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with Urban, African-American Kindergartners
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Introduction

Social skills are critical to a student's success in the school environment; numerous psychological studies have shown that social skills are linked directly with academic achievement and future success in the workplace and in interpersonal relationships (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; Hartup, 1983; Strayhorn & Smith, 1986). Additionally, research regarding the efficacy of social skills training in urban, African-American children surprisingly is scarce; much of the existing research and programs implementing social skills training are concerned with Caucasian students from a middle-class or higher socioeconomic level. Many inner-city schools have pupils who lack appropriate social skills for learning, interacting with their teachers and peers, and behaving appropriately in the classroom setting. Many teachers find themselves needing to teach basic skills, such as listening and paying attention, before teaching the academic curriculum.

This project examines the efficacy of the Social Skills Intervention Program (SSIP; Elliott & Gresham, 1991) with urban, African-American kindergarten children. Each child in the classroom will receive this training, allowing more socially adept children to act as peer models for less adept children. Seventy children in three kindergarten classrooms and their teachers at an inner-city elementary school will participate; all of the children are African-American and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The SSIP will be used as a guide for this training. Designed for use with 1st through 10th grade students, the SSIP follows a combined social learning theory and applied behavior analysis approach to teaching social skills. The program covers 43
skills in five main domain areas: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

The Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Form Elementary Level form (SSRS-Teacher; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) will be used by the teachers to record students' behavior in intervals. "Blue-green-yellow-red," a behavior tracking system employed by the kindergarten teachers at the experimental school, will also be used to monitor the children's daily behavior.

Prior to the beginning of this study, numerous conversations between administrators at the elementary school and the clinical supervisor and present author, both of Xavier University, identified both the need for social skill instruction for the students and the resources at Xavier University that could address that need. Once the SSIP was chosen as the program of choice, the teachers were asked to rate the 43 skills covered by the SSIP according to how important they felt each skill is to the child's success; the 14 skills rated most important by them will be the skills taught to the children. The teachers have begun to use the blue-green-yellow-red procedure to monitor students' daily behavior; this procedure will be maintained throughout the course of the study. At the end of the first period, the teachers will fill out an SSRS-T record form on each student.

In the second period, the SSIP will be implemented in one of the classrooms. The Tell-Show-Do-Follow Through and Practice-Generalization procedure will be implemented using the specific guidelines provided in the SSIP manual (Elliott & Gresham, 1991). During the procedure, the children will be divided into smaller groups and assigned a group leader, either the classroom teacher or one of the graduate students,
who will assist the group in practicing the skill and providing feedback. At the end of the second period, the teachers of all three classrooms will again fill out the SSRS-T form; weekly tallies of the classrooms' scores using the blue-green-yellow-red system will continue to be collected. This procedure will be followed for the remaining two classrooms, during the third and fourth periods. Behavior modification will also be included in the program implementation as outlined in the SSIP manual.

This project operates under the following three hypotheses: implementation of the SSIP will improve the students' interpersonal relationships; implementation of the SSIP will decrease the instances of problematic behavior; implementation of the SSIP will increase the students' academic performance. If any or all or these hypotheses hold, the SSIP will be of benefit to these students. It will provide them with the basic skills necessary to perform well in school, have meaningful interpersonal relationships with their teachers and peers, and later develop more advanced social skills critical to success in life.
Chapter I

Review of Literature

Why Are Social Skills Important?

Ample evidence points to the importance of developing adequate social skills for a variety of critical life experiences (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997). For example, Strayhorn and Smith (1986) found that children who develop positive social relationships with their peers early in life tend to, as adults, have better employment records, live independently, have fewer instances of contracting adult diseases, have better mental health as well as increased self-esteem, and live longer. During these positive interactions and relationships with peers, children acquire a wide range of competencies, including conflict resolution, sharing toys, participating in imaginary play, and displaying and responding to social affection (Hartup, 1983). A lack of proper social skills development can lead to a variety of problem behaviors. Walker, Steiber, and Eisert (1991) found that deficits related to social skill development, especially skills related to peer and teacher acceptance, are associated with the development of antisocial and violent behavior patterns.

Much of the mental health care allocated to children is provided in the educational setting; this includes social skills training and development. Maag (1994) states that promoting social skills development in all school children, not just those with learning and/or behavioral disorders, is a relevant and important goal for all teachers to achieve.
Usually, the children most at-risk for learning and behavior disorders are placed in general education classes, where social skills training and development rarely are addressed, much less emphasized. In these traditional classrooms, these children are not able to receive the extra help they may need to learn to behave in a socially appropriate way.

In many ways, this system does not adequately address the needs of these children, and therefore puts them at a disadvantage for skills related to school, work, and future interpersonal relationships (Nowacek, 1988). For example, many studies have shown that learning disabled (LD) students tend to be less well-liked than non-handicapped peers (Bruininks, 1978; Bryan, 1974, 1976; Garret & Crump, 1980; Siperstein, Bopp, & Bak, 1978), participate less in school activities (Deshler & Schumaker, 1983), and exhibit social problems that persist throughout life (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973; Roff, Sells, & Golden, 1972). Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) suggest that schools are not alone in their negligence to teach and model appropriate social skills; parents and the community-at-large also contribute to the lack of development of proper, and therefore the development of problem, behavior in children and adolescents. Lewis et al. (1998) also suggest that schools that punish problematic behavior without also maintaining a school-wide system of positive support are associated with increased aggression, vandalism, truancy, tardiness, and dropping out of school.

**What Is a Social Skill?**

Caldarella and Merrell (1997) distinguish between three definitions of social skills. The first definition, the peer acceptance definition, defines social skills as
behaviors of children and adolescents that are generally accepted by or popular with peers. In this case, social skills are more environment-specific and vary according to culture, gender, and age group. The second definition, the behavioral definition, conceptualizes social skills as situation-specific responses that increase the probability of positive reinforcement and decrease the probability of punishment; this definition emphasizes the consequence of the skill in determining which social skills are appropriate and which are less suitable. The final definition, the social validity definition, is a combination of the two. This definition views social skills as situation-specific behaviors that predict and/or correlate with important social outcomes; these outcomes can include peer acceptance, popularity, as well as the judgment of behaviors by important others, (e.g., peers, teachers, parents). This definition has been the most influential in the development of current social skills assessment instruments.

Caldarella and Merrell (1997) conducted a meta-analysis on more than 20 years of research dealing with the social skills of children and adolescents. Their research showed that five main dimensions of social skills occurred consistently. The first dimension, peer relations, deals with the role of social skills in interpersonal interactions, prosocial behaviors, and empathy. The second dimension, self-management, includes behaviors related to social convention and rules, social responsibility, and frustration tolerance. The third dimension, the academic dimension, relates to behaviors related to one’s academic performance. This includes adjustment to school, task orientation, and the ability to follow school and classroom rules. The fourth dimension, compliance, is related to such abilities as social cooperation, competence, and compliance. The final
dimension, assertion, includes skills such as social intuition, being a social activator, and being gutsy.

Sheridan, Hungelmann, and Maughan (1999) distinguish between “social skills” and “social competence”. Sheridan et al. define a “social skill” as a single, learned behavior that is performed by an individual in order to complete a task. In contrast, a “social competence” is concerned primarily with others’ evaluations and judgments. Social competencies are related globally to the opinions of the recipients of an individual’s social overtures. Sheridan and Walker (1999) define a social skill as a goal directed, learned behavior allowing one to interact and function effectively in a variety of social contexts. In addition, Sheridan and Walker outline two tasks they believe important to a child’s social skillfulness. The first task is learning a variety of important social skills to be used in an assortment of social situations. The second task is learning to relate to others in a manner acceptable in many social situations.

As mentioned above, children develop a wide range of social competencies during peer interactions; these competencies include conflict resolution, sharing toys, imaginary play, and responding to and displaying affection (Hartup, 1983). Kohler and Strain (1993) have developed a program for social skills development that focuses on five main social skills that are implemented in three ways. The five skills developed in this program are the following: making offers and requests to share; offering suggestions for play; offering and requesting assistance; showing affection; and complimenting others. The three different strategies to be used to implement these skills are the following: initiating play interactions; responding positively to others; and persisting in the use of the previous two strategies.
Korinek and Popp (1997) note that there are a variety of definitions of social skills and social competence, which may be due to the wide variety of social skills. Korinek and Popp chronicle the many aspects that result in positive social interactions; that is, social skills include both verbal and nonverbal components such as one's tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions. Korinek and Popp also include the following in their list of critical social skills: peer/friendship skills such as listening, greeting, and asking questions; coping/survival skills such as following rules, handling teasing and negative feedback appropriately, and resisting peer pressure; and problem-solving and decision-making skills such as goal setting, negotiating, and identifying and selecting alternatives. In addition to the aforementioned skills, Korinek and Popp identify active listening, sharing, criticizing ideas instead of people, and reaching consensus as additional social skills that are crucial to working in cooperative groups.

McKeiver and Kneen (1992) used their experiences to identify 17 social skills they consider crucial for the success of their students. They also discuss the importance of including social skills development within the academic curriculum. The following skills are ones McKeiver and Kneen deemed important to proper academic and social development for school-aged children: the ability to both introduce themselves and introduce two strangers; following directions; giving and receiving positive feedback; sending an "'I'm interested'" message as well as an ignoring message; beginning, interrupting, joining, and maintaining a conversation; sharing; offering to help; solving problems and compromising; asking for clear directions; solving problems; using positive consequences to influence behavior; giving and receiving constructive criticism; handling name-calling and teasing; and saying "'no'" to avoid trouble. In summary,
"'the function of schooling is to watch over, superintend, and guide the development of young children into adults, having concern both for their roles as members of a society and for their individual fulfillment. It involves educating and socialising them, as well as nurturing their physical, moral, and emotional development’" (Barrow, 1984).

