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The effects of social skills instruction and parent participation on aggressive behaviors, antisocial behaviors, and prosocial skills exhibited by primary-age students

Middleton, Myra Bobo, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1994

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THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION
AND PARENT PARTICIPATION ON AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS,
ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS, AND PROSOCIAL SKILLS EXHIBITED BY
PRIMARY-AGE STUDENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University
By
Myra B. Middleton, B. A., M. Ed.

The Ohio State University
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"In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:6

In memory of my father,

Roy Bobo
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I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Gwendolyn Cartledge who served as my major advisor. You are admired for the dedicated service that you give to students. Your encouragement, and high expectations helped to insure the success of this study. To the members of my committee, Drs. John O. Cooper, Diane Sainato, and Daryl Siedentop, I say thank you for devoting the time and energy to help me through this process. Thanks to Dr. Ralph Gardner for providing technical assistance and moral support.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of education is to prepare children to become responsible and contributing members of society. Traditionally schools have emphasized the attainment of high scholarly achievement, and appropriate behavior defined by following rules that exemplify self-discipline and positive social interactions. Recently schools have had to contend with ever increasing levels of aggression and acts of violence among students. Youth are perpetuating violent crimes at unprecedented rates, exhibiting antisocial behaviors and presenting challenges in our classrooms as well as the larger society. Humi (1994) cites in his article about social skills training in schools, statistics from a 1993 U. S. Justice Department report that indicate violent acts committed by juveniles increased over the last five years by 124 percent. News media report violence as one of the most pressing public health threats in the United States, and public opinion polls indicate that threats of violence in the community is the number one concern of our citizens (Kotulak, 1994; Humi, 1994).

Aggression defined. The word "aggression" or the imprecise reference to "aggressive behavior" has become common usage in everyday language.
Researchers in the field define aggression as a broad concept that may be defined by specific observable actions manifested in poor interpersonal relationships with adults and peers (Forehand & Long, 1993; Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1993). Okey (1992) asserts that, "conferring the label of aggression on human behavior involves some degree of social judgment; no specific behavior can be termed aggressive without knowledge of its social context" (p. 53).

In social learning theory, aggression is treated as a complex event that includes injurious and destructive behavior, and some social judgments that label the behavior as aggressive. Bandura (1973), the noted social learning theorist, defined aggression as, "behavior that results in personal injury and in destruction of property. The injury may be psychological (in the form of devaluation or degradation) as well as physical" (p. 5). In defining aggression, Bandura (1973) emphasizes in his writing that aversive effects cannot serve as the sole defining characteristic of aggression. His suggestion for defining aggression is based on a variety of criteria: (1) the characteristics of the behavior itself; (2) the intensity of responses; (3) expressions of pain and injury by the recipient; (4) intentions attributed to the performer of the act; and (5) characteristics of the aggressor, such as stereotypes attributed to certain ages, gender, or ethnic groups. Individuals who perform a socially sanctioned function, as in the performance of professional duties (e.g., a dentist repairing a cavity) would not be considered aggressive. Therefore, aggression generally is defined by most authors as behaviors that are exhibited intentionally to harm or hurt others (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Pepler & Rubin, 1991). These harmful behaviors are often classified as
physical aggression (e.g., hitting, pushing, kicking, fighting) or verbal aggression (teasing, threatening remarks, profanity, name calling). For the most part, males are identified or labeled as aggressive more often than females (Hammond & Yung, 1993; Hudley & Graham, 1993; Lochman, Burch, Curry & Lampron, 1984; Lochman, Burch, Curry, & Lampron, 1984; Pope, Bierman & Mumma, 1989; Willis & Foster, 1990) and represent the largest population of concern to schools and the larger society. In addition, the effects of aggressive behaviors are reported to be four times greater for African American males than other ethnic groups (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

Dimensions of aggression. Hughes and Cavell (1995) report dramatic increases in aggressive behaviors among students, including destruction of property, and verbal or nonverbal behaviors that harm other persons. Antisocial or aggressive students are at risk of developing long-term difficulty, and present problems for teachers that affect time devoted to academic instruction, orderly operation of class routines, and peer interaction (Carter & Sugai, 1988). In school settings, students identified as aggressive, or as exhibiting antisocial behavior, are often characterized by their record of academic difficulties, poor peer interactions, and poor school attendance. These students are also noted to be at risk for exclusionary practices by teachers and peers (Schneider, 1993) and for dropping out of school at a young age (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller & Skinner, 1991; Hops & Cobb, 1974). Aggressive behaviors are noted by Dishion et al., (1991) as interfering with the learning process by virtue of reduced time on-task in learning assignments, which result in academic failure.
Many of these students are potential candidates for referral to special education programs which address learning and behavioral characteristics, and restricted placements for socially maladjusted and delinquent behaviors (Strain, Cooke & Appolloni, 1976). Schools that track children's classroom placement may therefore increase deviant social behaviors by placing similar children in the same classroom, thereby maximizing a child's antisocial contacts and models. Aggression or antisocial behaviors are also predictive of delinquency and peer rejection in adolescence (Coie, Lochman Terry & Hyman, 1992), and these behavioral patterns are major risk factors for social and emotional difficulties in adulthood (Eron, Huesmann, & Zelli, 1991; Serbin, Moskowita, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1991).

Interventions for aggression. For children to exhibit some measure of success later in life, educators must begin to seriously address social, as well as cognitive requirements for adulthood. Decades of research has revealed several factors contributing to the causes of violence and aggression, and many solutions have been developed. If schools do not begin to take steps in using the solutions developed, however, our nation risks continued destruction and despair. To address the concerns of aggression in schools, Hammond and Yung (1993) suggest the need to emphasize social relationship skills, and other authorities indicate that aggressive behaviors often result from deficits in prosocial skills which include positive interpersonal relations and a reluctance to harm others (Eron, 1987; Dodge & Frame, 1982). Eron, Huesmann and Zelli (1991) argued that aggression and prosocial responses are at opposite ends of a continuum. Students who acquire behaviors at one end of the continuum tend not to learn behaviors at the other end well.
Therefore, it is important for children to learn nonaggressive-alternative responses as a means to avoiding aggressive behaviors. Students may learn alternatives to aggressive behaviors and develop prosocial behaviors through social skills instruction. When students develop appropriate social interaction skills, improvement is noted in peer and adult acceptance, negative consequences may be avoided, and problems later in life (Akhtar & Bradley, 1991; Knapczyk, 1988).

Elliott and Gresham (1993) state that, "The development of social skills is one of most important outcomes of the schooling process" (p. 287). Cartledge and Milburn (1986) define social skills as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses" (p. 7). The construct of social skills is often considered synonymous with social competence. Social competence is a summary term that reflects social judgment of an individual's general performance in a given situation, whereas, social skills are specific identifiable skill components (i.e., looking at the person during a greeting) and social processes (i.e., thinking about what to do and doing it) that are generated by an individual in response to social feedback (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Cartledge and Milburn (1986; 1995) contend that teaching social skills to children involves many of the same methods as teaching academic skills; yet, teachers often are uncertain how to increase prosocial behaviors in skill deficit youngsters; Methods for teaching social skills and academic skills involve modeling, corrective feedback, and opportunities for practice (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; 1995). In addition, both academic and social skills may be taught in a small group or entire class.
According to Knapczyk (1988), social skills instruction is not a particularly difficult task, but teaching students to use the social skills they have learned in appropriate situations is the challenge. Utilizing interventions that focus on positive behaviors and nonaversive methods in natural environments may enhance skill maintenance and generality.

**Behaviors to be taught.** Aggressive children often lack appropriate social skills and need to be taught more appropriate ways to achieve their goals (Knapczyk, 1988). The prosocial behaviors that make up social competence include those actions that are specifically described as cooperative, helping, supportive, friendly, and that attribute positive motives to others (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, Schaps & Battistich, 1988). Increasing prosocial behaviors in children can have positive effects according to a study conducted by Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, Schaps, & Battistich (1988), who found that students also made gains in academic achievement and interpersonal relationships. Steinberg (1987) states that, "children can be raised to work with, care for, and help each other, and that schools play a major role in that process" (p. 13). Given this information, the need to address social competence through direct skill instruction, appears to be of particular importance. In addition, efforts to address skill deficits in children need to begin early, so that they are exposed to models of prosocial behaviors, and nonviolent behaviors, rather than aggressive solutions (Steinberg, 1993).

**Role of Parents.** Social skills instruction is most likely to be effective if the behaviors are valued by the learner and support systems are established in the home and community to reinforce the newly taught behaviors. Several authors (Goldstein, Glick, Irwin, Pask-McCartney, & Rubama, 1989; Hughes,
1985) for example, found that parents become a critical link in assisting educators and therapists in providing successful learning experiences for the child, and that parents are important in the maintenance and generality of newly learned behaviors. Parents are the child's first teacher and have a tremendous impact on the child's learning. Patterson (1982) studied parental influences extensively in the development of his model of "coercive family process" and provides evidence documenting the direct and indirect impact of parents on children's social relationships in school, home and community settings. Bandura (1973; 1986) studied the influence of those who serve as "models" for the development of children's social competence, and found that parents (or surrogates) play a significant role in shaping a child's behavior. Social skills instruction and collaborative efforts among significant others in the child's environment are of concern for changing the way children react to conflict, care for and help others, and exhibit insensitivity towards others' feelings. Given that aggression is highly stable and potentially harmful to the aggressor and the victim, strategies to ameliorate problems associated with aggression must be identified. Research indicates that social skills instruction and parental involvement are potentially effective for changing identified behaviors, and for the prevention of problems later in life. Further study is warranted to determine the effects of social skills instruction and parental involvement on the behaviors exhibited by young children.

Purpose of the Study

Prosocial skills are essential to the present, and future well-being of children (Dubow, Huesmann, & Eron, 1987). Children who interact in
socially inappropriate ways, are at risk for encountering negative consequences at school and in the community. Children exhibiting antisocial or aggressive behaviors comprise the largest percentage of referrals by teachers for special services (Strain, Cooke & Appolloni, 1976). Researchers (Eron, 1987; Loeber, 1982; Olweus, 1979) have suggested that early intervention is critical to the treatment of aggression, since the stability of aggression over time is strong. By intervening early, children who may be at-risk for antisocial behaviors later in life, will have less time to develop patterns of aggressive behaviors, less time to be in contact with aggressive peers who may maintain inappropriate behaviors, and less time to develop other problem behaviors that might accompany aggression, such as poor academic achievement (Forehand & Long, 1993). Social skills instruction has proven to be an effective strategy in remedying deficits in the social competence of children (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Middleton & Cartledge, in press). Children who exhibit aggressive behaviors are deficient in appropriate social interaction skills, often lack opportunities for viewing positive models, and receive little or no reinforcement for positive social behaviors. Bierman and Montminy (1993) posit that children who lack the necessary social skills to establish mutually rewarding relationships have not learned how to act in appropriate ways that will elicit positive reactions and evaluations from peers. This assumption provides a framework for social skills instruction, that is, instruction of social behaviors deemed socially appropriate and likely to elicit positive peer responses. It is hypothesized that by fostering social competence in children through social skills instruction, the frequency and intensity of aggressive behaviors might be reduced or
possibly eliminated and that effective, preventive interventions reduce the risk of serious problems later in life. Direct instruction of social skills is proposed as an effective intervention for children (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). This instructional process uses modeling, role-playing, feedback, and reinforcement to teach appropriate social behaviors and alternatives to antisocial behaviors. Social skills interventions focus on positive behaviors, and can be built easily into existing classrooms or home environments.

Significant progress has been made in understanding childhood aggression, and developing effective interventions to combat the effects of aggression in the child’s early development (Dodge & Crick, 1990; Parke & Slaby, 1983). The beneficial effects of parent participation is documented in changing of school behaviors (Barth, 1979; Forehand, Wells, & Giest, 1980), acting as therapists (Hughes, 1985), social cognitive problem-solving, socialization (Maccoby, 1992), and the maintenance and generalization of newly learned behaviors (Sanders & Glynn, 1981). Additional research is needed that addresses the combined effects of parental involvement and social skills instruction for increasing prosocial behaviors and decreasing antisocial and aggressive behaviors in school environments.

This study will seek to extend the present knowledge base by determining the effectiveness of social skills instruction and parent participation on aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors of primary-age students. Social skills instruction will consist of skill definition, modeling, behavioral rehearsal (roleplay), feedback, and differential reinforcement of incompatible behaviors. Parent participation will involve parent training, and communication through phone calls and parent notes. Based on
previous research, the researcher proposes that students' prosocial behaviors will increase, and their antisocial and aggressive behaviors will decrease with social skills intervention and parent participation.

Research Questions

Research on the topics of aggression, social skills instruction, and parental involvement, indicate a need to validate effective, measurable, interventions that focus on collaborative strategies between the school and home for reducing inappropriate behaviors and increasing prosocial skills. This study will investigate the effects of a social skills instructional package, incorporating parent involvement and differential reinforcement of incompatible behaviors on antisocial and aggressive acts in young children. To determine the effects of the treatments in this study, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What are the effects of social skills instruction on the number of prosocial behaviors exhibited by primary-aged students?
2. What are the effects of social skills instruction on the number of antisocial behaviors exhibited by primary-aged students?
3. What are the effects of social skills instruction on the number of aggressive behaviors exhibited by primary-aged students?
4. What are the effects of parent participation on the maintenance and generalization of newly learned social skills in their primary-aged children?
5. What instructional strategies effectively increase student's prosocial behaviors?
6. What evidence is there to show that newly learned social skills transfer to untrained settings?
7. What evidence shows that newly learned social skills last over time?
8. What is the opinion of the participants regarding social skills instruction?
9. What is the opinion of teachers and parents about parent participation in social skills instruction?

Terminology and Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply.

**Social competence.** A summative evaluative term that refers to the quality or adequacy of a person's overall performance on a particular task within a given social context or situation (Walker, Irvin, Noell & Singer, 1992).

**Social skills.** Socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses from them (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986).

**Prosocial behaviors.** Age appropriate, socially acceptable behaviors which promote positive interpersonal relationships (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, Schaps & Battistich, 1988).

**Antisocial behaviors.** Any behaviors that reflect social rule violations, and are characterized by poor social interaction with peers and adults (Kazdin, 1987). Sample behaviors include noncompliance, making annoying noises, refusing to share when requested to do so, and tantruming.

**Aggression.** Any verbal or physical act that is characterized by the intent to inflict harm to another. Specific behaviors include: pushing, kicking,
hitting or striking another with self or object, throwing an inappropriate object, forcefully taking something from someone, arguing, teasing in an annoying or hurtful manner, name calling in a profane manner, and making threatening gestures with body parts (Eron, 1987).

**Parent participation/involvement.** Any activity in which a parent/guardian of a student takes an active role in planning for his/her child’s instruction, and assisting a child learn, or practice a social or academic skill (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990).

**Reinforcement.** The presentation or removal of environmental events that increase the frequency of a behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The introduction to this research posits out that aggressive behaviors are of major concern in schools and the larger society, and that without intervention, students identified as aggressive risk long term negative effects. This chapter will review literature related to antisocial and aggressive behavior, social skills instruction, and parent participation in the treatment process to decrease aggression and increase prosocial skills. A final section will review literature that discusses the use of direct instruction in social skills training.

Aggressive and Antisocial Behaviors

Acts of Aggression

Reports of childhood antisocial behaviors present a social phenomenon that is emerging as a contemporary problem of great concern (Graham, Hudley & Williams, 1992). In the context of childhood disorders, antisocial behaviors have been studied for decades, beginning with the mentally disabled and those referred for clinical services (Kazdin, 1987). Antisocial behaviors include the broader range of activities characterized by annoyance of others, and social-rule violations that result in poor peer, and adult social interaction (Kazdin, 1987). These are behaviors that annoy others or may be
offensive but not harmful such as, throwing a spit ball, popping gum, refusal to share, or not responding politely, would be considered antisocial. Aggressive behaviors represent more specifically described antisocial behaviors which are categorized as acts of violence intentionally committed to inflict harm or injury (Crick & Grotpeter, in press; Eron, 1987; Okey, 1992). Aggression is most often categorized as physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, property destruction) and verbal (e.g., threatening, teasing, profanity) acts that inappropriately fulfill social goals by purposely hurting to gain control of another, or to the exclusion of one from the peer group (Crick, 1993). Acts of aggression also include fighting, theft, vandalism, lying, cheating, and truancy (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Crick & Grotpeter, in press; Eron, 1987).

Because of the detrimental effects of antisocial behaviors on children, numerous studies focus on aggression (Hughes and Cavell, 1995) resulting in significant advances in understanding childhood aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, in press). Some studies document aggressive acts as more problematic in terms of cost to life and property (Kazdin, 1987). Nearly 3 millions thefts and violent crimes occur on or near school campuses every year (U. S. Justice Department Report, 1991). Antisocial youth often require frequent contact with mental health and criminal justice systems well into adulthood (Farrington, 1991; Parker & Asher, 1987). Additionally, numerous other negative outcomes are associated with aggression including academic underachievement and inappropriate responses to authority (Kazdin, 1987), dropping out of school, low self-esteem, peer rejection (Coie, Lochman, Terry & Hyman, 1992), poor peer relationships (Graham, Hudley & Williams, 1992), and cognitive problem-solving deficits (Graham, et al., 1992). Social skills
instruction is needed to address childhood aggression predictive of more deviant and criminal acts in adulthood (Akhtar & Bradley, 1991).

Causes of Aggression

The literature reports the influence of physiological, genetic, environmental, and other constitutional factors, such as trauma, on the development of aggressive behaviors (Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz & Walder, 1984). These perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and none can be discounted in understanding aggression. Understanding theoretical origins of aggression and problems associated with children's manifestation of aggressive behaviors, especially in school settings, has important implications for effective intervention planning (Merrell, 1994). Social learning theory emerges as the conceptual framework most able to account for the diversity and complexity of aggression. Bandura (1986) proposes the following:

Individuals are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather, human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as determinants of each other (p. 18).

