.

I think they should start talking about mediation when kids are in elementary school. Not start at Jr. High...since it took me a while to get used to it in elementary school. But there are less kids in elementary school and I guess you hang out with a smaller group of kids. Once you get to the Jr. High...there's a lot more people around. A different variety of people. Not everybody is going to be nice...And you're going to have to know how to deal with your anger when someone isn't nice.

Robert, an African-American faculty member, added his thoughts about the need for this training to begin in elementary school and to include parents as well.

We talked about the need for this to begin in elementary school and I think the need is to train parents about its value in elementary school so that they begin to promote that as a concept at home early on.

Daniel Webster agrees. "Late starters" whose antisocial behavior patterns begin during adolescence usually do not lack social skills. Different types of interventions are necessary for different adolescents, depending on where they fit into the spectrum of early, late starters and "typical" adolescents. He emphasizes that

middle/high school is too late to be beginning primary prevention programs which should begin in elementary school.

Several key issues emerged from this section. Some respondents spoke of wanting mediation to be a more accessible process and one that does not involve adult intervention. Concern was expressed, particularly by mediators, about having to work through the Dean's office, thus associating mediation with the disciplinary system. There is controversy about using mediation as an alternative to suspensions. On the one hand, some respondents see it as providing the mediators with disputants and more opportunities to use their skills. On the other hand, mediators I interviewed felt strongly that it runs counter to a basic premise of mediation, that mediation is a process willingly entered into by both parties. Other concerns at the time of this study included the lack of a headquarters or at the very least, a regular private space in which to hold mediation sessions and the need for more adult supervision and guidance of the program. The lack of diversity among mediators was raised as a significant issue by a number of respondents. Initiating early intervention and a district wide program were concepts raised by several respondents as being integral to the success of a mediation program.

Factor 6: Societal Issues

The larger societal context was not raised by any students in the surveys and only 8.7% of faculty and 8.77% of parents bringing up this issue. Although only 3 out of 20 students interviewed raised this issue, three quarters of the 12 faculty interviewed brought up larger societal issues as did one half of the 8 parents interviewed.

The adults who did raise this point spoke of how schools today are increasingly involved in socializing children, about the negative effects of the media and the general decrease in civility and polite behavior.

Schools Teaching Civility. Anne described a type of rage combined with a lack of civility that she was seeing in the larger society and among her students.

There's a rage. There's sort of a free floating rage in society at large and these children are kind of immersed in it and I think most of us go in and out of it because we really are basically socialized not to do it... when I'm out driving or I'm out shopping or out with people at large, I'm almost always amazed by the lack of civility and how minor instances can just suddenly explode into major emotional reactions.

Gina, a White teacher, said that students are coming to school without having learned appropriate behavior at home.

I think that we are definitely, as teachers, now taking over that role because it doesn't happen at home, and I don't want to sound old and I don't think I would have said this 15 years ago, but I think the kids have, you know, definitely changed and they're coming in here without that kind of modeling at home.

Rick, a White teacher, agreed and pointed out that there are fewer and fewer places for children to learn appropriate behavior today.

But like you said, I think it's modeling and it's a message that very often isn't being heard enough places. In the old days, you heard it from Mom and Dad and Grandpa, Grandma, Uncle Harvey, you also heard it in your religious house of worship, you also probably heard it from other civic organizations, you probably even heard it on some television, in the old days "Father Knows Best" covered those things. Now, what do you see? What do you hear?

Jean also agreed that, as a whole, there has been a shift in the behavior patterns of students in this school. Her perception was that, as a whole, students have less of a sense of appropriate behavior and internalized boundaries and rules.

When I first came here there was sort of an adult acknowledgment that some kids were in real trouble and that they were effecting the entire school environment, but they were...identifiable and... the majority of the kids, were going about their business. Then, I think, we went through a safer, healthier period.... an increasing concern that I have is that, through a variety of outside factors in our society as a whole, our kids have less of a sense of boundaries and rules and expectations...than they've had before. They're not getting a clear message from anybody about how to behave and they're not behaving. The "good kids" are doing bad things. The "good kids" are disrespectful sometimes and there's less of a clear message to all of our kids about appropriate behavior in our world.

A White parent felt strongly that schools must teach appropriate behavior and values such as honesty and kindness. In this parent's words:

Communication is essential...Basic values must be taught...Small violences, nastiness, sarcasm, insults, stolen pencils, and calculators etc.. need to be taken very seriously. The lines need to be drawn often and early.

David, a ninth grade disputant, added his voice to that of the adults, agreeing that he has seen changes in behavior over his school years as well.

It's like the change of the years. I see it in kids, a change ... one kid pushes or bumps another kid by accident and the other kid will turn around and punch him in the face.

Robert attributed some of the problem to the fact that "Maybe everybody's nerves are a little bit shorter and their sensitivities to conflict are a little more heightened as part of the societal drift."

Counter to Mainstream Culture. Some respondents pointed out that the processes involved in mediation are not congruent with the values of the larger society. Gina said that communication and relying on others for support are not mainstream values.

Communication in our culture isn't, I don't think it's highly valued...a lot of the problems come from not knowing how to communicate... mediation focuses on communication....in our culture we haven't gotten to the point where kids really know that they can get support when they need it ...and that's not a value...so helping others or not having to have your own - your problem isn't necessarily your own problem, and so I think we're trying to bridge that in a system that isn't really preaching that, so that's another small obstacle.

Joseph, an African-American faculty person, describes the self involvement that he sees among students.

Unfortunately, in our culture, in 1994-95, our young people are referring to violence and the sense of "I got to protect myself." It's not about the next person, it's about me and that's what's unfortunate.

Gina, a White teacher, agreed with this point and expanded on it by describing a kind of narrow focusing on self rather than an attitude of looking out for each other.

Kids are so much involved with their own struggle or their own success and if it was ...your success is everybody else's success, so if someone is failing you are not succeeding, but that's not really what we're doing. Each kid is very narrow channeled-I need to do this, I need...the more we get across the feeling that you need to look out for everybody because we're all in the boat together and if somebody has a lot of problems then eventually those problems are going to affect us.

Edward, a White faculty person, pointed out that people are neither born with mediation skills nor do they learn them in the culture.