Kain, Downs, and Black (1988), Wilson and Shulha (1995), and Strain and Smith (1996) also identify social skills they believe to be important to the overall development of children and success in school and as adults. Kain et al. (1988) define a social skill as a skill that is acquired through a process of teaching, learning and mastering. They outline seven social skills as being essential for positive social interactions. These skills are the following: following directions, including making eye contact, acknowledging the task, and completing the task immediately; accepting criticism and consequences of one’s behavior; accepting “’no’” for an answer, including understanding that undesirable things do happen; making a request, including using a pleasant voice, smile, and eye contact; disagreeing appropriately, especially using a calm voice; greeting someone, including smiling, standing up, and being pleasant; and getting the teacher’s attention, including raising a hand, waiting patiently for acknowledgment from the teacher, and asking in a quiet voice. Wilson and Shulha (1995) identify seven other social skills that they deem important to children’s personal, academic, and social development. The seven skills that Wilson and Shulha outline are the following: listening, cooperating, exhibiting self-control, persisting at a difficult task, expressing feelings, and accepting personal responsibility for one’s actions. Strain and Smith (1996) suggest that the things children
say to each other during play are an important part of how children view and interact with one another, and may therefore be crucial skills to teach.

Stephen Elliott and Frank Gresham may be two of the most influential researchers in the area of social skills development and training. Gresham and Elliott (1984) define social skills as learned behaviors that are socially acceptable, allowing an individual to interact with others in a manner that evokes positive responses, thereby avoiding negative ones. They identify five major classes of social skills (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). The first class, cooperation, involves helping others, sharing materials, and complying with rules. The second class, assertion, involves asking others for information and responding to the behavior of others appropriately. The third class, responsibility, involves the ability to communicate with others about concerns. The fourth class, empathy, involves showing concern and understanding for others' feelings. The final class, self-control, involves conflict resolution and responding appropriately to teasing and constructive criticism.

Social Skill Deficits

Historically, social skills deficits have fallen into two main categories. The first category, skill deficit, is defined as lack of a critical skill or group of skills (Sheridan et. al., 1999). Maag (1994) cautions that, too often, an individual's social skill deficit is attributed to a condition within the individual as opposed to environmental or situational factors. The second category, a performance deficit, occurs when an individual has a particular skill within his/her repertoire but either fails to use it or uses it in appropriately (Sheridan et al., 1999). Relating performance deficits to an educational setting, teacher corrections normally occur when a student fails to perform a particular skill that will
enable him/her to participate fully in an academic lesson (Warger & Rutherford, 1996). Warger and Rutherford question, however, whether the student fails to perform the skill because he/she cannot perform the skill, or because he/she does not possess the skill in the first place.

Nowacek (1988) was one of the first researchers to identify and explain how social skill deficits, performance deficits, and behavioral excesses affect LD students. Social skill deficits imply that certain skills are lacking in some individuals; these skills can include both verbal and nonverbal skills (Bryan, Donahue, Pearl, & Sturm, 1981; Bryan, Sherman, & Fisher, 1980). Intervention for social skills deficits focuses on increasing the individual's repertoire of skills. Performance deficits occur when individuals know how to use certain skills, but either are not motivated enough to use the behaviors, or are unable to read the situational cues that invite the behaviors. In the case of performance deficits, interventions may focus on providing natural and/or staged situations so that an individual can learn to identify situational cues. The third deficit, behavioral excesses, may be one of the most familiar types of social skill problems that special educators face. Behavioral excesses occur when an individual either uses a social skill when it is not necessary, or uses a skill too vigorously. Interventions for behavioral excesses normally include contingency-type systems, including token economies, contingency contracts, and generalization training.

Elliott and Gresham (1993) identified four major reasons why social skills deficits occur. The first reason is a lack of knowledge; that is, an individual fails to exhibit appropriate social skills because he/she lacks the knowledge to behave in a socially sanctioned manner. This may occur for one of the three following reasons: the individual
may fail to identify suitable goals for social interaction; the individual may not be aware of the appropriate behaviors in order to achieve his/her interactional goals; or the individual may not be aware of which contexts are suitable for which behaviors and social skills. A second reason for social skills deficits is a lack of practice and feedback. A lack of practice and feedback implies that a social skill has been unskillfully performed. Oden and Asher (1977) note that many social skills programs fail because they do not provide adequate time for the children to practice and incorporate learned skills into their repertoire. A third reason for a deficit is a lack of cues and/or opportunities. This means that an individual has a lack of social skills because social cues and/or opportunities that would normally provide an opportunity to practice certain skills are absent. Puttallaz and Wasserman (1990) suggest that a child’s inability to participate in an academic lesson or in interactions with others may be due to this lack of familiar cues that prompt them into specific behaviors; because these children cannot identify contextual cues, they cannot respond appropriately to these cues. The final reason for social skills deficits is problem behaviors that interfere with more appropriate ones. These problem behaviors may interfere with a child’s acquiring and/or performing certain social skills (Coie & Koeppl, 1990). Elliott and Gresham (1993) note that it is important to distinguish between problem behaviors that interfere with skill acquisition from behaviors interfering with skill performance. Interventions, therefore, can either include skill acquisition or skill performance. Interventions dealing with skill acquisition include modeling, coaching, and behavior rehearsal; interventions dealing with skill performance can include operant and/or social–cognitive procedures.
General Approaches for Teaching Social Skills

Most social skills programs focus on either social skill deficits or performance deficits, and a variety of approaches have been used in these programs, including operant conditioning, cognitive-behavioral techniques, social learning theory and self-management, and cooperative learning. Each of these techniques is discussed individually below, yet all of these employ general measures that have been outlined and discussed by several researchers (Elliott & Gresham, 1993; Goldstein, 1981; Korinek & Popp, 1997; Lewis et. al, 1998; Moore, 1994; Sheridan et. al., 1999).

Goldstein (1981) notes that social skills training typically involves planned and systematic instruction of certain behaviors that students need in order to function effectively and in a socially effective manner. Korinek and Popp (1997) divide formal social skill instruction into the following five steps: defining the skill and its substeps; providing a rationale for the skill; modeling the skill using examples; guiding student practice of the skill with feedback; and promoting generalization of the skill to new situations.

The first step involves defining the skills to be taught and breaking each skill into a series of substeps. For example, possible substeps for the skill of listening could include looking at the speaker, keeping hands and feet still, and keeping one's lips quiet (Warger & Rutherford, 1996). Lewis et al. (1998) also discuss the importance of operationalizing the skills to be acquired; that is, skills must be behaviorally defined in order to be properly measured. In their study, Lewis et al. operationally defined "running" as "moving quicker than others in the group, feet leave the ground."
The second step that Korinek and Popp (1997) detail is providing a rationale for the skill. That is, only skills that will be useful and relevant to the student should be taught; it may also be helpful to explain the rationale of the particular skills to be taught to the student. By explaining the rationale of the particular skill, and telling the student how the skill can benefit him/her, the student will likely become more invested in learning each skill.

The third step of social skill instruction is the teacher modeling the skill using examples. Elliott and Gresham (1993) distinguish between verbal instruction and modeled instruction. Verbal instruction involves using spoken language to describe, explain, define, and request socially appropriate behavior; Modeled instruction, in contrast, uses behavioral performances that can be live or filmed (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Elliott and Gresham (1993) also note that an advantage of modeled instruction is that students can observe how several social skill substeps can be combined and ordered to produce socially acceptable behaviors. Lewis et al. (1998) recommend four methods in teaching social skills. The first recommendation is to directly teach one skill in a particular setting for 30 min; they found that when both instruction and direct intervention were used in the teaching of social skills, modest decreases in the occurrence of problem behavior were maintained three months post-measurement. A second recommendation is to teach only one skill each day; this helps to address Oden and Asher's (1977) concern that oftentimes teachers do not dedicate adequate time to students practicing newly acquired skills. The final recommendations that Lewis et al. make is to carefully review each social skill once it has been learned, continue to provide examples
of correct situations in which a skill can be used, and integrate the acquired social skills across the academic curriculum.

The fourth step that Korinek and Popp (1997) outline is to use feedback to guide student practice of the skill. This involves rehearsal, feedback, reinforcement, and reductive processes (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Elliott and Gresham define “rehearsal” as the continual practice of a social skill so that the individual is able to better retain and use the skill in future situations. Rehearsal can occur in one of the three following ways: overt rehearsal, in which manifest behaviors are repeated; covert rehearsal, in which the individual thinks about the desired behaviors; and verbal rehearsal, in which the individual recites the various components of a skill (Elliott & Gresham, 1993).

Feedback, reinforcement, and reductive processes are used to help the individual fine tune and implement newly acquired skills into his/her behavior repertoire. Feedback is information that the teacher provides to the student regarding how well the student performed the behavior and how it compares with how well the teacher expected the skill to be performed (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Reinforcement refers to increasing the frequency of desired skills due to the presence/removal of environmental cues; reductive processes, in turn, deal with presenting/removing environmental stimuli for the purpose of decreasing the frequency of competing, inappropriate behaviors that interfere with the performance of more desired behaviors (Elliott & Gresham, 1993).