Within social learning theory, Bandura (1973) attributes aggressive characteristics in children both to the opportunities that they have had to observe acts of aggression and reinforcement schedules. Accordingly, social behavior is learned during a person's early development and stored in the person's memory as cognitive scripts, which serve as guides for behavior and social problem-solving. Proponents of social learning theory specify that labeling behavior aggressive involves some degree of social judgment, which
includes obtaining knowledge of the social context of the specific aggressive behavior (Patterson, 1982; Eron & Huesmann, 1984; Rubin, Bream, Rose-Krasnor, 1991). Okey (1992) makes the point that social judgments within context underscore aggression as a social construct, and are implicit in attributions of aggressive behaviors. Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz & Walder (1984) report the presence of "appropriate learning conditions" as most influential in the development and stability of aggressive behaviors. The learning conditions are identified as those opportunities that a child has to observe aggression, is reinforced for aggression, and is the object of aggression. These researchers also correlated data to report on the interactions between intellectual functioning, aggression and development. Early childhood aggression was found to be predictive of greater differences between measures of intelligence and academic achievement later in school. Eron (1993) indicates that a variety of learning conditions in the child's environment is linked to the development of cognitive structures that influence the likelihood that the child will encode, maintain, and retrieve aggressive scripts to guide behaviors in social situations. These cognitive scripts that are learned early in life, rehearsed over time, and reinforced in the environment, account for the stability of aggression across time and situations.

Stability of Aggression

Documented in the empirical literature is the stability of aggression from childhood to adulthood (Eron, 1993; Graham, Hudley & Williams, 1992; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz & Walder, 1984; Patterson, 1982). Huesmann, et al. (1984) collected data for a span of 22 years on aggressive behaviors of 600 subjects, their parents, and their children. Compared to age 8, the adults were
identified as more aggressive at age 30, indicating that aggressiveness identified early in life was predictive of antisocial behaviors later in life, especially for males. This longitudinal study confirmed the predictability of adult aggression from childhood aggression and established that aggression is not only stable over time, but is transmitted across generations. In addition, early childhood aggression in school is predictive of adult criminality and other adult antisocial behaviors, such as alcoholism, and personality disorders (Eron, 1993). Eron (1993) indicates that aggression emerges early in life and is influenced and shaped by a child's life experiences. The conditions under which the child has many opportunities to observe aggression and is reinforced for aggressive acts is viewed as a persistent trait. Olweus (1979) reviewed 16 separate studies ranging from 6 months to 21 years, which demonstrated the stability of aggression in males.

Correlates of Aggression

Socioeconomic status. A few researchers (Farrington, 1991; Huesmann, et al., 1984) have attributed lower social status and lower socioeconomic status (SES) to higher risks for aggressive behaviors. Various factors associated with the physical characteristics of a low SES family's environment, such as crowded living conditions, are reported to produce negative cognitions and emotions which increase the likelihood of aggression. Furthermore, subcultural norms about social behavior associated with low SES may be reflected in the child's behavior towards others. Children tend to assimilate the cultural standards of the peers with whom they associate. Appropriate behavior for low SES children may not reflect the cultural norms of others outside of their environment (Eron, 1993).
Studies which report on aggression most often are comprised of populations from lower middle class and impoverished areas (Price & Dodge, 1989; Hudley & Graham, 1993; Lochman & Curry, 1986; Tremblay, LeBlanc & Schwartzman, 1988; Underwood, Coie & Herbsman, 1992). The selection of subjects may represent a process characterized by bias which results in more data reported for individuals from low SES populations. Other studies have targeted certain ethnic groups, namely African Americans, in studying antisocial and aggressive behaviors (Coie, Lochman, Terry & Hyman, 1992; Hammond & Yung, 1993; Hudley & Graham, 1993; Underwood, Coie & Herbsman, 1992). These studies did not specifically address ethnicity nor was there an emphasis on sensitivity to cultural diversity in designing interventions. The selection of African American male adolescents as subjects in many research studies point to greater risks factors associated with this particular ethnic population, such as, low income families, histories of aggression, victimization, and racism (Hammond & Yung, 1993).

Peer Rejection. Notably in the literature are studies that correlate childhood aggression with peer rejection, and their predictive long term negative effects (Coie, Lochman, Terry & Hyman, 1992; Foster, Inderbitzen & Nangle, 1993; Landrum & Lloyd, 1992; Parker and Asher, 1987; Price & Dodge, 1989). Interest in peer interactions has increased the development and use of sociometric ratings as a method of evaluating a child’s social status. Sociometric ratings provided useful information in addressing childhood aggression. High rates of aggressive behaviors often are cited by children for rejecting a peer, especially unwarranted angry retaliatory aggression, such as starting a fight (Lancelotta & Vaughn, 1989). Lancelotta and Vaughn (1989)
identified the relationship between aggressive behavior and sociometric status as important to teachers in evaluating the extent to which aggressive behavior may hinder positive social development, since teachers may not be exposed to the antecedents and contexts of the same behaviors as peers.

In addition to peer rejection, a body of literature addresses the involvement of the rejected peer with deviant friends who serve to escalate participation in antisocial and aggressive behaviors (Simmons, Whitbeck, Conger & Conger, 1991). Parker and Asher (1987) studied aggression in elementary age children and found peer rejection to be a strong predictor of multiple negative consequences, significant academic difficulties, and dropping out of school. Coie, et al. (1992) estimate that nearly half of all rejected children are also identified, through sociometric nominations, as aggressive. Pope, Bierman and Mumma (1989) reported disturbances in peer relationships as a result of hyperactivity and aggressive behaviors. They found hyperactive and aggressive behaviors correlated with negative sociometric nominations, but aggressive behaviors alone had more impact than hyperactive behaviors alone. Aggressive rejected boys are associated with more physically aggressive, argumentative, and disruptive behaviors (Bierman, Smoot & Aumiller, 1993), and boys were noted to exhibit more diverse and more severe conduct problems than other groups of peer-rejected children. Willis and Foster (1990) investigated the sociometric and attribution ratings of aggressive boys and found that unprovoked aggression resulted in lower "liking" ratings by peers.
Gender and Aggression

The majority of studies addressing aggression and antisocial behaviors focus on males rather than females (Hudley & Graham, 1993; Lochman, Burch, Curry & Lampron, 1984; Lochman & Curry, 1986; Walker, Shinn, O'Neill & Ramsey, 1987). In contrast to females, research shows male aggression to be more stable (Olweus, 1979) and related to later life delinquency and criminal behaviors (Huesmann et al., 1984). In assessing physical and verbal aggression, Eron (1993) found that males score higher as a group than females.

Huesmann and Eron (1986) demonstrated the differential response of teachers, parents, and peers to aggression in boys and girls. They found that girls' aggressive acts tended to be overlooked or responded to at very low rates, while boys' aggressive acts received considerable attention and therefore were reinforced. In addition, the differences between male and female aggression may be more a matter of type manifested than degree. Crick and Grotpeter (in press) found that females focus more on relational behaviors, i.e., rejection and social exclusion, that harm peer relationships, and on average, males were more overtly aggressive than females. The authors propose that males are likely to be overly represented in studies on aggression because of the complexity in measuring relational aggression as compared to overt behaviors which may involve little more than counting interactions such as, one child hitting another. According to Crick and Grotpeter (in press) both males and females exhibit aggressive behaviors, however, each tends to exhibit distinct forms of aggressive behavior.
Cognition and Aggression

Cognitive problem solving skills which underline social interaction, are often deficit in aggressive children (Graham, et al., 1992). Hughes and Cavell (1995) note that a child's negative reputation may be sustained by their own negatively biased perceptions. For example, an aggressive child's attributional processes would interpret gestures of others as hostile and intentional (Hudley & Graham, 1993). Dodge & Crick (1990) report on the attributional bias of aggressive children who inappropriately justify the use of aggression because the belief is that another person acts with malicious intent. It has been found in research with elementary-age children that aggressive behavior may result from deficits and biases in processing social information (Dodge & Crick, 1990). These findings were investigated in additional research by Slaby and Guerra (1988) using six information-processing components of social problem-solving. The components were: 1) seeking information, 2) defining the problem, 3) selecting a goal, 4) generating alternative solutions, 5) anticipating consequences, and 6) prioritizing responses. Their data showed that general beliefs held by aggressive adolescents support the use of aggressive behavior as a legitimate response in a variety of situations, and suggest that aggression left unaddressed may play a role in violent criminal offenses committed in adulthood. Guerra and Slaby (1990) identified a tendency for aggressive children and adolescents to overattribute hostile intentions to others and hold beliefs that aggression will lead to positive outcomes, is a legitimate response, increases self-esteem, avoids a negative image, and does not lead to suffering and pain by the victim. Erdley and Asher (1993) adapted Slaby and Guerra's position in a
study which presents additional evidence concerning children's belief's about the appropriateness of their aggression, and found that aggressive children tend to legitimize their actions. Nevertheless, Guerra and Slaby (1990) suggest that these attributes can be mediated through social skills instruction.

Interventions

Guerra and Slaby (1990) state that "aggression has been characterized as one of the most prevalent, stable, socially transmittable, personally destructive, and clinically problematic behavior patterns we face" (p. 269). This pattern of behavior presents a challenge for treatment when developed to the level of physical and verbal aggressive acts committed by adolescents (Guerra & Slaby, 1990). Because aggression in children predicts aggression in adults, researchers have devoted much attention to understanding aggression and effective strategies for intervention (Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Goldstein, Glick, Reiner, Zimmerman & Coultry, 1987; Hawkins, Von Cleve & Catalano, 1991; Hollinger, 1987; Hudley & Graham, 1993; Jones, 1991; Lochman & Curry, 1986; Lochman, Nelson & Sims, 1981). Sallis (1983) explains aggression control thusly:

Aggression control is a complex set of skills which appear to involve interactions among behavioral, cognitive, and physiological processes. A child must learn to discriminate appropriate and inappropriate occasions for aggression, to gain control over aggressive behaviors, and to modulate both aggressive actions and arousal in response to instigating conditions (p. 175).

Numerous factors may exert control over aggressive behaviors. However, two major categories of interventions have focused on altering aggressive
behaviors, that is, increasing more appropriate behaviors and reducing (or eliminating) aggressive behaviors. These categories include: 1) environmental variables, such as contingency management and parent training; and 2) person-centered variables, such as social-cognitive skills training. Research studies completed in the 1960's and 1970's using single subject design methodology, demonstrated that physically aggressive children could be controlled through the manipulation of environmental contingencies, i.e., verbal praise, time out, and over-correction (Zeilberger, Sampen & Slone, 1968; Wasik, Senn, Welch & Cooper, 1969; Slaby & Crowley, 1977). However, when the contingencies of reinforcement were removed, as in a reversal experimental design, the aggressive behaviors reverted back to baseline conditions and no maintenance or generalization gains followed. In most of the studies on interventions that focused on environmental factors, improvement was noted as long as the contingencies of reinforcement were maintained.

Interventions that focus on altering person variables have demonstrated that social contingencies can modify aggressive behavior (Sallis, 1983). Since aggression conceivably represents deficits in prosocial behaviors, an approach to reducing aggression is to train children to use cognitive and behavioral skills to interact in socially appropriate ways (Gresham & Elliott, 1989). Asher and Coie (1990) have documented that children identified as aggressive are in great need of social skills instruction. In light of the many concerns about children who exhibit antisocial behaviors, social skills instruction has been identified as the treatment best able to address the behaviors and cognitions of aggressive children (Coie, Underwood & Lochman, 1991; Etscheidt, 1991;
Knapczyk, 1988; Pepler, King & Byrd, 1991). Since social skills instruction is a major variable of investigation for this document, the construct of social skills instruction to ameliorate aggressive behaviors is discussed in the following section.

Social Skills Instruction

Social Competence Defined

In order to get along with others one must become competent in many behaviors and traits which sustain positive social interaction (Bierman & Montminy, 1993). The behaviors and traits associated with social competence govern social interaction in various settings, and receive approval from peers or significant others (Schneider, 1993). Competence indicates observed behaviors that are actually displayed appropriately - knowing what to do, when to do, how to do - and is relevant to overall social interactions with others (Hollinger, 1987). Schneider (1993) in his search for a comprehensive definition of social competence, proposes the following:

The ability to implement developmentally appropriate social behaviors that enhance one's interpersonal relationships without causing harm to anyone. A social skill is defined as one of the more specific, discrete abilities which together comprise social competence (p. 19).

Cartledge and Milburn (1986) indicate that social competence reflects the "general quality of an individual's performance in a given situation" (p. 8). Swanson and Malone (1992) define social skills as, "cognitive functions that are performed when interacting with others and reflect specific behaviors an individual exhibits to perform competently on a social task" (p. 427).

Cartledge and Milburn (1986) define social skills as, "socially acceptable
learned behaviors that enable the person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses from others" (p. 7). This definition suggests positive outcomes derived from skill in varying one's behavior based on responses received from others. Socially competent children have been found to be more positively perceived by peers, and subsequent opportunities for peer interaction contribute to further development of appropriate social skills (Taylor, 1991). Gresham (1981) has found that a large body of literature indicates that certain social behaviors such as cooperation, positive peer interaction, sharing, greeting others, asking for and giving information, and making conversation are predictive of social acceptance.

Effects of Social Incompetence and Competence

Children who are deficient in social skills have been shown to suffer short-term and long-term, negative consequences (Huesmann, et al., 1984), and often are a challenge to classroom teachers. Parker and Asher (1987) present evidence that poor relationships in childhood are associated with mental health problems in adulthood. These social skill deficient children present behaviors that interfere with instruction, disrupt classroom routines, and cause negative interpersonal interaction (Carter & Sugai, 1988). According to Elliott and Gresham (1993), "Children who exhibit social skills deficits experience short-term, and often long term, negative consequences" (p. 287). Children with social interaction difficulties are often rejected by their peers, are at risk for social-emotional difficulty, and experience poor academic achievement (Parker & Asher, 1987). In addition, researchers have
documented that children who are identified as aggressive, are in critical need of social skills instruction (Akhtar & Bradley, 1991; Kazdin, 1987; Sallis, 1983).

Aggressive children may lack knowledge of appropriate social skills, have had no opportunities to learn or perform prosocial behaviors, lack reinforcement for socially appropriate behaviors, and present interfering problem behaviors that block or impede acquisition of prosocial behaviors (Pepler, King & Byrd, 1991). Prosocial behaviors have been defined as those behaviors that are socially reinforcing to the recipient of the behavior (Hollinger, 1987). They include age appropriate social interactions that show empathy for others, provide helpful suggestions, exhibit supportive and cooperative behaviors, and show a reluctance to harm others (Eron, 1987; Dubow, Huesmann & Eron, 1987; Siegel, 1990). Often aggressive children either misinterpret or ignore social cues in the environment that prompt appropriate social interaction (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1991). Teaching children how to respond appropriately to antecedent events, that is, when confronted with a provocative situation, social skills enable the child to respond in accordance with the demands of the setting (Knapczyk, 1992). Furthermore, Knapczyk (1992) suggests that remediating skill deficits may increase interactions that foster prosocial behaviors and enhance maintenance of acceptable responses.

Assessment of Social Competence

It is important to assess skills prior to instruction in order to distinguish deficits resulting from the lack of skill acquisition or skill performance, or both (Foster, Inderbitzen & Nangle, 1991). Skill deficiencies are antecedents and correlates of antisocial behavior that can be approached through social
skills training (Goldstein, Glick, Irwin, McMartney & Rubama, 1989). In a social learning program, the initial task is to delineate the desired changes by developing performance goals that are clearly stated in demonstrable form (Bandura, 1973). Further stated by Bandura (1973) is that the antecedent conditions that produce the problem behaviors, and the consequences that maintain behaviors must be identified. After obtaining the determinants, the changes required to achieve desired outcomes are initiated. In addition Bandura (1973) stresses objective assessment of results obtained. Continuous monitoring produces information to determine when methods are succeeding, failing, or need to be modified to increase their strength.

Fundamental to the conceptualization of social skills assessment and intervention plans are five assumptions proposed by Michelson, Sugai, Wood and Kazdin (1983). They are as follows:

1. Social skills are primarily acquired through learning that involves observation, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback.
2. Social skills comprise specific and discrete verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
3. Social skills entail both effective and appropriate initiations and responses.
4. Social skills are interactive by nature and entail effective and appropriate responsiveness.
5. Social skill performance is influenced by the characteristics of an environment.

These assumptions stress the multidimensional, interactive, situation-specific nature of social skills. Whatever the approach, effective interventions must address target behaviors that involve verbal and nonverbal communication used to imitate interaction or respond to others
(Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Prior to treatment or intervention, children must be assessed on the level and type of social skills deficiency, and the reasons for the social skills deficits. Deficits may be attributed to a lack of knowledge, insufficient practice or feedback, no opportunities to learn or perform prosocial behaviors, lack of reinforcement for appropriate social behaviors, and the presence of interfering problem behaviors that block or impede performance of prosocial behaviors (Coie & Koppel, 1990; Merrell, 1994; Oden & Asher, 1977).

**Intervention Models**

Without intervention the prognosis of antisocial and aggressive behaviors in children is poor (Slaby & Guerra, 1988). The literature suggests that replacing aggressive acts with alternative responses can help reduce aggression and foster prosocial behavior, especially when the training focuses on the responses required and reinforced by the natural social context (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1984). Social skills interventions have found support in the literature relating to peer acceptance indicate that children with early peer difficulties are at risk for a number of negative outcomes, i.e., mental health problems. Social skills instruction can be accomplished with a group of children, in dyads or individuals, and teachers may use the same skills in teaching social skills as with academic skills: teach the skill, practice the skill, and provide feedback on the performance of the skill (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; 1995).

