A study of the effectiveness of using collegiate mentors to reduce violent behavior, improve self-concept, and increase academic success in an urban middle school

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A study of the effectiveness of using collegiate mentors to reduce violent behavior, improve self concept, and increase academic success in an urban middle school

Newton, Faith Richards, Ed.D.
The College of William and Mary, 1994

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING COLLEGIATE MENTORS TO REDUCE VIOLENT BEHAVIOR, IMPROVE SELF CONCEPT, AND INCREASE ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Faith R. Newton
April 1994
A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING COLLEGIATE MENTORS TO REDUCE VIOLENT BEHAVIOR, IMPROVE SELF CONCEPT, AND INCREASE ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Faith R. Newton

Approved April 1994 by

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Robert Hanny, Ph.D.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Steve, for his love which has no bounds.
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CHAPTER

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of many people to this study, starting with Ms. Bessie Lewis who contributed her support, time, and effort to ensure that the mentors met with their students, administered the self concept scales to the students, and generally kept things going. This study would not have been possible without the support of Dr. James Stronge, who has been a thoughtful mentor to me throughout the process, or of Dr. Tom Ward who taught me statistics chapter by chapter. I would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Robert Hanny for his kind words of encouragement and astute comments. I would also like to thank Dr. William Bullock for teaching a northern girl the meaning of perseverance in a southern state.

Finally, the study could not have been possible without the support of Dr. Steve Newton and Delaware State University. Dr. Newton provided the mentors and made sure that they came weekly, often driving them back and forth.

Much of what is found to be useful in this dissertation can be attributed to the above-mentioned individuals. The deficiencies are those of the author.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was designed to determine whether mentoring programs which might be used in middle schools could be successful in increasing self concept in order reduce violent behavior and improve academic performance. The significance of this study lay in its intent to assess the outcomes of a semester-long intervention by collegiate mentors to effect a reduction in middle school violence by building self concept and improving academic success. Although there has been a substantial amount of literature documenting the linkages between violent behavior and self concept, and between self concept and academic success, there is little or no direct evidence that this destructive cycle can be broken through a mentoring program.

This research addressed deficiencies in earlier studies by selecting the sample pool to include only students with parallel histories of violent behavior and a lack of academic success. Students in both the treatment and control groups were evaluated in terms of self-esteem through the use of the 
Bracken Multidimensional Self Concept Scale both before and
after treatment. Student outcomes were monitored in the same terms used to select them for participation. The results were analyzed by performing a t-test for independent means in order to determine whether there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups with regard to grades, self concept, and violent behavior after the treatment. Where initial differences were found to have existed, analysis of covariance was utilized to control for these differences. A chi-square analysis was used to determine whether there was a significant difference before and after the study in terms of expulsions and exclusions.

The study concluded that the mentored students in the experimental group showed significant increases in the dimensions of academic and total self concept. The mentored students also demonstrated a significant decline in violent incidents and exclusions. Changes in grades were not found to be significant. This study supported the idea that a low-cost mentoring program for middle school students is an effective method of raising self concept and reducing violent behavior.
Chapter 1
The Problem

Introduction

The situation is grim; the conditions seem to be spreading: "In the chaos of broken windows, smoke-filled bathrooms, verbal abuse, robberies, stabbings, and truancies, and all the rest, principals are painfully forced to act as security guards rather than as instructional leaders" (Clarke, 1977, p. 8). In this scene from an educational apocalypse, parents worry whether their children are safe in today's schools, while teachers wonder if a handful of students are listening and learning among the chaos. Political candidates stalk the country seeking votes by decrying the violence and calling for public accountability and old-fashioned discipline.

In the face of mounting cries for change, educators have traditionally tried to control behavior in the schools by setting standards or establishing rules. These are provided to the students in the first days of the academic new year, usually in the form of a code of conduct published in a student handbook. The rules are defined and the punishments clearly specified. The consequences mandated for most violations of rules involve either the issuance of detentions, in-school suspensions, or out-of-school suspensions. Students who
habitually break the rules may be excluded from school or expelled. Such penalties can be shorter than ten days or require permanent removal from school.

Yet even though thousands of students are suspended each year, both the number of school discipline problems and the severity of these problems have increased. Guns, knives, and assaults on students have become so commonplace in some schools that the U. S. Department of Justice National Crime Survey in 1989 reported that more than 25% of the violent crimes committed against teenagers occur in schools or their immediate vicinity (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). In the past few years, this surge of violence has penetrated all levels of public education—neither middle nor elementary schools have proven to be a safe haven.

Administrators across the country are looking at ways to decrease the number and the nature of violent and disruptive incidents in schools. Perhaps the way we have been doing things—addressing the issue more determinedly than ever by promptly meting out punishments—is not the way to reduce the disciplinary problems of students in our schools. Clarke (1977) in fact argued that there was no indication that the practices currently in operation for disciplining students were effective. He indicated that educators have to become more innovative in order to resolve the problem of school violence. That is not to
say that students should be allowed to do whatever they please, that we should not have standards or rules. But perhaps we need to look for approaches that deal directly with the causes of the discipline problems in our schools—especially those that result in violent behavior—rather than continuing merely to treat symptoms.

Researchers are beginning to suspect that the root causes of much school violence lie within the very nature of the methods that the schools employ in dealing with certain students. Rather than drug deals or gang warfare, the routine frictions of the school day actually account for most of the disciplinary referrals seen by administrators (McMullen, 1985). "It is pain and boredom which drive children to smash windows . . . and beat on other children," Clarke argued (1977, p. 8). He further asserted that "in varying degrees and ways, many students have been kicked in the head all their lives," in homes "where there is more yelling than listening, more liquor than love, more taking than giving" (p. 8). These children "have been laughed at, lied to, pushed aside, put down, and left alone so often that they believe such treatment is all they are worthy of. In such a world, children learn to hate themselves—and almost everything else—at an early age" (p. 8).

These children come to school, and school makes them feel even worse. They are behind, and have been since the first
day they stepped in the classroom door. Not having learned acceptable patterns of behavior, and not being able to compete academically with their peers, they act out—often violently—get suspended, and fall even further behind (Loyola, 1985). It is understandable if not acceptable that teachers who already feel overworked view these violent children as obstructions to the education of their better-behaved peers rather than victims who need their special attention. The administrators reluctantly accept responsibility for the problem, and faithfully attempt to cope with it at their level. They try everything from behavioral contracts to school-wide violence prevention/reductions programs.

Clarke (1977) suggested that we need to remember that these students act out because they lack self-esteem. Students—especially middle school students—need to feel important, need to feel that they are unique. According to Clarke, if we help students meet their emotional needs, we can in turn reduce our discipline problems in the schools. One way that this might be done is to help these students be successful at school. If this logic is sound, then non-violence programs—those programs that seek to reduce the discipline problems in our schools—must target academic performance and self-esteem as well as the student's specific behaviors in order to be successful. Helping students experience success in the
classroom and simultaneously providing them with positive role models should lead to an increase in self-esteem and, therefore, a reduction in the number of violent incidents.

Unfortunately, to-date there has been little research to support this hypothesis, primarily because the design of such a program has seemed to require such a steep investment of resources that no school district could reasonably expect to afford to implement such a program on a continuing basis. This study sought to fill that gap by examining the effectiveness of a low-cost, volunteer program which brought college-age mentors into an urban middle school for an hour a week to work with students who had a dual history of low academic success and violent behavior. The objective of the program was measurable change, both in academic and behavioral terms.

Theoretical Rationale

Violent behavior and self-esteem. While there exists a significant body of literature documenting the rise in violent incidents in American public schools over the past several decades, the research which directly ties violent behavior to self-esteem and academic success is difficult to frame into a coherent picture. Gold (1978) perceived delinquent behavior as an "ego defense . . . against the external realities which
threaten a young person's self-esteem..." (p. 37). He postulated a self-defeating pattern of events and behavior wherein individuals attempt to improve a poor self-image through specific acts. Delinquent behavior is a defense in which the adolescent is "avoiding situations which endanger self-esteem. . . . A situation endangering self-esteem can be regarded as a provocation to delinquency: it is an experience that motivates an individual to be disruptive and delinquent" (p. 37).

School is the place where some children feel compelled to demonstrate delinquent behavior. There is reason to do so: "Incompetence or failure in school can be seen as a major provocation to delinquent behavior" (Gold, 1978, p. 37). The student is expected to achieve in school. The standards may be clear, yet the means to attain success are narrowly defined: grades are the one and only way to prove that you have been successful. If students are not successful academically, then they have to figure out a way to deal with their low self-image. As a result, students turn to disruptive behavior in the school environment. Gold cited several reasons for this: first, the disruptive behavior occurs at school where the student has failed. Secondly, the student can find an audience that will appreciate his behavior. This makes the student’s behavior—his way of coping with the lowered self-esteem—all the more
acceptable. Third, by being disruptive, the students are publicly stating that they reject the standards of society which have labeled them as failures.

There is no one set of research data that supports the above hypothesis. Rather, the evidence has to be gleaned from the literature. Research has shown that more successful students have higher self-esteem (Bachman, 1970; Epps 1969; Williams & Cole, 1968). There have been some studies done by Feldjusen, Thurston, and Benning (1967), as well as Swift and Spivack (1968), which indicate that students who are unsuccessful in school are usually disruptive in school. These studies, however, are obviously becoming quite dated.

Considering the state of the literature, there is a reasonably well-established correlation between low self-esteem, violence, and the lack of academic success. What remains to be tested is the efficacy of programs designed to address these problems.

**Mentoring and the reduction of violence.** Doda (1991) suggested that there are several variables that "invite" discipline problems and which can be countered with specific practices. But while hundreds of mentoring programs exist across the country, there is little evidence that they are successful in reducing violent behavior. Graeff (1989)
conducted a drop-out prevention program that improved retention of at-risk students but did not show significant improvements in GPA, the number of disciplinary referrals, the number of truancies, the number of out-of-school suspensions, or days suspended from school. McPartland and Nettles' (1991) two-year mentoring study reported only limited success in three of seven sites.

In light of the lack of consistent success in such programs, Greenberg (1991) advocated that "mentoring/tutoring models should be examined carefully with respect to outcomes. While these programs would appear to have a certain intuitive validity, data that support actual changes in mentee or tutee behavior and, specifically, academic performance, too often are lacking" (p. 73). On the other hand, Gold (1978) believed that alternative educational programs that can "maximize success experiences thus have the potential to reduce the provocations for and strengthen the controls against delinquency" (p. 38).

Gold (1978) stated that additional research should be done to investigate whether the student's disruptive behavior declines as academic success increases. "Two essential ingredients of such an alternative education program are: (1) a significant increase in the proportion of a youth's experiences of success over failure; and (2) provision of a warm, accepting
relationship with one or more adults” (p. 41). He also emphasized the shortage of mentoring programs that involve bringing college students into the public schools. The few that he surveyed were all centered on high schools rather than middle schools, and tended to focus almost entirely on academic success rather than appropriate behavior. In almost every case the college students received credit in college education programs in exchange for their services and were not, therefore, genuine volunteers. Thus, the current state of research is virtually devoid of information that directly addresses the problem of using collegiate mentors to increase academic success and decrease violent incidents among middle-school students.

This experiment had to determine first whether a mentoring program that is a close one-on-one relationship between a student and a collegiate adult actually increased self-esteem. The research then had to determine whether this increased academic success, as well as decreasing the number of incidents of violent behavior by the student.

**Social learning theory and mentoring.** Lindzey and Aronson (1985) credit Albert Bandura with "advancing the position that treats aggression, like other responses, as an explicit consequence of motivational, stimulus, and
reinforcement conditions" (p. 111). Bandura was the seminal thinker who proposed that the nature and severity of aggressive behavior could be explained in part due to the result of the interaction of an individual with the dynamics of a given situation. This became the basis of social learning theory.

Social learning theory focuses on specific behaviors and how people learn or acquire them (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1987). In the last ten years, there has been a focus on social situations and how people react to these situations: “This involves people’s perceptions about different situations and their ability to distinguish between one and another” (p. 78). Children learn through socialization how to interact with others; what behaviors are acceptable and which are not; how to communicate with others, etc. This process of socialization is the "[P]rocess through which individuals learn proper ways (‘proper’ as defined by the society) of acting in a culture" (Zastrow & Bowker, 1984, p. 25). Adolescents can either be pleasant and fun-loving, or they can be obnoxious, rude, and overbearing. If they are the latter they can cause problems for their parents as well as their teachers at school. If teenagers do not learn how to get along with both adults and peers, they will not become well-adjusted adults.

Social learning theory looks at adolescents in their environments and interprets their actions as reactions to that
environment rather than in isolated acts. The underlying idea is that behaviors are learned, and, therefore, can be unlearned (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1987, p. 118). This theory advocates the idea that anyone can learn positive behaviors by specifically defining these behaviors and applying behavior modification techniques.

There are several types of behavior modification: respondent conditioning (also known as classical or Pavlovian conditioning), modeling, and operant conditioning. Respondent conditioning occurs when a person learns to respond to a new stimulus that does not naturally elicit a response. An unconditioned response occurs when a dog salivates after the plate of dog food is placed before it; a conditioned response is when the dog learns to salivate on command, without the stimulus of the plate of food. Operant conditioning works on the basis of consequences. We alter behavior by changing the consequences which follow that behavior (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1987). This is done through positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, or extinction.

Modeling is perhaps the most significant type of social learning as far as mentoring is concerned. Modeling occurs when an individual learns a new behavior as the result of observing another individual engaging in that behavior. The
individual learning the new behavior does not necessarily have to participate in the behavior to learn it. Modeling can be utilized by the tutors to model appropriate behavior so that their mentees learn appropriate behaviors. Another example of modeling is role-playing. In such a situation the mentor may role-play various ways in which the students might respond in a more socially appropriate way when dealing with difficult situations.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to determine whether non-violence programs which might be used in middle schools could be successful in reducing violent behavior and in improving academic performance and self-esteem. The research was valuable because there existed little if any research at the middle-school level that examined whether low academic achievement leads to low self-esteem which in turn leads to more disruptive and violent behavior.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference (p < .05) in the number of violent incidents committed by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors as compared to similar students who did not receive
the same intervention.

2. There is a significant difference ($p < .05$) in the academic success achieved by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

3. There is a significant difference ($p < .05$) in the level of self-esteem by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

4. There is a significant difference ($p < .05$) in the number of expulsions and exclusions received by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

**Operational Definitions**

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions applied:

**Academic success.** Students who have achieved cumulative grade-point averages above 2.0 among core academic classes (Science, Math, Social Studies, and Language Arts) without grades of "F" in any class will be considered to
have achieved academic success.

**Collegiate mentor.** A college student with a GPA of at least 2.5 who volunteers to spend at least one hour a week tutoring and providing a role model of appropriate behavior to one or two middle-school students for a complete college semester.

**Detention.** An administrative or teacher disciplinary action which requires a student to spend additional time in school outside normal class hours (usually after school) in an isolated, highly structured environment.

**Exclusion.** An administrative disciplinary action, resulting from an agreement between the district board of education and the parents of a child, to remove a student from school for the remainder of the academic year without formally expelling the student.

**In-school suspension.** An administrative disciplinary action removing a student from regular classes for a specified period of time (usually five days or less) and placing the student in an isolated, highly structured environment.

**Middle school.** A school specifically designed to meet the needs of the transescent, including any or all of grades 6-8, and characterized by interdisciplinary teaming in the core academic subjects, flexible scheduling, and a teacher's advisory program.

**Out-of-school suspension.** An administrative
disciplinary action removing a student from the school for a specified period of time. Short-term suspensions refer to those of five days' duration or less; long-term suspensions refer to those exceeding five days in length.