The final step in social skill instruction is generalizing the newly acquired skill to new situations. The ability to generalize social skills to novel situations is critically important, yet is also perhaps most difficult to achieve. It is essential to the efficacy of social skills training, however, that skills are properly acquired before generalization can
be expected (Moore, 1994). To help guide the process of generalization, Sheridan et al. (1999) outline five procedures to help bind assessment of an individual’s social skill repertoire with generalization of those social skills. The first procedure is to select meaningful skills that can encourage trapping of desirable behaviors. This can include observations of the acceptable social skills in the individual’s environment, as well as inquiring about appropriate skills from significant others in the individual’s environment, including parents, teachers, and peers. The second step is to assess the individual’s social deficits. This may involve collecting ratings of an individual’s behavior, observing the individual in his/her natural settings, and/or conducting observations based on the individual’s skill ability. The third step is to identify variables that may either strengthen or interfere with the performance of desired social skills. This includes assessing internal and external characteristics of the individual and his/her situation to determine what variables are likely to reinforce performance of desired social skills. The fourth procedure is to incorporate elements of the individual’s natural environment into the training environment. This involves peers, relevant activities in which the individual would engage normally, and gauging the appropriate behaviors for interpersonal interactions. The final step is to move elements from the training environment into the natural setting. In this way, social skills training is sustained through self-management, homework, self-monitoring, and the continued use of positive reinforcement.

**Operant Conditioning Techniques**

In the case of teaching social skills, operant conditioning techniques are among the most effective procedures currently used (Elliott, Sheridan, & Gresham, 1989). This may be due to the ease of using positive reinforcement within the training setting as well
as in the natural environment, particularly if significant adults are involved in both settings (Sheridan et al., 1999). Operant conditioning focuses on overt, observable behaviors, as well as the preceding and consequential elements of behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). A general review of the techniques and concepts behind operant conditioning will be discussed below, followed by a review of how operant conditioning is used in social skills acquisition specifically.

Operant conditioning has been defined as “a simple form of learning in which an organism learns to engage in behavior because it is reinforced” (Rathus, 1997, p. 231). Reinforcement serves to increase the frequency of a targeted, desirable behavior, whereas punishment serves to decrease the frequency of a targeted, unwanted behavior. Reinforcement and punishment can be further divided into positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment. Positive reinforcement encourages behavior by presenting something desirable after the targeted behavior is performed; negative reinforcement encourages behavior by removing something aversive from the environment after the targeted behavior is performed. Positive punishment dissuades behavior by presenting something negative into the environment after the targeted behavior is performed; negative punishment, in contrast, inhibits behavior by taking something positive away from the environment after the targeted behavior is performed.

Reinforcement can occur on one of four schedules. A fixed ratio schedule entails a reward being given after a previously set number of proper responses are made. In a fixed interval schedule, a reward is given after a target response is made within a set amount of time, regardless of how many proper responses are made within that time.
period. A variable ratio involves a reward being given after an average number of behaviors are performed; in this way, the number of behaviors required for a reward is altered each time. In a variable interval schedule, a reward is given after an average time period; this means that the amount of time that must pass before a reward is given is changed each time. Stokes and Baer (1977) found that variable reinforcement schedules, as compared to fixed schedules, are most resistant to extinction. Resistance to extinction occurs when targeted behaviors are no longer reinforced and therefore decrease in frequency.

Elliott and Gresham (1993) discuss two tactics used in operant conditioning for social skills training. The first tactic is to create, through manipulation of the environment, chances for social interaction that will prompt or cue socially appropriate behaviors in an individual. Through manipulation of the environment, the individual can decide whether or not to engage in the targeted behavior. The second tactic involves manipulating the consequences of an individual’s behavior so that socially appropriate behavior is reinforced and socially inappropriate behavior is ignored.

Carson and Hoyle (1989/1990) consider the benefits of group reinforcements on shaping both group and individual behavior. When an entire group is rewarded for socially skilled behavior, more socially isolated and withdrawn students tend to learn social skills more quickly and perform them more readily (Lew, 1986). Carson and Hoyle (1989/1990) recommend the following procedure for incorporating group rewards into social skills training. First, as in all social skills programs, the desired social skills must be identified, defined, and taught to a group of individuals. Second, use of the newly acquired skill is reinforced through group rewards and points. When an individual
performs the targeted behavior, the individual's entire group receives a point. Points are earned only through socially appropriate behavior, and points earned can never be rescinded. Bonus points can be accumulated and exchanged for academic credit, free time, time to listen to music, etc.

Maag (1994) detailed two main techniques within the operant conditioning genre that are commonly used in social skills training. Both of these techniques focus on the concepts of reinforcement, generalization into natural settings, and interference from undesirable behaviors. The two techniques are contingency reinforcement and differential reinforcement of other behavior.

Contingency reinforcement (OR) uses tangible rewards as positive reinforcement and often incorporates homework into social skills programs to encourage generalization in natural settings (Sheridan et al., 1999). Individuals are encouraged to perform the targeted social skills in both the training environment as well as natural environments such as home, work, and school. As discussed above, many individuals with social skills deficits fail to recognize environmental cues that prompt the use of certain social skills. Rhode, Jenson, and Reavis (1994) recommend the use of behavioral contracts to help identify these environmental cues and therefore promote generalization. Effective contracts detail the specific behaviors that will be addressed by the contract, the conditions around which the behaviors are to occur (frequency, setting, etc.), and the contingencies for the performance or nonperformance of the specified behaviors.

Unlike contingency reinforcement, which focuses on increasing the frequency of desired behavior, differential reinforcement of behaviors works to decrease the frequency of undesirable behavior. Three main types of differential reinforcement are used in social
skills training. Differential reinforcement of other behavior (DRO) reinforces any behavior other than the targeted behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior (DRI) reinforces any behavior that is directly incompatible with the targeted behavior (Mash & Barkley, 1998). Differential reinforcement of low rate of responding (DRL) presents reinforcement for decreased rates of the targeted behavior; reinforcement can be given either for an overall decrease in the rates of the targeted behavior, or for increased time intervals between occurrences of the targeted behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993).

Cognitive-Behavioral Procedures and Self-Management

Cognitive-behavioral procedures (CBP) include a wide variety of procedures that rely on an individual's internal locus of control, that is, his/her ability to internally control behavior (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). As it applies to social skills training, CPB teaches individuals how to solve problems and regulate their behavior. Elliott and Gresham (1993) discuss two main cognitive-behavioral techniques that are used often with social skills training. These techniques are coaching and social problem solving.

Coaching is defined as “direct verbal instruction technique involving a ‘coach’ (most often a teacher or psychologist, but occasionally a peer) knowledgeable about how to enact a desired behavior and the student in need of acquiring the target behavior” (Elliott & Gresham, 1993, p. 304). Coaching has received a great deal of support as a social skills training procedure, and typically involves three steps (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). The first step is to present the individual with the expected standards of behavior. The second step involves rehearsing the targeted skills with a coach. In the final step, the
coach provides feedback and suggestions for improving the performance of the targeted behavior.

Whereas coaching typically focuses on teaching various social skills, social problem solving focuses on teaching individuals how to solve problems of a social and/or interpersonal nature; also unlike coaching, social problem solving does not rely as heavily on external reinforcements and instead relies more on the individual’s ability to self-monitor and self-regulate his/her behaviors (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Social problem solving is largely classroom-based and is comprised of four main procedures (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). The problem to be solved must first be recognized and identified. Alternative methods for reacting to the problem must be identified and the consequences for each alternative estimated. Finally, the alternative that allows for the best consequence is chosen.

Self-management, similar to cognitive-behavioral procedures, focuses on social skill generalization through increasing an individual’s self-awareness of using the targeted skills (Sheridan et al., 1999). Sheridan et al. (1999) outline two traditional self-management techniques. The first technique, goal-setting, determines what goals will be established in order to affect an individual’s use of social skills. Goals can include both trained skills and those personal skills that are unique to an individual, and can be integrated into structured group experiences and homework assignments in order to better aid generalization of social skills (Sheridan, 1995).

Social Learning Theory

McKeiver and Kneen (1992) note that role play and other similar structured interpersonal interactions give individuals the practice through which they can improve
their social skills; when teachers role play appropriate social skills, students are able to watch and identify critical components of each skill. Elliott and Gresham (1993) outlined three types of social learning techniques.

Contingent social reinforcement occurs when a significant person in an individual’s life publicly reinforces socially appropriate behaviors. Although contingent social reinforcement increases the frequency of positive social interactions, it requires a great deal of that significant person’s time in order to be truly effective. Contingent social reinforcement is best used as a means for maintaining the use of social skills once they have been acquired through other means of training.

Modeling, a second type of social learning techniques, is receiving a great deal of empirical support for its role in teaching social skills to children and adolescents (Wandless & Prinz, 1982; Gresham, 1985). Two main types of modeling, live modeling and symbolic modeling, are used in the instruction of social skills and have been shown to be equally effective. In live modeling, an individual watches modeled social behaviors in a natural environment; an advantage of live modeling is that social behaviors can be changed and modified as the conditions of the environment change. Symbolic modeling occurs when an individual watches positive social interactions via film or videotape. Symbolic modeling is often used in research studies due to the experimental control that a consistent presentation style allows.

The third type of social learning technique is social learning intervention procedures (Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Rooted in Bandura’s social learning theory, these procedures focus on learning by observation while also focusing on cognitive processes underlying individual differences; social behavior is acquired both through observational
learning, which is similar to modeling, and reinforced learning, which is similar to operant conditioning.

**Cooperative Learning**

As with operant conditioning techniques, cooperative learning involves manipulation of environmental variables to encourage positive social interactions (Madden & Slavin, 1983). Cooperative learning directs individuals to work together in small, diverse groups in order to complete a task, normally of an academic nature; grades are given based on group, not on individual, effort (Slavin, 1983; Elliott & Gresham, 1993). Reinforcement for good effort can be given by both the teacher and the other group members (Fad, Ross, & Boston, 1995). Cooperative learning, however, involves more than simply putting individuals into groups; cooperative learning teaches individuals how to work together in that group to accomplish a goal while using a specific social skill (Fad et al., 1995). These groups encourage positive social interactions by requiring the individuals within each group to cooperate, share, and help each other to complete the designated task (Elliott & Gresham, 1993).