Various intervention procedures have been identified as effective for social skills instruction (Zaragoza, Vaughn & McIntosh, 1991), and for the most part, these interventions focus on positive behaviors to enhance
treatment acceptability and integrity (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). The procedures for social skills instruction are categorized into three commonly identified theoretical approaches. These approaches are (1) operant, (2) social learning, and (3) cognitive-behavioral (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Each of these approaches has different characteristics for the intervention employed, performance expected, and outcome evaluation.

**Operant approaches.** Operant approaches focus on observable behaviors, antecedent and consequent events. Reinforcement is the primary procedure used in the intervention, which may be individually or group directed in the natural environment, or to untrained settings. Control of a behavior is achieved through application of reinforcement or punishment contingent on the observance of specific behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). The control of performance is external and outcome is evaluated by a change in the frequency of the target behavior (Sallis, 1983). Bandura (1973) states that in reinforcement practices, "it is important to recognize the complexity and developmental changes in consequences that influence behavior. At the lowest developmental levels, behavior is primarily responsive to tangible consequences" (p. 288). Reinforcers must be suitable and appropriate to the child's developmental level, and gradually modified as change in behavior occurs. Sallis (1990) describes a study in which nursery school teachers attended to and praised children who were playing cooperatively and ignored children who were acting aggressively. A reversal design demonstrated that the physically aggressive behaviors were under operant control, that is, contingency management procedures were effective in reducing the children's physically aggressive acts. Lacking, however, were maintenance of
appropriate behaviors in the absence of operant conditions, and generalization of appropriate behaviors to other settings.

Gresham (1981) reports on a study in which differential reinforcement of other behaviors (DRO) was used to decrease the aggressive behavior of a preschool male, and positive reinforcement to increase appropriate peer interaction. Aggressive behavior decreased and appropriate peer interaction increased under the DRO schedule with results maintained at one-month follow-up. Other studies have implemented operant approaches by using food and drink, activity choices, and token economies to affect social behavior changes (Carter & Sugai, 1988). Operant procedures have been documented as an effective social skills instruction strategy, and as an intervention for the treatment of aggression (Bandura, 1973; Gresham & Nagle, 1980; Lochman, Nelson & Sims, 1981). Nevertheless, operant approaches have only been successful when backed by rewarding experiences of positive value, and in combination with other approaches (Gresham, 1985).

Social learning approaches. Social learning approaches focus on observable behaviors and mediational processes. Modeling, roleplay, and self-instruction through direct instruction or peer mediation, are procedures used in this intervention process under conditions that exist in the natural environment or analogue conditions (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Performance control is internal and external, with outcome evaluated on the change in learned responses and performance of the responses. Modeling and roleplaying have broad support for teaching new social skills to children (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Elliott & Gresham, 1993). In social skills instruction, modeling can be divided into two types: (1) live modeling
observed in untrained or naturalistic settings, and (2) symbolic modeling in which social behaviors are observed via film or videotape (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Live modeling is preferred because of the flexibility in modifying modeling sequences.

Bandura (1973) cites the efficacy of social learning approaches in the development of social skills. New, appropriate ways of handling a situation are modeled by a competent individual, participants roleplay, and feedback is given which provides corrective action or reinforcement of an appropriate action. Therefore, social skills may be evoked through a person modeling a particular behavior; that is, students watch and listen to vignettes that follow specific skill steps. Each student participates in roleplays by enacting the steps modeled. It is hypothesized that observers will be influenced to simulate the same behaviors, especially when observation shows the modeled behavior reinforced (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Goldstein, Glick, Irwin, McCartney & Rubama, 1989). Park and Gaylord-Ross (1989) present a study they conducted using social learning approaches in social skills training for employment settings with students having developmental disabilities. Target behaviors included increasing social initiations, and conversation termination. These behaviors were taught using instruction, modeling, roleplaying, and feedback. All participants made positive gains as a result of this approach to social skills instruction, and over-training induced generalization. Sasso, Melloy and Kavale (1990), used social learning approaches to remediate social skills deficits in children with behavioral disorders. The procedures included reinforcement of appropriate social interactions, and training that followed a structured learning format (e.g.,
modeling, roleplaying, feedback, and homework) for specific social skills. Results of the intervention proved effective for all participants. Prosocial behaviors were performed at higher rates after social skills instruction using social learning approaches.

Carter and Sugai (1988) state that, "modeling has been shown to be effective in promoting prosocial behavior especially when (a) multiple models are used, (b) wide ranges of behavior are displayed, and (c) the observers perceive the model as similar to themselves" (p. 68).

**Cognitive-behavioral approaches.** Cognitive-behavioral approaches focus on problem-solving skills and their relationship to observable behaviors, and place significant emphasis on an individual's internal regulation of his or her behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Coaching, problem-solving and self-instruction techniques comprise the intervention conditions. Control of performance is internal with outcomes evaluated by changes in thoughts about behavior and the ability to enact appropriate behaviors (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Cognitive-behavioral approaches place significant emphasis on an individual's internal regulation of his or her behavior, and the person's ability to solve problems and self-regulate behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Cognitive-behavioral approaches include self-instruction, management of anger, and social-cognitive skills training. Two procedures most often used in cognitive-behavioral approaches include (1) coaching, and (2) social problem-solving.

Coaching is a verbal instruction technique that involves having a socially knowledgeable person, e.g., teacher, enact a desired behavior with the target student. Coaching requires that the target student use cognitive skills to
translate instruction into desirable behaviors through problem-solving. Oden and Asher (1977) successfully used coaching procedures with children to increase friendship making skills.


Efficacy of intervention models. The goal of interventions targeted at aggressive behaviors is to effect change by reducing or eliminating aggressive acts, and increasing prosocial skills (Sallis, 1983). The ultimate goal of social skills instruction is to increase children's social-cognitive competence and to foster effectiveness in eliciting positive responses from others (Bierman & Montminy, 1993). In moving toward this goal, the literature supports the efficacy of combining social learning and operant theories as the most viable procedures for changing social behaviors of aggressive children (Elliott &
Gresham, 1993; Kazdin, 1987; Kazdin, Esveldt-Dawson, French & Unis, 1987; Lochman & Curry, 1986; Lochman, Nelson & Sims, 1981). Results of research conducted by Knapczyk (1988) has demonstrated that modeling, rehearsal, and directed feedback can be effective with students who exhibit aggressive behaviors in school settings.

Social skills instruction, derived from operant and social learning theories, encompass cognitive-behavioral training techniques (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). For students characterized as aggressive, data suggest that cognitive-behavioral interventions are also effective (Etscheidt, 1991; Goldstein, Glick, Reiner, Zimmerman & Coultry, 1987; Guerra & Slaby, 1989; Kazdin, Esveldt-Dawson, French & Unis, 1987; Lochman & Curry, 1986; Lochman, Nelson & Sims, 1981; Sallis, 1983; Zaragoza, 1991). Coaching procedures combined with modeling, roleplaying, and reinforcement seem to be the most effective training procedures for social skills instruction (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; 1995; Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Hollinger, 1987; Middleton & Cartledge, in press). Dubow, et al. (1987) documented the effects of social skills instruction in decreasing children's aggression and promoting prosocial behavior by using an intervention that included modeling, roleplaying, coaching, feedback, and reinforcement. Training effects indicated children were significantly less aggressive and more prosocial. Goldstein et al. (1989) advocate the use of Aggression Replacement Training (combining Skillstreaming or Structured Learning Training, Anger Control, and Moral Education) for aggressive adolescents. Aggression Replacement Training address behavioral, affective, and cognitive strategies using modeling, roleplaying, feedback, and transfer of training.
The efficacy of combining teacher directed instruction with peer mediated and initiated strategies has also been documented as effective in modifying children's social interaction and increasing their prosocial skills (Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Hollinger, 1987). Using a packaged social skills curriculum, Middleton and Cartledge (in press) found teacher directed activities, and the assistance of socially competent peers, an effective strategy in reducing aggressive behaviors of African American, elementary-age males. Gaylord-Ross and Haring (1987) investigated dyadic exchanges within social interaction and found competent peers to be effective as direct change agents. Jones (1991) completed a unique study that addressed aggressive behaviors in young children through the use of creative dramatic experiences based on children's stories. The procedures of the study emphasized the use of combined intervention approaches to decrease the aggressive behaviors in the children, and added parent training to provide generality.

**Maintenance and Generalization**

Social skills instruction must program for generalization and maintenance (Shores, 1987). Once social skills have been taught, the newly learned behaviors must remain over time, and after intervention has been changed or discontinued. Social behaviors must also transfer across different dimensions: time, settings, responses and individuals (Landrum & Lloyd, 1993). Programming for maintenance and generalization requires addressing the social validity of social skills taught to insure that newly learned behaviors will elicit positive responses from peers or adults in the student's environment (Landrum & Lloyd, 1993). The generalization and maintenance of social skills through "Structured Learning" was investigated by Sasso,
Melloy, and Kavale (1990). Using single subject designed methodology, these researchers obtained data in the treatment setting (classroom), across integrated settings (generalization), and had students self-record behavior during the school day. Examination of findings suggest that the "Structured Learning" approach to social skills instruction using modeling, role-playing, rehearsal, reinforcement and self-recording can be effective in teaching skills that maintain over time and generalize to untreated settings.

Hughes (1985) trained parents as cotherapists using a social cognitive problem-solving program called Think Aloud (Camp & Bash, 1981) in an effort to promote generalization and transfer training outcomes. Parent training proved to be an effective strategy that met the goal of the new behaviors lasting over time and in various settings. Under natural conditions, stimuli vary along physical and behavioral dimensions (e.g., age, gender, size). Although the above studies did not single out the conditions most instrumental for behavior generality, the literature in this area point to the importance of cognitive procedures, varied reinforcing contingencies, and altered conditions in other settings (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995). For this purpose, Stokes and Baer (1977) propose that social skills instruction address (1) multiple exemplars (e.g., several peer trainers), (2) natural maintaining contingencies (e.g., competent peers), (3) indiscriminable contingencies (e.g., fading and increasing response criterion), and (4) programming common stimuli (e.g., role-play scenarios). Fox and McEnvoy extended Stokes and Baer's techniques to include, mediated tactics (e.g., say-do training). Other authors also support the use of these strategies (Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Landrum & Lloyd, 1992).
Summary. Millions of dollars are spent and many personal tragedies are encountered by victims of antisocial or aggressive acts. With only a brief overview of the enormous problems caused by antisocial and aggressive behaviors, there is hope in treatment through effective interventions, one of which is social skills instruction. Many identified special education students with behavioral problems show deficiencies that are associated with a lack of social skills instruction (Knapczyk, 1988). Procedures that teach students to replace aggressive acts with acceptable responses should be an integral part of educational approaches (Knapczyk, 1992). Social skills instructional programs teach children the social behaviors essential for positive social interaction (Hughes & Cavell, 1995). In addition, a important component of social skills instruction is planning for maintenance and generalization. Parent involvement has already been identified as important for increasing student achievement, and creating "Effective Schools." Parent involvement is also important to the social development of children. The literature suggests that collaborative parent participation is an effective means for changing behavior, and is one way to increase maintenance and generality of desired social behaviors (Forehand, Wells & Griest, 1980; Hughes, 1985; Sanders & Glynn, 1981). Parent participation in behavior change is discussed in the next section.

Parent Involvement

Importance of Parent Involvement

Schools are "reaching out" to redefine themselves as community institutions (Davis, Burch, & Johnson, 1992). School personnel are making commitments to a belief in the success of all students (Lezotte, 1980), and are
focusing on ways to involve parents in the education of their children (Schurr, 1992). A major component of successful school programs as identified by Effective Schools research is extensive parental involvement which includes programs that exist to involve parents in all facets of the school's academic and social programs (Lezotte, 1989). Other authors also point to strong positive relationship between parent involvement and student achievement (Chavkin, 1989; Henderson, 1988; Heward & Orlansky, 1992; Krasnow & Heleen, 1988). Parental involvement is associated with improvements in children's reading and math achievement, and social maturity in first grade (Taylor, 1991), as well as increased student attendance, improved student attitudes and behavior, enhanced parent-community support and improved home-school communication (Chavkin, 1989).

Parents who have shown an interest in their child's education, and maintain high expectations of their child's performance, promote attitudes that are critical to student achievement that will have significant, long-lasting effects (Henderson, 1988). Shared responsibility, parent-professional partnerships, can enrich the learning environment of a school and the lives of children (Hollifield, 1992). Mutual problem-solving between families and professionals is highly desirable (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990) and can lead to a child's success in school. Most important to the focus of this research, is that bringing parents into prevention and intervention programs that concentrate on antisocial and aggressive behaviors, strengthen prosocial behaviors in children and increase positive peer interaction (Patterson & Narrett, 1990). The success that the child experiences early on, can lead to a successful and productive adult life (Farrington, 1991).
Parenting Style and Antisocial Behaviors

Inadequate or incompetent socialization by parents has been identified as a negative outcome of aggression that may recycle across generations (Patterson, Capaldi & Bank, 1991). In order to stop this cross-generational cycle, it is important to determine familial and ecological influences that are likely to place children at risk. Social learning theorists such as Bandura (1973) have identified a child's social competence as occurring by means of imitating parents or significant others. Very young children who are learning to interact with others have been found to particularly notice emotionally-laden behaviors, e.g., aggression, which they in turn imitate. Young children are likely to emulate the actions of their parents, or others they hold in high esteem (Schneider, 1993). Because of obvious external characteristics, emotionally-laden behaviors, such as aggression, capture the attention of young children who are learning how to interact with others. Knapczyk (1992) concludes from his research that "parents' behavior can encourage or provoke aggressive acts. When parents reduced their provocative behaviors, a significant decrease in their child's aggressive acts occurred" (p. 247). Strassberg and Dodge (1990) studied the effects of parents' aggressive behaviors on 5 year-old children. They found a significant correlation between parents' use of aggressive strategies in conflict resolution and children's level of aggressiveness and peer acceptance. MacKinnon, Curtner and Baradaran (1991) conducted a cross contextual analysis of aggressiveness in 7-to 9-year-old boys and their mothers. The sons' aggressive behaviors at school were highest in cases where there were indications of aggressiveness in the mother and son dyad.
Patterson (1982), who has done extensive research in the area of parental control strategies, has identified a characteristic profile for the family that appears to place children at higher risk for antisocial behaviors. These behaviors include (1) a lack of parental monitoring, (2) inconsistent disciplinary practices, (3) inability to teach social process skills, (4) failure to teach academic survival skills, and (5) negative family management techniques. Patterson's (1982) research has shown that parents of antisocial children engage in practices that promote aggressive behavior and suppress prosocial behavior. Coercive interaction patterns in particular play a central role in promoting aggressive child behaviors (Patterson, 1986). Coercion refers to deviant behavior on the part of one person that is supported or directly reinforced by another person. For example, an aggressive behavior performed by a child may be reinforced when a parent gives in or complies with the child, vacillates or engages the child in harassment. The effect may be encouraging rather than suppressing inappropriate behavior.

Patterson (1986) also notes poor discipline practices that provide the basis for coercive exchanges between parent and child. Parents who lack skills for disciplining their children tend to be less aware of where the child is at given times, when the child will be at home, and so forth. The parent's poor management skills often correlate with antisocial behavior in their children, which may be manifested as aggressive behaviors and involvement with deviant peers (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger & Conger, 1991). Patterson's model further suggests that children may generalize this coercive interpersonal style from the family to interactions with peers and teachers at school (Simons et al., 1991).
Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, and Skinner (1991) explored the effects of parenting practices and antisocial behaviors in young boys over a two year period. Ineffective discipline and poor parenting that existed at the beginning of the study were found to be significantly associated with membership in antisocial peer groups, academic failure, and peer rejection two years later. In reviewing Patterson's model of coercive family process, Schneider (1993) concludes with the following statement:

If ineffective parental control persists, antisocial behaviors escalate. When they reach extreme dimensions, the child begins to display antisocial behavior at school. This leads to academic failure and rejection by the peer group. In a final consolidation of the proclivity toward antisocial behavior, the youngster gravitates to virtually the only available source of positive reinforcement, an antisocial peer group. The research supporting this model constitutes the best evidence available in documenting the direct and indirect impact of parenting practice on children's long-term social adjustment in schools, homes and in the community (p. 57).

Parents' belief and attitudes regarding how children should be raised has also been shown to influence social competence in children (Janssens, 1990; Palacios, 1991). Palacios (1991) outlined four dimensions of theory and research on parent beliefs: (1) determining the nature and content of the beliefs; (2) tracing the sources of the beliefs; (3) determining the relation between parents' beliefs and their behaviors with children; and (4) identifying the consequences for children of their parents' ideas. The parents' thinking about how their children should be raised and disciplined is affected by many
aspects of their own background and social context, such as how they were raised: by an entire village or a single parent.

The family system is seen as a major factor in socialization research (Maccoby, 1992). Social systems approaches describe the child as one element of a dynamic family system in which the family functions as a part of a larger network of systems. Within the family the child is heavily influenced by the social and economic conditions on the parents (Schneider, 1993). For instance when families have experienced a drop in income, children may feel less accepted by their parents and gravitate towards antisocial peers. Vernberg (1990) studied family mobility and social interactions of children and found peer interactions were fewer than in more stable families and peer relationships tended to be rated as less intimate. Other factors within family systems noted to effect the behavior of children are martial discord (Jouriles, Pfiffner & O'Leary, 1988), divorce (McCord, 1990), and abuse (Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer & Rosario, 1991).

Childhood is a period of time when enduring social skills, personality attributes, social orientations and values are established. Parental monitoring and programming of their children are instrumental in the development of desired social behaviors. Parents are not the only salient models for young children. Peers are noted to contribute extensively to the child's social-cognitive repertoire, however, parents are vital to regulating a child's access to peers (Schneider, 1993). Parents arrange opportunities for their young children to interact with peers through visits and neighborhood play. Maccoby (1992) states that parents are the primary persons who set the agendas for what children learn, and administer the rewards and
punishments that strengthen desired behaviors and eliminate undesired ones. The interplay of systems—school, family, and community—is seen as affecting the child's behavior. Interventions that target aggressive children's social cognitions and peer relationships have often neglected the homes from which these children come (Pepler & Rubin, 1991). Therefore, what is lacking in social skills development is an empirical base for collaborative parent intervention procedures that identify target social skills, and an efficient intervention procedure for enhancing the social development of identified aggressive and antisocial children (Schneider, 1993).