Referral. Administrative action taken by a teacher or administrator to initiate disciplinary action against a student for a behavioral infraction.

Self-esteem. A measure of a student's evaluation of his/her own self concept, as quantified by reference to Bracken's Multidimensional Self Concept Scale.

Students with a history of violent behavior. Students who have received at least one disciplinary referral in the previous academic year for violent behavior, and whose Violence Scale and Violence Index scores are above the median for all students with at least one such referral.

Violent incident. A disciplinary infraction by a student resulting in a suspension or exclusion, and involving one or more of the following: severe verbal abuse/threatening; minor physical violence (pushing and shoving/throwing objects); fighting; assault; assault on a teacher; or possession or use of a weapon.

Violence index. A descriptive measure developed for this study which attempts to show that the likelihood that any given disciplinary referral for a student will result from a
violent incident. The Index is derived by applying the formula
VI=Violence Scale/Referrals. The higher the number yielded by
this equation, the more likely a given referral is the result of a
violent incident.

**Violence scale.** A quantitative measure developed for this
study of the relative severity of the degree of violent behavior
involved in any given referral, with a range of 0-5; the lower
the scale score, the less violent the incident.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its intent to assess the
outcomes of a semester-long intervention by collegiate
mentors to effect a reduction in middle-school violence by
building self-esteem and improving academic success.
Although there has been a substantial amount of literature
documenting the linkages between violent behavior and self­
esteeem, and between self-esteem and academic success, there is
little or no direct evidence that this destructive cycle can be
broken through a mentoring program.

Loyola (1985) and Doda (1991) both emphasized that
reduction in suspensions is related to academic improvement;
however, they did not document any remedies. Likewise,
Graeff (1989), Greenberg (1991), and McPartland and Nettles
(1991) attempted, with only limited success, to document the
success or failure of mentoring programs. Part of this gap in the documentation stems from the fact that the programs they study appear to have been initiated because the ideas seemed sound and logical. No specific provisions were made, however, to define desired outcomes in quantifiable terms, or to document the behavior of the students in the sample group.

This research addressed those deficiencies in the earlier studies by selecting the sample pool to include only students with parallel histories of violent behavior and a lack of academic success. Each student in both the treatment and control groups was evaluated in terms of self-esteem through the use of the Bracken Multidimensional Self Concept Scale both before and during the semester. The collegiate mentors were selected on the basis of specific criteria. Their role was clearly defined: The served primarily as tutors; secondarily as mentors. Student outcomes were monitored in the same terms that were used to select them for participation.

It is hoped that this study will provide administrators with a practical potential tool for administering a low-cost collegiate mentor program to reduce violence and increase academic success among middle-school students. This research is also intended to provide additional information for administrators instituting violence reduction programs and their potential for success.
Limitations of the Study

The first limitation was derived from the fact that the student population selected was limited to one urban middle school in Delaware. Several features of that school and district might sometimes prevent generalization. Even though it was organized as a middle school, the school in the experiment contained only seventh and eighth-grade students. The district, even though it was primarily urban, was structured to include a significant though small rural population within the school. Similar results might not be expected in a traditional junior high school or a predominantly rural middle school.

Secondly, the mentor population was limited to students who had a 2.5 GPA from a local university in the state of Delaware who volunteered to commit one hour each week to working with students for a complete semester. These students received no academic credit for this program; the mentors were each selected individually by the university coordinator. This procedure would not necessarily be practical either in a large university or a large mentoring program. Thus the ability to find a willing and qualified collegiate population to participate in other violence reduction programs may vary considerably.
In addition, the conclusions reached by this study might be challenged on the basis of the absence of a large sample size. In both the experimental and control groups, a larger sample would have facilitated an analysis between grade levels as well as by sex. One might also argue that the number of collegiate mentors involved in the process could have been larger.

Finally, the participation of the students in the study—both in the experimental and control groups—was restricted by the need to acquire parental permission. A number of students who might otherwise have been selected for inclusion were therefore eliminated from consideration. It is possible that there was a significant difference between those at-risk students whose parents were concerned enough with their education to return the forms and those whose parents were not.

**Major Assumptions**

The first major assumption of this study was that self-esteem is a causal agent for both academic failure and violent behavior. The second major assumption behind this research was that a carefully controlled mentoring/tutoring program could in fact influence student self-esteem. Finally, this study assumed that violent and disruptive behavior as well as
academic performance would be affected because of the positive change in self-esteem.
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

Introduction

There is a tremendous amount of scholarly literature dealing with individual aspects of violence in the public schools and its prevention. Statistics have been compiled on a national basis for over two decades to document the existence and extent of the problem. The causal link between school violence and poor student self concept seems generally accepted, although there remains an uncertainty concerning whether or not improvements in the self concept of a violent child can be expected to result consistently in a decline in violent acts. A similar connection is usually posited between a lack of academic success and poor self concept; most of the literature, however, stops short of directly linking academic failure to violence. Major institutional responses to violent behavior tend to fall into two discrete categories: increasingly strict or increasingly lax disciplinary policies, neither of which have been shown to be particularly successful.

Among other strategies considered and pursued, mentoring programs are seen by many researchers, administrators, and teachers as both inexpensive and potentially effective in reducing violence; hundreds have been
initiated in the past decade. What is not well documented is the efficacy of using mentoring programs as remedies to these interrelated problems. The seeming abundance of studies concerning mentoring programs is deceptive, because the inconsistency of organization, objectives, and expected outcomes in the different programs, combined with structural flaws in many of the research designs, leaves the potential effectiveness of mentoring programs an open question. In addition, although psychological theories of aggression suggest that mentoring may be an effective strategy, they also imply some significant limitations.

This review of the literature is divided into sections examining violence in the schools, institutional responses to violent behavior, academic failure, self concept, theories of aggression, and mentoring programs.

Violence in the Schools

School crime first appeared as a concern in the public schools in the early 1970's, when the Committee on Education and Labor (1973) released a report stating that there was a serious crime problem in the public schools. Later in the decade, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare published "The Safe Schools Study Report to Congress, Volume 1" (1978), which provided some of
the first statistical information on the incidence and seriousness of public school crime. More detailed descriptive statistics, such as the actual financial costs of crime to each school or district, the number of schools affected and their demographic composition, were also included. It was the beginning of what threatened to become a national obsession with crime and violent behavior in American education, leading to a current condition in which Curcio and First (1993) have lamented that the "symbol of the little red schoolhouse as a safe haven has been replaced by the yellow and black sign, Danger Zone" (p. 2).

Dimensions of the problem. Even before the collection of comprehensive, descriptive statistics on school violence, experts were warning about the potentially critical consequences of school violence. Ianni (1972) cautioned that, when analyzing violence in a school, researchers had to be careful to recognize that violence in schools does differ from crime in the streets. School violence was arguably more threatening to society as a whole than violence in the streets, primarily because of the hidden costs and consequences of that violence. The most obvious consequence of violent behavior in the classroom was that it disrupted the education of all students in the room, not just those who were the immediate victims. But Ianni also pointed out that there was a hidden
social consequence to such behavior: schools being social institutions, violence and disruption could "have a lasting effect on youth which spreads outward from the school over time" (p. 41).

Quantifying the dimensions of school violence has been difficult from the very beginning. Between 1950 and 1975, the primary sources of information on juvenile crime were the F.B.I.'s Uniform Crime Reports (Karlin & Berger, 1992). It is important to remember that the statistics presented therein were limited to crimes reported to law enforcement agencies, which necessarily excluded a great many incidents. Moreover, the numbers could also have been artificially deflated due to the fact that juveniles historically have not always been arrested for the crimes they committed. Rubel (1977a) reported that by 1977 there were already ten major metropolitan school districts, including Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, who were employing armed police officers in the schools.

Unfortunately, aside from what could be inferred from the Uniform Crime Reports, there was then no other source for comprehensive statistics on school violence available. Statistics were neither tracked yearly by the Department of Education nor were other Federal agencies concerned specifically with tracking violent crime in the schools. What little accurate data were available had not been provided by
the government, but by the privately funded Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. Even those statistics were specifically restricted to one category of violence: "From 1986 to 1990, seventy-one people—sixty five students and six employees—were killed at school; 201 were severely wounded and 242 were held hostage at gun point..." (Gutscher, 1993, p. 10). These findings suggested a major upheaval taking place in the public schools, but they were far from establishing the precise relationship between general crime statistics for young people and violence in the schools.

By the mid-1970's, the collection of statistical evidence specifically concerning school violence became increasingly more important to the public and policy-makers alike. According to Rubel (1977a), it was at that time that violence in the nation's public schools became a national political issue. Public concern appeared to drive governmental interest: the "Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education" asserted that the public's primary concern regarding schooling was the lack of discipline in the schools.

Bann and Ciminillo (1977) noted that the "polls reflected a certain amount of fear that there is a general loss of control over youth by adults... Many fear that the lack of discipline in the schools and home is a causal factor behind violence and vandalism..." (p. 37). The authors noted that over 45% of the
students who began high school did not ultimately receive a general diploma; many of those attending school were "ill equipped in basic skills and see no useful purpose in attending classes for which they cannot do the reading" (p. 9). Their work was among the first to suggest a direct link between the lack of academic success and the incidence of violence.

The statistics concerning crimes committed by young people have remained daunting. In 1988, the Uniform Crime Reports, containing the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual statistics on crime for the previous year, revealed that there had been 172 murder and manslaughter (non-negligent) arrests of children below 15 years of age, and that for the same demographic group the incidence of other potentially violent crimes—assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft—was an appalling 456,722 (Karlin & Berger, 1992). Ten children in the United States were killed by gunfire every day, according to the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. These figures represented total incidents, not just those in our schools. But that has hardly been cause for comfort, especially since the Children's Defense Fund estimated that no fewer than 135,000 students carried a concealed handgun to school every morning.

**Governmental responses to school violence.** Aside from the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act—passed in 1974 with amendments in 1977—which authorized specific
programs "to help reduce violence and crime in the public schools" (Rubel, 1977a, p. 22), formal hearings had thus far represented the extent of the government's response to the public outcry. The General Congressional Subcommittee on Education in the U.S. House of Representatives, for example, had met to discuss safe schools and the appropriateness of the existing curriculum for all students. Its report, entitled "A Safer Environment for Learning" (Committee on Education and Labor, 1973) noted that daily violence and regular disruption of classes were rapidly becoming the norm in public schools.

The committee framed its conclusions in terms of a national crisis. James Harrison (Committee on Education and Labor, 1975) commented that students who failed in school would become triple failures as far as the economy was concerned. These students would fail in school, fail to land good jobs, and fail to become productive citizens. Harrison argued that the United States needed a "complete reassessment of our national educational goals and values, [and] a redirection of our national resources to insure that no child will receive an inferior education" (p. 130). Concurrently, a United States Senate subcommittee convened to investigate juvenile delinquency reported a dramatic increase in criminal
behavior on the part of adolescents, with specific reference to
school violence.

These subcommittee hearings eventually resulted in one
of the pioneer attempts to control or reduce violent behavior in
the public schools. Utilizing a cross-section of public schools, a
two-year Federal study of over 5,000 schools from all fifty
states was designed to provide a detailed report on the extent
and nature of the problems in our public schools. The
information derived from this examination was to be used to
provided a direction to solve the problems in our public schools

The findings confirmed many of the public's worst fears,
prompting Congress to act. The legislators ordered the
Department of Health, Education and Welfare to prepare a
comprehensive report that included the status of violence in the
public schools. Released in 1978, the report was entitled the
"Violent Schools--Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report
to Congress." This document identified several critical factors
that distinguished public schools which were prone to chronic
violence and disruption from those which had few if any such
incidents. The study discovered that a given school's size and
impersonality were related to the amount of crime and
violence taking place in its classrooms: larger schools had
more students, more teachers, and, typically, a greater
incidence of violence. One particularly interesting discovery in the report was that the majority of disruptive and violent acts of behavior occurred in the junior-high school level (today's middle schools), and not in the high school. This ran counter to the prevalent public perception that high school students were inherently more likely to commit violent acts.

The report also stressed the critical importance of the existence and effectiveness of a school's reward or incentive system, noting that "schools where students express a strong desire to succeed by getting good grades have less violence" (p. 135). This research therefore implied that an emphasis on getting good grades would decrease violence in our schools. However, the report admonished its readers that academic incentive programs were hardly a panacea. Violence could well be provoked in a "situation in which the competition for rewards is intense, the availability of rewards is limited," if there was no perception that such awards were fairly distributed (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978, p. 135). In other words, if students care about the rewards of the school, but see little chance of ever receiving them, they will react by attacking the school.

More public hearings were held in the wake of this report. Congress eventually passed a bill authorizing $15,000,000 to be available for school districts to address,
among other issues, violence in their schools. But this legislation involved more political posturing than a commitment to action. Although millions were authorized for the purpose of reducing school violence, not one penny was ever appropriated or spent.

The Federal government's response took a somewhat different turn during the 1980's and early 1990's. The "conservative revolution" placed renewed emphasis on the old idea that violence in the schools was almost totally the result of the leniency engendered by the educational strategies of extremist liberals. In the late summer of 1983, President Ronald Reagan asked the Cabinet Council on Human Resources (CCHR) to investigate discipline in the public schools. The CCHR created the Working Group on School Violence and appointed as its chairman Gary L. Bauer, an undersecretary in the Department of Education. After reviewing current policies and practices, the group made formal recommendations and prepared a report to President Reagan entitled "Disorder in Our Public Schools." The CCHR stated that administrators had been ignoring crime in the schools and would continue to do so until action was demanded by the public. The answer to increasing violence could only be a return to strictly enforced disciplinary standards, with building administrators acting more as police
officers than educators. This conclusion caused so much uproar and anger from school administrators that an issue of the School Research Forum was devoted entirely as a response to President Reagan's new policy agenda (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1984). But the professional literature hardly gave the Reagan administration's theory much attention after it became evident that the CCHR report did not really herald a major attack on the intellectual underpinnings of American education.

Two successive Republican administrations said little else about school violence. But violence in public schools remained such a persistent, fundamental concern for the Federal government that, when President Bush held his 1989 education summit, the six national goals of Education 2000 included one specifically focused on eliminating it. Goal six read, "Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (U.S. Department of Education, 1992, p. 4). Bush's Department of Education even issued a document addressing basic questions such as what defined a violent-free school and how a school could determine the severity of a violence problem. The document also explored topics including teacher strategies for combatting violence, as well as the effects of community involvement.
The U.S. Department of Education's definition of a violence-free school specified "those where students and staff are not subject to physical attacks or threats" (p. 7). To determine the severity of the problem in a particular school, the Department recommended that students and staff members be surveyed by asking questions such as "How often have you been a victim of crime?" or "How safe do you feel at school?" (p. 7). The report also recommended that records be kept of arrests, violent episodes, and that the school should report this information to the police and public, as well as conducting a "school safety assessment" examining how often violence occurs in the school, if school policies are enforced, the nature and effectiveness of the cooperation between the school, community and police, as well as social characteristics of the school, the overall positive school climate.

The U.S. Department of Education report was followed in 1992 by hearings on violence in the classroom conducted by the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education. The legislators continued the focus on the causes of school violence and its prevention. Serrano (1992) suggested that the Federal government should provide the "necessary assistance to local school districts in the prevention and reduction of school violence" (p. 1). He argued for the inception of programs in which students would be taught that...
there were "wiser, more sensible, and safer ways to resolve conflicts..." (p. 2). Serrano introduced "The Classroom Safety Act of 1992," which would have provided funding for counseling, conflict resolution and peer mediation, as well as the purchase of metal detectors and other prevention equipment. But the bill was not enacted into law, primarily due to opposition from the Republican administration on budgetary grounds.