Nowacek (1988) notes that using cooperative learning in social skill acquisition can accentuate learning in two important ways. First, the inherent need for positive social interactions, and, therefore, appropriate social behavior, increases the frequency of environmental variables cueing appropriate social skills. Second, and consequentially, cooperative learning increases the overall frequency of social skill application to evoke positive social interactions with peers. Overall, cooperative learning allows both teachers and their students to model, rehearse, and reinforce necessary social skills for successful functioning in a group setting (Fad et al., 1995).
Johnson and Johnson (1999) distinguish between three main types of cooperative learning. The first type, formal cooperative learning, involves putting students into semi-permanent groups. The students in each group work together to achieve given learning goals while completing academic assignments. Four main steps are involved in formal cooperative learning. Teachers must first specify their objectives and goals for the implementation of cooperative learning. Next, the teacher is to explain to the students the academic task and the positive effects of dependence on other group members. The teacher should then monitor the students' learning and intervene when assistance is required. Finally, the students' learning should be assessed and input provided to each student.

The second type of cooperative learning, informal cooperative learning, uses more temporary groupings of students (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). Informal cooperative learning can be used in five ways. Informal cooperative learning can be used to focus students' attention on a lesson plan; establish a classroom mood that is conducive to learning; set expectations regarding material that will be covered in class; ensure that students will consciously process the material being taught; and properly close a lesson.

The third type of cooperative learning, cooperative base groups, uses stable, long-term group membership, (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998) with members that assist, support, and encourage each other. This collaboration among group members is necessary for each student to develop academically, cognitively, and socially. Base groups tend to improve attendance,
personalize both the required work and the overall school experience, and improve both the quantity and quality of learning.

An important part of cooperative learning is developing activities that are cooperative, allowing for positive group interdependence. Five basic elements are critical in order for these activities to be cooperative (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998). The first essential element is positive interdependence; that is, group members must believe that they cannot succeed without the involvement of all group members. The second essential element is individual accountability; cooperative groups serve to make each individual member a stronger person by assessing the performance of each member and giving feedback to both the individual members and the group overall. The third element is face-to-face promotive interaction. Individual members can advance the success of every other member by supporting, encouraging, and praising each other’s efforts to succeed. In fact, the following cognitive activities occur only when promotive interactions are present: verbally explaining how to problem-solve, discussing the nature of the learned concepts, using one’s knowledge to teach other classmates, and connecting present and past learning concepts (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The fourth essential element is social skill acquisition by the group members. Such social skills as leadership, decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution are required for successful group interactions and task completion. The final essential element is group processing, which serves to help group members identify and communicate with each other which actions are helpful/unhelpful, which actions should be kept/changed, and which actions are helping the group achieve its goal.
Social Skills and Academics

As the aforementioned demonstrates, both academic and social skill instruction and learning are based on similar principles of learning and respond to similar intervention; Kaplan, McCollum-Gahley, and Howell (1988) assert, therefore, that the distinction between social behavior and academic behavior is somewhat arbitrary. Social skills are a key part of learning academic material, for students cannot appropriately learn material and experience positive learning experiences with their peers without such skills as problem identification, goal setting, determining alternative solutions and predicting the consequences of each, and evaluating situations (Korinek & Popp, 1997; Warger & Rutherford, 1996).

The implementation of social skill training with academic instruction has become perhaps the newest method of social skill training and acquisition. Wilson and Shulha (1995) explain that such a successful implementation can yield two different interpretations of the results. First, it can be interpreted that students who behave in ways appropriate with the school environment tend to produce a higher level of academic achievement, whereas those who fail to show socially appropriate behaviors relative to the school environment tend to produce lower levels of academic achievement. It could be deduced, then, that doing well in school is attributed equally to academic competence and the ability to fulfill the school’s expectations of its students. A second interpretation states that the teacher’s evaluation of a student is based partially on his/her perception of the student’s ability to conform to the rules of the institution; that is, those students who are judged as able to conform to the school rules may receive higher marks from a
teacher than those students who are judged as having more difficulty in conforming to the school’s expectations.

Warger and Rutherford (1996) outline three steps that can be used to implement a social skills training program within an academic lesson plan. The curriculum must first be crafted; this includes selecting the social skills to be targeted, assuring that the social skills are developmentally appropriate for the age of the students and arranging them in a hierarchy, and determining how performance, and therefore improvement, will be measured. The next step is to implement the instruction. Students are taught each skill directly; instruction should include modeling, feedback, and practice. Finally, students learn to self-monitor their behavior through event recording, duration recording, and time-sampling. Event recording involves keeping track of how many times the targeted behavior occurs. Duration recording involves the length of time a targeted behavior occurs, and time-sampling involves tracking the incidence/non-occurrence of an event during specified time intervals.

Lack of Data on Social Skills

Despite the development of numerous social skills programs (Merrell, 1994), very few have empirically validated their results to show that their program teaches the social skills necessary for positive social interactions with peers; even if they do, the long term outcome is oftentimes different from the (Strain & Smith, 1996; Caldarella & Merrell, 1997). Research is especially lacking regarding the issue of generalization in social skill acquisition. Fields (1989) note that often in educational settings, children who are in need of social skills training are taken out of the classroom environment and separated from their more socially-adept peers. And because many social skills programs involve
separating children from others and eliciting appropriate behaviors in the training session, there is little opportunity for generalizing those behaviors outside the training environment and into the natural environment (Choi & Heckenlaible-Gotto, 1998).

Along with the aforementioned issues of lack of empirical research and lack of generalization, Sheridan et al. (1999) list three other limitations of the current social skill research. First, current social skills theory views social skills deficiencies as an internal difficulty of the child, and fails to consider environmental and situational variables that may have influenced the child’s lack of social skills repertoire. Second, and perhaps due to the lack of empirically-validated programs, it is not known which behaviors are critical for socially appropriate behavior; each program, therefore, focuses on separate social skills deemed important by the individual researchers, making it somewhat difficult to compare programs with each other. Finally, most social skills programs deal with small groups of children in artificial training environments, and therefore fail to aid generalization.

In connection with the above limitations, Sheridan et al. (1999) make several recommendations for future research in the social skills discipline. First, Sheridan et al. recommend that future research focuses on developing empirically sound techniques and methods to link assessment outcomes to successful interventions that work to generalize social skill acquisition. A second recommendation is to devise methods that will identify critical social skills to target in social skills training. Finally, Sheridan et al. (1999) recommend that future research look at social interactions in depth, as social relationships are interactive by nature and therefore involve more than just one individual’s social behavior.
Social Skills in African-American Schoolchildren

Another limitation of social skills research is the significant lack of research on social skills in the African-American culture. Much of the existing research and programs implementing social skills training are concerned with Caucasian students from a middle-class or higher socioeconomic level. The following is a synopsis of the rather limited research regarding the values of the African-American family and culture, and how these values influence social skills.

Elrich (1994) noted that many children consider their diversity not a strength but a sign of future failure. As a result, many of these children suffer from low self-esteem, underachievement, and juvenile delinquency (Irvin, Nippold, Noell, Schwarz, & Walker, 1994). For those culturally diverse children who are also from a low socioeconomic background are doubly at risk (Keltner, 1990). By the time many culturally diverse children are 11 years old, they have given up on the educational system, and therefore may be less willing to learn those social skills taught by in schools (Elrich, 1994). This may serve to further these children’s sense of failure and low self esteem, as children who have weak social skills and problematic interpersonal relationships with their peers are at risk for a number of developmental outcomes, including low self-esteem and low expectations (Irvin et al., 1994).

These fathers placed great emphasis on family commitment and properly raising their children. Fathers were the most common male influence in Hurd and Roger's child participants, and almost half of the fathers who did not live with their children remained involved in their lives. Nonresident fathers also involve themselves in bequeathing values and advice to their children and in modeling appropriate behaviors. The fathers interviewed considered it very important to teach their children about familial and cultural history in order to instill a sense of pride and self-respect in them (Hurd & Rogers, 1998; Mosley-Howard & Evans, 2000); the fathers also taught their children how to endure hardships, oftentimes refusing to coddle them to teach them that they will be disappointed in life. Similarly, the fathers considered it important that their children become independent and self-reliant adults, through the educational system as well as through parental instruction. Finally, the fathers interviewed in this study expressed the importance of nurturing their children's spiritual and moral development; they often used the Bible and other religious stories and materials in order to shape behavior.

Overall, popular culture sees African-American fathers as being largely absent both from the home and from the lives of their children (Johnson, 1998). Current research, however, shows African-American fathers as being quite committed to their children, regardless of socioeconomic status. Hurd and Rogers (1998) found that these fathers held similar values concerning commitment to the family; all of these fathers vowed always to be available to their children emotionally, physically, and financially. This latter promise can be quite difficult for many fathers, as African-American fathers are disproportionately unable to retain work and therefore find it difficult to provide for their children (Johnson, 1998). As a result, many African-American fathers must
sacrifice their physical presence in the home so that their child(ren)'s mother can qualify for public assistance, thereby giving the children the financial support they need (Johnson, 1998). At the same time, African-American fathers place a great deal of emphasis on their ability to provide financially for their children, even to the point of defining their manhood and their ability to parent their children solely on this ability (Bowman, 1989; as cited by Johnson, 1998).