**Interventions With Parents**

Parents are the earliest and most enduring socializing influence, and families play an active role in shaping a child's social repertoire (Fox & Savelle, 1987). Parent involvement in early childhood programs, such as Headstart, are seen as crucial in the delivery of successful services. Mandates for services to children with disabilities (i.e., P.L. 99-457) include requirements for parent involvement. Educating parents to change the behavior of their children received considerable attention during the early 1970's (Arnold, Sturgis & Forehand, 1977). Also studied have been parents' knowledge and perceptions regarding developmental information and social competence in their children (Ladd & Price, 1986), and the parents' perceptions of their responsibility for promoting social development (Buzzelli, 1989). Many of the studies reviewed by Arnold et al. (1977) point to the necessity of training that will transfer to the child's natural environment, untrained settings, and insuring that reinforcement sustains target behaviors beyond therapeutic
settings. Discussed in the following section are various interventions that
document parent involvement as a strategy for behavior change.

**Models of parent intervention and training.** Teacher and parent
education have been advocated as promising approaches in addressing
Hawkins, et al. (1991) indicate that preservice and inservice teacher training
programs have emphasized appropriate social interaction of students.
Knapczyk (1992) investigated conditions that contribute to aggressive acts and
trained teachers and parents to administer an intervention involving
instruction, feedback, and reinforcement. Parenting programs such as, "Let's
Be Social Home Program," (Rule, Morgan, Innocenti & Stowitschek, 1986)
have taught parents to monitor and supervise children's social behavior.

Siegel (1990) identified several interventions that have proven
successful. These interventions urge teachers and parents to become social
planners, to arrange the environment for prosocial development, to
emphasize collaboration, to serve as models for positive social interaction,
and reinforce positive social skills displayed by children. Gresham and Nagle
(1980) propose social skills instruction as important. Identified as a
component in social skills instruction is homework (Armstrong &
McPherson, 1991). Involving parents to sustain newly learned behaviors
appears to be a necessary direction. Homework involves the parent practicing
with their child newly learned behaviors that may not readily occur in the
classroom, and provides natural contingencies of reinforcement. Barth (1979)
provides a review and analysis of parental involvement through home-based
reinforcement programs. Discipline problems were eliminated in a combined
school-home motivational system that consisted of a "Good Behavior" letter sent home with the child in a study by Ayllon, Stephen and Garber (1975). Parents provided differential consequences in the home, based on the child's behaviors as reported in the letter. This procedure served as a link between home and school, was effective in reducing the target behaviors, and relied on natural reinforcers occurring in the child's environment. The results support the effectiveness of home-based reinforcement contingencies in improving school behaviors, and that the home can be a viable and meaningful source of reinforcement for controlling behavior (Ayllon, et al., 1975).

Parents have learned to use a variety of other strategies in order to better manage the behavior of their children. Hughes (1985) trained parents to be cotherapists in a social-cognitive problem-solving program targeted for aggressive children. Based on social learning theory, the training was found to increase treatment potency, generalization, and maintenance by providing a common element between training and the child's natural environment. Grusec (1991) studied approaches to socialization in the home by training mothers to look at their children's spontaneous prosocial behavior and negative behavior, as well as responses the children received to the behaviors. Forehand, Wells, and Griest (1980) examined the social validity of a parent training program in which parents were taught to use social reinforcement and time-out procedures with their children described as exhibiting "noncompliant behavior problems in the home." Independent measures employed by each parent in the study resulted in positive behavior change of their child. Sanders and Glynn (1981) examined the generalization
and maintenance effects of parent training on the behavior of disruptive children. A multiple baseline across subjects design revealed that children's problem behaviors are reduced in the home and in community settings with parent intervention.

**Effects of parent interventions and training on antisocial behaviors.**

Uninvolved parents contribute to the antisocial behaviors and poor self-concept of their children (Bank, Patterson & Reid, 1987). On the other hand, when parents are involved, effective strategies have produced positive results (Barth, 1977). Parents have been trained to teach language and communication skills (Arnold, Sturgis & Forehand, 1977), and to provide home-based reinforcement of identified school behaviors (Barth, 1979). Parents have been taught to identify, define, and observe problem behaviors, and to use positive reinforcement strategies that address problematic behaviors (Kazdin, 1987). Bank, et al., (1987) developed parent training at the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSCL), that taught parents how to pinpoint their child's behaviors, record the observed behaviors, and to provide positive reinforcement procedures. OSCL studies have typically been conducted in clinical environments, but serve to illustrate that parents can successfully help with their antisocial children. Johnson (1992) provided parents with systematic training in parenting skills and measured the behavior of children in which daily telephone reports and parent ratings indicated a reduction in problematic aggression by children. Parent management training has been shown to produce therapeutic change in children with aggressive and other antisocial behaviors (Kazdin, Esveldt-Dawson, French & Unis, 1987). Scott-Jones (1987) indicates that young
children's experiences within their families impact their cognitive and social development, and that knowledge and understanding grow out of social interactions with others.

In addition to treatment procedures, parent involvement enhances generality and maintenance of social behaviors (Ayllon et al., 1975; Hughes, 1985; Seigel, 1990). As indicated in the social skills instruction section, once social skills have been taught, the newly learned behaviors must remain over time, and after intervention has been discontinued. Social behaviors must also transfer across different dimensions: time, settings, responses and individuals (Landrum & Lloyd, 1993). Parent participation helps to produce transfer of treatment and maintenance of social skills by reinforcement of target behaviors in natural environments or untrained settings, and by persons who may be held in high esteem by the child (Patterson & Narrett, 1990; Schneider, 1993). Sanders and Glynn (1981) trained parents for generalization and maintenance of children's behavior. They found that family and community settings can support the application of behavioral skills, and therefore foster the development of prosocial behaviors in children which will carry-over into adulthood.

Summary

Research indicates that parents are instrumental in determining how children interact socially with others. The literature provides empirical evidence that parents can and do make a difference in the social development of their children, and serve as models for effecting that development. Researchers have demonstrated that parents' behavior can encourage or provoke aggressive acts. Conversely, parents have been shown to be effective
in decreasing their child's aggressive behaviors. When children are helped by the involvement of parents, effects persist. With parent involvement, the benefits of instruction received in school or therapeutic settings are extended. A significant part of the child's environment, the home, creates a supportive atmosphere for maintaining positive behaviors.

**Direct Instruction**

Direct instruction approaches are reviewed briefly due to its extensive use in social skills treatment packages (Cartledge & Kleefeld, 1991). Treatment procedures evolving from operant and social learning approaches have proven to be the most effective with children (Elliott & Gresham, 1993), and Direct Instruction is shown to be an effective instructional method with difficult to teach populations such as students with disabilities or students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Binder & Watkins, 1990). Direct Instruction approaches were employed in procedures of this study.

**Direct Instruction.** Direct Instruction is derived from basic behavioral principles and the research of effective teaching practices (Binder & Watkins, 1990). Direct Instruction involves carefully designed instruction that is provided to students at a faster than average rate, and is associated with specific correction procedures (Becker & Carnine, 1980). Research done in Project Follow Through, a longitudinal-evaluation study of different teaching approaches with economically disadvantaged students, validated the effects of Direct Instruction with primary grade students who were at risk for failure (Becker & Carnine, 1980). Research and application suggest that Direct Instruction in general education and special education classrooms produce
greater academic achievement and self-esteem among students than traditional teaching methods (Watkins, 1988).

Direct Instruction is used for initial teaching of skills and concepts, and is increasingly combined with Precision Teaching procedures to develop fluency (Binder & Watkins, 1990). Direct Instruction teaching procedures feature (1) scripted presentations - which support quality control of instructions and ensures effective instructional sequences that have been field tested; (2) small group instruction; (3) unison responding - which maintains student attention and reduces the chances of one student copying another student's answer; (4) signals - ensure simultaneous responding by students during unison responding, and can be an evaluation tool to determine whether a student masters a skill; (5) rapid pacing of instruction - keeps students interested during instruction, and maximizes the amount of materials covered; and 6) correction procedures for different types of errors to ensure that students get the practice needed (Binder & Watkins, 1990).

The strategy used in this study which incorporated components of Direct Instruction were those described by Rosenshine (1976). The four defining characteristics were: (1) tasks systematically taught in small approximations to a specified mastery level; (2) active student responding; (3) immediate feedback on performance of task; (4) frequent direct interaction between the student and teacher.

Direct instruction, variously termed skills training models (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995), directive teaching (Stephens, 1992), structured learning (Goldstein, Spraflin, Gresham, & Klein, 1986), and Skillstreaming (Goldstein, Spraflin, & Gresham, 1995), all employ principles widely used in instructional
programs to develop social skills. The components of these models include instruction, modeling, roleplaying, feedback, and transfer training, or homework. They also incorporate reinforcement strategies such as, tokens, verbal praise, and primary reinforcers (Carter & Sugai, 1988; Sasso, et al., 1990). Teaching social skills though direct instruction is considered to provide a flexible and sensitive model for developing social competence in children who exhibit high rates of aggressive behaviors (Sasso, et al., 1990).

Instructional methods that incorporate direct instruction have proven to be effective with aggressive children and adolescents (Christopher, Nangle & Hansen, 1993), and in the generalization and maintenance of learned social skills in behaviorally disordered children (Sasso, et al., 1990).

Summary

Student aggression and violence are major concerns for educators and the larger community. School personnel disturbed by escalating violence can choose from a number of empirically validated curricula. A body of research exist attesting to the efficacy of special prevention and intervention programs that teach students appropriate alternatives to violence and aggressive behaviors. One such approach combines social skills instruction and parent participation. Social skills instruction includes a combination of instruction, coaching, modeling, rehearsal, feedback and reinforcement. Social skills instruction with aggressive students assumes that these children lack skills for interacting appropriately with peers and adults. Given that aggression is a broad configuration of behaviors, children may not improve in their social interactions without assistance from their natural environment, namely,
with assistance from parents and peers, whom children usually hold in high esteem.

Parents are a child's first teacher and can be instrumental in modeling, monitoring, and managing appropriate social behaviors. Parents can effect changes in their child's attitude, academic performance, and social interaction. With the assistance from parents in social skills instruction, children can be taught to exhibit appropriate behaviors, such as nonviolent methods for dealing with aggression.

Limitations in the Literature

The scientific literature documented separately the beneficial effects of parental involvement on the academic and social behaviors of their children, and of social skill instruction on altering aggression. Few, if any, published studies investigated interventions where social skills instruction and parent participation are combined. This study employs a packaged social skills curriculum that integrates skill training procedures with parent participation to reduce aggressive behaviors and increase prosocial skills in primary-aged inner city students.

Results reported in most of the literature on aggression, social skills instruction, and parental involvement have been limited to the following: (1) clinical settings, (2) group methodological procedures, (3) males, (4) minority populations, (5) low- socioeconomic groups, (6) single sources for data collection, and (7) limited social validity to determine whether behavior change enhanced the quality of life for the child and therefore justified the outcome.
Since aggression is a complex configuration of behaviors, it is difficult to determine the specific variables that should be addressed without knowledgeable application of applied behavioral principles. Many general education teachers and administrators may not be aware of these principles and strategies to obtaining effective results in their intervention. The research and its application is frequently not reported in publications widely read by the general education population. In addition, most research findings have presented interventions that have proven to be successful for aggressive individuals who are incarcerated as delinquents and placed in treatment facilities or institutions. Other studies have focused on special education populations. Little research has been conducted in general education classroom settings, with the exception of preschool classrooms, that use applied behavioral principles and social skills instruction to decrease children's inappropriate behaviors, or increase their appropriate social interaction.

The effects of peer modeling within general education classrooms has received little investigation as a method for developing prosocial skills. As teachers are taught to use cooperative learning, and focus on maintenance and generality of newly learned behaviors, peer training strategies may prove helpful to teachers who increasingly must deal with large numbers of students in one classroom.

The literature is limited in providing a functional list of critical social skills for children in today's society. Behaviors that may not have been socially acceptable ten or fifteen years ago may be found to be acceptable in 1994 as we address aggressive and antisocial behaviors through culturally
relevant instructional practices. More research is needed to clarify home-based contingencies that take into consideration the child's cultural background.

Although effective, home-based interventions have not provided specificity, reward types, and frequency measures to ascertain important variables related to social skills instruction. Research is abundant which considers the influence of parents on children's social behaviors, however considerable variation exists among the parents in their involvement. The literature is also limited with regards to research studies that investigate attitudes held by parents regarding social skills instruction, and if culturally and economically diverse parents view the social skills needs and development of their children in like manner as school personnel. Researchers may want to consider the differences held between culturally diverse groups of parents, and socioeconomic levels within and between ethnic groups.
CHAPTER III
METHODS

This chapter describes the methods of the study. It is divided into the following sections: participants, settings, researcher and observers, definition and measurement of dependent variables, training, interobserver agreement, materials, experimental design, and procedures. The methodology for the study was field tested using a multiple baseline-withdrawal experimental design under conditions similar to those described in this chapter. The pilot study has been accepted for publication (Cartledge & Middleton, in press).

Readers are encouraged to review the methods, results and discussion of the pilot study inorder to enhance ones awareness of the significance of social skills instruction and parent participation in addressing social interaction of young children.

Participants

Target students. The target students for the study were five elementary school, primary-aged children attending general education classes, identified by their classroom teachers and through direct observations. These students were selected because they lacked appropriate social skills (e.g., controlling their temper in conflict situations, using kind words), and exhibited problem behaviors (e.g., arguing and fighting). Five students were selected from a possible total of 114 students, according to the selection process described in the next section. Three of the target students were in first-grade, one student
was repeating first-grade, and one was repeating kindergarten. At the
beginning of the study the ages of the five students ranged from 5.11 to 7.6
years, with a mean of 6.7 years. Only one female student met the criteria to be
selected as a participant. All other target students were males. All target
students were African American, however, three European Americans had
been identified as potential participants by the classroom teachers. One
European American student met the selection criteria, and the other two
were eliminated as target students. All target students qualified for free lunch
according to federally defined family economic guidelines. Teachers reported
that all target students functioned at least 6 months below their grade
placement. The possibility of selection bias by the teachers was addressed
informally during classroom observations of the teacher's relative impact on
the target students and other students in the classroom. None of the target
students had been identified as students with a disability according to the
Ohio State Department of Education Rules for the Education of Handicapped
Children. Table 1 gives demographic information on the target students.

Selection process. Before the study began, six general education
classroom teachers, grades K-2, were asked each to identify four students in
each of their classes who were exhibiting physically and/or verbally
aggressive behaviors according to a description given to them by the
researcher (Appendix A). The teachers were asked to rate the selected
students' behaviors with the Social Skills Rating System-Teacher (SSRS-T) by
Gresham and Elliott (1990). The SSRS is standardized and reports subscale
reliability coefficients that range from .75 to .88 for the teacher form. Social
Table 1

**Demographic Information, Target Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10-21-86</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6-24-86</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1R</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7-28-87</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6-28-87</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3-25-87</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skills are rated on a 3-point scale of 0, 1, or 2. A rating of 0 indicates that the behavior never occurs, 1 indicates the behavior occurs sometimes, and behaviors that occur often receive a rating of 2. On this instrument three performance areas are assessed: (1) social skills within categories of cooperation, assertion, and self-control; (2) problem behaviors; and (3) academic competence. Students with ratings that fell below the 25th percentile in social skills, and above the 70th percentile in problem behaviors were selected for direct classroom observation. The teachers identified and completed rating scales on a total of 23 students. Sixteen of the students meet the criteria for classroom observation. Student ratings of academic competence on the SSRS-T was not considered in the selection criteria.

During the selection process, ratings obtained by the target students in the social skills category of the SSRS-T ranged from a percentile rank of <2 to
19, with a mean percentile rank of 7. These mean scores on the social skills category of the SSRS-T indicate that 93% of the students in the SSRS-T standardization comparison group received higher social skills ratings than the students targeted in this study. In the category of problem behaviors on the SSRS-T, the target students received ratings from a percentile rank of 70 to >98, with a mean percentile rank of 87. The mean rating for problem behaviors was extremely high for the target students in comparison to the standardization group, and indicates that on average, only 11% of the comparison group ranked higher. In the category of academic competence the target students were rated from <2 to 16, with a mean percentile rank of 5. The target students mean ranking at the 5th percentile in academic competence meant that 93% of the comparison group achieved higher ratings. Table 2 presents the SSRS-T raw scores (RS), standard scores (SS), and percentiles (%ile) for the target students. Figure 1 illustrates the SSRS-T percentile scores for the target students. Norms were scored according to age, and nonhandicapped peers. The SSRS is not designed to be used as a pre-/post- assessment, or to assess short-term intervention effects of student behaviors, therefore ratings were not completed during, or at the conclusion of the study.