With the Democrats recovering the White House, at least the rhetoric returned to institutional remediation to decrease public school violence. The "Safe Schools Act of 1993" has been proposed to provide federal funding along the lines proposed by Serrano: more than $175,000,000 over the course of two years to fund anti-violence programs. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration also found itself caught on the horns of an economic dilemma: in the light of rising deficits, Congress has yet to approve this bill and make it law.

State and local responses to school violence. In the absence of Federal action, the public has begun turning to local and state governments for programs and legislation to end violence in the schools. New York Mayor David Dinkins, for example, spoke during the hearings on the Classroom Safety Act of 1992, and stated that $28,000,000 would be added to the New York City Schools' budget to increase the number of
security patrols, administrative personnel, metal scanners, etc. Dinkins characterized the measures as the result of two students being killed in a New York City high school, even though there were 13 security guards on patrol at the school.

Often, such legislation on the state level has also been the consequence of specific—sometimes sensationalized—events. Delaware can be considered as a case in point. During the 1992-93 academic year, handguns were found in middle schools and high schools across the state. Following one highly publicized incident wherein a middle school principal removed an unloaded gun from a student, House Bill 85 (Oberly, 1993) was proposed and passed during July, 1993. This is one of the first laws in the nation directly resulting from a public outcry that the state's schools had become intolerably violent places. The legislators sponsoring the bill insisted that public would no longer tolerate hearing about children becoming victims of violence in schools and teachers being hospitalized for breaking up fights. They also implied that in order to avoid bad publicity, many administrators were covering up violent behavior in their schools.

House Bill 85 requires all Delaware public school administrators to report to the police, as well as the state superintendent's office, almost all acts of violence. Crimes which occur on school property involving weapons, drugs,
assault, or extortion committed by the student, parent, or guardian against another student are covered under this law. The principal or designee must determine if there is "probable cause" for criminal charges. Should this be the case, the principal is required by law to report the incident to the superintendent and police. In addition, if a teacher observes an offense, the teacher is also obligated to report the event to the principal.

The law is considerably more detailed with regard to crimes against school employees. Reporting of drugs, weapons, assault, offensive touching, terroristic threatening, and extortion against school employees on school property is now mandatory. The exception to the above law involves students from kindergarten through the third grade. Failure to file any of these reports has become a punishable offense: $250 for the first infraction, and $500 for the second. Every school administrator in the state was required, during the summer of 1993, to attend a training session presented by the Attorney General's office to ensure knowledge of the law's requirements. The administrators, in turn had to conduct inservice training for their faculties, and document attendance at this training.

Whether this approach will have any significant impact on school violence, either through placing it more directly in
the spotlight, or through creating a deterrent effect, remains to be seen. House Bill 85 is, after all, one of the first laws of its kind in the nation. It is unique in that it seeks to decrease school violence through a direct application of the legal process, and removes all elements of professional discretion from teachers and administrators, placing it instead in the hands of the police. This legislation, at least in Delaware, represents a complete repudiation of the institutional responses to school violence attempted over the past three decades.

The experience of the Cincinnati Public Schools, however, suggests that such a strategy is filled with pitfalls of its own. In 1991, as the result of lobbying by the teachers' union and pressure by the municipal government, the district adopted a discipline policy including mandatory suspensions for certain offenses, including fighting and verbal abuse, which culminated in a 77% rise in suspensions (Hull, 1994). An unexpected side-effect surfaced within a year: "black students are twice as likely to end up disciplined throughout the entire Cincinnati public school system" (p. 30). Hull noted that this was "a particularly awkward statistic for a school district mired in a 20-year-old desegregation suit" (p. 30). The district entered 1994 under threat of a court order which would required it to track not only the nature of offenses in schools and the ethnicity of the perpetrators, but also the ethnic
background of the teachers who reported them. Ironically, the teachers' union threatened to sue the district if this ruling went into effect.

**Institutional responses to school violence.** The external attempts by legislators to reduce violence in the public schools by statute law reflect a public perception that the schools themselves have not adequately addressed the issue. Many school systems have primarily pursued strategies of decreasing violent behavior by increasing disciplinary standards, hiring security guards, or installing metal detectors. Disturbingly, however, a significant number of schools have decided to deal with violence in the classroom by ignoring it.

In comparison to the amount of research conducted on violence in the schools or the connection between poor self concept and violent behavior, it must be admitted that the research on institutional responses to violence--aside from mentoring programs, which will be considered as a separate issue--has been much less extensive. The studies which have been conducted, however, do suggest that many administrators and teachers have been thinking along the same lines as the public, but without adopting provisions for monitoring success.
Cohen and Wilson-Brewer (1990), examined 51 violence prevention programs, and the effects these interventions had on at-risk students. Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Education Development Center was asked to investigate violence prevention programs. A total of 83 violence prevention programs were sent questionnaires, with a return rate of 51 surveys. Wilson-Brewer et al. (1991) reported that it was "impossible to state with conviction which types of violence prevention programs or intervention strategies reviewed are most effective" (p. 56). The authors noted that, even most of the programs were evaluated, the evaluations did not focus specifically on outcomes. Thirty percent of the programs studied could not provide any quantitative data regarding outcomes.

One insight this study revealed was that focusing on violence prevention and discipline did not necessarily imply increasing punishments for a deterrent effect. Doda (1991) addressed this issue when she entitled one chapter of a larger work "Preventative Discipline: Good Schools Make Good Kids." In our middle schools, she argued, preventative discipline should be the rule, especially due to the nature of the middle-school student. Both behavior and expectations can be altered in the public schools, so that students look for the "good" things to do, rather than for violent ways in which to
Doda suggested that there are several variables that "invite" discipline problems, and that these can be countered with specific practices. She cited as her underlying assumption: "when middle schools are large and anonymous places for kids, and there's very little opportunity for a sense of community to develop or for long-term relationships to grow, kids get into trouble" (p. 49). Urban schools with populations of 1,000 or more fit her definition of "large schools." Even if such schools are organized into interdisciplinary teams with active teacher advisory programs, these cavernous buildings still represent a place for students to get lost. A positive relationship with an adult can prevent some of those discipline problems; conversely, the absence of any such relationship is an indicator of trouble waiting to happen.

Assuming that this hypothesis was correct, Walker and Sylwester (1991) provided evidence that schools were not being effective in preventing the criminal careers of "at-risk" children, precisely because they conceptualized discipline in purely negative terms. The authors argued that the problem of school violence is "multi-dimensional," but that most schools are advocating a "one-dimensional" approach to the answer. Typically, schools either suspend their problem students, or place them on some sort of homebound or alternative status. Thus, Walker and Sylwester's data suggested that the number
of disciplinary contacts with the principal's office is one measure that can predict adolescent arrests of boys; it did not suggest that suspension or exclusion represented an effective tool to modify delinquent behavior.

In advocating a balanced institutional response to school violence, Kadel and Follmann (1993) also believed that the use of suspensions, expulsions, student service assignments, and alternative educational programs had to be employed nationwide for deterrence and remediation. But while they advocated enforcing a code of conduct in each school which included out-of-school suspension (OSS), if such a code was "not coupled with long-term preventive and rehabilitative strategies" such an approach had little chance, in their opinion, of preventing violence in the school (p. 11). Thus their work contained something for everyone, from those who believed in cracking down on violence to those who supported creative approaches to prevention.

On the other hand, there have always been administrators, teachers, and parents who believed that suspensions unfairly limit the child's ability to learn, and therefore perpetuate the cycle of school violence. The child is not in class and consequently falls further and further behind. As a result, many schools appear to have made the conscious decision to respond to student violence by ignoring it. Their
policy employs the dubious logic that suspensions simply place the problem children back on the street, denying them the education necessary to keep them from ending up on the welfare roles, so the best thing to do is keep them in the classroom at all costs.

Expectations in the classroom concerning what is considered acceptable behavior—or what we now call school climate—have therefore changed. Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl (1993) argued that, as a result of such lenient policies, teachers have lowered their expectations for difficult students. Teachers asked them fewer questions, gave them less opportunity to learn new material, and neglected to spend the time to help them catch up when they had been out of the classroom on a suspension. The researchers found that the primary concern of these teachers was neither the education nor behavioral modification of disruptive children, but rather the hope that they would sit quietly in class and behave well enough so that they did not disrupt the learning of others. This is a particularly critical finding with regard to middle schools as the drive toward heterogeneous classrooms is sweeping across the country, placing more and more students with behavioral problems in class with students who are achieving academic success.
Ironically, one of the most astute comments on the dual effects of ignoring inappropriate behavior while pushing toward heterogeneous grouping was made fifteen years ago. Rubel (1977b) observed that climate in the schools had changed drastically. He noted that violence had dramatically increased in the public schools, and "that much of what is now taken for granted would have been shocking twenty years ago" (p. 1). His comments were made during the earliest years in which the government and educators were expending their efforts simply to define the magnitude of the problem. It is chilling to speculate on what he would have to say about today's schools, where guns, knives, and beatings are commonplace.

Rubel argued that the increase in violence in the public schools actually patterned and limited the nature of institutional responses to that violence. He noted that the 'Safe School Study' report found that "eight percent of all large-city junior-high school youths reported actually staying home at least one day in the previous month out of fear" (Rubel, 1977b, p. 25). Almost a third of the students felt so afraid that they could easily describe at least three places within their given school that they regularly avoided for fear of violence. This kind of fear could hardly occur among the students without affecting administrators and teachers as well. In essence, the climate of violence has caused the educational
process to become progressively less effective. Rubel points out that in this climate "the quality of education decreases: time-on-task is reduced; teachers become less open and outgoing; staff do not want to stay after school work with pupils; staff demand greater assurances of physical safety" (p. 26).

As violence becomes more prevalent in a school, it can become the norm in terms of student behavior. If rules are not enforced, there is no perceived institutional authority in the school. The culture of the school can degenerate to a point where the students make their own rules because they know their teachers and administrators cannot do anything about it. Rubel calls this the "institutionalization of violence and unwanted behavior" (p. 26). If active interventions are not tried, then this behavior becomes the norm in the school. It leaks out to the surrounding community as angry and violent teenagers leave their schools and spreads until "that community becomes infected with youth-perpetuated crime" (p. 26).

What emerges from this overview is the perception that no working consensus exists among professional educators concerning the most effective strategies for countering violent behavior in the schools. This has resulted in a crazy-quilt patchwork of inconsistency, even within individual school districts. In one school, a student may receive a three-day
suspension for foul language, and in another be returned to the classroom after a fight, with no more punishment than one hour's "time out" to cool off. Given that the United States has an increasingly mobile society, and most students no longer spend their entire academic careers in one school or one district, these inconsistencies themselves serve to exacerbate the problem.

**Academic Failure**

Early investigations of the problem of violence in the public schools focused a considerable amount of attention on inadequate curriculum and academic failure as primary causes of misbehavior. The report entitled "A Safer Environment for Learning," published by the Committee on Education and Labor in the late 1970's, directly questioned the relevance of the curriculum utilized by New York State schools. Nearly forty-five percent of the students who started high school in New York failed to earn a diploma. Many students lacked the basic skills—especially reading skills—to be successful in their classes. The question raised by this report was one of whether or not violence and misbehavior might well be the predictable consequences of the failure of our schools to provide meaningful instruction.
Though that report is now two decades old, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the situation has not necessarily changed. Eccles et al. (1993) suggested that there is "often a mismatch between characteristics of the classroom environment in traditional middle grade schools and early adolescents' developmental level" (p. 553). Because of the failure of the schools to create appropriate academic challenges, the authors posit that the "early adolescent years mark a downward spiral on school-related behaviors and motivations that often lead to academic failure and dropping out of school" (p. 554).

But most of the literature has targeted the success or failure of the students, rather than that of the schools, as the potential cause of violent behavior. As suggested above in the "Violent Schools—Safe Schools" report by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1978), a prevalent assumption among educators and theorists is that there is a link between delinquent or violent behavior in the schools and academic failure. That report, like most of the published literature throughout the 1970's, emphasized the positive connection between good grades and good behavior, for which considerable data could be cited.

The corollary thesis, that troublesome youths are more likely to be academically unsuccessful, have limited career
objectives, dislike school, have more delinquent friends, and are more likely to commit violent acts, has been advanced, but without an equally firm foundation of research (Gottfredson, 1987; Hirschi, 1969). Feldhusen, Thurston, and Benning (1967), as well as Swift and Spivack (1968), were among the first to argue that students who were academically unsuccessful were more likely to be disruptive at school than those who were academically successful. Jerse and Fakouri’s 1978 study did amass evidence that delinquents were less academically successful than non-delinquents. Three years later, Siegel and Senna (1981) asserted that poor academic achievement in school, coupled with “chronic under-achievement,” were predictors of delinquent behavior. All of these studies, however, stopped short of proving a causal link.

Confirmation of the linkage between poor academic success and disciplinary actions came soon after. Loyola (1985) determined that out-of-school suspensions were related to low GPAs. The study sampled fifty junior high and high school students from an urban school district, utilizing the statistical method analysis of covariance, in order to investigate possible correlations. Suspensions, whether they were out-of-school or in-school, often resulted in lower achievement on the part of students.
These findings engendered some controversy because they directly contradicted the CCHR report, which had implied that increased use of suspensions might improve overall student performance. But further substantiation for Loyola's conclusions came when Smith (1992) asserted from a review of the evidence that "children may ward off feelings of inadequacy," engendered by poor academic performance by indulging in "misbehavior, displaying indolence in order to disguise incompetence, and asserting a lack of concern so as to hide a lack of ability" (p. 24). These misbehaviors, even though they were linked to academic performance, were not directly susceptible to eradication through a strategy of punitive deterrence, despite what many educators and parents would like to believe. None of this research, for example, has proven that as students become more successful academically their delinquent or disruptive behavior in the school declines.

Self Concept

Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) argued that an integral component in adolescent development is a positive, personal evaluation by that adolescent of his or her own value or competence as an individual: "This self-image will be based on the fact that the youth will be at least

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very good at something, because success is critical to a positive self-image" (p. 16). From this positive assessment flows the young person's inherent belief in his or her ability to accomplish tasks, to overcome obstacles, and, in general, to succeed. The problem with this theory is that the critical component—sometimes referred to as "self-esteem," and sometimes as "self concept"—has never been standardized. Many studies and articles are hopelessly imprecise in their use of either term, often employing them interchangeably.

**Definition of self concept.** The definition of "self concept" and how or to what extent it differs from "self-esteem" has been argued for years. Some authors tend to limit the definition of self concept to an individual's perceptions about specific dimensions in his or her life: religious self, social self, etc. In contrast, self-esteem is defined as an overall evaluation of the different dimensions of self-concept—in other words a measure of "what degree they accept and approve of themselves" (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 53). Coopersmith also suggested that the fundamental difference between the terms can be clarified by categorizing self concept as referring to adolescents' beliefs about themselves, whereas self-esteem refers to their feelings about themselves. This fine distinction, however, has yet to be widely accepted or utilized in the professional literature.
Some authors have preferred a much simpler definition: James (cited in Bracken, 1992), defined self-esteem as a "function of his or her presumed abilities and actual accomplishments" (p. 1). Bracken responded by pointing out that the weakness in James's definition is that it fails to take into account the effect that the environment can have on an individual's self-assessment. He also believed that James's formulation did not consider the fact that most individuals perceive themselves as a combination of strengths and weaknesses. One could have a much more positive feeling about himself or herself with regard to academics than in terms of "social self." Bracken therefore posited a multidimensional construct of self concept, which has become the consensus opinion in recent years. What varies from article to article, however, is that researchers have yet to agree on exactly what constitutes the critical dimensions of self concept. Bracken himself believed that most significant were the following six dimensions around which he constructed his Multidimensional Self Concept Scale: social, competence, affect, physical, academic, and family self concept. But Bracken has also been compelled to admit that these specific dimensions are not universally accepted, and that other instruments measure self concept in different terms.
While it is important to acknowledge the intellectual debate over terminology, it is equally critical not to belabor these disagreements to the extent that they prevent us from examining the outcomes of programs intended to promote positive change. Although the precise details of the definitions vary, a considerable amount of research has been done which supports the idea that self concept is one of the most important factors in determining whether students will be successes or failures. In this study, since the primary intent of the research is to measure changes in self-evaluation regardless of the precise terminology employed, the two terms will also be considered essentially interchangeable.