Perhaps due to African-American fathers' increased difficulty caring for their children financially and, therefore, the possibility of their living outside of the home to increase their children's chances of receiving public assistance, much of the daily responsibilities for parenting are placed solely on the mother. Mothers often take on multiple roles, including those of provider, caretaker, educator, and disciplinarian. This can become stressful, especially for younger mothers who may be less prepared emotionally for such difficulties, and may influence greatly their parenting styles.

Bluestone and Tamis-LeMonda (1999) investigated the parenting styles of 114 African-American mothers of children ages 5 through 12 from a variety of educational backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds, and lifestyles (i.e. whether they were single, married, separated, or divorced). Bluestone and Tamis-LeMonda found that mothers who reported increased depressive symptomatology tended to be less able to engage in more child-centered parenting and reasoning but were not more likely to engage in less desirable forms of parenting, including punishment; this trend was especially strong when the mothers regarded their own upbringing negatively. Mothers who had advanced levels of education were more likely to use child-centered parenting styles than are mothers from less risky populations, that is, mothers from middle-class backgrounds). Mothers

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from more risky populations, including less well-educated mothers from lower-class backgrounds, tended to use harsher forms of parenting and discipline.

Another strong variable in African-American families is the importance of extended family members; this can be for several reasons. One reason that extended family is important because many young, African-American mothers are unprepared emotionally to properly care for their children and themselves. A second reason is that many mothers are without the financial support from their children’s fathers and must therefore work, leaving their children with extended family members (Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). A third reason is that families during slavery came to count on each other and developed their own sense of extended family (Farrar & Gyant, 1998). Regardless of the reason, extended family has proven crucial for many young, African-American mothers and their children.

The mother-grandmother relationship seems to be especially important (Wakschlag et al., 1996), and seems to serve as the model for how a mother interacts with her own children. Research has shown that young, poverty-stricken mothers who feel emotionally supported and individuated in their relationships with their own mothers are more likely to promote a proper balance of connectedness and individuality in their children; these results are optimized when the grandmother is living away from the mother and grandchildren (Wakschlag et al., 1996). Grandparents in general are very important to the African-American culture. As many as one-third of African-American homes are headed by the grandmother or other elderly figure (Mosley-Howard & Evans, 2000); the family is dependent on their elders for cultural traditions and extended support when necessary.
In some communities, the extended support for families in crisis has come from the local schools. Morris (1999) describes one such school and how its faculty and staff have helped improve the lives of countless schoolchildren and their families.

Historically, strong bonds linked communities, schools, and families; this bonds, however, have weakened considerably since the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision (Morris, 1999). Morris (1999) attributes these weak relationships to the failure on the part of schools to properly involve the students’ families and communities in the everyday happenings of the school. In the school that Morris (1999) highlights, the teachers prove to be the stability of the school, some teachers having taught at this school for over 40 years. Morris states that all low-income, African-American schools have the potential to serve as the stabilizing force for their students, families, and communities.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

This study addresses two main limitations in current social skills literature: the lack of empirical evidence pointing to the efficacy of social skills programs, and the lack of research on social skills with African-American children. Through addressing these issues, this study will begin to shed light on these issues of research.

This study will look at the efficacy of a social skills program used with urban, African American children in a kindergarten class. As described below, this study uses a time-series with multiple baselines design so that a sense of the generalization and long-term benefit of the program can be established. This study is operating under the following three hypotheses. First, it is hypothesized that participation in a social skills program will improve the quality of the students' interpersonal relationships with peers and adults. This hypothesis will be tested through a MANOVA analysis of the “Social Skills” section on the Social Skills Rating System -Teacher edition (SSRS-T). The second hypothesis is that participation in this program will decrease the occurrence of students' problematic behaviors. This hypothesis will be tested through MANOVA analyses of the “Problematic Behaviors” section on the SSRS-T form and the students' “blue-green-yellow-red” scores. The final hypothesis is that participation in a social skills program will increase the students' academic performances. This hypothesis will
be analyzed through a MANOVA analysis of the "Academic Competence" section of the SSRS-T.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

Sixty children in three kindergarten classrooms and their teachers at an inner-city elementary school in the Midwest will participate in this study. These children were assigned by the school administration to their respective kindergarten classrooms. All the children are African-American and come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The children are receiving the services offered through the program free of charge.

The three kindergarten teachers at an inner-city elementary school in the Midwest will participate in this study. All three teachers are female; two of the teachers are Caucasian, and one of the teachers is African-American. Their average length of teaching at this school is 10.3 years. The teachers are receiving services offered through the program free of charge.

Materials

The Social Skills Intervention Program (SSIP; Elliott & Gresham, 1991) will be used in this study. The SSIP was designed for use with kindergarten through tenth grade students with a wide range of social skill deficits and learning and emotional disabilities, and follows a combined social learning theory and applied behavior analysis approach to teaching social skills. This program teaches a variety of social skills, and allows the teachers at the experimental school to pick the social skills they believe are most relevant.
to their classrooms and their students' academic success. The program covers 43 skills in five main domain areas: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. The SSIP provides comprehensive instruction on how to introduce the skill, define, and demonstrate it. This instruction is divided into five phases. The first phase, the Tell phase, involves introducing the skill, defining the skill, and identifying the substeps of the skill. The second phase, the Show phase, involves modeling the skill appropriately and inappropriately, and role playing with a student a situation in which the skill would be used. The Do phase, the third phase, heavily involves the students. The students take responsibility for learning the skill by defining the skill, identifying the substeps of the skill, and practicing the skill. The fourth phase, Follow Through and Practice, provides specific follow-up exercises for each skill and recommends review of the skill periodically. The final phase, Generalization, uses activities specific to each skill that will help the students internalize the skill and identify how they will be able to use the skill in their lives. The program also includes checklists that the teachers can use to record improvement or lack thereof in their students' behavior and provides instruction on how to reinforce appropriate behaviors as well as how to address negative behaviors.

Measures

The Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Form Elementary Level form (SSRS-T; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) will be used by the teachers to record students' behavior in intervals. The SSIP serves as the intervention component for the SSRS; the SSIP and SSRS, therefore, are very compatible tools that provide a comprehensive view of a child's social skill aptitude. The form, created specifically for children in grades kindergarten through grade six, measures behavior in the following three domains: social
skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence. The respondent measures a
student’s behavior on a number of behaviors according to how often the behavior occurs.
For the social skills domain, the teacher also rates how important a certain behavior is for
success in the classroom.

This form was standardized on a sample of 4,170 children rated by 259 teachers
in 59 institutions around the nation. The sample included students in mainstream classes
as well as students identified by one of the following handicaps: learning-disabled,
behaviorally disabled, and mentally handicapped; the sample was also normed on
Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, and other ethnicities. Each student completed a
rating scale, as did the student’s teacher and his/her parent(s); for students below third
grade, ratings came only from the teacher and the parent(s). Five hundred nine ratings
resulted, all of which were then compared. The internal consistency reliability
coefficients for this form range from 0.78-0.95 for each of the domains and the
subdomains, and test-retest reliability coefficients range from 0.75-0.93 (Gresham &

“Blue-green-yellow-red” is a behavior tracking system employed by the
kindergarten teachers at the experimental school. Each student begins the day on “blue,”
which symbolizes that no inappropriate/bothersome behavior has been performed by the
child. Instances of inappropriate behavior cause the child to move up the scale from blue
to green. As instances of inappropriate behavior continue, the child will continue to
move up the scale from green to yellow and from yellow to red. For the purposes of this
study, the weekly tally of how many students reached the red, yellow, green, and blue
scales will be used; also, blue-green-yellow-red will be assigned with values 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively, for the purpose of evaluating the data.

**Procedure**

This proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and accepted under "exempt" status (see the Appendix on page 55 for a copy of the approval letter from the IRB). The students were assigned to a regular education classroom and teacher by the school administration. The SSIP teaches 43 skills; the kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the 43 skills covered by the SSIP according to the priority of each skill to the child's success in the classroom. At the school's Open House, the students' parents were provided with a letter informing them of their child's participation in this program. As time progresses, the students' parents will continue to be informed, through letters sent home with the children, about the program, their child's participation, and what skills the children are learning. Similarly, monthly meetings will be held with the teachers to keep apprised of current issues and situations in their classrooms.

The first quarter of the school year will be used to orient the students to the teachers, the teachers to the students, and to establish a baseline of the students' behavior. During this time, the teachers will begin to use the blue-green-yellow-red procedure to monitor students' daily behavior; this will be tallied weekly (blue = 1, green = 2, yellow = 3, red = 4). Each student's score will be calculated for the week and then combined with the scores of his/her classmates; each classroom's score then will be compared with its score for the other time periods. This procedure will be maintained throughout the course of the study. At the end of the first two quarters, the teachers will fill out a SSRS-T record form on each student. Each student's score on the SSRS-T will be combined
with the scores of his/her classmates; this score will then be compared with classroom scores on subsequent SSRS-T forms in order to measure classroom performance. Each of the three sections of the SSRS-T (Social Skills, Problematic Behaviors, and Academic Competence) will be analyzed separately, and then all together.