The researcher, assisted by 4 university undergraduate students majoring in special education, directly observed the students' behaviors in the classroom and recorded the observed behaviors on an individual student observation record form (Appendix B). Over a period of 10 days the students were observed in the classroom for five, 20-minute sessions following their lunch period. Students who exhibited an overall average of two physically
Table 2

Social Skills Rating System - Teacher

Raw Scores (RS), Standard Scores (SS), and Percentile Scores (%ile), on Target Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Social Skills RS / SS / %ile</th>
<th>Problem Beh. RS / SS / %ile</th>
<th>Academic Comp. RS / SS / %ile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29 / 87 / 19</td>
<td>28 / 134 / &gt;98</td>
<td>14 / 74 / 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 / 66 / &lt;2</td>
<td>17 / 115 / 84</td>
<td>11 / 67 / &lt;2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 / 76 / 5</td>
<td>13 / 108 / 70</td>
<td>23 / 85 / 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 / 54 / &lt;2</td>
<td>30 / 139 / &gt;98</td>
<td>14 / 71 / 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21 / 77 / 6</td>
<td>21 / 122 / 93</td>
<td>9 / 62 / &lt;2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aggressive behaviors (e.g., hitting, pushing, biting, kicking), verbally aggressive behaviors (e.g., teasing, name calling, threatening, swearing, shouting), antisocial behaviors (e.g., reacting to social initiations by refusing to cooperate, making annoying noises, cutting in line), or initiated a severe disruptive confrontation, such as a fight, during the observation period, were selected as potential target students for the study. In addition, students' prosocial behaviors (using kind and courteous words such as thank you,
Figure 1. Students' percentile scores on the Social Skills Rating System - Teacher.
please, may I, excuse me, I'm sorry; or interacted appropriately with peers - no aggressive or antisocial behaviors), were observed during the same period of time. Students who did not exhibit prosocial behaviors, met the description as aggressive, exhibited antisocial behaviors, and had parental permission to participate, were selected as target students for the study. Seven African American students and one European American student met the criteria for participation based on (1) teacher's selection, (2) SSRS-T ratings, (3) direct observations, (4) parental consent, and (5) parent's willingness to participate. Seven of the students were males; 5 first-graders, 1 second-grader and 1 kindergartner. Only one female student (of two females recommended by the teachers) met the selection criteria.

During the first week of the study one student was identified as severely hyperactive through evaluations by the school psychologist and a physician. The student was placed on medication and the school's multidisciplinary team determined that he should receive special counseling at the school through a service provided by Childrens Hospital. This student was withdrawn from the study fearing contamination due to confounding variables. Two students selected for participation (1 African American and 1 European American) moved to another school zone, and two students were withdrawn by the researcher because of poor school attendance, parent withdrawal from participation, and scheduling conflicts for other school services, thus leaving five target students.

**Teachers.** Six teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Five of the teachers were European American (four females and one male), and one
an African American female. One European American female teacher was withdrawn from the study when the two students selected from her class moved. All teachers are certified in Elementary Education, and had taught from 2 to 11 years for an average of 6.6 years. Two teachers held Master's degrees (one in Elementary Education, and one in Elementary and Music Education). None of the teachers were certified in special education, however two teachers had taken special education courses. Three of the teachers had taken a course in behavior management, and 2 teachers participated in a workshop on social skills instruction. Table 3 presents demographics on the participating teachers.

**Parents.** Parents participating in the study were all African American females. One parent was married and resided with her husband and children. Another parent was the grandmother who had custody of the child. The other participating parents were single heads of household, either divorced or never married. Four of the families resided in low-income public housing developments, and one family resided in a single family house. Four of the participating parents reported that they had a high school diploma or GED; however, only two were employed outside of the home. Parents agreed to participate in the study after receiving a letter that explained the study and requested consent for their child to participate (Appendix C). One parent consented to participate but would not schedule a conference with the researcher as requested in 2 letters mailed to the home address and two phone calls. After four attempts no further contacts were made.
Parents were asked to complete the Social Skills Rating System-Parent, during the interview with the researcher. The parent form rates students in the categories of social skills and problem behaviors. Student-1 obtained a percentile rank of 5 in social skills and 96 in problem behaviors. Student-2 obtained a percentile rank of 18 in social skills and 96 in problem behaviors. Student-3 was ranked at 82 percentile in social skills and 91 in problem behaviors. Student-4 was not rated by the parent because of scheduling problems. Student-5 received a percentile rank of 19 in social skills and 84 in problem behaviors. Table 4 presents the raw scores (RS), standard scores (SS),
Table 4

Social Skills Rating System - Parent

Raw Scores (RS), Standard Scores (SS), and Percentile Scores (%ile), on Target Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Social Skills RS / SS / %ile</th>
<th>Problem Beh. RS / SS / %ile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>37 / 76 / 5</td>
<td>24 / 127 / 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>43 / 86 / 18</td>
<td>24 / 127 / 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>61 / 114 / 82</td>
<td>21 / 120 / 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>44 / 87 / 19</td>
<td>19 / 115 / 84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and percentiles (%ile) recorded for the target students on the SSRS-P. Figure 2 illustrates the target students' percentile rankings on the SSRS-P.

Competent peers. The participating classroom teachers were asked to identify 2 students who exhibited social competence and had no classroom problem behaviors. These students were observed for two, 20-minute intervals in the classroom and once for 20-minutes in the cafeteria, over a
Figure 2. Students' percentile scores on the Social Skills Rating System-Parent.

*Did not complete parent form.
period of five days. Six students were selected as competent peers. They ranged in ages from 6 to 8 years for a mean of 6.6 years, and were in first and second grades. Three of the students were female: 2 African Americans and 1 Asian American. Two of the three male peers were African American, and 1 was European American. These students were observed to exhibit appropriate behaviors, interact well with peers, and were liked by others. In addition, these students were observed using assertive behaviors (e.g., telling one student to say "I'm sorry" to another student for pushing in line). No other assessment of behavior was completed for competent peers.

**Researcher and observers.** The principle investigator who served as the social skills instructor, was an African American female, completing requirements for her doctoral studies. Four students assisted with social skills instruction and direct observations. They were all upper-level undergraduate European American females majoring in special education.

**Settings**

**School.** The setting for the study was an urban public elementary school, located near a public housing complex. The school had an average enrollment of 500 students in kindergarten through fifth grades. Approximately one-third of the school's enrollment resided in the immediate area of the school. The racial composition of the students attending the school was 60% African American, 20% Asian American, 15% European American, and a mixture of other ethnic groups representing 5%. Of the students attending the school, 98% qualified for free lunch under federal economic guidelines. The school was identified as an "alternative school" with emphasis in physical education and general academic skills.
Classroom and cafeteria. Observation data were collected in the classroom and the school cafeteria. Observation in the classroom (approximately 700 square feet of space) occurred twice a week during periods of time that students were not participating in teacher directed activity. Students were most often engaged in small group or dyadic activities sitting either at a rectangular table or on an 8' X 10' carpeted area of the floor. Student activities included completing puzzles, worksheets, using flashcards, reading, or working on the computer independent of direct teacher attention. Students were observed once a week in the school cafeteria during regularly scheduled lunch periods. Students sat in designated areas with their class. Tables were rectangular with bench type seats on both sides. No specific seats were assigned the children, but classes usually sat in the same area of the cafeteria. Approximately 250 children ate lunch during one 30-minute time period. Supervision of all students in the cafeteria was provided by one teacher and one teacher's assistant. Rules for appropriate cafeteria behavior were posted, and occasionally the supervising teacher would award stickers to classes that followed the rules of staying seated, not throwing food, and talking in a low voice. All food had to be eaten in the cafeteria or thrown away.

Social skills instruction. Social skills instruction took place at a round table in a corner of the school library (Figure 3). In most instances during instruction, only the researcher, a student assistant from the university, and participating subjects were present. On one occasion each, a parent and two of the participating teachers observed from a table nearby.
Definition and Measurement of Dependent Variables

Three dependent variables were measured: (1) number of aggressive behaviors exhibited by the target students during a 20-minute observation, (2) number of antisocial behaviors exhibited by the target students during a 20-minute observation, and (3) number of prosocial behaviors exhibited by the target students during a 20-minute observation. The behaviors which define the dependent variables that were measured are as follows:

- Aggressive behaviors - any verbal or physical act that is characterized by intent to inflict harm to another. Specific behaviors included for observation were: pushing, kicking, hitting or striking another with self or object, throwing an inappropriate object, forcefully taking something from someone, arguing, teasing in an annoying or hurtful manner, name calling in a profane manner, and making threatening gestures with body parts.
• Antisocial behaviors - an action that reflects social rule violations, and are characterized by poor social interaction with peer and adults, such as noncompliance, making annoying noises, refusing to share when requested to do so, stubbornness, and tantruming.

• Prosocial behaviors - age appropriate, socially acceptable behaviors which promote positive interpersonal relationships, such as sharing with others, initiating positive interactions, using kind and courteous words.

The researchers observed students for a period of 20-minutes and recorded on an observation form, the aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors that met the description given above. It was also noted on the observation form if the student initiated, or reacted to, the observed behavior, and whether The teacher's reaction to the student's behavior was recorded as observed or not, and the kind of attention given to the behavior.

Training

Instructor/Observers. The author of this document and principal investigator served as the instructor for the target students, the university students assisting with data collection, teachers, and parents. Prior to data collection, university students assisting as observers were trained by the researcher. First, the students received a written description of the study and definitions of specific behaviors targeted. An oral review of the written information, and the curriculum to be used, were presented and any questions answered. The training was conducted by direct instruction and roleplaying. Lastly, practice recording of student behaviors were completed in the participating classrooms to achieve at least 80% agreement.
Teachers. All participating teachers were familiar with social skills instruction and emphasized "making good choices" in their classrooms. However, none of the teachers taught social skills specifically, as a regular part of their curriculum. Prior to commencing the study, teachers were given a written description of the proposed study which included the methods to be used. To insure that teachers understood the methodology, the researcher gave a verbal summary of the study, presented the materials to be used and answered questions. No other training was provided.

Parents. Parents participating in the study were not familiar with social skills instruction. For the most part, they indicated in an interview that social skills were children using "good behavior," and "being nice." Parents met with the researcher individually for one session of approximately 45 minutes to discuss the study, review the procedures they would follow at home in using "The GAB Sheet" (Gaining Appropriate Behaviors Sheet) (Appendix D), and discuss simple behavior management in the home (i.e., verbal praise and tangible rewards given immediately after a desired behavior to increase the likelihood of the child repeating the behavior). Follow-up was provided to the parents during weekly phone calls and/or notes.

Measures of Interobserver Agreement

To be sure that observer drift did not occur and that correct data were being collected, the researcher and observers discussed identified behaviors recorded on the observation forms at the end of each week. In addition, the time at which each occurrence of behavior was observed and recorded, was compared in calculating the agreement percentages to insure that the two observers saw the same behaviors.
Reliability checks were conducted at least twice in each phase, by having the researcher and student assistants independently and simultaneously observe the target students. Reliability was determined as percent of agreement that the behavior occurred, by calculating the number of agreements, and the number of disagreements. The number of agreements was divided by the number of agreements plus disagreements, and multiplied by 100.

\[
\text{(1.) Agreements} \\
\frac{\text{Agreements}}{\text{Agreements} + \text{Disagreements}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of Agreement}
\]

Materials

The social skills instruction was based on the curriculum, *Taking Part: Introducing social skills* (Cartledge & Kleefeld, 1991), which consists of a teacher presentation manual with scripted lessons, sample sticker record sheets, picture posters, sample parent letters, paper animal puppets, and animal stickers. This curriculum was developed for young children, preschool through grade three, and provides specific strategies for social skills instruction considered critical for the development of young children. The curriculum addresses the behavioral, cognitive, and affective components of social skills and is based on social learning theory. *Taking Part* was field tested at selected sites that represent young children from different geographic locations, economic levels, and cultures. The packaged curriculum was specifically used to instruct the target students in the following social skills lessons: (1) identifying others' feelings, (2) making positive statements, (3) speaking kindly and using courtesy words, (4) respecting others' property, (5)
sharing materials, (6) ignoring aggression and (7) controlling one's temper. The curriculum was supplemented with additional animal hand puppets, finger puppets, individual teacher-made sticker books for each of the participating students, pictures from magazines, response cards (a happy face and a sad face), and worksheets. A parent note was developed by the researcher for the purpose of communicating to the parents the social skills that they were to practice with their child and to record the child's performance. The parent note was called, "The GAB Sheet."

Experimental Design

The experimental design was a multiple baseline across subjects (Cooper, Heron & Heward, 1987). In the multiple baseline across subjects design, aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors were selected for all five of the target students. These students were observed in the classroom and the school cafeteria for the same period of time. After steady responding had been achieved in the students under this initial condition referred to as baseline, the independent variable was applied to Student 1 while baseline conditions remained in effect for the other target students. After a noted change in the behavior of Student 1 over a period of time, the independent variable was then applied to Student 2, and so on until all students had been introduced to the independent variable at staggered intervals. The experimental conditions included baseline; social skills instruction, parent participation and classroom coaching; and follow-up. During baseline, target students were not aware that data were being collected on their behavior. They were told that the researcher and observers were there to observe the
class. The students were introduced to the intervention in small groups of three students, which consisted of at least one competent peer.

**Procedures**

*Screening and pre-baseline observations.* The study began with the selection process as previously described. After participants were identified as target students for the study, baseline data were collected and the intervention introduced according to procedures for a multiple baseline across subjects design, in order to demonstrate a functional relationship between the intervention and the behavior change.

*Baseline.* The target students were observed directly for seven, 20-minute sessions over a two-week period: 5 times in the classroom, and 2 times in the cafeteria. Aggressive, antisocial and prosocial behaviors were recorded on the student observation record form. For each occurrence of the observed behaviors, the following information was recorded: time of occurrence; student initiated or reaction to behavior; student's response (physically aggressive, verbally aggressive, antisocial, or prosocial); positive peer behavior, negative peer behavior, or no response from peer; whether the teacher observed the behavior; and the teacher's reaction - positive, negative, or no response. The total number of identified behaviors observed during each of the seven 20-minute sessions were recorded as baseline data for Student-1. Baseline conditions continued an additional two weeks for Student-2 and Student-3, who were students in the same classroom. Student-4 remained in baseline for a total of six weeks (15 observations; one week absent). Due to problems with scheduling and obtaining parent consent, Student-5 did not start baseline until 6-weeks after all other target students.
Baseline conditions for Student-5 were monitored for 3-weeks (12 observations).

**Social skills instruction, parent participation, and classroom coaching.**

The researcher and one university undergraduate student conducted social skills instruction for 10-weeks. Sessions were held in the school library twice weekly for 20 minutes. The social skills instructional groups (4 groups total) included one target student and two competent peers, or as in one case, two target students and one competent peer. Each group was taught separately. The social skills instruction was based on the curriculum, *Taking Part: Introducing Social Skills* (Cartledge & Kleefeld, 1991). Each lesson included:

1. an introduction to the scripted story;
2. definition of the social skill to be taught;
3. modeling of the skill through a scripted story that included roleplay with puppets;
4. practicing the skills using the scripted story and puppets with a peer;
5. feedback;
6. practice of the skills using the puppets in roleplays that were made-up by the participants; and
7. reinforcement.

(Appendix E includes copies of the lesson plans developed for instruction.) Skill lessons were repeated as necessary using strategies suggested from the curriculum and strategies developed by the researcher to insure that students had learned the skill components prior to moving to a new lesson. As additional practice, students used real life situations that they had seen or experienced.

All practice included coaching by the instructor, verbal praise (e.g., good job, great), and stickers which students collected to exchange for "surprises" (e.g., match-box cars, finger puppets, small board games) that cost them 20 stickers each. Stickers initially were given to students each time a component
of the social skill lesson was demonstrated appropriately, such as, not looking
at or talking to a person as a way to ignore verbally aggressive behaviors. The
schedule of tangible reinforcement was reduced each week so that students
earned one sticker per instructional session if the performance was
determined by the instructor to be satisfactory, that is, the student was able to
perform skill components during the roleplay, or was able to describe
appropriate skills. When a student did not receive a sticker because
performance was unsatisfactory (e.g., laughing at others or did not remember
skill components), the student received a verbal explanation of why a sticker
was not earned, and was told to try again during the next session. During each
session, a bonus sticker could be earned by a student for presenting a real life
situation that was judged, by the researcher, to be an excellent example of the
social skill lesson. New social skills lessons included situations that required
participants to use some of the previously learned skills. All students, target
and competent peers, received the same social skills instruction and
reinforcement.

Target students were observed twice weekly in the classroom (except on
two additional occasions to make-up days lost during spring vacation), and
once a week in the cafeteria to determine if the newly learned social skills
were used, and to collect measures of the dependent variables. In the
classroom, observers attempted to enter and sit quietly in an area away from
student activities, during the 20-minute observation period. Following the
observation period if inappropriate behaviors were noted, students were
coached or prompted to interact positively with peers. Occasionally
overcorrection was used to practice an appropriate response. Prior to each
new social skills lesson, the classroom teacher received a copy of the lesson plan (Appendix E) for the skills to be taught and was asked to reinforce students with stickers and verbal praise when they exhibited appropriate social skills. Teachers were not instructed on how to address inappropriate behaviors. However, the researcher verbally communicated with the teachers on a regular basis about the students' behaviors and thanked them for awarding stickers to the students for "good" behavior.

Parents of the target students who consented to participate in the study received training in a 45-minute instructional and interview session. They were contacted by phone, and through letters, to schedule an individual session with the researcher. The parent session included the completion of the SSRS-P, and a discussion and demonstration of the following: (1) importance of prosocial skill development to the students, (2) how parents influence their child's behavior through reinforcement, and (3) social skills instruction using the Taking Part curriculum. Parents also reviewed the parent note, "The GAB Sheet," that would be sent to them, via the target students, at the beginning of each new lesson. New lessons always started on a Monday. "The GAB Sheet" listed questions or activities that were to be conducted with the student as homework, and a process to evaluate the child's performance. The questions or activities listed in the parent note related to the skill components of the social skills lesson taught. Parents were asked to talk with their child about the questions after the child had given the answer, or completed the activity, and to praise the child for completing the tasks. When incorrect answers were given to the parent by the child, the parent was told to mark the box which indicated that the child did not get the
correct answer, then say to the child, "good try, but the answer is . . ." The
child repeated the correct answer and that ended the homework session for
that day. Homework sessions were scheduled for three days a week. The
researcher telephoned the parents on Monday evenings to insure that they
received the note and understood the task. For parents without a telephone,
the note indicated that they should contact the researcher (by using a
neighbor's phone, pay phone, coming to the school, or sending a note), as
soon as possible, if they had questions. "The GAB Sheet" was returned to the
child's teacher on Friday of each week, and collected from the teachers by the
researcher. During the first week of the student's participation in the
intervention, an extra sticker could be earned for taking the note home, and
one for returning the note at the end of the week. Thereafter, students only
received verbal praise from the researcher and encouraged parents to do
likewise. "The GAB Sheet" was sent home five times during the intervention
phase of the study.