**Self concept and disciplinary problems.** Clarke's (1977) research indicated that the higher a student's self-esteem is, the fewer the discipline problems to be expected from that student. Unless students are provided the opportunity to be successful in school, he argued, then the schools will continue to have discipline and violence problems. "We will have more social disturbances, more people who need to be kept in jails, prisons, and mental hospitals, more people who need social workers to take care of their lives because they feel they cannot succeed in this society and are no longer willing to try" (p. 75). His specific suggestion for improving self-esteem--and therefore reducing discipline problems--was for a mentor to
develop a "close, caring relationship with the student" (p. 37) in order to help the child feel more confident and more important. If the relationship leads to greater success in school, this will result in higher self-esteem and fewer discipline problems.

Gold (1978) agreed with Clarke (1977) that disruptive behavior in schools is a mechanism by which many students cope with low self concept. He made the same essential argument: repeated failure reduces positive self concept. Unable to achieve success in the prescribed manner, the student eventually discovers that he or she can always find a receptive audience among other students that appreciate violent or disruptive behavior. In addition, the student receives a secondary gain in his ability to publicly voice his revolt against both society and the criteria that society has set for him. He is able to reject the values of the system he feels has rejected him.

This cycle, that failure in school leads to low self concept leading to violent or disruptive behavior, has gained wide acceptance. Research done by Massimo and Shore (1963), supported later work by Gold and Mann (1972), which postulated a causal relationship between low self-esteem and delinquent behavior. Feldhusen, Thurston, and Benning (1967), as well as Swift and Spivack (1968) and Kaplan (1975), indicated that students who were academically unsuccessful
were more likely to be disruptive at school than those who were not. Kaplan (1976) conducted a study of 4,000 junior-high students, determining that those who had shown evidence of low self-esteem had also committed twenty-two acts fitting the category he had labeled as deviant behavior. Reviewing the field in 1978, Gold suggested that it had been thoroughly proven that "delinquent behavior in school is generated by negative school experiences and resulting low self-esteem" (p. 4). Kelley (1978) advanced the corollary thesis that increasing self-esteem would reduce delinquent behavior. The problem, according to the Report of the Task Force on School Discipline (1990), was that the administrative practices of many schools actually reinforced the cycle leading to disruptive behavior rather than attempting to break it.

Self concept and academic achievement. The question of why all students who are failing do not turn to delinquent behavior to raise their self-esteem remains open. Gold (1978) suggested that "some youngsters are so closely attached to people who discourage such behavior that the support offered by an audience of their peers is offset by adult disapproval" (p. 38). This is typically provided by parents. The child may find the costs of inappropriate behavior, such as the withdrawal of love or material items, far outweigh the benefits. But in
today's society, it is increasingly likely that "at-risk" children will not have the benefits of positive parental interventions.

Other researchers have consistently returned, however, to an examination of self concept within the school environment as the most critical factor in determining behavior. McMullen's (1985) study of an urban middle school concluded that discipline problems most often result from the everyday problems that middle school youngsters typically face: social interaction, the need to achieve, and the impersonality of the school system. The author found that the most serious and persistent of these discipline problems occurred among students who suffered from low self-esteem. The study implied without unequivocally asserting that low self-esteem equated with, or resulted from, poor academic performance. Planning individual programs for middle school students was suggested as a possible method to raise these students' self-image.

Along similar lines, Clark and Clark (1993) argued that peer group influence is strongest during the middle school years. This influence is not only powerful, but often results in a loyalty to friends that is unparalleled during any other time during their life. Peers establish "standards and models of behavior" (p. 453) for early adolescents; unfortunately this can result in cruel and often inappropriate behavior. It should be
noted, however, that Clark and Clark did not assign complete influence to peer groups. They agreed with Gold that young adolescents also want to know that "significant adults (parents and teachers) love and accept them" (p. 453). It was therefore the absence of adult support and affection which left students vulnerable to being driven into inappropriate and destructive relationships with their peers.

Recent research has also confirmed the premise that changes during early adolescence result in a developmental decline in self-concept of ability (Eccles et al., 1993; Marsh, 1989), and self-esteem (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Simmons, Blyth, Van Cleave, & Bush, 1979). Eccles et al. (1993) discovered that "students' general self-esteem was lowest in the fall of their seventh-grade year" (p. 555), immediately after their transition to the middle school. The study surveyed 2,500 students during the fall and spring of the sixth and seventh grade years in all academic areas.

Several researchers have suggested that school transition, as well as changes associated with puberty in adolescents, results in a decline in general self concept. But studies on self concept in young adolescents (Nottelmann, 1987; Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Thornburg & Jones, 1982) which have attempted to control for the factor of transitioning to the middle school have proven inconclusive. Eccles et al. (1993)
suggest that this may be due to the use of the term "general self-esteem" by the researchers in the studies; he argues that a decline in self-esteem can result for reasons other than school. In addition, he points to the fact that the studies did not specifically define the critical components of the middle school environments in the prospective schools in their studies.

Self concept and educational reform. Recently, self-esteem seems to have become an active agenda item for educational reformers. In 1986, California passed a bill creating a California State Task Force to promote self-esteem, as well as personal and social responsibility. The purpose of this task force was to study the effects of self-esteem and its relationship in several key areas, among which were education and academic failure (Redenbach, 1991). The final report, entitled "Toward A State of Esteem" recommends that reinforcing self-esteem be considered an integral part of the educational programs offered to all students. Given the size of California and its usual influence on educational practices in the rest of the nation, it seems likely that similar developments can be expected in other places.

The movement of self concept as a subject of research to an issue for reformers should not be allowed to obscure the fact that many key causal links are still being logically inferred, and do not yet rest on a solid foundation of evidence. The link
between poor self concept and violent behavior is generally accepted, as is the connection between poor self concept and academic failure. What is still not proven is that raising self concept will have a direct impact on either academics or behavior.

Environmental Influences on Student Aggression

Understanding why students act out in violent and disruptive manners is critical to developing programs to reduce or eliminate those behaviors. As self-evident as this proposition might seem, most of the work which challenges and extends the more traditional paradigms while grappling with this issue has only been published since the mid-1980's— for example, the important, recent work on aggressive behavior and its influence on the school environment. Much can be said to have been accomplished in a brief span: researchers have successfully documented many of the ways that the school environment affects the behavior of students.

"Person-environment fit" is a theoretical philosophy that maintains that there are negative consequences of working in an environment which does not meet or fit an individual's needs (Hunt, 1975; Mitchell, 1969). For example, in a middle school, there are distinct differences in the classrooms and teaching styles from those employed in an elementary
classroom, and most of these changes reflect a transition toward a more impersonal educational environment. This raises the question of whether or not the institutional change is compatible with the adolescent's needs at the time when they enter the sixth or seventh grade. Some research (Eccles et al., 1993) suggested that a poor fit between the student and the environment might explain the decline in motivation that some students experience at this level. If so, there are certain implications to be considered for any inappropriate behavior or academic problems developing here.

In one sense, this is hardly a new concept. Hunt had already argued in 1975 that it was important for teachers to meet the developmental levels of the students they teach. But Eccles took this a step further, arguing that "different educational environments may be needed for different age groups in order to meet developmental needs. . ." (Eccles et al., 1993, p. 537). This suggests not only different teaching strategies and classroom environments, but different disciplinary and motivational paradigms as well. If the person-environment fit is poor, this might account for the lack of motivation, poor grades and inappropriate behavior on the part of students.

Eccles & Midgley (1989) have labeled this as "stage-environment fit," and argue that it is important to ensure that
the adolescent's need are met within the classroom environment. A consideration of the appropriate environment, however, is also dependent on a workable model of behavioral motivations, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of student actions. Rosenberg et al. explained in 1992 that there are essentially two psychological models of behavior, under which most interpretations attempting to explain the cause of aggressive behavior in children can be grouped: psychodynamic and behaviorist.

The psychodynamic theorists claim that "aggression is caused by faulty resolution of underlying psychological conflicts (e.g., Oedipus complex) that were precipitated or caused by pathological child-rearing practices" (Eccles & Midgley, 1989, p. 50). The psychodynamic model is based on one originally postulated by Freud, and represents a dauntingly complex explanation. It is all the more difficult to work with because it is so very hard to quantify in order to prove or disprove the model. In Freudian terms, aggressive behavior is the result of a lack of resolution of conflicts among the id, ego, and superego. Usually such behavior is associated with the superego, a problem in the development of which conflicts with the self-satisfying id. Freudian analysts advocate the idea that the superego controls the id, and see aggressive behavior as the failure of the superego to control
the id: as a result, there is no internal control over overt aggressive acts of behavior.

In marked contrast, behaviorists view aggressive behavior as a learned, maladaptive response to specific environmental stimuli. The behaviorists postulate two main theories explaining aggressive behavior: the aggression-frustration theory and the social-learning theory. Of all the explanations, the latter is the one most widely accepted among the researchers in the literature.

**Aggression-frustration theory.** Aggression-frustration theory suggests that when a person is denied fulfillment of basic needs (e.g., hunger, safety, pleasure, etc.), then an aggressive response is triggered by the frustration associated by not meeting these basic needs. This theory, whose major proponent was Dollard, has continued to be advanced and refined by other researchers. A more precise frustration-aggression hypothesis was defined by Rosenberg et al. (1992), who concluded that when people are blocked or prevented from attaining their goals, this frustration ultimately results in aggressive behavior.

It is important to note, in understanding this theory, that aggressive behavior consists of actions in which the intent is to hurt others rather than constructively resolve the problem which is the source of the original frustration. Thus diverted,
the individual becomes less and less able to find ways to meet those basic needs, and more and more likely to persist in lashing out at others. In a school environment, this suggests that students engage in violent behavior as they become increasingly frustrated with their inability to achieve academic success. This theory also implies that the aggressive behavior can be curbed if a way can be found to help the person meet those needs: for example, if a student is helped to conquer the mysteries of algebra. In other words, people who cannot resolve problems or situations, lash out against others. One major concern with this viewpoint among modern theorists is that environmental factors do not play a role in this hypothesis.

**Social-learning theory.** Social-learning learning theory, as advocated by Albert Bandura, is more widely accepted by researchers on aggressive behavior. Bandura discovered that children who simply observe aggressive behavior—for example by filmed actors—would be more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior than their peers who did not (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). The theory "assumes that behavior can be acquired merely through watching another perform the action," and that children can learn aggressive behavior through "observation, imitation, and modeling of another's behavior" (Rosenberg et al., 1992, p. 55). Individuals not only learn about behaviors from others, they learn about consequences and
rewards: "Reinforcement can occur vicariously; that is, observing the consequences of a behavior by another influences the likelihood of that behavior in the observer" (Woody, LaVoie, & Epps, 1992, p. 40).

Somewhat dissatisfied with the original premise as a complete explanation, Bandura (1986) has recently modified social learning theory slightly, by adding a dimension he has labeled "reciprocal determinism." In this theoretical viewpoint, "the characteristics of the person, his or her behavior, and the environment influence each other"—that is they are interdependent (Woody, LaVoie, & Epps, 1992, p. 41). Therefore, the revised theory argues, not only does the person and the person's behavior have an influence on the environment, but the environment has an influence on the person. This addition responds to some of the concerns which had been leveled at the theory, which charged that people learn from their environment, rather than interact with it.

Bandura promoted the idea that our behavior is a result of observational learning because that kind of learning is quick and effortless. He defined observational learning as taking place when the "observer acquires a symbolic representation of a model's behavior, which is then stored in memory and later retrieved when it is needed to guide the observer in the replication of behavior" (Woody, LaVoie, & Epps. 1992, p. 94).
For example, if the student is in a positive social environment and watching appropriate behavior as practiced by the collegiate mentors, Bandura would say that this new environment influences how that student thinks and behaves. Thereafter, the student would recall the example of the mentor, and behave in an appropriate manner. Bandura would also suggest, however, that the student’s behavior affects the environment as well. If the behavior of the student improves, because the mentor manages to influence him to be academically successful, then this would in turn affect the student’s own environment—hopefully in a positive manner. If the student’s behavior improves, then perhaps the students around him will be better behaved. Mentoring programs designed to reduce violent behavior or to improve study habits, therefore, implicitly begin from a basis in social-learning theory; otherwise, the mentor serves no specific purpose.

Social-learning theorists propose that children learn aggression through two other distinct and separate processes: modeling and reinforcement. Modeling suggests that children can learn aggressive behavior from watching others do it and attempting it themselves. This could happen at the playground or in the school hallway when a student witnesses a fight and then strikes someone else. Other environmental factors specified by the modern social-learning theorists as potentially
powerful influences causing children to imitate aggression are aggressive family members or a subculture, such as a gang, that considers aggression to be a positive attribute (Bandura, 1976 in Rosenberg et al., p. 56).

But even the most devout advocates of social-learning theory acknowledge that modeling alone does not consistently result in aggressive behavior. Aggressive behaviors must be reinforced, in order to become a permanent part of a person's repertoire. In the school environment, aggression can be immediately reinforced by the victim crying or running away. If the victim of an attack begins crying and runs away before a teacher or an adult authority figure can intervene, the flight of the victim has satisfied the aggressor's immediate needs in a way that is extremely difficult to counter with institutional consequences after the fact. Behavioral theorists would argue that this component is absolutely critical, and believe that without reinforcement aggressive behavior cannot be acquired (Rosenberg et al., 1992). It is simply not sufficient for a person to witness aggressive behavior in order to adopt; the behavior must be practiced and reinforced.

In practical terms, the concept of negative reinforcement can best be explained through the following classroom scenario: John is yelling in the classroom, complaining that the teacher will not let him go to the bathroom. The teacher
threatens a detention, and tells him to be quiet; John responds by yelling louder, and screams that he is going to go to the principal and call his parents about the teacher who would not let him go to the bathroom. Frustrated, the teacher gives in, and tells John he may go to the bathroom if he comes back and quietly gets to work. The student agrees and stops the obnoxious behavior. A negative behavior, in this case the student disrupting the class by yelling and screaming, continued to increase because the teacher refused to let the student go to the bathroom. This resulted in an increase in the intensity of the behavior—the yelling got louder and was accompanied by threats—which so disconcerted the teacher that John’s original demand was met, in exchange for returning to the room and behaving appropriately. In the future, the student will more than likely scream and scream louder until the teacher lets him go to the bathroom as a result of the teacher’s inadvertent negative reinforcement. He has also learned that appropriate classroom behavior, such as sitting quietly and doing his work, is a subject for negotiation, rather than a standard from deviation will be met by consequences.