In the second quarter, the SSIP will be implemented in one of the classrooms. The following 14 skills were rated most important to the teachers, and therefore will be taught to the children: ignoring distractions; paying attention and following directions; using time well when waiting; giving a compliment; making positive self-statements; telling an adult about unfair treatment; volunteering to help other children; asking an adult for help; refusing unreasonable requests; asking permission to use property; reporting accidents to adults; cooperating with other children; responding to peer pressure; controlling temper; and handing it when another children pushes or hits. The following procedures will be done according to the SSIP (Elliott & Gresham, 1991). The group leader first will initiate the Tell phase by introducing the goal of each session, presenting the skill to be taught, and defining it. The group leader will then imitate the Show phase by modeling appropriate and inappropriate uses of the skill. The students then will be divided randomly into subgroups of five to seven students for the Do phase with role play, reviewing the skill, and providing feedback of the group’s performance. Graduate students and the classroom teacher will be trained to help one subgroup of students with the Do phase of the session. The other two phases, the Follow Through and Practice Phase, and the Generalization phase, will then be implemented using the specific guidelines provided by the SSIP manual. Each session will last for approximately 30 min. Two sessions will be conducted each week for seven weeks, with each session
being devoted to a separate social skill. At the end of the second period, the teachers of all three classrooms will again fill out the SSRS-T form; weekly tallies of the classrooms’ scores using the blue-green-yellow-red system will continue to be collected.

At the beginning of the third period, a second classroom will receive the SSIP intervention. The first classroom will have no further formal social skills instruction, though the teacher will continue to promote and reinforce appropriate use of the social skills addressed. The instruction will be identical to that received by the first classroom. At the end of the third period, the teachers will again fill out the SSRP-Teacher forms for each student. The same procedure will be used for the third classroom, which will receive social skills instruction in the fourth period (see Table 1 for a tabular representation of the multiple baseline design).

Behavior modification will also be used during the social skills instruction. Using Elliott and Graham’s (1991) interdependent group-contingency systems, each group of students will be rewarded one point for each 5 min period that all directions are followed by every member of the group. If the group earns four points, each member of the group is awarded a small prize. Inappropriate behavior will be ignored, although inappropriate behavior that is dangerous to the child or the class will be addressed strictly, and the child placed in time out.
Chapter IV

Results

The first hypothesis of this study states that participation in a social skills program will improve the quality of the students' interpersonal relationships with peers and adults. This will be measured through analysis of the "Social Skills" domain on the SSRS-T form. These items concern the child's ability to make friends, initiate conversations, give compliments, and cooperate with peers. The standard scores on the "Social Skills" domain will be compiled for each classroom for each administration and compared across quarters. The classroom standard scores for all three domains of the SSRS-T form will also be compared across time periods. The data will be analyzed using a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). The SSIP will serve as the independent variable; the scores on the "Social Skills" domain will be the dependent variable.

The second hypothesis in the study states that participation in this program will decrease the occurrence of students' problematic behaviors. This will be measured through analysis of the "Problematic Behaviors" section of the SSRS-T. Similar to above, the standard score of each classroom for each time period is compared to those of other time periods and analyzed using a MANOVA. The blue-green-yellow-red scores will be analyzed by using a MANOVA to test this hypothesis. Once values have been assigned to the blue, green, yellow, and red scales (as mentioned, blue = 1, green = 2, yellow = 3, and red = 4), the quarterly scores for each classroom will be calculated; these
scores then will be compared with the classroom’s scores from other time periods to assess the classroom’s overall behavior. The SSIP will again be the independent variable; both the scores on both the “Problematic Behaviors” section of the SSRS-T and the “Blue-Green-Yellow-Red” scores will be the dependent variables.

The third hypothesis posits that participation in a social skills program will increase the students’ academic performances. This hypothesis will be tested by analyzing the “Academic Competence” section of the SSRS-T form. The process for analysis will follow the aforementioned procedure for analyzing the other two sections of the SSRS-T; a MANOVA will be used to statistically analyze the data. Again, the SSIP will be the independent variable, and the scores on the “Academic Competence” domain of the SSRS-T form will be the dependent variable.

For each of the above analyses, the statistical significance will occur at the 0.05 level. Post-hoc analyses on the data will also be conducted using t-tests; these analyses include looking for differences between male and female students, and if results are significant across time periods, determining in which time periods significant improvements occurred.
Chapter V

Discussion

It is expected that this intervention will increase the students' quality of interpersonal relationships and academic performance, as well as decrease their problematic behavior. If this intervention does improve the students' classroom functioning, this program could be implemented school-wide to help other students in the study school better interact with each other, learn in the classroom, and decrease behavior correction and punishment. If this intervention does not significantly improve students' functioning in the school environment, then perhaps other interventions would better serve this particular population of students. Or, perhaps the measures chosen did not adequately reflect positive changes in the students' behaviors.

Because this study is being conducted in a natural, inner-city school environment, there are confounds that could impact the results of the present study. First, the researcher was unable to conduct a random assignment of students to a classroom; the classroom rosters were predetermined by the school's administration. Also, it is likely that students will both be added to and lost from each classroom, which may significantly impact the classroom environment and personality; this may then impact how the students react to each other, particularly if students come into a classroom during the intervention.
Also, this study does not investigate the individual factors of the intervention program that may prove useful, so future areas of research could focus on determining which factors of the program are most effective in behavior and academic improvement.
Chapter VI

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Table 1

**Multiple Baseline Design for the Present Study**

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<tr>
<th>Classroom</th>
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<th>Quarter Two</th>
<th>Quarter Three</th>
<th>Quarter Four</th>
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<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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December 7, 2000

Jennifer A. Hanket
4932 Strathmore Drive #9
Cincinnati, OH 45227

Dear Ms. Hanket,

Your protocol, #0133, *Program Evaluation of the Social Skills Intervention Program with Urban, African-American Kindergartners*, was reviewed at the December 4, 2000, meeting of the IRB and accepted in the Exempt category.

If there are any adverse events or modifications, please notify the IRB.

We wish you every success with your project.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Baumiller, S.J.
IRB Chair and Administrator

CC: Kathleen Hart, Ph.D.
Chapter VI

Dissertation

Abstract

Current research demonstrates the necessity of social skills development for academic success and positive interpersonal relationships. In the current study, 60 African-American students in three kindergarten classrooms participated in the Social Skills Intervention Program (SSIP; Elliott & Gresham, 1991). Each class was taught a total of 14 skills in a 7-week period. The effectiveness of the program was measured through teachers' ratings of each child on three domains of the Social Skills Rating System—Teacher form (SSRS-T; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) and each student’s score on “blue-green-yellow-red,” a behavior tracking system employed by the teachers. Participation in the SSIP significantly influenced the students in Class Three’s use of social skills and behavior in the classroom. Data analysis showed that, after participation in the SSIP, the children in Class Three significantly improved their scores on the “Social Skills” domain of the SSRS-T, as well as their scores on the “blue-green-yellow-red” system. Possible reasons for the largely nonsignificant results, such as the student population, the students’ home and school environments, the SSIP, or a combination of the above, are explored.
Program Evaluation of the Social Skills Intervention Program

with Urban, African-American Kindergartners

Substantial evidence points to the importance of developing adequate social skills for a variety of critical life experiences (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; Hartup, 1983; Maag, 1994; Strayhorn & Smith, 1986; Walker, Steiber, & Eisert, 1991). Through positive interactions and relationships with peers, children acquire a wide range of competencies, including resolving conflict, sharing, participating in imaginary play, and displaying and reacting to social affection (Hartup, 1983). Strayhorn and Smith found that children who developed positive social relationships with their peers early in life, as adults, tend to have better employment records, live longer and more independently, have fewer instances of contracting adult diseases, and have better mental health, including self-esteem. Conversely, results have found that a deficit of social skills, especially skills related to peer and teacher acceptance, is associated with the development of antisocial and violent behaviors (Walker, Steiber, & Eisert, 1991) and poor academic performance (Malecki & Elliott, 2002).

Additionally, social skills are a key part of learning academic material. Skills such as problem identification, goal setting, determining alternative solutions and predicting the consequences of each, and evaluating situations are critical to success in
Children who lack these skills have more difficulty learning class material and have fewer positive learning experiences with peers (Korinek & Popp, 1997; Warger & Rutherford, 1996). Wentzel (1991) found that socially responsible behavior enables academic achievement by creating a "social context" for learning and by creating social goals working in conjunction with learning goals; moreover, in schools where students are taught in group settings, social skills are imperative in being an active and attentive member of the group and relating appropriately with other students and teachers. Additional research has shown that one's sense of social responsibility affects one's academic achievement more than one's academic achievement affects one's sense of social responsibility (Coie & Krehbiel, 1984); this relationship persists throughout adolescence (Teo, Carlson, Mathieu, Egeland, & Sroufe, 1996). Using correlations between the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Social Skills Rating System-Teacher, a standardized rating of students' social skills completed by teachers (Gresham & Elliott, 1990), Malecki and Elliott (2002) reaffirmed the relationship between students' social behavior and academic achievement.

Caldarella and Merrell's (1997) meta-analysis of 20 years of studies involving social skills found three categories of social skills. The first, peer acceptance, describes social skills as behaviors of children and adolescents that are generally accepted by or popular with peers. In this case, social skills are more environment-specific and vary according to culture, gender, and age group. The second category, defining social skills behaviorally, conceptualizes social skills as situation-specific responses that increase the probability of positive reinforcement and decrease the probability of punishment; this definition emphasizes the consequence of the skill in determining which social skills are
appropriate and which are less suitable. The final definition, social validity, is a combination of the above. This definition views social skills as situation-specific behaviors that predict and/or correlate with important social outcomes; these outcomes can include peer acceptance and popularity, as well as the judgment of behaviors by important others (e.g., peers, teachers, and parents). This definition has been the most influential in the development of current social skills assessments, and is the approach utilized by Elliott and Gresham (1991).

Stephen Elliott and Frank Gresham may be two of the most influential researchers in the area of social skills development and training. Gresham and Elliott (1984) define social skills as learned behaviors that are socially acceptable, allowing an individual to interact with others in a manner that evokes positive responses, thereby avoiding negative ones. They identify five major classes of social skills (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). The first class, cooperation, involves helping others, sharing materials, and complying with rules. The second class, assertion, involves asking others for information and responding to the behavior of others appropriately. The third class, responsibility, involves the ability to communicate with others about concerns. The fourth class, empathy, involves showing concern and understanding for others' feelings. The final class, self-control, involves conflict resolution and responding appropriately to teasing and constructive criticism. Their Social Skills Intervention Program (SSIP; Elliott & Gresham, 1991) addresses these five classes of skills through the teaching of 43 separate skills.