Well, the (skill) of mediation is something that is acquired,...one is not born with it. We are a fight or flight organism in most cases. And the cultural imperatives that would support voluntary or immediate or easily result in mediation are just not there, especially in early adolescence.

George summed up how these issues are related to mediation with these words..."mediation is counter to the general culture...in the U.S." According to these respondents the values of communication and of both helping others and of asking for help, all of which are cornerstone values of mediation, are in contradiction to the everyday behaviors they see in students.

The Media. Anne, a White teacher, wondered about the impact of television and film violence. "I think it would be interesting to look at how the T.V. programs they watch, what are the popular movies? How are conflicts resolved in those areas? Are they resolved?" Joseph added to this point by describing the dilemma inherent in the combination of parents who are at work and inappropriate offerings on television.

If the parents are forced, in our system, to be at work and not able to work with their children on values more, than the values that they're being exposed to is coming from the T.V. or the movies or the mall or the talk shows.... I see students not handling as well as we would expect and that is because we have to really understand how our students, young people, are being indoctrinated by your music industry, your T.V. industry and then your motion picture industry.. How do they relate to real life situations when they leave here and they go home and look at these talk shows, okay?...This is a different culture that our kids are being exposed to, so how... they handle conflicts is based on what they're exposed to...Maybe if there were more real life people that were in their lives at the school, other than some talk show host who has some unbecoming guests or topic on...

Anne had a poignant analysis of the relationship between students' lack of investment in the mediation program and the school itself and the larger societal issues. She described it as a "dislocation in a way of any kind of social contract."

I just think about Kenneth Clark when he was doing his civilization series, years and years ago, and he started out talking about moving from the lowest part of the Middle Ages, called the Dark Ages, when nothing much goes on but anarchy and when it begins to move out into a building period when they're building big cathedrals and

he makes a point that what's required in order to engage in great building programs is a confidence in the future and when I try to think about why I'm seeing this change in society, I think that's part of it, that when I was this age and when I was first teaching, predominantly the community had a very strong confidence in the future... and they got this from all sides, they got this from the media, they got this from school, they got this from peers, a sense that if you played the game, you'd wind up in a good place or things would be better, and I don't believe children believe that anymore and I think it's particularly true for children who have not seen success, just in terms of the class system. For children who dramatically see they have the short end of the stick, there's no confidence in society and so without a confidence in society, without a strong affiliation with the group, you have absolutely no reason (to try to be successful). So the issue here is that the people in the group have to have the same social contract or it won't work.

A number of issues related to the larger society and inhibitions to the use of mediation were raised. Among them are peoples' concerns about a decrease in civility among students and in the society at large and a resulting need to teach civility in schools; the perception that values and practices of mediation are counter to the values of main stream culture, the influence of the media and what one respondent termed a "dislocation of the social contract," meaning that young people in general and particularly those who are poor and in the working class no longer have a faith that hard work alone will bring them success.

Summary of Inhibiting Factors

The findings of this chapter illustrate the ways in which conflict resolution within a school is influenced by the climate or atmosphere of this school and in turn influences this climate or atmosphere. In this chapter the six major factors inhibiting the use of mediation in this school were explored within the context of both the climate of the school and the larger society which in turn infuses the climate of this school.

This analysis of the factors inhibiting the use of mediation began with an exploration of students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding mediation. Students in this school perceive their peers' attitudes, feelings and behavior as major deterrents to the use of mediation and in fact, the adults surveyed do not realize the degree to which students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors are inhibiting them from using the mediation program. Themes emerging from surveys and interviews indicate that when looked at more closely there are several specific issues that inhibit students from using mediation. Students are wary of mediation, a process they have little experience with, don't grasp and rarely think of in the heat of conflict. By this age, students have internalized social messages about the importance of solving problems on their own rather than seeking help from others. They attend closely to messages from their peers' and, perceiving mediation as "uncool" they hesitate and stay away.

Introducing mediation at this particular developmental stage, during a time of adjustment to a large new school and amidst the tumultuousness of adolescence is not the optimal time.

The second factor looked at is student methods of handling conflict. How students are resolving their conflicts is intimately related to their use or lack of use of mediation. Passive and avoidant responses by students appear to prevail in this school which would indicate that students frequently feel intimidated by the conflicts they encounter. Active/assertive responses in the form of relying on friends to help or talking it out with each other are often employed. Pre-assaultive and assaultive responses to conflict such as namecalling, threats and physical fighting are more common than is the use of peer mediation, which appears to be the least employed of all of these approaches to resolving disputes.

The third factor examines the overall attitudes, feelings and behaviors of students in school. A number of issues were raised regarding the negative impact of students' attitudes, feelings and behaviors in school on the use of mediation. Name calling and spreading rumors occur with the most frequency of all types of conflictual behavior. Given the concern students reported about rumors leaking from mediation sessions this would appear to discourage the use of mediation. Female and non-White students in this school see harassment as a much more

frequent occurrence than do White and male students. Developmental issues that inhibit the use of mediation include the volatility and impulsiveness of early adolescence, particularly in the area of social interactions and the tendency for people in this age group to seek immediate results. Vulnerability to peer pressure is another developmental issue which in this school inhibits the use of mediation. Power imbalances, such as those in victim-victimizer relationships are also inhibiting factors.

A small group of students with chronic negative behavior patterns, appears to feel disconnected from and to hold little investment in this school as a place where they can meet with success. This group, while perhaps most likely to be involved in conflict is among the least likely to choose to avail themselves of mediation.

The fourth factor focuses on the dynamics of this school. Six major issues related to school dynamics emerged from the data as inhibiting the use of mediation. Although the faculty is supportive of mediation-no one is actively blocking it and attitudes are strongly positive towards the use of mediation, issues related to the faculty include the need for more training and education and the very real limitations of time and space. An overarching inhibition to the use of mediation at this school is the lack of a "culture of mediation" infused throughout the system. This school has not yet created a "culture of mediation" among

the adults, in which mediation is consistently taught, modeled and encouraged.

While faculty members reported a growing lack of respect on the part of students towards adult authority figures there were parents and students who were equally passionate in their comments about what they perceive as a lack of respect towards students on the part of faculty. Parents and faculty want to see the adults in the building become more available to listen to student problems, build one on one relationships with them and serve more as resources to students, resulting in more of a sense of connectedness and community.