Meanwhile, as John’s behavior has been negatively reinforced, he has modeled a successful aggressive behavior for the other students in the classroom. This is also critical, as
Bandura further advocates the theory of observational learning: "the observer acquires a symbolic representation of the model's behavior, which is then stored in memory and later retrieved when it is needed to guide the observer in a replication of the behavior" (Woody, LaVoie, Epps, 1992, p. 94). Bandura does point out, however, that the individual has to be motivated to follow a particular model.

The implications of social-learning theory to the challenge of eliminating violence in the schools are quite significant. The social-learning theorists would suggest that unless institutional responses to violence pursue a multidimensional strategy, they are doomed to be ineffective. Not only would effective strategies have to involve modeling and reinforcement of appropriate non-aggressive behaviors, but administrators, teachers, and staff members would have to be trained to avoid situations wherein they unknowingly provide negative reinforcement for aggressive actions. In addition, there has to be a realization on the part of everyone concerned with discipline that preventive measures are far more effective than the ever more stringent punishments. This is because the immediate aspects of satisfaction felt by a student following an aggressive or violent act may far outweigh in his mind the consequences that the school imposes. Thus any individual program adopted by the school to reorient
behavior, whether or not it is a mentoring program, may only be expected to be fully effective as part of an overall institutional strategy to reduce violent behavior.

**Mentoring Programs**

One strategy for reducing violence and improving academic performance which has become more and more widespread during the past decade is that of mentoring. Mentoring in the public schools is popular as a low-cost method of having a caring adult establish a one-on-one relationship with a troubled or unsuccessful student. The adult not only provides direct assistance with academics, but is able to model more appropriate behavior and support the student's self concept. As with other institutional responses to violence in the schools, however, the available research regarding mentoring programs suggests a lack of consistent application and a dearth of significant results to prove its efficacy. Nonetheless, parents and educators exhibit a strong belief in its ability to exercise a positive influence on student behavior. This has resulted in a variety of mentoring programs being initiated across the country, regardless of the state of the research.

**Definitions of mentoring.** One of the major concerns with the issue of mentoring has been the lack of one consistent
operational definition of what mentors are and what they do. Everyone interested in designing a mentoring program seems to have had a different definition, whether in business, higher education, private institutions such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, or public schools. At some institutions, mentoring was thought to be offering support or guidance; at others, it meant making attempts to keep the child out of trouble, and at still others it meant tutoring the child. Jacobi (1991) observed that the definitions were "so diverse that one wonders if they have anything at all in common beyond a sincere desire to help students succeed" (p. 505).

Educational researchers had attempted to provide definitions and paradigms, but their results have been inconsistent. In one of the more comprehensive efforts thus far, Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) defined mentors as "adults who assume quasi-parental roles as advisors and role models for young people to whom they are unrelated" (p. 546). The authors developed four hierarchical categories of mentoring relationships. Operating at level one were those mentors who rarely met with their mentees, and viewed the program's purpose as simply developing a relationship with the youth. At level two, mentors spent time with their mentees and did discuss options with the youth; level three focused on the mentors developing character in their mentees, and level four
mentors focused on developing competence among their mentees. The article cited several examples of mentors at each of the levels. While the work was well received, their definition and hierarchy can by no means yet be considered as a generally accepted standard.

Greenberg warned that it is often difficult to distinguish between mentoring and tutoring programs. Tutoring implies that the student is to receive help in attaining increased proficiency in a given subject area. Mentoring is interpreted as providing a warm, caring atmosphere and a positive role model for the student. Agreeing with Greenberg that it is often impossible to distinguish between the two, careful attention should be paid to his next point. He specifically argued that "mentoring/tutoring models should be examined carefully with respect to outcomes. While these programs would appear to have a certain intuitive validity, data that supports actual changes in mentee or tutee behavior and, specifically, academic performance, too often are lacking" (Greenberg, 1991, p. 73).

Survey of mentoring programs. A large number of schools in a variety of settings are attempting to utilize programs which take an adult mentor from the community to help students succeed in ways that are not possible for the students to accomplish alone. These programs vary from district to district and region to region, with the focus shifting
from academic to social or career goals. The New York State Mentoring Committee listed in 1989 more than 211 mentoring programs in that state alone. The "I Have a Dream" program of the Martin Luther King Foundation, and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program are just two examples of well publicized organizations providing adult volunteers for one-on-one relationships. The latter has more than 500 branches throughout the nation, serving children from low-income or single-parent families (Smink, 1990).

This appears to be indicative of a national trend. In 1990, the National and Community Service Act became law, and funds were delegated to support volunteerism and community service across the country. Since then, leaders nationwide, from the President of the United States to the ministers in our churches, have been calling for increasing volunteerism on the part of youth in our society. Derek Bok (1990), author of Universities and the Future of America advocates tutoring our at-risk, underprivileged students as one example of a collaborative, community service program. Many schools have a few volunteers donating an hour or more each week; Bok argues for a far more massive commitment of time and energy.

According to Bok, the U.S. Department of Education reported in 1990 that of an estimated 1,701 college and
university tutoring programs existing in partnership with the public schools—mostly organized through education departments—sixty-three percent of them provided some sort of mentoring. For at least seventeen percent of these programs, mentoring that was their specific focus. In any community with even a small college or university, what would be the potential impact if even twenty percent of these students devoted one hour a week to tutoring our nation's children?

Evaluating mentoring programs. The existence of so many programs raises the question of what studies have been done to determine their effectiveness. The City University of New York (CUNY) and the New York City Board of Education (BOE) developed a mentoring program that focused on academic progress, as well as promoting a more positive self concept among potential high school drop-outs (Turkel & Abramson, 1986). The CUNY study is the only one in the available literature which examines questions similar to those investigated in this dissertation. Ninth graders considered to be at risk of dropping out of school were selected as part of the project. The collegiate mentors, all education majors, were role models who "offered advice, a personal relationship, and academic skill development" (p. 69). This study assumed that academic progress would be more successful if the collegiate students served as adult role models, and helped students "to
deal with and overcome some of their academic, school-related, social, and personal problems" (p. 69).

The peer tutoring/mentoring project studied by Turkel and Abramson not only included academic goals, but also the intent to improve students' personal efficacy. A high school coordinator supervised the mentees, while a university coordinator selected the mentors and provided regular feedback. The study measured three aspects of behavior when determining the success of the mentoring relationship: school attitude, attendance, and GPA. A pre- and posttest Likert-type scale was administered to the mentee group to assess their attitude toward school.

Statistical procedures were employed to analyze the data with the following results: the mentors' rating of the mentees at the end of the study was significantly higher on both attitude toward school and ability. Data was obtained from a comparison group of ninth graders who were not mentored, but who were not considered to be at-risk of dropping out of school. There were no significant differences between the two groups when the chronic truant problems were removed, although attendance improved slightly. This study lacked any specific data concerning the number of truant students removed from each group, as well as descriptive statistics of the students in the comparison group.
The study also analyzed GPAs for both groups, and again, with the exclusion of the data from the chronic truants, there was no significant difference, although the GPAs were slightly higher for the mentee group. Using the Quality of Student Life scale, a significant difference was found between the pretest and posttest scores for the attitudes of the mentees. Taken as a whole, the study is a positive indicator that a mentoring program can be successful, but the analysis of the data lacked sufficient data to be considered definitive.

Other studies have suffered from similar problems. Graeff's (1989) research scrutinized a drop-out prevention program where at-risk middle-school students were assigned to a volunteer staff member who would meet with them regularly to provide academic support. In this quasi-experimental study, 51 at-risk students were selected to participate in the treatment group, and 82 students were selected to participate in the control group. The study lasted for a full academic year. The results showed that the students with assigned mentors achieved significantly better results when measured against the control group on variables of grade-level promotions, retention in school, and citizenship point average. But what is interesting to note is that the "at-risk" students who were involved in the Adopt-A-Kid program did not show significant improvements in grade point
averages, number of disciplinary referrals, number of truancies, number of out-of-school suspensions, or days suspended from school.

Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) created "Linking Up," a program designed to match mentors with youth in the local school districts. The purpose of the study was to explore the formation of mentoring relationships, and to figure out how to develop relationships that would make students persevere and succeed in the world. The authors admitted that the program had serious problems, beginning with extreme difficulties in recruiting mentors and problems associated with mentors not meeting with their tutors. The researchers interviewed the mentors in depth following the completion of the program, in order to achieve a better understanding of the mentoring process. Again, however, there was a distinct lack of documentation of the specific effectiveness of the mentors in changing behavior.

Slicker and Palmer (1993) designed a study that involved 86 at-risk tenth graders from two suburban high schools in Texas. The state of Texas has established criteria for identifying students at-risk, which include failing at least two classes, standardized test scores at less than the tenth percentile, graduation unlikely because of a lack of sufficient credits, as well as several other indices. The pool was divided
into three groups of 32 students each. The first group consisted of students considered to be the most at-risk, and each was assigned a mentor. The second group consisted of students deemed less at-risk. The third group was designated as a comparison group, on a number of variables including age in grade, GPA, etc.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (PHCSCS), GPA, dropout status, and a mentor log were used as measures of effectiveness. Operational definitions were provided for all measures. The PHCSCS was given as a pretest and posttest to both groups. The mentors were given one hour of training, including being provided with a hand-out on mentoring activities. Mentors selected their mentees from the available sample. The mentees had an initial meeting with the mentors who explained the program. Mentees were seen during the school day, or sometimes after school. In this study, mentors were instructed to be role-models for "conflict resolution, dependable behavior, positive attitude, and academic achievement" (Slicker & Palmer, 1993, p. 330).

Forty-five students remained in the study for the posttest at the end of the semester. It would have been interesting to analyze how many students dropped out, and how many moved, but this information was not published. A chi-square analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in
the dropout rate between the two groups. Analysis of covariance of the PHCSCS determined that the self concept of the mentored students had significantly increased. There was no significant difference found in the GPAs between the two groups.

Slicker and Palmer (1993) admitted that the integrity of their results can be questioned due to the quality of the mentoring. Some mentors saw their mentees routinely, and others very infrequently. As a result, the researchers decided to conduct a post-hoc analysis dividing the experimental students into two groups: those who were effectively mentored and those who were not. A questionnaire was administered to obtain this information. A chi-square analysis was completed on these two groups, and a significant statistical difference was found between the groups. The researchers also had the mentors keep "mentor logs," which rated on a scale of one to five the perceived effectiveness of each session. The student ratings of their mentors corresponded to the researchers' ratings of the mentor logs.

Although Slicker and Palmer's (1993) results were not statistically significant in most areas, their results still have merit. The researchers cited the importance of closely monitoring the mentors and the quality of the program. The authors suggested that further research should be done to
determine the effects of middle school mentoring, as well as its longitudinal results.

Sommerfeld (1993) noted that Public/Private Ventures, a private corporation, studied the longitudinal effects of the Big Brother/Big Sister programs. Researchers from Public/Private Ventures visited eight programs that served over 2,000 youths and conducted a phone survey of 821 people to obtain their results. The findings supported the premise that these programs tend to last longer and have more interactions than other mentoring programs based on volunteers. On the average, these mentoring relationships lasted longer than two years, with meetings at least once every other week. The researchers noticed a tendency for the number of meetings to decline as the length of the relationship increased. But many questions were left unasked. Because Public/Private Ventures was only seeking to determine how successful the programs had been in sustaining these relationships, the surveys did not focus on any behavioral changes.

School-college partnerships. More in-depth research on mentoring is almost non-existent. It has not been until the last few years that we have even seen any literature—let alone a single book—on school-college partnerships. George Washington University, in cooperation with ERIC and the Association for Higher Education, has published High School-
College Partnerships: Conceptual Models, Programs and Issues (Greenberg, 1991). This work explored ideas for a multitude of partnerships which could be developed, including a brief description of existing mentoring/tutoring partnerships.

Greenberg could cite very few mentoring programs between colleges and high schools. Only two high school-college partnerships were described. One of the partnerships provided academic assistance to increase the promotion rates of high school students who were facing academic difficulties, while providing positive role models. The college students earned college credit and were trained to be "effective tutors and mentors" (p. 73). Three CUNY colleges worked with four New York City high schools. In the second example, college students supported the local high schools' writing programs. The collegiate tutors offered tutoring sessions, graded papers, and led group discussions. Neither program, however, has been evaluated in terms of outcomes.

In 1989, Queens College launched a "Big Buddy" program to aid homeless children. A college student acted as a mentor to a homeless child serving as a "friend, educational and cultural guide, confidant, and role model" (Salz & Trubowitz, 1992, p. 551). Initially, twenty students were recruited to serve as Big Buddies one full day every weekend; they were collegiate mentors selected after interviews by a faculty
committee. Children were recruited in consultation with the local school district and the Crisis Intervention Service. The Big Buddies took their mentees to city attractions such as the Central Park Zoo, the Statue of Liberty, etc. Some went even as far as inviting their mentees to their homes for Thanksgiving dinner. Money was provided weekly for transportation and entrance fees to events; the collegiate mentors met regularly with the project coordinator.

Salz and Trubowitz (1992) cited several outcomes this program had on both the collegiate students as well as the homeless children. One significant outcome was the improvement of the children’s academic performance and behavior at school. Secondly, the authors pointed to the positive impact that participation in this program had on the college students. Unfortunately, in both cases, the authors neglected to provide the quantitative data to support these conclusions.

In a similar study, McPartland and Nettles (1991) conducted a two-year study on at-risk middle school students selected from seven middle schools, in which adults served as school-based advocates and one-on-one mentors. The program, entitled Project RAISE, linked adult mentors with urban sixth graders. RAISE, an acronym for Raising Ambition Instills Self-Esteem, asked adults from a number of area
colleges and industries to meet with an at-risk student once a week until they graduated from high school. When the program began in 1988, there were 55 students. Three years later 40 students remained in the program. The first two years of the study were conducted in only three of the seven sites. Student attendance and English report card grades improved, but promotion rates and standardized tests scores did not.

The small amount of specific research available which attempts to document the success of school-college mentoring partnerships is therefore ambiguous. While there is a general perception that such programs are productive, attempts to quantify success have been frustratingly inconclusive.

Components of successful mentoring programs. A rough consensus concerning some of the elements which must be included within a successful mentoring program has been emerging among educational researchers. Some of these prescriptions for success have been derived from the results of the studies cited above, while others germinated from more theoretical analyses. Among the earliest sets of guidelines for mentoring, Gold (1978) advised that any program intent on reducing delinquent behavior must have the following ingredients: "(1) a significant increase in the proportion of a youth's experiences of success over failure; and (2) provision of
a warm, accepting relationship with one or more adults" (p. 41).

Garrett, Bass, and Casserly (1978) believed that researchers must arrive at a common definition of the kinds of school disruption, and also standardize how we measure or record these events before launching into studies of methods to reduce these disruptions. If there is inconsistency in our definitions, and the way in which incidents are reported, it will be difficult to test theories and assess their reliability and validity from school to school. These authors specifically suggested conducting studies which were directed at preventing crime and disruption on a small scale rather than a large one, in order to better control conditions and analyze results.

Turkel and Abramson (1986) advised that, when schools were looking for measures to prevent academic failure, administrators should keep in mind that for changes to occur and be successful, "they must be developed and implemented without requiring inordinate expenditures or extreme system-wide modifications" (p. 68). These authors had two recommendations for programs employing collegiate mentors. First, there should be close collaboration between the college and high school if the mentoring program was to be successful. Equally important, the authors felt, the college mentors must
be closely supervised and the mentoring process should be considered an evaluated part of their coursework. This final requirement, it should be noted, eliminated the aspect of volunteerism in the mentoring program, a subject which had not been thoroughly studied at all.