Limitations to current research include a lack of validated programs, generalization outside the classroom, and social skills in minority populations. Many authors have not validated their programs sufficiently to show the efficacy of their
programs, and for those who have, the long-term outcome of their program is oftentimes radically different from the short-term outcome (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; Strain & Smith, 1996). Also, few studies address the issue of generalization in social skill acquisition. For example, because many social skills programs involve training children outside of the classroom, there is little opportunity to generalize those behaviors outside the training environment and in the classroom environment, where they are most important (Choi & Heckenlaible-Gotto, 1998).

There also is a significant lack of research concerning the development of social skills in the minority culture. Much of the existing research and programs implementing social skills training are concerned with Caucasian students from a middle-class or higher socioeconomic level. In addition, research results noting the importance of emotional competence, behavioral regulation, and social competence also are based upon middle-class Caucasian children (Cauce, Ryan, & Grove, 1998). Smith (2001) examined the relationship between preschool-aged African-American children’s peer acceptance and measures of emotional competence, behavioral regulation, and social competence. Smith’s results replicated those of studies involving Caucasian children, namely, that emotional regulation was associated positively with peer acceptance, and that girls experienced greater peer acceptance than boys. Smith and others have emphasized, however, the need for within-group norms for African-American children, especially as they relate to income level (Garcia Coll, Lamberley, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Waik, & Garcia, 1996).

The current study investigated the efficacy of the SSIP (Elliott & Gresham, 1991) when used with 60 urban, African American children in three kindergarten classes. As
described next, this study uses a time series with multiple baselines design so that a sense of the generalization and long-term benefit of the program can be established. This study was designed to address the following three hypotheses. First, it was hypothesized that participation in a social skills program would improve the quality of the students’ interpersonal relationships with peers and adults. The second hypothesis was that participation in this program would decrease the occurrence of students’ problematic behaviors. The final hypothesis was that participation in a social skills program would increase the students’ academic performances.

Method

Participants

Sixty children, 35 girls and 25 boys, in three kindergarten classrooms and their schoolteachers participated in this study. The school is a public elementary school that serves grades kindergarten through eight in a large urban district in the Midwest. All of the participants were between the ages of five and seven, African-American, and came from low socioeconomic backgrounds (98 percent of the children at the elementary school receive subsidized lunches). The children received the services offered through the social skills program as a part of the regular academic curriculum. Although 60 children participated in the study, the data of only 49 children were analyzed for the purpose of this study. Of these 49 students, 31 were female and 18 were male, and all were between the ages of five and seven. Students who were not enrolled in the school for the duration of the program were excluded from the analysis.

The three kindergarten teachers at the school served as raters for this study. All three teachers were female; two of the teachers were Caucasian, and one was African-

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American. At the time of this study, their average length of teaching at the school was 10.3 years ($\text{SD} = 17.04$).

**Materials**

The Social Skills Intervention Program (SSIP; Elliott & Gresham, 1991) was employed in this study. The SSIP, designed for use with students through the tenth grade, follows a combined social learning theory and applied behavior analysis approach to teaching social skills. The program covers a total of 43 skills in five main domain areas: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. The SSIP provides comprehensive instruction on how to introduce the skill, define, and demonstrate it. This instruction is divided into the following five phases: Tell, Show, Do, Follow Through and Practice, and Generalization. The SSIP also includes a behavior management component that was utilized during the course of this study. Additional information regarding the SSIP can be obtained by referring to Elliott and Gresham (1991).

**Measures**

Two outcome measures, the Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Form and “blue-green-yellow-red” behavior tracking system, were employed for the present study. The Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Form Elementary Level (SSRS-T; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) was used by the teachers to record students’ behavior quarterly. The SSIP serves as the intervention component for the SSRS-T; the SSIP and SSRS-T, therefore, are compatible tools that provide a comprehensive view of a child’s social skill aptitude. The form, created specifically for children in grades kindergarten through grade six, measures behavior in three domains: social skills in relating to classmates and school
personnel, problem behaviors, and academic competence. The respondent ranks a
student's behavior on a number of behaviors according to how often the behavior occurs;
for the social skills domain, the teacher also rates how important a certain behavior is for
success in the classroom. Test-retest reliability for the SSRS-T is as follows: 0.85 for the
Social Skills domain, 0.84 for the Problematic Behaviors domain, and 0.93 for the
Academic Competence domain (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Criterion-related validity for
the SSRS-T, when compared to the Total Problem Behaviors section of the Child
Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Form (CBCL-TRF), is as follows: -0.64 for the
Social Skills domain, 0.81 for the Problematic Behaviors domain, and -0.59 for the
Academic Competence domain (Gresham & Elliott, 1990).

"Blue-green-yellow-red" was a behavior tracking system employed by the
kindergarten teachers. Each student began the day on "blue," which symbolized that no
inappropriate/bothersome behavior had been performed by the child. Instances of
inappropriate behavior caused the child to move up the scale from blue to green. As
instances of inappropriate behavior continued, the child continued to move up the scale
from green to yellow and from yellow to red. For the purposes of this study, and to allow
for statistical analysis of the data, the weekly tally of each student's performance was
calculated by assigning a value to each step of the scale (blue = 1, green = 2, yellow = 3,
red = 4). Contingencies also were attached to each step of the scale (e.g., if a child
reached "red," the child's parent was called).

Procedure

This dissertation was approved by the Xavier University Institutional Review
Board (IRB). Passive consent for participation was obtained from the students' parents.
The SSIP (Elliott & Gresham, 1991) describes how to teach up to 43 skills; the kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the 43 skills covered by the SSIP according to the priority of each skill to the child's success in the classroom. The following 14 skills were rated most important to the teachers, and therefore were taught to the children: ignoring distractions; paying attention and following directions; using time well when waiting; giving a compliment; making positive self-statements; telling an adult about unfair treatment; volunteering to help other children; asking an adult for help; refusing unreasonable requests; asking permission to use property; reporting accidents to adults; cooperating with other children; resisting negative peer pressure; controlling temper; and responding appropriately when another child pushes or hits.

The first academic quarter of the school year was used to accustom the students to the school and the teachers, the teachers to the students, and to establish a baseline of the students' behavior. During this time, the teachers began to use the blue-green-yellow-red procedure to monitor students' daily behavior; the blue-green-yellow-red scores were tallied weekly (as mentioned earlier, blue = 1, green = 2, yellow = 3, red = 4). Each student's score was calculated for the week and then added with the weekly scores for the same academic quarter so that each student had one total score per quarter. Each student's quarterly scores then were compared against each other. This procedure was maintained throughout the course of the study. At the end of each academic quarter, the teachers filled out a SSRS-T record form on each student. Each student's score on this form was compared with his/her score on previous SSRS-T forms in order to measure individual performance.
In the second academic quarter, the SSIP was implemented in Class One. Students were taught each selected skill as outlined in the SSIP (Elliott & Gresham, 1991). Each session lasted for approximately 45 min. Two sessions were conducted each week for seven weeks, with each session devoted to a single social skill. For the behavior modification component of the SSIP, children were rewarded with one star for every five minutes that they displayed appropriate behavior, e.g. listening to the group leaders, sitting in their seats, and taking turns speaking. If a group earned four stars within one session, each member was allowed to visit the “Prize Box” and take one piece of candy.

At the beginning of the third academic quarter, Class Two received the SSIP intervention. The first class had no further formal social skills instruction, though the teacher continued to promote and reinforce appropriate use of the social skills taught. The instruction for Class Two was identical to that received by Class One. The same procedure was used for Class Three, which received social skills instruction in the fourth academic quarter (see Table 1 on page 54 for a tabular representation of the multiple baseline design).

Due to the study population, certain modifications were made to the program. These modifications are explored further in the “Discussion” section.

Results

The first hypothesis of this study stated that participation in a social skills program would improve the quality of the students’ interpersonal relationships with peers and adults. This hypothesis was tested through analysis of the “Social Skills” domain on the SSRS-T form with three separate one-way, repeated measures ANOVAs for each class, with the factor being the school academic quarter and the dependent variable being
the quarterly scores on the SSIP. For this and all analyses, the Bonferroni correction was used, thereby requiring a significance level of .0125. The results indicate that, only for Class Three, significant changes in the student's SSRS-T scores occurred. Follow-up polynomial contrasts showed that significant changes occurred between the end of the second and end of the fourth academic quarters. It should be noted that it was during this time that the class received the intervention. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. A graphic representation of this analysis can be found in Figure 1.

The second hypothesis in the study stated that participation in this program would decrease the occurrence of students' problematic behaviors. The hypothesis was tested first through analysis of the "Problematic Behaviors" section of the SSRS-T using three separate one-way, repeated measures ANOVAs for each class, with the factor being the school quarter and the quarterly Problematic Behaviors scores on the SSRS-T the dependent variable. The results of this analysis indicate that the students' scores on the Problematic Behaviors portion of the SSRS-T did not change significantly with participation in the SSIP. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3. A graphic representation of this analysis can be found in Figure 2.