**Follow-up.** Follow-up consisted of four, 20-minute observations. Three
observations were conducted in the classroom and one in the cafeteria.
During follow-up, instruction, classroom coaching, and parent participation
were not provided. At the conclusion of the study, all participating students
presented a puppet show for their entire class and received a "Certificate of
Achievement," acknowledging their completion of the social skills
instruction project (Appendix F).

**Social Validity Measures**

Schwartz and Baer (1991) describe social validity as a measure of
acceptance of an intervention effort. They suggest that social validity data may
enhance a program's "viability." Therefore, social validity questionnaires that had been developed by the researcher were given at the conclusion of the study to assess the subjective views of participants: target students, competent peers, teachers, and parents (Appendix G). All students were read the questions and asked to answer in their own words. The student questionnaire assessed their feelings about participating in the study, the activities, the materials used, and what they learned. Questions posed to the teachers and parents assessed their awareness of changes in the students' behavior and feelings about social skills instruction. They were also asked to share any comments they had about the study.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study on the effects of social skills instruction and parent participation on aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors exhibited by the target students in this study. Results of the experimental conditions are given for each target student, along with graphic displays common to single-subject design research. Interobserver agreement measures are presented, and a summary of the responses received from the social validity questionnaires completed by the students, teachers, and parents.

Baseline

Immediately following completion of the selection process, data collection began with the target students to establish baseline for the purpose of measuring the effects of the intervention. Figures 4, 5, and 6 illustrate the experimental phases of the study for all students. Figure 4 illustrates baseline conditions on the number of aggressive behaviors exhibited by the students: Student-1 exhibited a total of 19 aggressive acts (9 physical and 10 verbal) in 6 observations, for an average of 3.1 aggressive acts per observation; Student-2 exhibited a total of 16 aggressive acts (7 physical and 9 verbal) in 12 observation sessions, for an average of 1.3 aggressive acts per observation; Student-3 exhibited 18 aggressive acts (6 physical and 12 verbal) in 14 observations, for an average of 1.3 aggressive acts per observation; Student-4
exhibited 14 aggressive acts (5 physical and 9 verbal) in 15 observations, for an average of .9 aggressive acts per observation; and Student-5 exhibited 10 aggressive acts (4 physical and 6 verbal) in 11 observations, for an average of .9 aggressive acts per observation. The results indicated that the five students engaged in 31 physically aggressive acts and 46 verbally aggressive acts, for a total of 77 aggressive acts during baseline conditions, and a mean of 1.5 aggressive behaviors per 20-minute observation. Students initiated 75, or 98% of the aggressive behaviors observed, and only 5, or .6% of the behaviors were directly observed by the teachers.

Figure 5 illustrates the number of antisocial behaviors exhibited by the students during baseline conditions. Those data show that Student-1 exhibited 2 antisocial acts, for a mean of .3 per observation; student-2 exhibited 9 antisocial acts, for a mean of .8 per observation; student-3 exhibited 15 antisocial acts, for a mean of .9 per observation; student-4 exhibited 21 antisocial acts, for a mean of 1.4 per observation; and student-5 exhibited 4 antisocial acts, for a mean of .4 per observation. Students engaged in a total of 51 antisocial acts during baseline conditions for a mean of .8 antisocial behaviors per observation. Students initiated 50 of the antisocial behaviors observed, and only 3 of the antisocial behaviors were directly observed by the teachers.

Figure 6 shows the number of prosocial behaviors exhibited by the students during baseline conditions. Student-1 exhibited 1 prosocial behavior; Student-2 exhibited 0 prosocial behaviors; Student-3 exhibited 2 prosocial behaviors; Student-4 exhibited 1 prosocial behavior; and student-5 exhibited 3 prosocial behaviors. A total of 7 prosocial social behaviors were exhibited by
the students during baseline conditions. This represents a mean of .6 prosocial behaviors exhibited by the students during a 20-minute observation. Students initiated 4, or 56% of the prosocial skills observed, and only 1, or .7% of these behaviors were directly observed by the teachers.

The number of aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors exhibited by the students, that were directly observed by the teachers during baseline, are presented in Table 5. During baseline, teachers observed only a small number of the students' behaviors. It can not be determined if teachers were ignoring the students' behaviors, or that they were engaged in instructional activities with other students and did not see the same behaviors that were recorded by the observers.

Table 5

| Number of Aggressive, Antisocial, and Prosocial Behaviors Exhibited by Students, and Number Observed by Teachers - During Baseline |
|---|---|---|
| Behaviors | Number Exhibited By Students | Number Observed By Teachers |
| Aggressive | 77 | 5 |
| Antisocial | 51 | 3 |
| Prosocial | 7 | 1 |
Figure 4. Number of aggressive behaviors exhibited by students during a 20-minute observation session.
Figure 5. Number of antisocial behaviors exhibited by students during a 20-minute observation session.
Figure 6. Number of prosocial behaviors exhibited by students during a 20-minute observation session.
Social Skills Instruction, Parent Participation, and Coaching.

During the intervention phase of the study, students were exposed to social skills instruction, parent participation through homework activities and weekly phone calls, and classroom coaching. Students-1, 2, 3, and 4, were each given a total of 5 parent notes to take home. Student-5 was given 3 parent notes, plus additional worksheets and ideas for social skills development that were requested by the parent. Student-1 returned 4 of the five parent notes; student-2 and student-3 each returned 3 of 5 parent notes; student-4 was given parent notes even though the parent did not schedule training with the researcher, however none of the notes were returned; and student-5 returned 2 of 3 parent notes. A total of 23 notes were sent home by the students, and a total of 12 or 52% were returned. Students indicated often that they lost the notes, could not find them at home or forgot them. Parents corroborated with the student responses. Figure 7 illustrates the percent of correct and incorrect responses to questions and activities contained in the parent note, "The GAB Sheet," that were returned to the researcher by the students. All students achieved at least 70% correct responses on "The GAB Sheet."

Manipulation of the independent variables resulted in data collected for each student on the number of aggressive behaviors, antisocial behaviors, and prosocial behaviors exhibited during a 20-minute observation session. The number of aggressive behaviors decreased substantially in all five of the students during the intervention. Although fewer reductions occurred in antisocial behaviors, there were noticeable increases in prosocial behaviors.
The GAB Sheet Responses

![Bar chart showing percent of correct and incorrect student responses to questions and activities contained in the parent notes-The GAB Sheet.]

**Figure 7.** Percent of correct and incorrect student responses to questions and activities contained in the parent notes-The GAB Sheet.

Positive reinforcement served as a strong motivator for the participants. As a part of the students' first instructional session, each participant made a "Sticker Book" in which to keep the stickers earned. The students were responsible for collecting their sticker(s) from the researcher, placing the
sticker(s) in the book, keeping the sticker book in their classroom mailbox or cubby, keeping count of the number of stickers earned, and alerting the researcher when a total of 20 stickers had been earned (from researcher and teacher combined) with which to trade for a "surprise." Because of time limits, Student 5 had to earn a minimum of 10 stickers for a surprise. Figure 8 shows the number of stickers earned by the target students during instructional conditions.

During instruction students continued to initiate 98% of observed behaviors, and responded to only 2% of inappropriate behaviors from peers. There was a slight increase in teacher observation of the aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors exhibited by the target students during instruction (Table 6). This may be attributed to teachers giving stickers to the students for exhibiting prosocial skills during this phase of the study.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Number Exhibited By Students</th>
<th>Number Observed By Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>
Aggressive behaviors. During instruction student-1 exhibited a total of 21 aggressive acts (7 physical and 14 verbal), or an average of .7 aggressive acts, per 20-minute observation. The majority of these acts were verbal initiations of threats, arguing, and teasing others. During baseline Student 1 averaged 3.1 aggressive acts per observation. Student-2 exhibited a total of 9 aggressive acts
(6 physical and 3 verbal), or an average of .4 aggressive acts per 20-minute observation. Most of these aggressive acts involved physical contact (i.e., hitting, pushing, kicking) with peers. Student 2 averaged 1.3 aggressive acts during baseline. Student-3 exhibited a total of 7 aggressive acts (2 physical and 5 verbal), or an average of .3 per 20-minute observation compared to 1.3 acts per observation during baseline. Verbal aggression (name calling such as, "you stupid") dominated his interaction with peers. During baseline Student 3 averaged 1.3 aggressive acts. Student-4 exhibited a total of 9 aggressive acts (4 physical and 5 verbal), or an average of .5 aggressive acts per 20-minute observation. Neither physical or verbal acts of aggression dominated the behaviors of Student-4. Student 4 averaged .9 aggressive acts during baseline. Student-5 exhibited a total of 2 aggressive acts (0 physical and 2 verbal), or an average of .2 aggressive acts per 20-minute observation. Physical aggression frequently followed verbal aggression for Student-5, if no adult intervened during the verbal aggression stage. Student 5 averaged .9 aggressive acts during baseline. Under instructional conditions, students exhibited a total of 48 aggressive acts (19 physical and 29 verbal) for a mean of .4 aggressive acts per 20-minute observation. This represents a mean reduction of 1.1 aggressive behaviors, per 20-minute observation when compared to baseline conditions. As a group the students' physically aggressive behaviors decreased by 12 acts, and their verbally aggressive acts decreased by 17 when compared to baseline data. During instruction students continued to initiate, rather than re-act to, the behaviors observed. Students initiated 44, or 92% of the aggressive behaviors observed. Only 7, or 18% of the behaviors were directly observed by the teachers.
Antisocial behaviors. During the 20-minute observation of students' behaviors, the following acts of antisocial behaviors were recorded: Student-1 exhibited a total of 16 antisocial behaviors, or an average of .6 antisocial behaviors; Student-2 exhibited 5 antisocial behaviors, or an average of .1 antisocial behaviors; Student-3 displayed 8 antisocial behaviors for an average of .3; Student-4 displayed 12 antisocial behaviors for an average of .6; Student-5 exhibited a total of 3 antisocial behaviors for an average of .3. Students exhibited a total of 44 antisocial behaviors, or a mean of .4 antisocial behaviors during instruction, as compared to a mean of .8 during baseline. Students initiated 40 of the antisocial behaviors observed, and teachers observed 7 of the 44 antisocial behaviors.

Prosocial behaviors. During observations of the students, Student-1 exhibited 13 prosocial behaviors (1 during baseline), or .4 per 20-minute observation; Student-2 exhibited 15 prosocial behaviors (0 during baseline), or .7 per 20-minute observation; Student-3 exhibited 14 prosocial behaviors (2 during baseline), or .5 per 20-minute observation; Student-4 exhibited 3 prosocial behaviors (1 during baseline), or .2 per 20-minute observation; and Student-5 exhibited 9 prosocial behaviors (3 during baseline), or .8 per 20-minute observation. The students exhibited a total of 54 prosocial behaviors during instruction as compared to a total of only 7 prosocial behaviors during baseline. A mean of .1 prosocial behavior was exhibited per 20-minute observation during baseline. The mean increased to .5 during instruction, and represents an increase of 47 prosocial behaviors observed during instruction as compared to only 7 during baseline. Students initiated 50 of the prosocial behaviors, and teachers observed 10.
**Follow-up.** During the follow-up phase of the study all students were observed for 20 minutes on four different occasions: 3 times in the classroom and once in the cafeteria. Student-1 exhibited 0 aggressive behaviors, 1 prosocial behavior, and only 1 antisocial behavior; Student-2 was absent for 2 of the 4 follow-up observations and exhibited 3 aggressive behaviors, 1 antisocial behavior, and 4 prosocial behaviors during 2 observations; Student-3 exhibited 1 aggressive behavior, 0 antisocial behaviors, and 3 prosocial behaviors; Student-4 exhibited 1 aggressive behavior, 2 antisocial behaviors and 2 prosocial behaviors; and Student-5 exhibited 0 aggressive or antisocial behaviors and 1 prosocial behavior. Students exhibited a mean of .4 aggressive behaviors, .3 antisocial behaviors, and .8 prosocial behaviors during follow-up.

In addition to collecting data on the number of aggressive, antisocial and prosocial behaviors exhibited by the students, data were collected that showed students initiated, rather than re-acted to, a majority of the behaviors observed. Peers rarely interacted with the target students, therefore limiting opportunities for reaction to peer initiations. Anecdotal records note that when peers were asked to initiate interaction, they often responded by saying, "not me!" It is possible that peers had experienced negative behaviors exhibited by the students during previous interactions, and chose to avoid similar encounters.

**Interobserver Agreement**

Interobserver data were collected on student behaviors at least twice during each condition of the study. Interobserver agreements were calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus
disagreements and multiplying by 100 to obtain a percent of agreement.
Observer reliabilities were not uniformly high across all target students, with
agreements ranging from 70% to 100%, and a mean of 83% for aggressive
behaviors; a range of 0 to 100%, and a mean of 80% for antisocial behaviors;
and a range of 64% to 100%, and a mean of 87% for prosocial behaviors. For
Student-1 the range of agreement scores was 57% to 100% for a mean of 89%;
Student-2 had a range of 0% to 100% for a mean of 65%; Student-3 had a range
of 60% to 100% for a mean of 80%; Student-4 had a range of 0% to 100% for a
mean of 75%; and Student-5 had 100% agreements in all behaviors. The
overall mean for all students, across all behaviors was 82% agreement.

Social Validity

Questionnaires were completed by all participants in the study: target
students, competent peers, teachers, and parents (Appendix G). Students, and
parents were read each question and they responded in their own words.
Teachers were given a questionnaire with directions to rate a list of
statements on a scale by circling, SA - strongly agree, A - agree, D - disagree, SD
- strongly disagree, or NO - no opinion. The findings for each group of
respondents to the questionnaire follows.

Students. The students responded positively towards social skills
instruction. They all indicated that they liked working with the tutor
(researcher), puppets, reading the animal stories and doing the roleplays.
When asked what they learned, the students' responses varied and are as
noted in the following statements:

• No fighting
• Take 5 deep breaths to cool down
• If someone pushes you ask them to say sorry
• Ignore fights
• If someone hits you or teases you to get you in trouble, ignore them
• Sometimes you're sad, happy, or mad
• Say nice things, say excuse me, thank you and please
• Share stuff
• Say I'm sorry if you bump into someone
• Everybody got feelings
• Ignore people who try to get you in trouble, think about ice cream and walk away
• Don't look at the person who is bothering you
• Don't show your temper, count to 10
• Don't pick on people, jump into fights, call somebody a bad name
• Don't play rough
• Leave other people's property alone and ask to borrow it.

When asked what they liked best about working with the tutors, the students indicated that they liked playing with the puppets and roleplaying. Target students were also asked if they did the homework sheets with their parents. Four of the 5 said that they had done some of them, and lost some of them. One student said the parent was asked to help but would not call the researcher and did not understand what to do. Finally, the students were asked if they would like to do the social skills instruction again, and they all said yes.

Parents. Of the 5 target students, only 4 of them had parent participation. Two of the four parents were contacted by telephone, and two were
interviewed in their homes. All parents indicated that social skills were important for children to learn, "so they will know how to act," and said that parents should be included in social skills instruction. All parents indicated that they noticed a change in their child's behavior: wanted help with homework more, asked more questions, spoke nice to siblings. The parents apologized for not following through on all of the homework sheets with their children but thought it was important. Three of the four parents said that their children talked about the puppets and the "surprises" earned with the stickers. Additional comments from the parents included statements that indicated that they were glad to help, thought the social skills instruction kept the child out of so much trouble, and wanted social skills instruction again next year.

**Teachers.** The questionnaire given to teachers required that they rate 16 statements regarding social skills instruction and the students behavior. Table 5 presents the results of the teacher questionnaire. Three of the five teachers indicated that the target student's behavior had improved after social skills instruction, and one teacher indicated no change in the student's aggressive behavior but the student had begun to talk more about his feelings. Overall, teachers indicated that social skills instruction and parent participation were important, and that the students enjoyed the social skills lessons. Four of the five teachers expressed an interest in continuing social skills instructional sessions with their students and suggested that the instruction start at the beginning of the school year in order to maximize its effectiveness.
Table 7
Teacher Responses to Social Validity Questionnaire

<table>
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<th>Question #</th>
<th>Teacher-1</th>
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<th>Teacher-4</th>
<th>Teacher-5</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree
NO=No Opinion. The reader is referred to Appendix-G for a copy of the questions.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a discussion of the results obtained in this study relative to the research questions posed in Chapter I. The limitations of the study are presented, followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings. Suggestions are given for classroom practice, and future research in order to extend the knowledge base and promote prosocial skills in students with aggressive behaviors.

Question 1. What are the effects of social skills instruction on the number of prosocial behaviors exhibited by primary-aged students?

The number of prosocial behaviors exhibited by the students during the instruction, when compared to baseline conditions, demonstrate that social skills instruction can be an effective strategy. The change in behavior was replicated at each level in the multiple baseline design. The systematic increases during treatment conditions suggest that the behavior was controlled by the independent variable. Prosocial behaviors exhibited by the students during instruction increased from a total of 7 during baseline, to 54 during instruction (80% increase). All five students showed an increase in prosocial skills during instruction, parent participation and coaching. The results further indicate that the effect on prosocial skills were stronger in the classroom settings than during the less supervised settings such as the
cafeteria. This may be attributed to the more structured classroom condition, providing more effective reminders of the desired behaviors through the proximity of the teacher, and greater similarity to the treatment setting. Stronger generalization training is warranted. This would include designing instructional activities that simulated more informal settings and providing more coaching of prosocial behaviors in these settings under real-life conditions.