Although many concerns about conflict and/or threats of violence were raised, a number of respondents described what they see as a conflicting agenda between the current rule oriented disciplinary system and the mediation program. Issues of physical safety, with large numbers of adolescents crowded into a too-small building, have resulted in a tightly developed system of discipline, based on negative consequences for infractions. As the school has grown, the complexity of problems that students bring to school has grown as well. Numbers of chronic offenders have increased as has their resistance to rules and consequences. Together these factors affect the school climate in dramatic ways. According to many respondents, rather than a "culture of mediation", an "authoritarian,

rule oriented", tightly structured disciplinary system appears to set the dominant tone.

The fifth factor relates to the structure of the mediation program. Several key issues emerged from this section. Respondents spoke of wanting mediation to be more accessible and of not involving adults. Concern was expressed, particularly by mediators, about having to work through the Dean's office, thus associating mediation with the disciplinary system. There was controversy about using mediation as an alternative to suspensions. On the one hand, some respondents see it as providing the mediators with disputants and more opportunities to use their skills. On the other hand, mediators I interviewed felt strongly that it runs counter to a basic premise of mediation, that mediation is a process willingly entered into by both parties. Other concerns at the time of this study included the lack of a headquarters or at the very least, a regular private space in which to hold mediation sessions and the need for more adult supervision and guidance of the program. The lack of diversity among mediators was raised as a significant issue by a number of respondents. Initiating early intervention and a district wide program were concepts raised by several respondents as being integral to the success of a mediation program.

The sixth factor covers societal issues. A number of issues related to the larger society and inhibitions to the use of mediation were raised. Among them were peoples'

concerns about a decrease in civility among students and in the society at large and a resulting need to teach civility in schools; the perception that values and practices of mediation are counter to the values of main stream culture, the influence of the media and what one respondent termed the "dislocation of the social contract", meaning that young people in general and particularly those who are poor and in the working class no longer have a faith that hard work alone will bring them success.

Although the emphasis of this study and the predominance of the data focus on those factors which inhibit the use of mediation, some encouraging data emerged as well. In terms of factors, the encouraging data included students, parents and teachers attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding mediation as well as aspects of the mediation program itself including: the peer helping aspects of the program; the quality of the peer mediators (and the high quality of the training for the mediators themselves); the usefulness of the skills in the mediators' own lives and the fact that mediation is a confidential process. Parents, faculty and students had a number of excellent suggestions which have been grouped by theme and appear next, at the close of this chapter.

Suggestions

All faculty, students and parents who were interviewed or surveyed were asked to give their suggestions for

improving the mediation program. Respondents' suggestions appeared to be grouped into three major themes. These themes include changes in the organization of the program, more effective outreach and publicity and intensified education about conflict resolution and mediation.

The first theme speaks to the need for changes in the structure and organization of the mediation program itself. Integrating mediation into the school as a whole rather than running it as an add-on program was an ongoing thread throughout all of these comments. Respondents wanted an official room that was always available for mediation and a faculty person whose job it was to be in charge of the program at least half time. In order to remove the association of mediation with punishment, it was suggested that the guidance office be the conduit through which mediations be channeled rather than the Dean's office. To draw in more mediators, it was suggested that a broader range of students be invited in as mediators and that either a portion of health class or an elective class be offered in mediation skills. Given that parent-child conflict is a major issue at this age, it was suggested that an option for parent-student mediation be created. Follow up after the mediation session in order to monitor agreements for compliance was also suggested.

Stronger outreach to the school community was the second theme around which suggestions emerged. A publicity committee was suggested whose job it would be to promote

the program in an ongoing way. Educating parents about the mediation program, perhaps by sending home notes or holding educational meetings was suggested. High visibility and reminders and encouraging of students by faculty and other students to use the program was a frequent suggestion. More clarification about how the program works was called for. Respondents wanted students to better understand the confidential nature of the program and to see it as an accessible and acceptable means of resolving conflicts. It was suggested that popular role models, such as athletic figures and high school students, come to the school to boost the program.

The third theme, more education and training in conflict resolution and mediation, included comments focusing on integration of skills and concepts into the curriculum and opportunities for small group discussion and training in conflict resolution and related matters such as handling emotions, civility and communication skills. Holding discussions in social studies classes about societal conflicts and in homerooms about behavioral rules and expectations were suggested as ways of providing more guidance to students about appropriate behavior and strategies for handling difficult situations. All of these comments spoke to a felt need for more connection between students and faculty and the need for more adult guidance in students' lives.

Suggestions for trainings ranged from routinely teaching mediation skills to chronic offenders to classroom role plays of mediation sessions and whole school trainings conducted simultaneously in classrooms and/or via assemblies. System wide training, beginning in kindergarten and including all faculty students and parents in the system was the most comprehensive and inclusive of the suggestions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Developmental Stage of This Program

In this study the perceptions of parents, students and faculty have revealed how the climate or atmosphere of this school is a primary context within which conflict resolution occurs and how, paradoxically, the participants and the structure of this system shape this climate. In reviewing Folger et al's (1993) analysis in their book, Working Through Conflict, the four factors they describe as having major impact on climate include how power is distributed, the way decisions are made, the level of support that people feel from each other and the degree to which people experience themselves as interconnected with each other and as a part of a larger community.

In looking at the first two factors, how power is distributed and the way in which decisions are made, the data reveals that in this school, there is what could be termed a "conflicting ideological agenda" between what currently exists and what is needed to create a school infused with a "culture of mediation".

At the time of this study, the developmental stage of this mediation program in relation to the school could best be described as one of "dissonance", meaning a lack of fit between the traditional tone and structure of the school and the radically different collaborative nature of peer

mediation. This dissonance or lack of fit is a source of conflict between these two very different ideological agendas and requires either change on the part of the school or the acceptance of a certain level of discomfort and contradiction between the school and the program.