Walker and Sylwester (1991) believed that intervention programs to reduce violence must include several components. They advised the school to take the initiative in setting up an intervention program between the home and the school. If possible, the school should teach academic skills in addition to the personal and social skills the student needs to be successful in school: "the instructional program should be accompanied by unobtrusive but sensitive school monitoring systems that monitor progress" (Walker & Sylwester, 1991, p. 16). The article also suggested a mentor program of either peers or teachers, who take an "active interest in the antisocial, at-risk student's school success" (p. 16). Walker and Sylwester, like almost everyone else working in the field, confined their focus to examining the problem and offering proposed solutions. They did not, however, document the efficiency of any of their proposals.

Hamilton and Hamilton (1992) offered eight specific recommendations for those organizations beginning mentoring programs. One of the most important points was
that it is often difficult to find mentors simply by recruiting them one at a time. Someone has to be willing to expend the effort to find adults willing to donate one hour a week to mentor students. Programs should concentrate on providing mentors only to at-risk students. Those mentors need specific goals and objectives. The authors asserted that the most important goal of any mentoring program is building competence: teaching the young people that they have the ability to do something well.

Support for the mentors is also essential to the success of any program. Hamilton and Hamilton noted specifically that their mentors had some difficulty in deciding exactly what to do with the mentees when they met them. Finally, the authors recommended that mentoring be viewed as a worthwhile commitment on the part of the adults.

While much of this material may in fact be helpful to administrators interested in establishing mentoring programs, it should be re-emphasized that what is missing are definitive studies which demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs in the first place. This is a critical handicap, because it leaves the designers of programs in the dark with respect to what behaviors or problems to tackle. If mentoring is successful at changing disruptive behaviors, but not in improving self concept, then this has to be taken into account when creating a
program. A completely different design is necessary if mentoring can be expected to reduce the drop-out rate, but not the suspension rate. Lacking any serious research into effective outcomes, there is at present no method available better than either trial and error or intuition to determine what kinds of programs should receive precious and ever-decreasing resources.

**Summary**

There is a tremendous amount of material available in the literature concerning different aspects of violence in the public schools. A concerted effort, for example, has been made by the federal government to gather a mountain of statistical data on the increasing levels of inappropriate and even criminal behavior in the public schools. Unfortunately, this effort has concentrated almost exclusively on documenting the magnitude of the problem rather than on positing solutions. The few governmental strategies for curbing school violence, as in Delaware, have centered on deterrence and punishment.

Educational research, however, has established a number of critical links between violence, self concept, and the absence of academic success. Many researchers believe that the chronic inability to achieve academic success drives a self-sustaining cycle in which failure in class leads to progressively lower self
concept. In turn, low self concept leads to violent behavior; the penalties imposed for these acts lead to the student falling further and further behind academically. As the student becomes less able to keep up in class, self concept declines further, and the potential for violence increases.

There is a widespread trend—if not quite a general consensus—that mentoring programs represent a potential tool for reducing disruptive behavior. The underlying idea is that the cultivation of a one-on-one relationship with an adult who can provide both academic assistance and a positive role model will be able break the self-perpetuating cycle of violence. Mentoring has the attraction that it is a low-cost strategy for effecting change, available to almost any school with a supportive community.

But there is an almost complete absence of any research to support the wisdom of employing these programs. Despite a growing number of studies, the analysis of experimental mentoring programs has proven to be inconclusive. One source of uncertainty stems from the inability of the professional literature to settle on a single definition of mentoring. Another part of the problem can be ascribed to the difficulty in defining the terms of success; each individual school district appears to have different goals, ranging from dropout prevention to better grades, or from reduction of
disciplinary referrals to decreased suspension rates. In order to determine the potential viability of mentoring programs, a precise set of definitions and objectives will have to be adopted.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Introduction
This project was an experimental study investigating the relationship between violent behavior, self-esteem, and academic success among urban middle school students, and whether a positive change could be affected in these areas through the intervention of a collegiate mentor. The study was designed to examine the effect of establishing a personal relationship between the collegiate mentor and low-achieving, violent students. This investigation sought to determine whether an investment of time and resources in the establishment of such a program of collegiate mentors was merited by an anticipated reduction in violent behavior and an increase in academic success and self-esteem.

Null Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference (p < .05) in the number of violent incidents committed by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.
2. There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the academic success achieved by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

3. There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the level of self-esteem by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

4. There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the number of expulsions and exclusions received by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

**Independent variable.** The independent variable was intervention of the collegiate mentor providing academic tutoring and a positive role model. The students were assigned collegiate mentors based on matching gender and race wherever possible.
Selection

The "Aim High: Students Helping Students" Program was created in the 1991-1992 school year as a cooperative effort between Central Middle School and Delaware State University, and served as the basis for this experimental study. University students with a minimum GPA of 2.5 (most of whom were education majors) were recruited as collegiate mentors for seventh- and eighth-graders. A college professor, serving as the campus coordinator for the project, individually selected students on the basis of classroom performance and personal interviews. Each potential mentor was asked to sign a contract to participate in the program for one full semester. The contract also required them not to advocate the use of drugs or alcohol, and to work within the administrative guidelines then in use at the school.

Role

Each mentor worked individually with one or two students, for at least one hour per week over the course of a semester. In order to be considered effective for the purposes of this study, each mentor met with each assigned student a minimum of ten times. Mentors were instructed that their primary mission was to provide academic assistance in identified problem subject areas, but received no special training. They were encouraged to work with teachers to help
establish behavioral goals for their mentees. In addition, the mentors served as positive role models and established an accepting, caring relationship with their students.

**Dependent variables.** The first dependent variable was the number of violent incidents as measured by administrative referrals and quantified by the Violence Scale and Violence Index. The second dependent variable was academic success as measured by the student's overall GPA in the spring semester, 1993. The third dependent variable was self-esteem, as measured by the *Multidimensional Self Concept Scale*. The fourth dependent variable was the number of exclusions and expulsions.

**Sample and Accessible Population**

**Accessible population.** These students attended an urban middle school in Dover, Delaware, which had a city population of approximately 23,000, and a district population of nearly 38,000. The city of Dover had a minority population of about 37%, which was growing rapidly; the largest minority was African-American, followed by Hispanic-American. The district included several smaller suburban entities which were an integral part of the greater Dover economic area. The city was the capital of Delaware, and therefore served as home to
the state government and all its subsidiary offices. The primary industries/employers in the area were Dover Air Force Base, General Foods, Playtex, Scott Paper, and A. I. Dupont. The area immediately surrounding Dover was primarily agricultural, with a large Mennonite population. Dover has two colleges: Delaware State University, which is a public, traditionally Black four-year university with a limited number of graduate programs (2,600 students), and Wesley College, which is a private, church-affiliated four-year undergraduate institution (1,500 students).

Capital School District encompassed the city of Dover and the north-central segment of Kent County. With a student population of not quite 5,000, there were seven elementary schools, two middle schools (one with grades 5-6, the other with grades 7-8), one high school, an orthopedic school, and an alternative school program. A significant number of high-school-age students in the district attended the local vocational high school, Poly-Tech High School. The minority population in the schools generally mirrored that of the population as a whole. Approximately 86% of all students who remained in the district graduate from high school.

The population of Central Middle School was approximately 1,000 students. This school contained grades seven and eight, with the population being about equally
divided between the grades. This school employed interdisciplinary teams and an active teacher's advisory program. Aside from the core academic subjects, students chose from a menu of related arts, exploratory courses, Band, Spanish, and Physical Education. The school had active intramural and interscholastic sports programs, and participated regularly in academic competitions such as Odyssey of the Mind. The faculty in this school had an exceptionally high number of teachers who had worked in the school for more than fifteen years. The building had been employing interdisciplinary teams for more than a decade. The seventh grade contained a 41% minority population and the eighth grade a 33% minority population.

**Sample size.** A stratified random sample of 21 students from grades seven and eight was selected for the experimental group from an accessible population of 1,019 in an urban middle school in the state of Delaware. There were 27 students selected for the control group. The intent of the sampling process was to define the population of students within that school who had both a history of repeated violent incidents and academic failure. Some of these students had such severe disciplinary problems in the past year that they had been
excluded from school. As a result, they returned with a GPA of 0.0.

Students were selected for the sample pool by two measures, after excluding all students who participated in the "Aim High" Program in the previous academic year: lack of academic success and violent behavior. Lack of academic success was measured by GPA in core academic subjects and failure of any class; a student was considered not to be academically successful if he or she had either an cumulative average of 2.0 or below, or had received a grade of "F" as the final grade in any subject.

Among these students, those with a history of violent behavior were selected for the final sample pool. This procedure was necessary in order to eliminate those students with non-violent disciplinary problems from the sample pool. This was determined through a consideration of three factors: number of administrative referrals in the preceding academic year; a Violence Scale score created as a cumulative measure of the relative severity of violent behavior; and a Violence Index score created to serve as a statistical descriptor of the likelihood that any given administrative referral for the student in question was the result of violent behavior.

All administrative referrals for disciplinary action in the preceding academic year were examined and tabulated. For
the purposes of tabulating the total number of referrals received by students in this study, all teacher referrals were weighted the same. The records of each referral were examined to determine whether or not it resulted from a violent incident.

The Violence Scale was created by assigning a point value to specific categories of violent behavior, with a range of 0-5 (See Table 1). The categories employed on the scale were those regularly used by referring teachers in the school being studied, with two exceptions: minor violence and non-violent referral. "Minor violence" was a summary category which included a variety of physical offenses judged by the administrator to be of a less serious nature than fighting: pushing, shoving, knocking someone down, etc. A "non-violent referral" was any referral which did not result from a violent incident. This included offenses such as perennial tardiness or missing detention. Higher numbers referred to progressively more violent behavior. "Fighting" referred to any physical altercation between students in which blows were exchanged and a third party had to intervene to separate the students. Such an episode would be categorized as "Assault" if the nature and violence of the attack by a student was such that it resulted in an arrest warrant being issued. In order to calculate a
student's Violence Scale score for a given year, the point values
generated by all referrals during the period were totaled.

The Violence Index was created to predict how likely any
disciplinary referral received by the student would be the result
of violent behavior. The index was calculated by the formula

\[
\text{Violence Index} = \frac{\text{cumulative Violence Scale Score}}{\text{Referrals}}
\]

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violence Scale Scores for Disruptive Behavior</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault on a teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This yielded a progressively higher result the more often a
student was referred for violent behavior. For example, a
student with three referrals—one for fighting, one for verbal
abuse, and one for a non-violent infraction—had a Violence
Scale of 4 and a Violence Index of 1.33. A student with three
referrals for fighting had a Violence Scale of 12 and a Violence Index of 4.0.

An examination of final grade reports indicated that, in the seventh-grade population, 158 of 532 (29.7%) students matched the criterion for not achieving academic success. Of these, 94 (59.5%) students had at least one administrative disciplinary referral. Thirteen of these students, however, had no disciplinary referrals for violent behavior; their infractions centered on behaviors such as cutting class, missing detentions, or theft. Excluding them, 81 (51.3%) of the students not achieving academic success had at least one referral during the

| Table 2 |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Academically Unsuccessful Students With Violent Behaviors** | **Seventh Grade** |  |
| **Incidents** | **Mean** | **Median** | **Mode(s)** | **Range** |
|  | 6.33 | 5.00 | 1.0 | 1-22 |
| **Violence Scale** | 8.25 | 5.00 | 1, 3 | 1-23 |
| **Violence Index** | 1.30 | 1.01 | 1 | .143-3.0 |

N = 81
school year for violent behavior. For these 81 students, the following statistical data concerning a history of violent behavior were compiled in Table 3.

When selecting among these students for inclusion in the sample pool, median scores were used instead of mean scores because it was observed that a small number of students at the extreme high end of the range of all factors—but especially Incidents and Violence Scale—had inflated the mean scores. Students were included in the sample pool based on scores at or above the median in any two of the three categories.

This procedure yielded a sample pool for the seventh grade of 57 students who have both a history of a lack of academic success and a pattern of violent behavior. This sample represented 10.7% of the entire seventh-grade population; 37.0% of whom were not succeeding academically; and 70.3% of whom had received at least one administrative referral for violent behavior.

Following the same procedure, 237 of 570 (41.9%) students were identified for the eighth-grade sample pool as not having achieved academic success. Of those, 59 (24.6%) had at least one disciplinary referral for a violent incident during the same academic year and had not participated in the "Aim High" program the previous year. For these 59 students
the following descriptive statistics were derived: of the students with at least one violent referral, 44 qualified as scoring above the median in any two of the three categories. The total sample pool for both grades was therefore 101 students out of a student population of approximately 1,102 (9.2%). The variance between this number and the current enrollment at Central Middle School was explained by the larger size of the sixth grade class measured, not all of whom transferred to Central Middle. Of these, 395 students (35.8%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academically Unsuccessful Students With Violent Behaviors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eighth Grade</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 59

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met the criteria for lack of academic success, and 138 (34.9\%) had at least one referral for violent behavior. The final consolidated sample pool of students selected for this study represented 73.2\% of the students with dual histories of academic failure and violent behavior.

The students in both grades were then rank-ordered. A rank order for cumulative scores on the Violence Scale was established, as well as a rank order for Violence Index. Then the two rank scores for each student were averaged together to create a final ranking. From this list, all special education students were eliminated. Students remaining on the list were selected for inclusion in either the experimental or control group through stratified random sampling. Parental permission for inclusion in the study had to be attained prior to the inclusion of a student in the experiment; this accounted for the fact that there were 21 students in the experimental group and 27 students in the control group.

**Generalizability.** The results of this study may be generalized to include students with similar histories of a lack of academic success and violent behavior in urban middle schools with similar demographics across the country. The results may also be applicable to middle schools with
populations of more than 1000 students (Doda, 1991) and a significant minority population.

**Instrumentation**

The *Multidimensional Self Concept Scale* (MSCS) was developed originally in 1992 by Bruce A. Bracken, a professor at Memphis State University, to "provide a multidimensional assessment of self concept" (p. vii). Bracken had found many problems with other self concept scales. They possessed "outdated items; . . . [being] normed on small samples drawn from single cities or states; have limited technical qualities; [and] are generally theoretically, practically, or empirically weak. . . " (p. vii). The MSCS was conceived on a "hierarchical model" of self concept or self-esteem, which begins from the assumption that the various domains of evaluated self-worth are at least "moderately intercorrelated" (p. 4).

The MSCS attempts to measure the individual dimensions of self concept—affect; social; physical; competence; academic; and family—which together make up Global Self Concept. This makes it possible for researchers using the test to focus on a particular area of self concept that relates to the subject of their individual study. Targeting children in age groups corresponding to grades 5-12, "the MSCS is founded on the assumption that children's self
concepts are learned behavioral patterns that have come under the control of context specific environments. It is presumed that children respond in fairly predictable fashions when in specific settings. . ." (p. 8).

"As a dependent measure, the MSCS allows for reliable multidimensional assessment of self concept" (p. 19), especially designed for evaluating changes over time in student self concept, and is thus appropriate for use in this research. Extensive field testing in public schools with a standardization sample of more than 2,500 children in nine states resulted in a test that "appears not to be greatly influenced by race, gender, or region of the country. . ." (p. 19).

The test can be administered individually or in groups. It requires about 20-30 minutes per test group to complete, and is considered minimally intrusive. Since the MSCS requires only a third-grade reading level, there is little chance academic deficiencies will impair a child's ability to comprehend and complete the assessment. Recent examinations of content and concurrent validity have revealed that the MSCS compares extremely favorably to both the Coopersmith and Piers-Harris inventories, scoring higher than either in the social, academic, and family sub-scales (Bracken & Bunch, 1992).