**Question 2.** What are the effects of social skills instruction on the number of antisocial behaviors exhibited by primary-aged students?

Antisocial behaviors exhibited by the students in the study were shown to decrease less dramatically than changes for other behaviors. This may be attributed to the increase in antisocial behaviors exhibited by Student 1, who was observed to exhibit a mean of .3 antisocial behaviors during baseline, and .8 antisocial behaviors during instruction. The increase in antisocial behaviors occurred during the death of the grandmother of Student 1, and may be attributed to the student's mood swing. However, there was a 50% reduction in the total number of antisocial behaviors exhibited by the students over the course of the study. Students exhibited a mean of .8 antisocial behaviors during baseline, and .4 during instruction.

It is worth noting that there was particularly little change with Student 4. In addition to having no parent participation, she chose to work alone rather than with others, and when prompted by the researcher to interact with peers, she often responded by making attributions such as, "They will get me in trouble." Anecdotal records of classroom observations show that Student 4 received little positive reinforcement from the teacher or peers for
appropriate behaviors in the classroom setting. This pattern of behavior is consistent with research described by Hudley and Graham (1993) which elaborates on an assumed "cognition-to-behavior linkage" in students who attribute to others the responsibility for negative outcomes. In addition, Bierman, Miller and Stabb (1987) note that increasing peer acceptance of children with negative sociometric status is difficult to change due to peer expectations. That is, peers have learned to avoid others who exhibit antisocial behaviors and therefore provide few opportunities for positive interaction.

**Question 3. What are the effects of social skills instruction on the number of aggressive behaviors exhibited by primary-aged students?**

The results of this study demonstrate that for students who exhibit aggressive behaviors in public school settings, social skills instructional procedures that include modeling, roleplay, feedback and reinforcement, can be effective in reducing aggressive behaviors. Students were observed to exhibit substantially less aggression after social skills instruction than prior to instruction (Figure 4). Results of the study show that the students exhibited a total of 77 aggressive acts during baseline that were reduced to a total of 48 aggressive acts during instruction, and only 5 during follow-up conditions. In comparison to baseline, these data represent a 40% reduction in aggressive behaviors during instruction, and a 94% reduction in aggressive behaviors during follow-up for all students.

Despite these substantial reductions, the treatment effects for Students 1 and 2 were somewhat erratic and could possibly be explained by the discussion of these major events. First Student 1 experienced the death of his
grandmother, immediately followed by the presence of a substitute teacher in the classroom. This student was reported to be close to his grandmother and was deeply affected by her death. The combination of this personnel loss and the change in routine and personnel proved to be quite difficult for this student. After achieving several days of no aggressive acts, there was a sharp increase at the time of these events. Student 2 experienced an even more dramatic trauma in the premature death of a much admired older brother. The brother was killed in a drive-by shooting causing Student 2 to express considerable anger and aggression towards his peers. Prior to this event, Student 2 had reduced aggressive acts to zero, and these behaviors had remained stable for several weeks.

Through direct observations, the observers were able to discern specific events that served to trigger aggressive behaviors in the target students, such as rejection by peers when they initiated a positive interaction. The target students were not taught these skills and thus failed to learn how to handle related situations in the classroom. The students were taught skills for performing appropriately in specifically observed situations, such as being teased by a peer, as well as understanding emotions, cognitions, and problem-solving strategies that were supported in the literature as relevant to the treatment of aggressive behaviors (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986, 1995; Pepler & Rubin, 1991).
Question 4. What are the effects of parent participation on the maintenance and generalization of newly learned social skills in their primary- aged children?

The results of this study indicate that for Students 1, 2, 3, and 5, whose parent participated, aggressive and antisocial behaviors decreased and prosocial behaviors increased, at rates higher than those for Student 4, whose parent did not participate. This outcome does not provide for conclusive statements about the role of parents in this social skills study, but it is worth noting that similar findings emerged in the pilot study. That is, the least amount of improvement occurred for the student without parent involvement (Middleton & Cartledge, in press). While on one hand, it may be reasoned that, resistant parents socialize their children to act accordingly, these data suggest that the reverse is true as well.

The parents in this study indicated that the students talked to them about the social skills lessons, enjoyed having their attention, and were observed using some of the skills at home. These observations by the parents, and the resulting effects, show that newly learned social skills were maintained and generalized to other settings, and possibly helped to strengthen treatment effects. These results corroborate the findings of Maccoby (1992) that parent participation is a critical component in the socialization of children, and as indicated by others (Hughes, 1985; Sanders & Glynn, 1981), parents provide naturally occurring contingencies that can support generalization and maintenance of behavioral change.
Question 5. What instructional strategies effectively increase student's prosocial behaviors?

The results of the study demonstrate that for students who exhibit aggressive behaviors in school settings, social skills instruction procedures that include modeling, roleplaying, feedback, coaching, and reinforcement can be effective. The results also validate the use of the Taking Part instructional package (curriculum) as an effective and viable tool for social skills instruction. The curriculum's use of animal puppets and stories provided a strategy that was appealing to young children. Stickers that were used as positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors provided motivation and a link to natural contingencies of reinforcement in the students' environment. Sallis (1983) indicates that aggression control involves complex discrimination skills. Students must discern appropriate and inappropriate occasions for certain behaviors, control their aggressive behavior in response to instigating conditions, and elicit positive responses from others. The social skills instructional procedures used in this study incorporated components that addressed discrimination skills, and therefore may in part account for the decrease in aggressive behaviors, and increase in prosocial behaviors of the students.

Question 6. What evidence is there to show that newly learned social skills transfer to untrained settings?

The reduction in the number of aggressive behaviors, and increase in prosocial behaviors observed following treatment indicate that students acquired requisite social skills, and that consequences were available in the natural environment, or untrained settings, to maintain them. That is,
parents, teachers, and peers provided opportunities for interaction with others and positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors. During and after social skills instruction, students were observed working more frequently in dyads and small groups for longer periods of time, and spending less time out of the classroom on disciplinary referrals. Parents reported that students used some of the skills learned when interacting with siblings and seemed to get into sibling quarrels less often than before social skills instruction. This evidence was shared with the researcher during informal telephone conversations and personal conferences. Behavioral transfer was also verified by the fact that data were collected in two school settings; the cafeteria, and the classroom.

Question 7. What evidence shows that newly learned social skills last over time?

During follow-up observations of the target students, the number of aggressive, antisocial, and prosocial behaviors continued to remain at levels achieved during instruction. In addition, situations were observed in which there were increased positive peer initiations and more positive reactions to the target students' behaviors.

Question 8. What is the opinion of the participants regarding social skills instruction?

The participants in the social skills instruction responded to a social validity questionnaire. The participants, target students and competent peers, indicated that they enjoyed the puppets, the stories, and earning stickers which they used to buy "surprises" (i.e., small toys). The participants were usually eager to attend instructional sessions and upon request would
promptly accompany the researcher to the instructional setting. When the students returned to the classroom after instruction they were often heard saying to other students, "we had fun today." This positive attitude is further evidenced in the frequent request of students not selected for participation in the study to "go" with the researchers because one of the participants told them what we were doing. Some of the teachers indicated that students were excited about participating and looked forward to the instructional sessions.

Question 9. What is the opinion of teachers and parents about parent participation in social skills instruction?

Teachers completed a social validity questionnaire that surveyed their opinions about parent participation in the social development of their children. All the participating teachers indicated that they "strongly agreed" with parent participation. One teacher expressed the opinion to the researcher that if more parents were involved, especially with young children, teachers would have fewer discipline problems in the classroom. The participating teachers expressed a strong desire to continue social skills instruction with the target students, and to provide the instruction for other students not selected for the study. They said that it was important for students to exhibit appropriate social skills before they could attend to academic instruction, especially young children. Teachers also indicated that modeling and roleplaying by using puppets were excellent strategies for teaching social skills.

Parents also completed a social validity questionnaire in which they were asked their opinions about social skills instruction. All parents stated a desire to assist teachers by helping their children with homework, and that
parents should be included in social skills instruction just as in academic instruction. Additional remarks by the parents indicated that they usually were not asked, not trained, and not supported in providing assistance to their children. Two of the participating parents said that parents are mostly involved with children when there are discipline problems, and that social skills homework such as, "The GAB Sheet" could be used to help them help their children.

Summary

The results of the study support the effectiveness of social skills instruction for decreasing aggressive behaviors, and increasing prosocial behaviors in young children. The data obtained from this study support existing literature reporting social skills as an effective strategy with children (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986; 1995; Elliott & Gresham, 1993), and as an effective treatment for childhood aggression (Akhtar & Bradley, 1991; Knapczyk, 1989; Middleton & Cartledge, in press; Peters, 1991). Support is also provided for the importance of parental participation in developing and maintaining appropriate social behaviors (Bandura, 1973; Schneider, 1993).

The data obtained from this study indicate that a social skills instructional package, including parent participation can be effective in increasing prosocial skills, and in decreasing aggressive and antisocial behaviors in the primary-age elementary students targeted. Parent participation through homework assignments was used to facilitate maintenance and generalization of newly learned skills. The study also demonstrates that a social skills instructional package that incorporates competent peers, the principles of direct instruction, and uses mediated
cognitive-behavioral problem solving strategies, can be effective in addressing aggressive and antisocial behaviors. The instructional package used for this study incorporated the instructional strategies and skill components found to be successful with aggressive children (e.g., modeling, rehearsal, feedback and reinforcement).

Competent peers were found to be a successful part of the study in that they were observed prompting the target students to exhibit appropriate behaviors by reminding them of skills learned during instructional sessions. When others would not interact with the target students the competent peer would initiate interaction that was received positively by the target student. This interaction by the competent peer helped to increase the interaction of others who may have previously rejected the target student. Competent peers also served as role models for appropriate behaviors, and reinforcement in untrained or the natural environment. The researcher found that for competent peers to be effective, they needed to be assertive and perceived by others as influential in the social context of the classroom.

The results of the study follow the body of research indicating that many aggressive and antisocial behaviors exhibited by students result from deficiencies in their social skill repertoires (Knapczyk, 1988). Social skills instruction prepare students to consider, or generate alternative responses to inappropriate behaviors, and then to initiate an appropriate response that will elicit a positive response from others. The students in the study were observed during and after instruction engaging in social interaction that supported their use of prosocial skills such as, using kind words, being
courteous, and cooperating with peers in dyadic interchanges and small groups.

The results of the study also suggest that parent participation contributed to the effectiveness of the treatment. Student 4 had limited success which ostensibly may be attributed to the lack of parent participation in the social skills instruction. It is not possible to determine the exact impact of parents on the results obtained, however, cooperative parents underscore the potential benefits of this portion of the instructional procedures.

At the conclusion of the study, the students, parents, and teachers completed a questionnaire regarding their impression of the social skills instruction. Parents and teachers were satisfied with the results of the study and indicated that social skills instruction was important. Students said that they liked the social skills instruction, especially the puppets and earning the stickers. They also indicated that they learned, "how to keep from getting into trouble."

**Limitations to the Study**

Stronger results may have been obtained under alternative and additional arrangements. Limitations to this study include the sample size, length of the treatment period, instructional procedures, parent and teacher participation, and follow up measures.

**Sample size.** This study had only five students in the population studied, which limits the generality of the results. More students were initially identified as exhibiting aggressive and antisocial behaviors, and few prosocial behaviors; however, mortality, and time constraints of the study were problems. Students exhibiting behavioral characteristics necessary to
participate in the study have been noted to have poor school attendance, and move from school-to-school as a result of relocating within the community. Additional students were selected after the study had begun to ensure at least minimum sample size for single-subject design research. The sample was also limited to African American children, though not intentional, and therefore results must be interpreted cautiously for other ethnic groups.

Length of the treatment period. After allowing time to obtain parental consent, complete the selection process, and to pre-observe behaviors, only 15 weeks remained to complete the study using a multiple baseline experimental design for five students. This resulted in only three weeks of instruction for Student 5. It is possible that had the instructional period been longer, allowing each student to participate in more instructional sessions, greater gains might have been recorded. Due to time restraints and the end of the school year, the researcher had to conclude the study after only several months.

Instructional procedures. The instructional procedures were limited to the use of a commercially marketed instructional package which incorporated principles of social skills instruction found to be successful with young children. The package used puppets and stories to develop social competence in skill deficit youngsters. It is not known whether another type of instructional package, possibly one that used live video taped scenarios, or teacher developed lessons alone would have increased the effects of the treatment. Instructional procedures were also limited to small groups of no more than three students. Additional research is needed to determine the
effects of social skills instruction with large groups of students in a classroom setting.

Parent and teacher participation. Parent participation was limited to one short training session, weekly notes and telephone calls. More extensive training, and monitoring of parent participation may have strengthened the treatment effects. Teacher participation was limited to casual observation of newly learned social skills in students, and irregularly scheduled awarding of stickers for appropriate behaviors. Teachers might have actually implemented the social skills instruction as a part of their instructional schedule. By doing so, the researcher could determine if behavior change would be achieved at a higher rate, and if the constant presence of the teachers would effect the maintenance and generality of newly learned skills by serving as a stimulus prompt.

Follow-up measures. Due to time constraints, little time lapsed between treatment and follow-up procedures. To determine conclusively that treatment effects lasts over time, a longer period of time, involving more opportunities for direct observation of student behaviors, is needed.

Implications for Classroom Practice

Approaches to reducing social skill deficits related to aggressive behaviors have been developed and implemented by a number of researchers (Coie, Underwood & Lochman, 1991; Graham & Hudley, 1992; Guerra & Slaby, 1990; Hammond, 1993). The present study adds to the current knowledge base on the effectiveness of particular approaches, namely instructional packages, for ameliorating problematic behaviors in children. First, this study shows that a social skills instructional package, Taking Part,
can be used by school personnel (e.g., teachers and counselors) as an effective tool for reducing aggressive behaviors, and increasing prosocial behaviors in children. Instructional packages are handy for school personnel since they may incorporate the essential components of social skills instruction found to be successful. School personnel may look for curriculum packages that do not require a lot of preparation time, are easy to implement, provide for flexibility, and are fun and interesting to children. Secondly, this study shows that parent participation is important. Parents can help teachers achieve positive results in students that may last over time thus benefiting the student, the school, and the community, through decreased time and resources devoted to negative acts committed by children, and on into adulthood. Thirdly, the study shows that peers may be used to help students maintain and generalize newly learned social skills. Informal observation of competent peers indicates that they act as models for positive behaviors, help to initiate positive interactions, and serve as coaches in the untrained settings. Finally, social skills instruction can be easily implemented in the classroom for as little as 15-20 minutes, twice a week to achieve desired changes in behaviors. The components of direct instruction have been shown to be effective in general education classrooms, especially with children at-risk for problem behaviors. Social skills instruction could be team taught, used with mixed age, gender, and ethnic groups. In addition, social skills instructional packages could be shared among teachers within a school to maximize cost effectiveness, and increase skill acquisition among a greater number of students.
Implications for Additional Research

This study involved primary-aged children attending an urban public school. The children were all African Americans from low socioeconomic families, and only one target student was female. Future research might study aggressive, antisocial and prosocial behaviors of students in suburban school settings, from middle and upper income families, and various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Data obtained from additional research that takes into consideration these student characteristics could be compared to previous research studies to ascertain whether differences exists in resulting behavior changes. Hammond and Yung (1993) present a case for cultural sensitivity in the development of social competence. They state the need to emphasize different skills for different cultures of peoples.

This study used an outside person (not the teacher) to implement social skills instruction and make contacts with participating parents. Positive interaction was developed between the researcher and the parents. By having the teacher conduct social skills instruction, and make contact with parents data could be gathered to document aspects of positive and supportive participation by parents that increase social and academic competence in students.

A major component of behavioral change research is the use of positive reinforcement. Students were motivated to perform newly learned social skills and appropriate social behaviors through differential reinforcement procedures. Students received stickers and verbal praise at all instructional sessions, and periodically in the classroom. Further study might investigate
other motivating factors for the students, and the effectiveness of other schedules of reinforcement.

This study did not take into account the role of attribution behaviors in peer aggression. One student, for example, was noted to attribute hostile intent of a peer when the peer accidentally stepped on his new, white, name brand athletic shoes. It was difficult, even with an apology from the peer and support from the teacher, to change the student's perceptions. Further research might study the effect of attribution change strategies on aggressive and antisocial behaviors.

Finally, the study used a small sample of five students for approximately 15 weeks. Using a larger population over an entire academic calendar year or for several years, would provide useful information on the most effective means for treatment delivery and generality of newly learned behaviors.
REFERENCES


Bank, L., Patterson, G. R., & Reid, J. B. (1987). Delinquency prevention through training parents in family management. The Behavior Analyst, 10(1), 75-82.


Hollifield, J. (1992). *The league of schools reaching out: Getting parents going*. Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.


APPENDIX A

Letter to Teachers and Definition of Target Behaviors
Dear Teacher,

Thank you for agreeing to assist with the social skills project that will be conducted by graduate students from The Ohio State University, College of Education. This project, titled, "The effects of social skills instruction and parental involvement on prosocial skills exhibited by aggressive/antisocial elementary students," will begin as soon as parent consent is obtained and continue through the end of May. This study has been approved by Columbus Public Schools administration and the principal of your school.

The project is very simple. You are asked to complete a rating scale for two or three students that you feel exhibit antisocial/aggressive behaviors with their peers (see Definitions sheet attached). Students must obtain certain scores on the rating scale to participate. Students identified as participants for the project will be observed for 20 minutes, 2 times a week in the classroom during times when social interaction is most likely to take place (Monday and Thursday mornings), and once a week in the cafeteria (Fridays). If these days are not good for you, please let me know. Once we begin it will be important to maintain the same schedule. After the students have been observed for approximately two to three weeks, social skills instruction will begin. During instruction we will work with the students outside of the classroom (in the library) for 15-20 minutes, in a group of three (one target student and two additional students who are identified as socially competent). You will receive copies of the lesson plans and parents will be contacted weekly to help practice the skills that the students will learn. We ask that if you notice the student exhibiting appropriate target behaviors, that you provide positive reinforcement.