However, this dissonance can also be viewed as a signpost of change that has already taken place. Existing alongside of the traditional punishment oriented system in which all power emanates from the top of the hierarchy, the peer mediation program represents "news of a difference"; an example of a small but meaningful change in the distribution of power and the handling of conflict. The very process of self examination and reflection and the willingness of people within this school community to be explicit about work that needs to be done and problems that need to be solved speaks to shifts that have already occurred and an openness to change that rumbles beneath the surface. This process of self reflection and study has revealed needed shifts in emphasis and key recommendations that are preconditions for building vital and effective peer mediation programs in schools.

Power and decision making with regard to rules and discipline are currently concentrated at the top of an authoritarian, rule oriented system. This is a model with the weight of tradition behind it; however it conflicts with the collaborative framework of a culture of mediation in which students are directly involved with the resolution

of conflict and mediation is actively modeled and utilized as a way to resolve differences at every level of the system. An effective mediation program for this school requires both an ideological and an organizational shift in the balance of power; a sharing, to at least some degree, of power and decision making with students and with parents. There will always be a need for rules and for consequences for infractions but a culture of mediation would mean that students were involved across the board in more decision making and would hold more responsibility for the functioning of the school. This conflicting agenda contributes to the frustration and sense of dissonance experienced by many of the respondents who spoke to this issue. One question that emerged from the research is whether this school and this community are willing to accept the dissonance which results from the conflict between the early stages of a change to a culture of mediation and the current system.

The second set of climactic conditions cited by Folger includes the degree to which people experience themselves as interconnected with each other and as a part of a larger community. Feeling a positive identification with the school and a sense of mutual respect among different groups of people (respect between racial groups, between the genders and among the parents, faculty and students in this school) are two examples of ways people could feel interconnected and more a part of the school community.

In this school, there is a significant group of disaffected and/or disconnected students who are not defined as "successful" by the standards of the school. Issues of class, race and of social/academic stratification emerge in relation to this group. These students do not feel a part of the "social contract" and do not buy into the notion that this society offers rewards to those who work hard.

The sense of community among students, faculty and parents in this school appears to be fragile and fragmented. Concerns were expressed by all three groups about the lack of respect they have encountered. Misperceptions and misunderstandings as well as tensions among various racial and social groups and class differences among students contribute to this fragmentation.

Applying the Principles of Mediation to This Project

One of the most important principles of conflict resolution and mediation theory is that conflict is not necessarily a negative or destructive process and that it can often be a positive force or catalyst for change and growth. Assuming that the conflict is between, on the one hand, the collaborative mediation model and, on the other hand, the authoritarian climate and punishment-oriented system of discipline in this school, how could the principles of mediation be useful in moving this problem

towards a positive resolution? The first step is for people on both sides of this conflict to truly hear what the "others" are saying and understand what they are feeling; in other words, to understand the conflict from the disputants' perspective.

For those respondents who are critical and angry about the climate and structure of this school, it might be useful to reflect on what it must be like to be an administrator of this or any public school today, bearing in mind the many larger social problems that schools by default must deal with, the limitations and difficulties created by overcrowding and budget cutbacks, and the tendency of both individuals and institutions in this society to blame schools for problems whose roots lie in the wider context of social and economic injustice and the failings of the larger political system. Imagine being an administrator in a school today, faced not only with these problems, but with the very pressing need to create a physically safe environment in an increasingly violent and uncivil society, while ensuring that a diverse range of students gets their academic and socialization needs met. Administrators are charged with keeping not only their students safe, happy, and thriving academically, but also must keep their faculty members feeling safe and taken care of, even as both the numbers and the problems of their students multiply. In addition, administrators must contend with the parents of these students, whose primary concern

is the well-being of their individual child, who is only one person in a large institution. From this perspective, it is perhaps easier to understand how rules came to be so central, why negative consequences and punishments are used as a means of maintaining control over the building.

From the perspective of a teacher whose class sizes are ever growing, who is dealing with an increasing number of profoundly alienated students, and who encounters the range of societal distress in every classroom, how can one find the time or energy to deal sensitively with every conflict, hurt feeling, unhappy child, or indignant parent?

This perspective is the one that is not heard as much in the voices of the respondents but is critical to understanding the problem and ultimately crafting a solution. Those, like many of the respondents heard from in the previous chapter, who passionately call for a "climate of mediation" (which implies listening and respect, responsibility, and power given to students to help their peers to resolve their conflicts, flexibility, and sensitivity to minor transgressions, the use of problem-solving and positive discipline rather than punishment and blame when disputes and misbehavior arise and an increase in the sense of community and collaboration) can take a first step towards creating a climate of mediation by understanding the other perspective. On the other hand, there is much to be learned by listening to these

passionate voices calling for a different climate in this school, many powerful insights, and heartfelt suggestions.

Along with listening to and understanding both perspectives and coming up with a definition of the problem, it is central to the mediation process to explore the interests that both parties have in common, as it is these common interests that form the basis for a mediated agreement. Examples of common interests are the physical safety of all those in the building and the desire of everyone in the school community to be treated with respect. Despite various degrees of alienation among segments of the student population, I think it is fair to say that everyone in this school community wants to see a student body that has been educated to work successfully in and cope effectively with an increasingly complex society. Despite different opinions about the degree to which rules and punishments should prevail, no one wants to see chaos, anarchy, or the cessation of adult guidance and authority.

After exploring these and other common interests, a mediator might work with both sets of disputants to discover what it is that they truly need in order to feel comfortable in reaching an agreement and what it is that they might be willing to compromise on in order to get what they need. I would propose as a next step in this school, or in any school experiencing this dissonance between its current climate and its mediation program, that there be a dialogue along these lines, perhaps facilitated by both the

students and the adults who are trained in mediation or perhaps by an outside mediation team. This is not a proposal for a "quick fix". Instead, it is a long-term plan that gives this school community a positive way to begin implementing the principles of mediation as a means by which an organic and workable structure can evolve over time which will better meet the needs of everyone in this school community.

Recommendations Based on This Study for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs

If a program is to be utilized effectively and to have a significant impact on the climate of the school, then the school system as a whole, including administration and faculty, needs to make a commitment to conflict resolution and mediation throughout the system, in effect creating a system wide culture of mediation. A significant aspect of a culture of mediation is the modeling and encouragement by administration and faculty of mediation and conflict resolution skills in their interactions with students, parents and each other. Parents must be included in this equation and parent/faculty mediation needs to be actively encouraged. Students need to see people using these skills effectively in real life and at this age are still in need of adults to provide guidance and direction, even though this may not always be apparent in their words and behavior.