Reliability. Bracken (1992) indicated that the desired reliability—internal consistency and stability—of any tests
designed to be used for gathering information in "decision-making situations" (p. 44) should be, at a minimum .90, and preferably .95. The overall reliability of the MSCS exceeds both criteria, with a Total Scale alpha coefficient of .98 for the 7th grade, .99 for the 8th grade, and .98 for the entire 5th-12th grade standardization population of 2,501 subjects. Bracken contended that "this level of consistency suggests that examiners can expect examinee item responses to be quite consistent within scales" (p. 44).

Test-retest stability is also quite good. The MSCS Total Scale stability coefficient is .90 over a 4-week interval. "This finding suggests," Bracken (1992) concludes, "that there was no appreciable 'learning effect,' gain score, regression, or change in test scores from pretest to posttest administrations" (p. 45).

Validity. In terms of concurrent validity, the MSCS was compared to both the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale. Sampling conducted with 5th and 6th grade students (48 white, 16 black, and 1 Chinese) found that "the MSCS Total Scale score correlated .73 with the Coopersmith and .85 with the Piers-Harris total test scores" (Bracken, 1992, p. 48). The correlations between the MSCS and the Piers-Harris were especially strong, but across the board "each of the three tests
produced mean scores that were within two-thirds of a standard deviation of the other two tests" (p. 48).

Construct validity has been examined through extensive factor analysis of the MSCS. A five-scale comparison of the MSCS to five other published self concept scales (Coopersmith; Piers-Harris; Self-Esteem Index; Tennessee Self Concept Scale; Revised; and the Self-Perception Profile for Children) revealed a high degree of correlation between the dimensions being measured. The administration of all six instruments to a group of students confirmed that "the six MSCS underlying domains create a common factor structure for other measures of self concept" (Bracken & Bunch, 1992, p. 11).

Data Collection Procedures

Baseline data for inclusion in the sample pool was collected on all students in the following categories: GPA, class failure, and administrative referrals. The students' GPAs were calculated differently for rising seventh- and eighth-graders, due to the fact that they had taken different academic courses.

Academic data. If the students were rising eighth graders, three measures of academic success were recorded. The first was the student's GPA for the four academic classes during the 1991-92 academic year: language arts, social
studies, mathematics, and science. The second indicator was whether students had obtained the grade of "F" in any of their four academic classes. A third indicator of academic success was whether students had failed any of their elective classes. All elective classes for eighth-grade students were graded on a pass/fail grading system. These classes included physical education, health, related arts and "clinic."

Rising seventh-grade students' GPAs were measured on two indicators. The GPA was based on the academic average of five academic classes: social studies, reading, language arts, science, and math. The second indicator was whether students had earned the grade of "F" in any particular class. Seventh-grade students were not given grades in their elective classes. All of these values had to be taken from the students' final report card from the previous academic year.

Disciplinary data. Violence was measured from the disciplinary referrals that were generated for the 1991-92 school year on each student and, in the case of current seventh-graders, the summary of disciplinary actions taken by the associate principal. Data were collected from disciplinary referral forms to include the nature of the incident and the consequence applied. Specifically, suspensions—either in or out-of-school—and exclusions/expulsions were tabulated. There was no distinction made between the two types of
suspensions because the students in their sixth- and seventh-grade years were at two different middle schools with slightly varying policies on what behavior merited what kind of suspension. It was therefore decided that the common factor was the decision to remove the student from the general school population.

During their participation in the test program, students in both the treatment and control groups were monitored utilizing the following data: grades, days suspended both in- and out-of-school, exclusions, expulsions, and administrative referrals.

Schedule. January 17-31, 1993: Parents were notified of the selection of their children for participation in the study. Permission slips were collected from all parents of students in both treatment and control groups. All students in the sample pool were given the MSCS. The final list of collegiate mentors was created.

February 1-10, 1993: Students were chosen by stratified random sampling for assignment to the treatment and control groups, and assigned mentors. Tentative schedules for mentoring sessions were arranged.

February 10-20, 1993: Mentors made initial visits to Central Middle School, received orientation, met the students
assigned to them, and each student introduced a mentor to his/her teachers.

**February 10-June 18, 1993**: Period during which students had weekly contact with mentors.

**February 10-June 18, 1993**: Period during which data were collected on student behavior. Mentors were required to sign in and sign out in order to document consistency of time spent with students in the treatment group.

**Data Analysis**

At the end of this study, the first stage in data analysis was the collection of descriptive statistics on all dependent variables. This allowed the calculation of academic success, Violence Scale, and Violence Index, for both the treatment and control groups. Both groups retook the MSCS.

In the second stage of data analysis, a t-test for independent means was performed to determine whether or not there were significant differences between groups for any of the dependent variables before or after the treatment. When a significant difference was found prior to the treatment, an analysis of covariance was conducted to control for initial differences. A chi-square analysis was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of the number of exclusions.
Ethical Safeguards and Considerations

With any study wherein the experimental group receives a potentially beneficial treatment which was denied to the control group, the question must be addressed whether it is ethical to deny the treatment to the control group. In this study, however, this did not seem to represent a problem. The study collected data from an ongoing mentoring program, which operated on guidelines that had been negotiated between the school district and the college. There have never been enough qualified mentors available to assign to the entire population matching the sample description; in fact, the number of mentors employed for this study (more than 10) was the largest number ever available for the program. In other words, during this study, treatment was actually provided to a larger population of students than had ever received it before.

The selection process for determining which students receive a mentor was based on the same process that had always been used in this program. Students considered for inclusion had always been identified by lack of academic success and a history of violent behavior. The only difference caused by this study was that the identification of those students was quantified to a greater extent than previously had been the case. Since there have never been enough
mentors for all students with these problems, some selection process has been used throughout the program's history. In the past, this had been accomplished through simple random sampling. The primary difference in the study was that the experimental and control groups were stratified to include a specific representative number of students whose problems were severe enough in the past year to require exclusion from school. The school records of the "Aim High" program over the previous year indicated that this resulted in a higher number of students with the most severe problems—and presumably therefore those most in need of treatment—being selected for treatment.

The control group did not receive collegiate mentors, but students were able to participate in all other programs designed to improve behavior, self-esteem, and academic performance which were then employed at Central Middle School. Such programs included: team behavioral incentive programs; a McDonald's business partnership study group; individual and classroom guidance counseling; and an alternative school program. Students who received mentors the previous year continued to have access to them; but they were not included in either the experimental or control groups.

The parents or guardians of all students in the sample population were advised of the nature of the program, and
required to sign a permission slip/waiver before their students participated in the program. Students participating in the program were assigned code numbers in order to protect their anonymity, and no individual information with the student's name attached was used. Students were unaware of their participation in a study because the "Aim High" program of collegiate mentors had been ongoing for over a year.
Chapter 4
Analysis of Results

The intent of this experimental study was to investigate whether a collegiate mentoring program that might be employed in middle schools can be successful in reducing violent behavior by improving academic performance and self-esteem. The control group consisted of 27 students and the experimental group of 21 students at the start of the study. The Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS) was administered as a pretest and posttest to both groups; 48 students completed the pretest and 41 completed the posttest. Seven students were excluded from school and did not take the posttest of the MSCS; all of these students were in the control group.

A t-test was initially used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the groups on the subtests of the MSCS. This statistical technique was used to compare the differences between the means on the pretest of students who were assigned a collegiate mentor versus those students who were not assigned a mentor. It was employed to determine the probability that the difference between the sample mean of the control group and the experimental group was a real difference rather than a difference due to chance or
a natural variability in the population. A .05 level of significance was used to reject the null hypothesis. If the observed significance level was significant at the .05 level on the pretest, analysis of covariance was used to control for differences in the sample means.

A t-test was also used to compare the control and experimental groups on GPA. The data were collected for all four quarters as well as a cumulative GPA for all students. Disciplinary referrals were tabulated and rated according to the Violence Scale as well.

The second statistical technique used in this study was the chi-square statistic. It was used to determine whether the discrepancies between the observed number of exclusions and expulsions was significant as compared to the set of expected frequencies. The residual, or difference between the observed and expected frequency, was computed.

Demographics of the Sample

The sample was represented by 27 students in the control group and 21 in the experimental group, selected from a population pool created in chapter three, combined to represent seventh- and eighth-graders with histories of poor academic performance and repeated violent incidents. All students on the list had either earned less than a 2.0 cumulative
GPA for the previous year or had failed at least one subject. All participants were rated in terms of violent behavior by the Violence Scale and Violence Index created in chapter three, and rank ordered in terms of relative violence. The experimental pool was divided into control and experimental groups by means of stratified sampling, modified only when parental permission for inclusion in the study could not be obtained.

The demographic data collected on the collegiate mentors from the local university included sex and ethnicity. The 12 college students from the local state university mentored 21 seventh- and eighth-grade students. Of the collegiate mentors, two (16.6%) were female and ten (83.4%) were male. Four of the collegiate mentors were Caucasian (33.3%) and eight (66.7%) were African-American. One female collegiate mentor was Caucasian, and one was African-American. Of the ten male collegiate mentors, seven (70%) were African-American and three (30%) were Caucasian.

Of the 28 students in the control group, 21 (77.7%) students were African-American and six (22.3%) were Caucasian. Eight (29.6%) students were female and 19 (70.4%) students were male. Of the 19 male students, 14 (73.6%) were African-American and five (26.4%) were Caucasian. Of the eight female students, seven (87.5%) were African-American and one (12.5%) was Caucasian.
Of the 21 students in the experimental group, 17 (81.0%) were male and four (19.0%) were female. Of the 17 male students, 12 (70.6%) were African-American, one (5.9%) was Hispanic, and four (23.5%) were Caucasian. Of the four female students, three (75.0%) were African-American and one (25.0%) was Caucasian. Students were matched with mentors by sex and ethnicity when possible.

**Tests for Changes in Violent Behavior**

Hypothesis one states that there is a significant difference (p < .05) in the number of violent incidents committed by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention. Student tendencies toward violent incidents were measured by the relative violence of the average disciplinary referral, as measured by the Violence Index created in chapter three (variable VINDEX).

Table 4 presents the findings concerning means and standard deviations of the Violence Index of the experimental and control groups both before and during the study. When the pretreatment scores of the Violence Index were subjected to a t-test for independent means, the mean scores for both groups were essentially equal, t (46) = .14, p > .05; these findings are
presented in Table 5. During the posttreatment, the difference between the mean scores on the Violence Index between the

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Experimental and Control Groups on Violence Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Control</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence Index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretreatment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttreatment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

experimental and control groups was statistically significant, \( t(46) = -1.68, \ p < .05 \). The mean of the control group increased from 1.67 to 1.90, while that of the experimental group decreased from 1.70 to 1.23.
Table 5

T-test for Differences Between Experimental and Control Groups on Violence Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretreatment</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttreatment</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Tests for Changes in Academic Success

Hypothesis two states that there is a significant difference (p < .05) in the academic success achieved by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention. Academic success is herein measured by the grade-point averages (GPAs) of the students in the control and experimental groups before and during the study. Variable names refer either to the academic quarter under consideration or the cumulative GPA.

Table 6 presents the findings concerning the means and standard deviations of the GPAs of the mentored and non-
mentored students before and during the study. The first and second quarters represent the period immediately prior to the study; the third and fourth quarters represent the period during the study. When the first and second quarters were subjected to a t-test for independent means, although the mean for the mentored students was lower than for the non-mentored students, it was not statistically significant (first quarter: \( t (46) = -1.90, p > .05 \); second quarter: \( t (46) = -1.68, p > .05 \)). During the third quarter, the difference between the means of the mentored and non-mentored students was statistically significant \( (p < .05) \); the mean of the non-mentored students increased from 1.20 to 1.32, while that of the mentored students remained essentially unchanged; \( t (45) = -2.65, p < .05 \). During the fourth quarter, although the mean of the mentored students increased slightly while the mean of the non-mentored students decreased, but these changes were not statistically significant: \( t (46) = -1.16, p > .05 \). The cumulative GPA indicated no significant differences between the means of the mentored and non-mentored students: \( t (46) = -1.71, p > .05 \).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Experimental (n = 21)</th>
<th>Control (n = 27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretreatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Quarter</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quarter</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Quarter</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quarter</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 presents the t values and probability values for GPAs in the experimental and control groups before and during the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Quarter</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quarter</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Quarter</td>
<td>-2.53</td>
<td>.015*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quarter</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
<td>.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>.190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Tests for Changes in Self Concept

Hypothesis three states that there is a significant difference (p < .05) in the level of self concept of middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the
intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

Bracken's *Multidimensional Self Concept Scale* (MSCS) was administered as a pretest and posttest to all students in the control and experimental groups at the school site in the spring, 1993. The MSCS measures the individual dimensions of self concept--social; competence; affect; academic; family; and physical--which together make up global self concept. A total of 48 students completed the pretest; 27 students in the control group and 21 in the experimental group. The discrepancy between the numbers of students in the control group taking the pretest and posttest is a result of seven control group students being excluded from school during the second semester.

Results of the t-test for independent means for each subtest on the pretest of MSCS for mentored and non-mentored students are presented in Table 8. The means of the mentored students were slightly higher than the non-mentored students on the individual dimensions of social, competence, and physical, and lower on the affect dimension. There were, however, no significant differences revealed by t-tests for independent means in these individual sub-scales of the MSCS. The t-test resulted in the following values for the social sub-scale: \( t(46) = .45, p > .05 \); for the competence sub-
Table 8
Means and Standard Deviations of Experimental and Control Groups on Self Concept

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSCS</th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
scale: \( t(46) = .16, p > .05 \); for the affective sub-scale: \( t(46) = -.69, p = > .05 \); and for the physical sub-scale: \( t(46) = .25, p > .05 \).

The pretest scores of the MSCS were lower on the academic, family, and total sub-scales for the mentored compared to the non-mentored students. Significant differences were found on the pretest of the MSCS when it was administered for the academic sub-scale tests: \( t(46) = -2.26, p < .05 \); for the family sub-scale: \( t(46) = -2.10, p < .05 \); and for the total sub-scale: \( t(46) = -2.10, p < .05 \).

The analysis of covariance was used to determine the effects of mentoring treatment on the individual dimensions of academic, family, and total self concept at posttest, adjusted for pretreatment performance. Posttest means, standard deviations, and adjusted means for this analysis are also shown in Table 8. A significant difference among groups was found on the academic and total scales: \( F(1, 38) = 7.485, p < .01 \); \( F(1, 38) = 4.778, p < .05 \), respectively.

Table 9 presents the findings of the t-test for differences between the experimental and control groups on self concept before and during the study.
### Table 9

**T-test for Differences Between Experimental and Control Groups on Self Concept**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>.657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>.491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>.028*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
<td>.041*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
<td>.041*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05
Table 10 presents the findings of the analysis of covariance for initial differences found to exist between the experimental and control groups on the academic, family, and total dimensions of self concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>.596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.035*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Tests for Changes in the Number of Expulsions and Exclusions

Hypothesis four states that there is a significant difference (p < .05) in the number of expulsions and exclusions received by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as
compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

There were no expulsions from either the control or experimental groups. Seven students were excluded from the control group, and none from the experimental group. The chi-square statistical procedure was utilized to analyze the number of exclusions. Table 11 presents the findings of the

| Table 11 |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square Analysis of the Experimental and Control Groups on Exclusions |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>n = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Excluded</td>
<td>n = 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 6.374 * (df = 46)

p < .05

Chi-square analysis of the experimental and control groups on
The chi-square of 6.374 surpassed the critical value at the .05 level, based on 46 degrees of freedom. If there was no difference in the number of exclusions between the experimental and control groups, then the observed and expected frequencies should be nearly identical. A discrepancy this large would only occur 1.2% of the time if the experimental and control students were equally excluded.