Hopefully this project will not disrupt your regular schedule of activities, and that ultimately the students will benefit by developing good social interaction with peers and adults.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at home during the evenings at 575-2330. Again, thanks.

Sincerely,

Myra Middleton
Doctoral Student
DEFINITIONS

Prosocial Behaviors - any socially acceptable behaviors that foster good peer and adult relationships (e.g., friendly, liked by others, kind and courteous, makes good choices during conflict situations). Student is said to be socially competent.

Aggressive behavior - any physical, or verbal act intended to inflict harm to another.

Physical aggression - hitting or striking another person or object; - pushing, kicking, biting, pinching, spitting on/at; - throwing something inappropriate (i.e., pencil); - taking something from someone by the use of force, and without their permission.

Verbal Aggression - arguing, shouting, name calling in a profane manner; teasing in an annoying and hurtful manner; making unpleasant faces to another; making a fist or threatening gesture with body parts (i.e., the finger sign).

Antisocial Behaviors - any behavior that is considered to be rudeness, annoyance of others, and are troublesome to others in social interaction, but are not termed aggressive.

Social Skills - socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses from them.

Parent Participation - any activity in which a parent of a student takes an active role in assisting a child to learn, or practice a social or academic skill.
APPENDIX B

Observation Form
## OBSERVATION RECORD

Student ______________________ Observer ______________________ Date __________________ Setting __________________

Teacher ______________________ Condition ______________________ Time: Start ___________ Stop ___________

### Event # - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10*

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<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Student Initiate/Re-act</strong></td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>RE</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>RE</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>RE</td>
<td>IN</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>II. Student Beh. - Aggres., Antisocial, or Pro-soc.</strong></td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>VA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>III. Peer Beh.</strong></td>
<td>P/N/PS</td>
<td>P/N/PS</td>
<td>P/N/PS</td>
<td>P/N/PS</td>
<td>P/N/PS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IV. Obs. by Teacher</strong></td>
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<td>Y/NO</td>
<td>Y/NO</td>
<td>Y/NO</td>
<td>Y/NO</td>
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<td>Y/NO</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>V. Teacher Beh.</strong></td>
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<td>P/</td>
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<td>NR</td>
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### EXPLANATION OF CODES:

I. IN= Initiation of action/behavior  RE= Reaction to action/behavior
II. PA= Physically aggressive  VA= Verbally Aggressive  Antisoc. = Antisocial (nonaggressive)
III. P= Positive interaction  N= Negative interaction  PS= Passive/no response
IV. Y= Yes, observed  NO= Not observed  ProSoc. = Prosocial behavior
IV. P= Positive teacher reaction  C= Corrective teacher reaction  NR= No response/ignores behavior

*| Use additional record form for more than 10 observable events |
APPENDIX C

Parent Consent Form
Dear Parent,

Several classes at our school have been selected to participate in learning activities that will be taught by graduate students from The Ohio State University, College of Education. Your child, __________________________, has been chosen to participate in a project called "GAB" in which children learn to use social skills that will help them in school and home. Social skills help children to play well with others, and to handle conflict in an acceptable manner.

The "GAB" program will require that your child participate in small group instruction for 20 minutes, 2 times a week. Your child will be observed in class to determine how well the instruction works. You will be asked to help your child during the project, and to meet with the GAB teacher, for about 45 minutes, to learn how to help. Your child will not miss any regular instruction and all information collected will be confidential.

So that we may begin the GAB program, your permission is needed. Please complete the form below and return to your child's teacher. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Principal

The GAB Program

(Check one) _____ I give permission _____ I DO NOT give permission
for my child, __________________________, to participate in the social skills instruction project, "GAB."

(Check one) _____ I will participate _____ I WILL NOT participate with my child.

_parent's signature_____________________________________________________________Date________________

Mailing address__________________________________________________________________________________

City & Zip Code___________________________________________________________________________________

Home phone ___________________________ Work Phone ___________________________

The best time to contact me by phone is ___________________________
APPENDIX D

Parent Notes - "The GAB Sheet"
Dear Parent,

This week your child, ___________________, will participate in the social skills listed below. Remember to talk with your child about the activities and practice the skills at least three times before Friday. If the skills are completed by your child without your help, place an X on the "Happy Face." If the child needs help with a skill, mark an X on the "Star," tell the child the correct answer, then have the child repeat the correct answer to you. Please call me at 575-2330, anytime you have a question. Thanks for helping your child do a good job! Don't forget to return this letter to your child's teacher on Friday. Thanks.

Mrs. Middleton

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Lesson #1

Monday

What did you learn in the GAB program today? (Answer - Being kind and courteous to others by saying thank you, please, excuse me, I’m sorry and to watch you tone of voice).

Tuesday

What are the steps in speaking kindly or politely? (Answer - Think of what you want to say, think of a way to say it kindly, and use a nice voice.)

Thursday

Tell me what you would say to someone who is standing in front of the TV and you can’t see the program you are watching. (Answer - In a nice voice, I would say, please move, I can’t see the TV. After they move, say thank you).

Comments: ____________________________
Dear Parent,

This week your child, ___________________ will participate in the social skills listed below. Remember to talk with your child about the activities and practice the skills at least three times before Friday. If the skills are completed by your child without your help, place an X on the "Happy Face." If the child needs help with a skill, mark an X on the "Star," tell the child the correct answer, then have the child repeat the correct answer to you. Please call me at 575-2330, anytime you have a question. Thanks for helping your child do a good job! Don't forget to return this letter to your child's teacher on Friday. Thanks.

Mrs. Middleton

Lesson #2

Monday

What are four kinds of feelings?
(Answer - Happy, Sad, Angry, and Afraid).
Student should now complete the attached sheet on identifying feelings.

Tuesday

Why is it important to know how others feel? (Answer - so we will know how to act with others).

How can we tell how a person feels?
(Answer - By the way they act and look)

Thursday

What are the steps to follow when you want to say something nice to a person? (Answer - 1. Look at the person, 2. Find something nice about the person 3. Tell the person). Have student demonstrate saying something nice to you.

Comments: ________________________________
IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

Name ______________________________________ Date _______________________
Write a word that describes how the person might be feeling in each picture.
NOT HURTING FEELINGS OF OTHERS

Name __________________________ Date ________________

Which of these comments might hurt someone’s feelings? Draw a sad face 😞 next to the ones that are hurtful. Draw a happy face 😊 next to the ones that are nice statements.

1. You’re fat and ugly.

2. Don’t you know how to read? You dummy!

3. Good try! You’ll make that basket next time!

4. Would you please pass me the markers?

5. Did you get that shirt out of the garbage?

6. Have you ever heard of using a toothbrush?

7. I like you tennis shoes! They’re cool!

8. We don’t want Billy in our group.

9. You are so stupid!

10. Would you like to be on our team?
Dear Parent,

This week your child, ____________________, will participate in the social skills listed below. Remember to talk with your child about the activities and practice the skills at least three times before Friday. If the skills are completed by your child without your help, place an X on the "Happy Face." If the child needs help with a skill, mark an X on the "Star," tell the child the correct answer, then have the child repeat the correct answer to you. Please call me at 575-2330, anytime you have a question. Thanks for helping your child do a good job! Don't forget to return this letter to your child's teacher on Friday. Thanks.

Mrs. Middleton

Lesson #3

Monday
When you want to use something that belongs to someone else what three things should you remember? (Answer - Ask permission to use it, be careful with it, and return it when you finish.)

Tuesday
Show me how you would borrow something from a friend, and then return it. (Have the child do this with a toy and some other items. Make sure the child asks politely and says "thank you" when it is returned.)

Thursday
Repeat the same activities that you did on Monday and and Tuesday.

Comments: ____________________________
Dear Parent,

This week your child, ____________________, will participate in the social skills listed below. Remember to talk with your child about the activities and practice the skills at least three times before Friday. If the skills are completed by your child without your help, place an X on the "Happy Face." If the child needs help with a skill, mark an X on the "Star," tell the child the correct answer, then have the child repeat the correct answer to you. Please call me at 575-2330, anytime you have a question. Thanks for helping your child do a good job! Don't forget to return this letter to your child's teacher on Friday. Thanks.

Mrs. Middleton

Lesson #4

Monday
When you want to use something that belongs to someone else what three things should you remember? (Answer - Ask permission to use it, be careful with it, and return it when you finish.)

Tuesday
Explain how to share something with someone. (Answer - Ask to share, think of how to do it, agree on a way, do it together in a nice way).

Thursday
If you only have one book and someone else wants to read it too, how can you share? (Answer - Ask nicely to share, read it together, take turns reading some, we can share turning the pages).

Comments: ____________________________________________
Dear Parent,

This week your child, ________________, will participate in the social skills listed below. Remember to talk with your child about the activities and practice the skills at least three times before Friday. If the skills are completed by your child without your help, place an X on the "Happy Face." If the child needs help with a skill, mark an X on the "Star," tell the child the correct answer, then have the child repeat the correct answer to you. Please call me at 575-2330, anytime you have a question. Thanks for helping your child do a good job! Don't forget to return this letter to your child's teacher on Friday.

Mrs. Middleton

Lesson #5

Monday

When someone is teasing you, what can you do? (Answer - Ignore the person. Don't look at the person, don't talk to the person, walk away).

Wednesday

In order to keep from getting into trouble, what is the first thing you ask yourself? (Answer - What am I suppose to do.)

Thursday

When you get angry with someone, you can take 5 deep breaths, then do what? (answer-count to ten).

Comments:  ________________________________
APPENDIX E
Lesson Plans
Lesson Plan #1

Goal: Speaking Kindly and Using Courtesy Words.

Objective: Students will use courtesy words appropriately during class and in the cafeteria, 100% of observed time.

Materials: Taking Part: Introducing social skills to children

Skill Steps:
1. Think of what to say.
2. Think of a way to say it kindly.
3. Use a nice voice.

Activities:
1. Introduce concept in a discussion.
2. Roleplay scripted story (teachers, then students).
3. Discuss meaning of rude and polite.
4. Generate list of polite words and example usage.
5. Discuss feelings, facial expression, and tone of voice.
6. Ro'eplay student developed vignettes.
7. Practice: parent (home) and teacher (classroom).

Evaluation:
1. During small group, award stickers for appropriate responses.
2. Direct observation of students in classroom and cafeteria.
3. Parent note (The GAB Sheet).
4. Teacher comments.

Homework/Practice:
1. Parent note (The GAB Sheet)
2. Teacher observation - Watch for skill usage, prompt students as needed, provide corrective feedback, and use positive reinforcement.
Lesson Plan #2

Goals: To increase positive interaction by identifying others' feelings.
       To increase positive interaction by making positive statements to others.

Objectives:
   With 100% accuracy, students will be able to identify facial expressions, postures, and gestures to help them interpret how others may be feeling.

   When given a situation or circumstance, students will describe how a person might be feeling by identifying basic emotions of happy, sad, angry, and afraid with 100% accuracy.

   Students will make positive statements to others and use previously learned social skills, in 5 of 5 contrived peer interactions.

Materials: Taking Part

Skill Steps:
   1. Look at the person. Determine how the person may be feeling.
   2. Find something nice about the person.
   3. Tell the person.

Activities:
   1. Introduce the concepts of feelings, and saying nice things to others. Follow with roleplay of scripted stories.
   2. Have students identify how people act and look when they are happy, sad, angry, and afraid (use story lines, drawings, and pictures).
   3. Have students describe and demonstrate how saying unkind words to others hurt and may cause trouble (story lines and roleplay situations).
   4. Students will make-up roleplays using puppets and discuss various situations that they can think of.

Evaluation:
   1. Stickers for appropriate responses and participation in small group.
   2. Direct observations of students in classroom and cafeteria.
   3. Parent note (The GAB Sheet).
   4. Teacher comments.
Homework/Practice:
1. The GAB Sheet activities.
2. Teachers watch for skill usage, prompt students as needed, provide corrective feedback, and use positive reinforcement.
Lesson Plan #3

Goal: To have students become aware of the importance of respecting the property of others and sharing materials as good social behaviors.

Objectives:

Students will ask permission to use someone else's property, or materials that are being used by others, by using appropriate language and tone of voice, with 100% accuracy.

Students will identify ways to use materials together, and share materials in appropriate situations in 100% of trials.

Materials: Taking Part, finger puppets, and magazine pictures.

Skill Steps:

1. Determine if the materials are really needed.
2. Determine when needed.
3. Ask permission to use someone else's property.
4. Handle it carefully.
5. Return it promptly, and say thank you.
6. Think of how to use together, if necessary.

Activities:

1. Introduce concepts of respect, borrow, and share.
2. Using stories and roleplays, have students demonstrate concepts.
3. Students will identify activities that may require sharing or borrowing.
4. Students will integrate previously learned concepts regarding courtesy, feelings, and using kind words, in their roleplays with prompts as necessary.

Evaluation:

1. Stickers for appropriate responses and participation in small group.
2. Direct observations of students in classroom and cafeteria.
3. Parent note (The GAB Sheet).
4. Teacher comments.

Homework/Practice:

1. The GAB Sheet activities.
2. Teachers watch for skill usage, prompt students as needed, provide corrective feedback, and use positive reinforcement.
Lesson Plan #4

Goal: To have students become aware of the importance of avoiding situations that may cause a problem for them or others.

Objectives:
Students will choose to ignore behaviors initiated by others, that may get them into trouble, in 100% of roleplay situations.

Students will demonstrate control of their aggressive and antisocial behaviors by using cognitive-behavioral, and problem-solving strategies in at least 80% of roleplay situations.

Materials: Taking Part

Skill Steps:
1. Think of what I'm suppose to do (follow the rules and make good choices).
2. Ignore the person who is trying to get me in trouble by not looking at the person, not talking to the person, and walking away.
3. When I feel myself getting angry, I'll take 5 deep breaths and count to ten.

Activities:
1. Introduce concept of ignoring.
2. Using stories and roleplays, students will demonstrate the skill steps.
3. Students will identify situations that will require that they use ignoring.
4. Students will identify situations that make them angry and practice controlling their anger.

Evaluation:
1. Stickers for appropriate responses and participation in small group.
2. Direct observations of students in classroom and cafeteria.
3. Parent note (The GAB Sheet).
4. Teacher comments.

Homework/Practice:
1. The GAB Sheet activities.
2. Teachers watch for skill usage, prompt students as needed, provide corrective feedback, and use positive reinforcement of target behaviors.
APPENDIX F
Certificate of Achievement
CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Presented To

For Participation in Social Skills Instruction
A program to teach children how to get along well with others.

Given This ___ Day of _______, 1994
At ____________________________Elementary School
Columbus, Ohio

_____________________________
Myra Middleton, Doctoral Student
The Ohio State University
College of Education
Department of Educational Services and Research
Columbus, Ohio
APPENDIX G

Social Validity Questionnaires
Social Skills Instruction Project  
Teacher Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in the social skills instruction project. Your opinion about the project and additional information is needed. Please take a few minutes to complete the following questions. Your answers are important and you will not be identified specifically in any reports of the information.

Name (Optional) _____________________________________________________________

Number of years taught, including 1993-94: _____ # of years at present school ___

Highest degree earned: _______________________________________________________

Area(s) of certification: _____________________________________________________

If you are not certified in special education, have you taken (check all applicable):

_____ special education courses at a college or university

_____ inservice training in special education or related services

_____ social skills instructional methods/strategies

_____ behavior management training

_____ parent involvement training

_____ special training in working with at-risk students

_____ multicultural awareness training

_____ other (list) ___________________________________________________________

Total Number of students in your class: ______

# African Americans ___ # Asians ___ # Caucasian ___ # others ____

Approximate percent of students qualifying for free lunch ________

Rate the following statements by using the scale given. Circle your answer. 
SA=strongly agree  A=agree  D=disagree  SD=strongly disagree  NO=no opinion

1. Social skills instruction is important for all children.  SA  A  D  SD  NO

2. Parent involvement is important for the development of positive behaviors in all children.  SA  A  D  SD  NO

3. Children learn social behaviors through models.  SA  A  D  SD  NO

4. Children can learn appropriate social behaviors through social skills instruction.  SA  A  D  SD  NO

5. Social skills instruction can only be taught in small groups.  SA  A  D  SD  NO
6. Social skills instruction is more appropriately taught in special education classrooms.

7. The students who participated in the social skills instruction project exhibited aggressive behaviors before instruction.

8. The students who participated in the social skills instruction project showed improvement in their behaviors after instruction.

9. The social skills instruction project interfered with my instructional schedule.

10. Students need more than twice a week social skills instruction.

11. The social skills instruction project-classroom observations were intrusive.

12. According to your observations, the participating students enjoyed the social skills instruction project.

13. Students who participated in the social skills instruction talked about the lessons.

14. Students who participated in the social skills instruction project were observed using at least some of the skills.

15. Social skills instruction and reinforcement (stickers) helped to increase appropriate social behaviors.

16. I would like to see social skills instruction continued in my school.

Please add any additional comments about the social skills instruction project that you feel the researcher should know or that would be helpful to the researcher for future projects.
Social Skills Instruction Project
Parent Questionnaire

Student’s Name ________________________________

1. Do you think social skills are important for children to learn?

2. Do you think parents should be included in social skills instruction?

3. Did you notice a change in your child as a result of participating in the social skills project? If yes, describe the change.

4. Did you complete the homework (GAB) sheets with your child?

5. Did your child talk about the social skills project?

6. Do you have other comments about the social skills project?
Social Skills Instruction Project
Student Questionnaire

Name _________________________________

How old are you? ____ What grade are you? ____

1. Did you like working with the puppets?

2. Did you like the animal stories?

3. What did you learn?

4. Did you like the tutor (researcher) you worked with?

5. What did you like best about working with the tutor?

6. Did you do The GAB Sheets with your mom?

7. Would you like to do this again?