A culture of mediation requires not only modeling and encouragement of mediation and conflict resolution skills but an active commitment on the part of the administration at all levels of the system to provide both leadership and financial support for the program. Leadership that models the use of mediation by those in charge of the school and the school system helps to address the paradox raised by Pilati (1994) regarding mediation programs that are centralized at the administrative level and are "imposed" on the faculty. It is unrealistic and unfair to expect the administration in one school building to take full responsibility for a program of this scope and magnitude. Administrative leadership includes public statements of support and clearly expressed expectations of utilization to the faculty, students and the community and clarification to the staff that this program is a priority and that release time will be granted to ensure that faculty have the time to make the program work effectively. Administrative resources are also critical to the success of a program in the form of a headquarters, ongoing adult leadership and commitment of other necessary resources.

Training is another critical aspect of this support. There are three different ways to implement this training, one of which involves only minimal expenses. The most costly model utilizes outside trainers who are brought in to teach the whole faculty or a portion of the faculty, who in turn teach the rest of the faculty members. Another

model is to hire one or more people whose job it is to work throughout the system to train faculty and students in conflict resolution and mediation and to provide ongoing support for the implementation of these programs. A third alternative, the least costly, is to bring together current faculty, perhaps with the assistance of parents and/or community members, who are qualified to do training and program implementation and have this group orchestrate the program system wide. No matter which model is chosen it is of the utmost importance that there be one or more people in each school who hold a deep commitment to the program and are willing to serve as advocates on a long term basis. Policy decisions alone are not enough to keep a program going; each program needs to be nurtured by faculty members who care deeply about it. Community support, in the form of an advisory board, is another strategically important tool for implementing and preserving these programs and can provide additional sources of encouragement, feedback, and assistance.

Training needs to be far more comprehensive than teaching a handful of student to be mediators. Conflict resolution skills need to be taught and encouraged in elementary school, beginning with the primary grades, a time when students are maximally open to learning a common language and set of strategies about how to relate to their peers. Peer mediation programs should be available, as well, with peer mediators being trained beginning in the

fourth or fifth grade and with mediators from the junior and senior high school systematically visiting elementary schools throughout the system to teach and model the skills and concepts. With this approach, students will be experienced in using both conflict resolution and peer mediation before they enter junior high school, a time when their openness to learning these skills is far lower and the stakes of their conflicts can be far higher.

Developmentally appropriate school wide training in conflict resolution, mediation and anger management need to be infused throughout the curriculum and made available to all students, especially those new to the system or who are chronic offenders. Part of a comprehensive program which will help to create a climate of mediation throughout the school system is the inclusion of parents, all staff members including paraprofessionals, bus drivers, lunchroom and recess aides and administrators in comprehensive training. Curriculum and/or staff training days could be used, system-wide, to do this training. Courses could be offered through the school and/or through adult education programs which students, faculty and staff members can participate in for academic and/or continuing education credit. These trainings and courses could be led by faculty members in the system, or by community mediation agencies.

A truly comprehensive program would provide for small group training, support and dialogue for students, parents and faculty, structured along the lines of a developmental

guidance program. For students, these groups can take the form of mini-courses taught by the counseling staff and/or health educators. Faculty members could teach them after school as a club or activity. Local colleges or universities could provide students who could run these groups for credit, an internship, or as a community service project and/or local health care providers could provide staff people to run these groups as part of their public health/community service mission. In these small and emotionally safe groups, issues related to understanding and appreciating differences in race, gender, cultural backgrounds and learning styles could be explored. Communication and social skills, training in how to deal with harassment, insults and aggressive behavior, strategies to handle potentially violent incidents and strategies for anger management could all be incorporated. These groups could assist in the building and strengthening of ties for students with positive adult role models, and could result in the development of positive activities such as community service projects and outreach to younger students. They would also serve to strengthen ties between students, parents, and the school and faculty with each other. However, overburdened faculty members cannot be expected to take on this critical piece unaided. Outside support personnel such as those suggested above or increased counselor time constitute a necessary precondition for these groups to be effective. These

efforts could go far towards building the sense of community and trust that is crucial for developing effective mediation programs.

Given that safety needs to be the first priority and that large, overcrowded schools create inevitable risks and tensions, the issue of size needs to be addressed in order to shift to a school climate reflecting both a sense of community and a fully integrated mediation and conflict resolution program. Breaking large schools down into smaller communities or subgroups or creating middle schools with more adult guidance and positive intervention are two ways to approach this problem.

The students in this study have been clear in their feedback that mediation needs to be an accessible and confidential process and one that does not involve adult intervention. Associating all mediation with the Dean's office and thus the disciplinary system is problematic. There is a need for separation from a punitive disciplinary system for those mediations that are requested by students themselves. Although it is a very positive thing for disputants who have entered the disciplinary system to seek mediation as part of their disciplinary procedure, it is important that these students be motivated and willing to actively engage in this process rather than going through the motions in a meaningless fashion in order to avoid further punishment. Along with the inappropriateness of using mediation in this way, it is unfair to ask student

mediators to be providers of alternative discipline. The pool of mediators needs to reflect the diversity in the population in terms of race, gender, learning styles, academic track and social group. Efforts must be made to reach out to a diverse group of students. This may involve inviting students to participate and providing incentives for becoming a mediator, such as team jackets, opportunities to attend conferences, and the chance to earn academic credit.

Reflections on This Study

This study reveals the impossibility of understanding the nature of a school based program that attempts to deal with a larger social problem such as conflict and violence without also studying the context of the school itself, the community in which the school is based and the socio-economic and political system as a whole. School mediation programs do not exist in a vacuum. The factors that inhibit their success are reflections of broader community and social issues and problems.

It is equally impossible to conduct a research project such as this one and hope to find an absolute "truth" or reality base from which to draw conclusions. In listening to the many voices of the respondents, I was struck by how differently the same institution and its issues are viewed depending on who is doing the looking and the speaking.

Another one of the broader social issues that emerged in doing this research was the difficulty of respecting and holding onto peoples' particular racial or other group identity such as country of origin while maintaining their confidentiality and avoiding the pitfall of meaninglessly small categories of one or two.