To further test the second hypothesis, the blue-green-yellow-red scores were analyzed using three separate one-way, repeated measures ANOVAs for each class, with the factor being the school quarter and the quarterly blue-green-yellow-red scores the dependent variable. For Class One, a misunderstanding with the teacher occurred, which resulted in blue-green-yellow-red data not being collected after the first quarter of the study, despite the teacher using this system throughout the study. Due to the lack of data, no analysis was conducted for Class One, though analyses were conducted for Classes
Two and Three. The results of this analysis show significant changes in scores for Class Three. Post-hoc analyses showed no significant results among the academic quarters; the significant change, therefore, did not occur across any particular academic quarters. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4. A graphic representation of this analysis can be found in Figure 3.

The third hypothesis posited that participation in a social skills program would increase the students’ academic performances. This hypothesis was tested by analyzing the “Academic Competence” section of the SSRS-T form using three separate one-way, repeated measures ANOVAs for each class, with the factor being the academic quarter and the dependent variable being the students’ quarterly scores on the Academic Competence domain of the SSRS-T. The results of this analysis indicated that participation in the SSIP did not influence significantly students’ scores on the Academic Competence domain of the SSRS-T. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5. A graphic representation of this analysis can be found in Figure 4.

Discussion

This study explored the effectiveness of the SSIP (Elliott & Gresham, 1991) when used with urban, African-American kindergartners. Effectiveness of the program was measured by students’ scores on both the SSRS-T and the “blue-green-yellow-red” behavior tracking system. The results of the present study show little evidence for the effectiveness of the SSIP, as out of 12 analyses very few significant differences in the children’s scores were found.

It is interesting to note that all significant effects occurred with Class Three. These effects could have occurred for several reasons. Because the SSIP was
implemented in the last quarter of the school year, it could be that the children had adequate time to accustom themselves to class rules and appropriate behavior. Perhaps the teacher of Class Three had better management skills with her class than the other two teachers, as she had worked in this school for 20 years and may have been more apt in dealing with the children. Or, because this was the last class in which the SSIP was implemented, there may have been a practice effect for the group leaders. When the SSIP was implemented in this classroom, the group leaders already knew how to alter the teaching of social skills (e.g., shortening definitions, developing more applicable role play scenarios) so that the children would benefit as much as possible from the lesson.

Only 2 of the 12 analyses showed statistically significant results. These results could be for a variety of reasons that involve the student population, the children’s home and school environments, the SSIP, or a combination of these factors. Each of these is described in detail.

Within the student population, several students in the three classes were thought to have Mental Retardation (MR) or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) such as autism. Although the children were never tested formally, the teachers felt strongly that these children did not benefit from being in a regular education class. These children were unable to participate appropriately in the SSIP, as well as in the class in general. Although these children were included in the groups, and their data included in the statistical analyses, their behavior was not taken into account when the rest of the group was working towards the Prize Box. In this way, the other children in the group were not penalized by not earning stars due to the behavior of these children. Oftentimes the children suspected of having PDD stayed with the teacher, who helped keep them on-task.
as much as possible. This is a modification to Gresham and Elliott's (1991) program, which emphasizes the importance of group contingencies for all children.

The children's behavior change through the SSIP may have been influenced by their home and school environments. Although 60 children participated in the SSIP, the data for only 49 were analyzed. This was due to the high level of mobility within this population. Throughout the study, children were withdrawing from and registering into the school. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is fairly common within the city's lower-income population, as finding low-priced housing is difficult and leads to frequent moves across school districts. Another environmental consideration concerns survival skills taught to the children by their families and friends that contradict social skills taught by the SSIP. For example, when talking about controlling their tempers when hit by another child, many children responded, "My momma said that when someone hits you, you hit them back." In another instance, a teacher confided in a group leader that one of her students told her that he had been taught by his stepmother to steal, as he would not be imprisoned if caught. It was difficult to teach many of the skills in the SSIP, as the children already learned to react in alternate ways. This illustrates Bandura's contention that learned behavior is not the same as the exhibition of good behavior. To accommodate for this discrepancy, skills oftentimes were taught as being school-specific, meaning that the children were expected to perform these skills in school, allowing them to behave differently in their homes and neighborhoods. This helped to alleviate the contradiction and resulting confusion.

Despite Gresham and Elliott's own research of the standardization of this program (Gresham & Elliott, 1992), the SSIP may not be applicable to this student population,
namely inner-city, African-American kindergartners. The modifications made to the SSIP during the present study may indicate that use of the SSIP with this population is ill-advised. Oftentimes the group leaders had to alter definitions of skills as presented by the SSIP because they were too long and too complex for the students to understand. For example, although the given definition of “making positive self-statements” is “making a positive statement or providing a positive description about yourself; telling a person about a good personal characteristic or a skill you have,” when taught to the children the definition became “saying something nice about yourself that’s true.” Also, the given protocol for teaching skills required the children to have a sufficient attention span to sit and discuss the skills and their importance, and answer questions about the skill. The children in this study often were unable to maintain the required attention span, leaving the group leaders to shorten significantly the amount of discussion held about each skill. In addition, oftentimes the given role-play situations were developmentally inappropriate for these children. For example, a role play situation for “cooperating with peers without prompting” is the following:

“You and your brother have decided to surprise your parents and make dinner for them. The two of you must plan and then prepare the meal.”

For this skill, the children instead were asked to show how they would act if two students wanted to read the same book; students who were able to sit down together and share the book were considered to be cooperating appropriately. All of the above modifications to the program may have altered the program and compromised its standardization, yet was necessary for the students’ comprehension of these skills. Although Elliott and Gresham
(1991) allow for the selection of specific skills, a final explanation as to the lack of significant results could be that all 43 skills must be taught in order to address a wider range of behaviors, as well as the students' ethnicities and developmental levels. Such levels were not taken into consideration when the teachers chose which skills would be taught to their students. For instance, the students were taught to refuse unreasonable requests, but did not learn how to differentiate a reasonable request from an unreasonable one. Thus, the students did not learn this skill well, and the teaching of this skill focused much more on identifying an unreasonable request than on learning how to refuse it. Perhaps, given the nature of the skills taught to the children, 14 sessions were not adequate to teach the children these skills.

The aforementioned results of this study demonstrate the difficulties of conducting applied research. Although initially a statistically clean study, many situations presented themselves for which no control had been established. As a result, the group leaders needed to provide solutions that sacrificed the standardization of the program for the students' acquiring of knowledge. For example, although the initial design was for each class to receive 14 skills in seven weeks, events such as Spring Break and field trips often forced the group leaders to deviate from this initial design. At times, communication from the school was also impaired, so that group leaders often did not know when sessions needed to be canceled. Despite these complications, however, the group leaders were able to administer the program as outlined in the manual.

The results of the present study coincide with other research examining the effectiveness of the SSIP. Studies were conducted exploring the use of the SSIP with two similar populations (Brickman, 1995; Patray, 1997). Brickman found that participation in
the SSIP did not improve significantly seventh grade students' self-concept, perceived social skills development, academic achievement, or degree of peer acceptance.

Similarly, Patray (1997) utilized 16 skills of the SSIP with 31 culturally diverse third, fourth, and fifth graders identified as being "of greatest need." Patray taught the students 16 skills over an 8-week period. Patray used the SSRS-T and SSRS-Student form (SSRS-S) and school disciplinary records to measure the effectiveness of the SSIP. Data analyses showed that the SSIP did not effect significantly scores on the students' SSRS forms, nor did it reduce the number of disciplinary actions against the students. Patray noted the following limitations in her study: students were taken out of their classroom setting, teachers were unable to generalize learned social skills outside of the treatment groups, and some data were lost by teachers.

The results of the present study provide many future directions for research in this field. Further investigation is necessary to determine the relevance of the SSIP in low-income, African-American students. More generally, future studies could explore if there are certain groups of students for whom the SSIP is more effective, such as non-developmentally delayed, older elementary school students. Although the program's authors report success with African-American students (Elliott & Gresham, 1991), the results of this study provide a very different view of the program's effectiveness with this group. Future studies also could provide a more structured testing environment (e.g., using only the behavior modification outlined in the SSIP).

The present study explored the effectiveness of the SSIP with urban, African-American kindergartners. Effectiveness was measured by the students' scores on both the SSRS-T and the "blue-green-yellow-red" tracking scale utilized by the teachers. In
this study, participation in the SSIP did not significantly improve students' social skills or academic success, nor did it significantly reduce the incidence of problematic behaviors. This study was similar to others (Brickman, 1995; Patray, 1997) in terms of population, methodology, and results. According to all of these studies, it does not appear that the SSIP is an effective program for teaching social skills to African-American students.
References


Table 2

*Results for Analysis of Social Skills Domain of SSRS-T*

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<th>Class</th>
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<th>(p)</th>
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*level of significance < .0125*
Table 3

*Results for the Analysis of the Problematic Behaviors Section of the SSRS-T*

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* level of significance < .0125
Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Blue-Green-Yellow-Red Scores

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class</th>
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<th>Mean (x)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (σ)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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</table>

* level of significance < .0125
Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Academic Competence domain of SSRS-T*

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<th>Standard Deviation (σ)</th>
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* level of significance < .0125
Figure Captions

Figure 1. Mean scores on the “Social Skills” section of the SSRS-T as a function of academic quarter and participation in the SSIP.

Figure 2. Mean scores on the “Problematic Behaviors” section of the SSRS-T as a function of academic quarter and participation in the SSIP.

Figure 3. Mean scores on the “Blue-Green-Yellow-Red” scores as a function of academic quarter and participation in the SSIP.

Figure 4. Mean scores on the “Academic Competence” section of the SSRS-T as a function of academic quarter and participation in the SSIP.
Double lines indicate the academic quarter in which the intervention was delivered.
Double lines indicate the academic quarter in which the intervention was delivered.
Double lines indicate the academic quarter in which the intervention was delivered.
Double lines indicate the academic quarter in which the intervention was delivered.