The surveys contained a question asking people, "What is your cultural group or groups? (Hispanic/Latino/Latina; Caucasian/White; African-American/Black; Asian-American/Asian; Native American/American Indian; Other group not included in this list)", giving people five choices and including the option of writing in their own definition. During the interviews, I asked people, "What cultural group/nationality do you feel the most connected to?" This question, in retrospect, could be perceived as meaning, "Who do you feel most comfortable with?", rather than "what is your own background, race, or country of origin?", but, being present, I was able to explain it to them if I sensed any confusion. The purpose of providing all of these options was to give people the opportunity to define themselves according to their own social/cultural/racial/ethnic identity, rather than limiting or boxing them in. However, it also meant that the responses were very varied and diverse (as is the population at this school). Some respondents described themselves as members of three or four different groups; a reflection of the rich mingling

of cultures, nationalities, and races that is occurring in our society.

However, as a researcher this posed two dilemmas for me. The first was the struggle between holding on to these rich descriptions while maintaining confidentiality when describing respondents' written or spoken comments, particularly in the case of those who described unusual combinations that might be revealing of their identities. The second dilemma was that I ended up with many different groups, some with only one or two members, which became meaningless in terms of comparing percentages.

The compromise that I arrived at was that, when quoting someone, I used their self-definition, except in instances where I thought it might reveal their identities, in which case I used the term bi/multi-racial. However, when working with the numerical data, I used three categories, white, people of color, and bi\multi-racial. In this way, I was able to maintain the identities of individual respondents, preserve their confidentiality, and also come up with categories for the percentages that allowed for more meaningful interpretation.

It was always a primary goal of mine to create a study that could be useful to anyone involved in school based mediation or conflict resolution programs. One of the reasons for the focus on inhibiting factors was to provide an honest look at the roadblocks to successful programs in order to strengthen the programs that already exist as well

as to support emergent programs. The close up look at inhibiting factors will hopefully be useful as a guide and an evaluation tool for others designing or hoping to improve school based mediation programs.

Directions for Future Study

Although this is a study of one program in one school, many of the findings that have been cited are applicable to programs in other schools. One major assumption held by a number of respondents in this study is that students are more likely to actively use conflict resolution and mediation skills during adolescence if they learn and use them in elementary school. A longitudinal study of two different school systems, one of which had a comprehensive conflict resolution program which began with the youngest students and the other in which these skills were introduced in middle school or junior high school would be useful in examining the assumption that early intervention is the most effective strategy. A study looking at how to teach conflict resolution and mediation in developmentally appropriate ways would also be a very beneficial study.

Another question needing further exploration is whether programs may need to be designed differently depending on whether the system is located in a rural, urban or suburban area. Each type of school community has its own challenges depending on its' particular demographics therefore the types of conflicts faced by

students and the range of their responses will be different.

Several other studies come to mind as next steps in this work. A study focusing on disputants and asking who goes to mediation and why, would be very useful. A longitudinal study of mediators and how this role has affected their studies, their self-image and their behavior in school is another potential direction to move in. An analysis of the relationship of learning disabilities and the special education population, race, gender and who it is that gets caught in the system of discipline in a school would be another significant topic. Stresses faced by faculty and how conflict resolution and mediation programs can be set up without further contributing to teacher stress and overload is another area of critical importance that remains to be studied. Clearly this field is in its infancy and enormous amounts of research are waiting to be done in order to advance the work.

Data from the Edges

There is an inherent danger, as a society, in putting all of our problem solving efforts regarding conflict and youth violence into school-based conflict resolution and mediation programs. Focusing on schools alone removes attention from the underlying sources of conflict in our society that stem from class, racial and gender inequality and an overall need to focus on society wide issues of

social justice. The danger lies in using school based conflict resolution and mediation to divert attention from these larger issues. These programs can potentially serve to contain, privatize and sweep under the rug what are in actuality larger and far more intractable issues of social justice.

School based conflict resolution and mediation programs are only one aspect of what must be a far more comprehensive approach to violence in society. Schools are already charged with responsibilities far beyond the teaching of math, reading and science. Today, more and more children are coming to school needing to learn basic social skills such as listening, taking turns and managing their emotions. Increasingly, school personnel are responsible for protecting children from physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Personal safety and education aimed at prevention of alcohol and drug use and abuse and pregnancy have all, by necessity, become part of the curriculum; all of this in the wake of increasing fiscal restraints and rising criticism of those who work most directly with society's most vulnerable members. It is both unfair and unreasonable to expect public schools to solve all of their students' problems, many of which result from economic, political and social injustices that are a part of our entire socio-economic system. It is the responsibility of government, large corporations and the business community, religious organizations, the media and the communities

within which school systems reside to work together if we are to be successful in tackling the very complex issue of violence in our society.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE WITH DISPUTANTS

Questions to explore with disputants (students who have been through mediation).

- 1) How did you find out about mediation?
- 2) Why did you choose to go to mediation?
- 3) What was the experience like for you?
- 4) Were you satisfied with the outcome?
- 5) What kinds of conflicts do you and your friends have?
- 6) How do you resolve them?
- 7) Which of your conflicts/problems do you think you and people you know would consider bringing to mediation?
- 8) Which of your conflicts/problems do you think you and people you know would not consider bringing to mediation?
- 9) Why do you think so few students use mediation?
- 10) What do you think is most effective about mediation?
- 11) What ideas or suggestions do you have that might encourage more students to use mediation?
- 12) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?
- 13) What is/are your cultural group or groups?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN THROUGH MEDIATION

- 1) What do you know about mediation at this school?
- 2) How did you find out about mediation?
- 3) What kinds of conflicts do you and your friends have?
- 4) How do you resolve them?
- 5) Which of your conflicts/problems do you think you and your friends would consider bringing to mediation?
- 6) Which of your conflicts/problems do you think you and your friends would not consider bringing to mediation?
- 7) What do you think is most effective about mediation?
- 8) Why do you think so few students use mediation?
- 9) What ideas or suggestions do you have that might encourage more students to use mediation?
- 10) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?
- 11) What is/are your cultural group or groups?

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE WITH STUDENT MEDIATORS

- 1) How did you find out about mediation?
- 2) Why did you become a mediator?
- 3) How do you feel about being a mediator?
- 4) When you mediate a dispute how satisfied are you, as a mediator, with the outcome?
- 5) What parts of your training have you found most useful to you as a mediator?
- 6) Has the bias awareness part of the training helped you work with students who see themselves as different from one another?
- 7) What kinds of conflicts do you and your friends have?
- 8) How do you resolve them?
- 9) Which of your conflicts/problems do you think you and your friends would consider bringing to mediation?
- 10) Which of your conflicts/problems do you think you and your friends would not consider bringing to mediation?
- 11) What do you think is most effective about mediation?
- 12) Why do you think so few students use mediation?
- 13) What ideas or suggestions do you have that might encourage more students to use mediation?
- 14) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?
- 15) What is your cultural group or groups?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

- 1) How would you describe the mediation program?
- 2) How did you find out about mediation?
- 3) What kinds of conflicts do you notice students having?
- 4) How do you see students handling their conflicts?
- 5) Which of their conflicts do you think students would consider bringing to mediation?
- 6) Which of their conflicts do you think students would not consider bringing to mediation?
- 7) Why do you think so few students use mediation?
- 8) What do you think is most effective about mediation?
- 9) What ideas or suggestions do you have that might encourage more students to use mediation?
- 10) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?
- 11) What is your cultural group or groups?

* * * * *

Extra Questions for teachers, staff and administrators who have been through mediation training.

- a) What is the impact of the teacher/staff training on the program as a whole?
- b) Has the bias awareness part of the training helped you work with students who see themselves as different from one another?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) What do you know about mediation at this school?
- 2) How did you find out about mediation?
- 3) What kinds of conflicts do you notice your junior high school aged child and his/her friends having?
- 4) How do they resolve them?
- 5) Which of these conflicts do you think your child and his/her friends would consider bringing to mediation?
- 6) Which of these conflicts do you think your child and his/her friends would not consider bringing to mediation?
- 7) What do you think is most effective about mediation?
- 8) Why do you think so few students use mediation?
- 9) What ideas or suggestions do you have that might encourage more students to use mediation?
- 10) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?
- 11) What is/are your cultural group or groups?

APPENDIX F
CONFIDENTIAL STUDENT SURVEY

Confidential Student Survey

Please circle Grade: 7 8 9

Gender: Female Male

1) Please circle any of the following types of conflict that you see occurring at ARJHS:

- a) spreading rumors
- b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
- c) threats
- d) physical fighting
- e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply):
gender, race, sexual orientation
- f) arguing/disagreeing
- g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
- h) other _____

2) Where in school can students go for help in dealing with conflict and/or the threat of violence? Please circle as many as apply.

- a) Guidance Counselor
- b) Teacher
- c) Dean of Students
- d) Principal
- e) Instructional Director
- f) Peer Mediation
- g) Other _____

3) What kinds of conflicts do you and people you know have at school?

- a) spreading rumors
- b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
- c) threats
- d) physical fighting
- e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply):
gender, race, sexual orientation
- f) arguing/disagreeing
- g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
- h) other _____

4) How do you and people you know resolve these conflicts? Please circle as many as apply.

- a) ignoring the person or people
- b) physical fighting
- c) peer mediation
- d) staying away from each other for a while
- e) friends help to work it out
- f) going to an adult for help
- g) threatening the person or people
- h) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
- i) talking it out with each other
- j) other ways _____

5) Do you know about the Peer Mediation Program? Please circle Yes No

6) If so, how did you find out about it?

7) Have you gone through peer mediation at your school?

Please circle Yes No

Any feedback?

8) Which of your conflicts do you think you and people you know would consider bringing to mediation?

- a) spreading rumors
- b) namecalling/teasing/taunting/insulting
- c) threats
- d) physical fighting
- e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
- f) arguing/disagreeing
- g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
- h) other _____

- 9) Which of your conflicts do you think you and people you know would not consider bringing to mediation?
- a) spreading rumors
 - b) namecalling/teasing/taunting/insulting
 - c) threats
 - d) physical fighting
 - e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
 - f) arguing/disagreeing
 - g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
 - h) other _____
- 10) What do you think is most effective about peer mediation?
- 11) Why do you think so few students use peer mediation?
- 12) What ideas or suggestions do you have that might encourage more students to use peer mediation?

- 13) Would you like to see part of your class time focused on conflict resolution, mediation and ways to handle anger and frustration?

Please circle Yes No

- 14) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?

- 15) What is/are your cultural group or groups?

Please circle as many as apply:

Hispanic/Latino/Latina; Caucasian/White;

African-American/Black;

Asian-American/Asian;

Native American/American Indian;

Other group not
listed _____

APPENDIX G

LETTERS TO PARENTS, STEP PARENTS, GUARDIANS

Parents, Step Parents and Guardians:

Please consider being interviewed for a study I am conducting about the Peer Mediation program at the Junior High School. Parent interviews are an important source of ideas and information about how to make the Peer Mediation program more responsive to the needs of all of our school community. This study is part of the research for my Doctoral Dissertation and is being done at the request of the Mediation Project, the organization that trained the mediators.

The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes, will be organized at your convenience and you will not be identified by name. I will provide childcare if necessary. Please contact me at 253-2161 if you have any questions, suggestions or would like to be interviewed.

Thank you,
Susan Theberge

Dear Parents, Step Parents and Guardians,

I am conducting a study of the Peer Mediation program at the Junior High School in order to get feedback about how to make the program more responsive to the needs of all of the school community. This study is part of the research for my Doctoral Dissertation and is being done at the request of the Mediation Project, the organization that trained the mediators. I would greatly appreciate your taking the time to fill this form out. Please note that this is an anonymous survey so do not include names or other identifying information. Completed surveys can be returned to the Junior High office or mailed to me at 250 Shutesbury Road, Amherst, Ma 01002 by December 00. Please feel free to contact me at 253-2161 if you have any questions. Copies of the completed report will be available through the office of the Instructional Director.

Thank you

Susan Theberge

APPENDIX H
CONFIDENTIAL PARENT SURVEY

- 1) What concerns, if any, do you have about conflict and/or the threat of violence at ARJHS?
- 2) Where in school can students go for help in dealing with conflict and/or the threat of violence? **Please circle as many as apply:**
- a) Guidance Counselor
 - b) Teacher
 - c) Dean of Students
 - d) Principal
 - e) Instructional Director
 - f) Peer Mediation
 - g) Other _____
- 3) Which of these options would you encourage your child to use? **Please circle as many as apply:**
- a) Guidance Counselor
 - b) Teacher
 - c) Dean of Students
 - d) Principal
 - e) Instructional Director
 - f) Peer Mediation
 - g) Other _____
- 4) Would you like to see a portion of the curriculum focused on conflict resolution, mediation, and/or ways to handle anger and frustration?
- Please circle Yes No**
- 5) Do you know about the peer mediation program at ARJHS?
- Please circle Yes No**
- 6) If so, how did you find out about peer mediation?

- 7) What kinds of conflicts does your child and/or his/her friends have at school?
- a) rumors being spread
 - b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
 - c) threats
 - d) physical fighting
 - e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
 - f) arguing/disagreeing
 - g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
 - h) other _____
- 8) For which of these conflicts would you encourage your child to use mediation?
- a) rumors being spread
 - b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
 - c) threats
 - d) physical fighting
 - e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
 - f) arguing/disagreeing
 - g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
 - h) other _____
- 9) For which of these conflicts would you discourage your child from using mediation?
- a) rumors being spread
 - b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
 - c) threats
 - d) physical fighting
 - e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
 - f) arguing/disagreeing
 - g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
 - h) other _____
- 10) What ideas or suggestions do you have to increase the effectiveness of the mediation program?

11) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful to us in evaluating the current mediation program?

12) What is/are your cultural group or groups? Please circle as many as apply:

Hispanic/Latino/Latina; Caucasian/White;

African-American/Black;

Asian-American/Asian; Native American/American Indian;

Other group not listed _____

APPENDIX I
LETTER TO FACULTY MEMBERS

Dear Faculty Members,

I am conducting a study of the Peer Mediation program at the Junior High School in order to get feedback about how to make the program more responsive to the needs of all of the school community. This study is part of the research for my Doctoral Dissertation and is being done at the request of the Mediation Project, the organization that trained the mediators. I would greatly appreciate your taking the time to fill this form out. Please note that this is an anonymous survey so do not include names or other identifying information. Completed surveys can be returned to the Junior High office or mailed to me at 250 Shutesbury Road, Amherst, Ma 01002 by December 21. Please feel free to contact me at 253-2161 if you have any questions. Copies of the completed report will be available through the office.

Thank you,

Susan Theberge

APPENDIX J
CONFIDENTIAL FACULTY SURVEY

- 1) What concerns, if any, do you have about conflict and/or the threat of violence at ARJHS?

- 2) What kinds of conflicts do students have at school?
 - a) rumors being spread
 - b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
 - c) threats
 - d) physical fighting
 - e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
 - f) arguing/disagreeing
 - g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
 - h) other _____

- 3) Where in school can students go for help in dealing with conflict and/or the threat of violence? **Please circle as many as apply:**
 - a) Guidance Counselor
 - b) Teacher
 - c) Dean of Students
 - d) Principal
 - e) Instructional Director
 - f) Peer Mediation
 - g) Other _____

- 4) Which of these options would you encourage your students to use? **Please circle as many as apply:**
 - a) Guidance Counselor
 - b) Teacher
 - c) Dean of Students
 - d) Principal
 - e) Instructional Director
 - f) Peer Mediation
 - g) Other _____

- 5) Do you know about the peer mediation program at ARJHS?
Please circle Yes No

6) If so, how did you find out about peer mediation?

7) For which of these conflicts would you encourage your students to use mediation?

- a) rumors being spread
- b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
- c) threats
- d) physical fighting
- e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
- f) arguing/disagreeing
- g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
- h) other _____

8) For which of these conflicts would you discourage your students from using mediation?

- a) rumors being spread
- b) name calling/teasing/taunting/insulting
- c) threats
- d) physical fighting
- e) harassment due to (please circle any that apply)
gender, race, sexual orientation
- f) arguing/disagreeing
- g) fighting about girlfriends/boyfriends
- h) other _____

9) Have you referred students to mediation at your school?

Please Circle Yes No

10) If so, please describe any feedback you have received.

11) What is most effective about mediation at ARJHS?

12) Why do so few students use mediation?

13) What ideas or suggestions do you have to increase the effectiveness of the mediation program?

14) Would you like to see a portion of the curriculum focused on conflict resolution, mediation, and/or ways to handle anger and frustration?

(Please Circle) Yes No

15) Is there any other information that you think would be helpful to us in evaluating the current mediation program?

16) What is/are your cultural group or groups?

Please circle as many as apply:

Hispanic/Latino/Latina; Caucasian/White;

African-American/Black;

Asian-American/Asian; Native American/American Indian;

Other group not listed _____

APPENDIX K
CODING SAMPLES

D: I think there are the kind of normal public school, if you will, pettinesses, the petty thievery, the kids this age are very quick to lie on other kids, and perhaps very quick to do themselves. Some kid finds something in the hallway, and pockets it. Maybe thirty or forty years ago you took that down to the lost and found. Today you take it and somebody else sees that and so, so and so is looking for the ring she lost. "Oh, I saw so and so pick up something in the hallway, I wonder." And pretty soon there is an accusation going on. There aren't a lot of controls and processes in twelve and thirteen, fourteen year olds, emotions are very immediate.

③

ST: (4) How do you see students handling their conflicts?
What do you observe?

D: Obviously, the whole continuum, which ranges from ignoring, withdrawing, to some pretty violent assault. ⁽²⁾ But, I think the thing that has changed radically again in the last decade, for me as an educator, is the fact that I no longer exist for kids. In the days when you walked down the hallways in school and you did something wrong, and "Ms. Wright said, 'Susan, stop doing that!'" I don't exist. My voice does not interrupt what they are doing, usually. I have to physically interpose myself without physically touching, in situations. I didn't use to have to do that.

(3)

ST: Now, is that across the board, or is that there are more kids that are like that?

D: That is a situation that was absolutely rare. Now, it is common. Actually we are talking about that smaller

portion of kids in school, who react in assaultive
ways.

③

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