Summary

The data allow for the rejection of Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference (p < .05) in the number of violent incidents committed by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

The data do not allow for the rejection of Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference (p < .05) in the academic success achieved by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

The data allow for the rejection of part of Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference (p < .05) in the level of self-
esteem by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention. There is a significant difference (p < .05) in favor of the experimental group on the academic and total sub-scales of the MSCS.

The data allow for the rejection of part of Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference (p < .05) in the number of expulsions received by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention. But there is a significant difference (p < .05) in the number of exclusions received by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.
Chapter 5
Conclusions, Discussion, Implications, and Suggestions for Further Research

This experimental study examined the relationship between self concept, academic success, and violent behavior of middle schools students when mentored by college students. Research on self concept (Clarke, 1977) supports the premise that students with an average or high self concept tend to display fewer discipline problems at school. Fostering mentoring relationships is one strategy that can be used to increase the level of self concept among violent middle school students. Academic success as measured by a student's GPA has also been shown to have a relationship with self concept. Siegel & Senna (1981) support the idea that the higher are students' GPAs the less likely that they will become violent, delinquent children.

The design of the study was experimental. A sample of 48 students was examined on the basis of academic success as measured by GPA, violent behavior as measured by the Violence Index, and self concept as measured by Bracken's (1992) Multidimensional Self Concept Scale. The students were rank-ordered in terms of the Violence Index, and then divided into experimental and control groups through a
process of stratified random sampling. The students in the experimental group were paired with collegiate mentors from the local state university.

The hypotheses investigated in this study, stated in the null form, were:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the number of violent incidents committed by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the academic success achieved by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the level of self-esteem by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) in the number of expulsions and exclusions received by middle school students with a history of violent behavior after the
intervention of collegiate mentors, as compared to similar students who did not receive the same intervention.

Conclusions

The results of this study support the idea that the intervention of a collegiate mentor can be expected to lessen the number of violent incidents in which students with a history of such incidents participate. The Violence Index was developed to assess the potential that any given disciplinary referral would be the result of a violent incident. There was no significant difference in the Violence Index of the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the study. During and following the intervention of the mentors, however, there existed a significant difference. The Violence Index of the control group actually increased, while that of the experimental group decreased. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

The intervention of the collegiate mentors with respect to academic performance appears not to have been effective, at least in the short term. In both the experimental and control groups, the general trend was for a steady decline in GPA from the first quarter on through the calculation of cumulative GPAs. There was a significant difference in the grades between the groups during the third quarter. In this quarter,
the GPA of the experimental group declined, while that of the control group increased. In the fourth quarter, however, the GPAs of both groups returned to their previous relationship. This had no discernible effect on the calculation of the cumulative GPAs of either group. Nonetheless, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results from GPA in this study appear to be consistent with earlier studies (Slicker & Palmer, 1993; Turkel & Abramson, 1986), which were unable to discover significant correlations between mentoring and academic success.

With respect to self concept, as measured by the MSCS, there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the pretest on the dimensions of family, academic, and total. Using analysis of covariance to adjust for the initial differences in the pretreatment test scores, the posttest revealed that, following the intervention of the collegiate mentors, there was a significant increase in favor of the experimental group relative to the control group in the dimensions of academic and total self concept. In all other dimensions, the relationship of the two groups remained constant. The Null Hypothesis 3 was rejected for the areas of academic and total self concept. Mentoring is an effective strategy for raising a students' academic and total self concept.
These results provide support for the conclusions reached by previous researchers (Gold, 1978; Kaplan, 1978; Kelley, 1978). No students involved in this study, in either the experimental or control groups, were expelled from school. Seven students from the control group, however, were excluded from school for the remainder of the academic year. If the intervention of the collegiate mentors had had no effect, then the chi-square analysis would have suggested that at least four students from the experimental group should also have been excluded. This was not the case: no experimental group students were excluded. Hypothesis 4, therefore, was also rejected; the intervention of the collegiate mentors did result in a decrease in exclusions among students with a history of violent behavior. These results seem consistent with earlier studies (McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Salz & Trubowitz, 1992).

Discussion

Violent behavior is a serious issue for administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Although students have performed disruptive and violent acts in public schools since their creation, the debate over the increasing severity of the nature of the problems schools are dealing with has expanded dramatically. Research has indicated that delinquent students tend to have a lower self concept (Gold, 1978) and GPA (Gold
& Mann, 1972) than non-delinquent students. Studies directly positing a causal correlation between self-esteem and academic improvement (Swift & Spivak, 1968, Walker & Sylwester, 1991), as well as self-esteem to violent behavior in the schools (Gold & Mann, 1972; Kaplan, 1976; Kelley, 1978; U.S. Department of Education, 1992; Serrano, 1992), have sparked further concern about successful interventions to alleviate the violent behavior of certain students.

It has been reported that these students have benefitted from the effects of interventions such as mentoring (Smink, 1990). Mentoring has consistently appeared in the professional literature as a viable strategy for attacking this problem. However, studies reporting these positive effects are few in number and tend to have flaws in their research design. Although there has been national interest for mentoring in our schools (Graeff, 1989), most districts do not provide this form of intervention. The results of this study offer evidence that mentoring programs do represent a possible solution to breaking the cycle of violent behavior among some students.

Given the fact that three of the four null hypotheses were rejected by the evidence generated in the study, the success of collegiate mentors in lessening the incidence of violent behavior and in improving self concept seems to have been supported. The presence of a handful of collegiate mentors
meeting weekly with one or two students resulted in a substantial decrease in violent incidents in the classrooms and halls at Central Middle School. Students in the experimental group showed a significant decrease in Violence Index, indicating a decrease in the violent nature of the administrative referrals they received. At the same time, the students in the control group not only continued along their previous path of violent behavior, their Violence Index scores increased.

A critic might argue that the mean scores on the Violence Index of the sample pool suggest that Central Middle School is not a very violent place, and that the decreases noted above are actually minimal. The mean of the seventh-grade sample pool for Violence Index was 1.33, and that of the eighth-grade sample pool was 1.09; both scores were calculated on a scale which ranges from 0 to 5. These means might be interpreted as showing that the average referral for these students ranged somewhere between verbal abuse and minor violence, which would not seem indicative of particularly violent students.

That this is not the case is shown in Table 12. This table presents the findings of a chi-square analysis of the most violent pretreatment incident recorded by each student in the experimental and control groups. Most students in the experimental and control groups had referrals for fighting or
assault (Violence Scale scores 3 and 4). The reason that this is not immediately apparent from an examination of the means of the Violence Index is that the index itself is less sensitive than it should be.

Table 12
Chi-Square Analysis of Experimental and Control Groups on Highest Pretreatment Violence Scale Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Violence Scale Score</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group n=0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group n=0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 0.495 (df = 2)

p > .05

But most of the students who had referrals for fighting or assault also had a large number of referrals for minor violence,
verbal abuse, and non-violent incidents. These non-violent referrals deflated the means for the Violence Index, because, by school and district policy, even one occurrence of an incident near the top of the scale (assault, possession of a weapon, or assault on a teacher) led to an immediate hearing for expulsion or exclusion. It would therefore be extremely rare for any student to be present in the school long enough to post a Violence Scale score of 4 or 5 more than twice.

Table 13 presents the findings of a chi-square analysis of the most violent incidents for the experimental and control groups during the study. It should first be noted that this table shows a significant difference (p < .05) between the single most violent incidents recorded by students in the experimental and control groups. The chi-square of 9.67 surpassed the critical value at the .05 level, based on two degrees of freedom. The seriousness of the most violent incidents recorded by the experimental group declined, while that of the control group rose. In the experimental group, 66.7% did not have single referral more serious than minor violence, compared to only 29.6% in the control group. At the other end of the scale, only 5.8% of the experimental group had a referral receiving a Violence Scale score of 4 or 5, while in the control group 25.6% of the students received such a referral. The significance of the differences between the two groups in terms of posttreatment
Violence Index is therefore supported as having reflected a real
decrease in violent behavior.

Table 13
Chi-Square Analysis of Experimental and Control Groups
on Highest Treatment Violence Scale Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Violence Scale Score</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td>n=11</td>
<td>n=6</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>n=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>n=0</td>
<td>n=8</td>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>n=4</td>
<td>n=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 9.67* (df = 2)

p < .05

While the Violence Index of the experimental group declined, their total dimension of self concept increased significantly as compared to the control group. This increase in total self concept was driven by significant increases in the academic and family dimensions. The academic dimension was
the area in which the mentors were concentrating on improving, and the results imply that the mentored students felt better about their work and themselves as students.

Perhaps the most important result of this study is that it strongly suggests that several students in the experimental group avoided exclusion from school because of their relationships with the collegiate mentors and the improved self concept resulting from these relationships. These findings therefore support Clarke's (1977) premise that the better students felt about themselves, the less prone they would be to misbehavior. The conclusions of Gold (1978), Kaplan (1976), and Smith (1992) regarding the relationship between self concept and behavior are also consistent with the results of this study.

Reaching a conclusion about the effectiveness of mentors in improving academic performance is more difficult, because there was no comparable increase in the GPAs of students in the experimental group to match the improvement in self concept. At first glance this result is disappointing, and seems contradictory to the results achieved by Salz and Trubowitz (1992), who did report concurrent changes in both academic performance and behavior. However, it should be noted that Salz and Trubowitz provided no analysis of data to support their optimistic conclusions, while Graeff's (1989) study, which
was supported by a thorough analysis of the data, found that a mentoring program could improve behavior without necessarily raising grades.

There are three potential reasons why the improvements noted in self concept did not cause the GPAs of the experimental group to increase. First, the increase in self concept may not have been large enough to effect a change in academic performance. Secondly, there could also be an inherent time delay between changes in self concept and resultant changes in GPA. The study could have been too short to observe such changes. Finally, the possibility does exist that GPAs did not change because there is no direct causal link between self concept and academic performance.

But the mentors did manage to lay a solid foundation for potential future improvement in the academic performance of the experimental group. Even though the members of the experimental group did not achieve higher GPAs, they evidently began to feel better about themselves as students. This is a small, but important first step toward academic improvement, and should not be dismissed lightly. It can also be argued that for an improvement in GPA to occur, violent and inappropriate behavior must first be curtailed. An increase in academic self concept in slightly less than two quarters represented the creation of a sound base for future academic
improvement, which was all that could practicably have been accomplished.

The fact that the two groups were not significantly different in terms of violent behavior prior to the study suggests that an inexpensive mentoring program can have a positive effect on student outcomes. The consistent interaction with a concerned, positive role model significantly improved the self concept of chronically violent students and caused a decline in violent behavior. Such a low-cost program is within the reach of almost any middle school. The collegiate mentors volunteered their time, and for the guidance counselor who supervised the program the time requirements were minimal. Students appeared to value their relationships with the collegiate mentors, as evidenced by the fact that many students outside the study requested mentors be assigned to them. This small investment was overwhelmingly repaid by the decrease in violent incidents and the reduction in the exclusions among the experimental group.

Implications

The most interesting implication of this study is that the existence of a mentoring relationship is equally if not more important in reducing violence than the precise nature of that relationship. In this program, the collegiate mentors were not
provided any special training regarding the type of relationship they were to enter into with the middle school students. They were instructed to help the students with their work, be supportive, and not advocate or endorse violations of school policy. When the mentors had specific questions or concerns, they were encouraged to bring them to an administrator or guidance counselor, who assisted in resolving those issues.

This resulted in a variety of approaches and relationships. The guidance counselor supervising the program observed that some of the mentors were fairly directive in their approach, and some were not; some assisted students in several academic subjects; while others focused on an area in which they felt comfortable and confident. All that was required, in terms of consistency, was that the mentors meet with the students once a week for at least ten weeks. In terms of the paradigm created by Hamilton and Hamilton (1992), there was no attempt to progress beyond a level one mentoring relationship. Yet this study suggests strongly that the students were able to see the mentoring relationship as a success within the context of the school, and this reduced the need to act out in compensation for failure.

These different mentoring relationships resulted in surprisingly consistent changes in behavior in the experimental
group. Self concept improved, exclusions disappeared, and violent behavior declined. The specific area of self concept which led to a global improvement was the academic dimension, despite the fact that overall GPAs in the experimental group did not change. This suggests that the relationship with the mentors caused the students to feel better about their schoolwork, and that this positive feeling affected their behavior in the halls and in the classroom.

Improvements in GPA did not go hand-in-hand with changes in behavior. In both the experimental and control groups the general trend was for the grades of students with a history of violent behavior to drop as the year progressed. This raises the question of why the mentors, who were concentrating on academic tutoring, did not have better success in raising grades. Turkel and Abramson (1986) would argue that the mentoring program at Central Middle School did not increase GPAs because the mentors were volunteers. As volunteers, their performance was not evaluated as a part of a grade for one of their own classes.

It is difficult to determine whether this would have made a significant difference in the context of this study. Guidance counselors and teachers expressed a strong preference for working with volunteers, perhaps due to a less-than-successful experience in the program's first year, wherein some of the
mentors (from another college) were in fact working for credit. Guidance counselors regularly observed that the collegiate mentors who were participating to earn credit were less motivated to establish meaningful relationships with their mentees.

Walker and Sylwester (1991) would argue that the mentoring program might have been more successful in improving academic performance if the mentors had been part of an integrated intervention program including direct home contacts to reinforce what was being done in the school. Direct coordination with parents or guardians might well have improved the results, but would also have represented a departure from the intent of the mentoring program. Central Middle School implemented this program in order to have an impact with a minimal expenditure of resources; the school does not possess the staff or the budget to support a comprehensive home visitation program.

Among the specific recommendations for mentoring programs made by Hamilton and Hamilton (1992), there is the suggestion that mentor training is a key element of success. They might have argued that this study would have had better academic results if such training had been conducted. Again it should be noted that this mentoring program was started to meet a defined need with very few resources. At the program's
inception, two years prior to the study, the mentors were recruited one by one, as college students became interested in the program. Each was thoroughly interviewed by the university coordinator and the guidance counselor, but the immediate need to pair the mentors with troubled students and the lack of resources available to the school made a formal training program unrealistic.

Although the mentors provided assistance with class work, the results of this study suggest that dramatic increases in GPA should not be expected. The students in this program were so far below passing, with all the deficiencies in basic skills this implies, that it would have taken years rather than months to improve them. A prerequisite for any improvement, however, is remaining in the classroom to receive instruction, and many of these students had days and weeks of multiple suspensions in the period prior to the study. Perhaps the expectations held by administrators, counselors, and teachers of what constitutes success in a mentoring program need to be framed in purely behavioral rather than academic terms, at least in the short run.

Teachers may have to be willing to tolerate a transitional period in which formerly disruptive students cease to be behavioral problems, but have not yet to become academically productive students. It also suggests that schools employing
mentoring programs should see them as only one tool in a coherent strategy of remediation. Perhaps mentoring, for greatest effect, will have to be linked to special classroom instruction, individualized to address specific academic deficiencies.

Perhaps the most important implication of this study for administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers is that a low-cost mentoring program can have an appreciable effect on violent behavior in an urban middle school. This program is within the reach of almost any school; it initially requires only the investment of the time to begin the partnership with a local university or corporation and willing mentors. Local modifications can be easily grafted onto its basic structure to meet specific needs.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Further research is needed to increase our understanding of mentoring middle school students with a history of violent behavior and academic failure. This study has documented a decrease in violent behavior and an increase in self concept through the short-term employment of collegiate mentors, but without a concurrent rise in GPA. A number of refinements are needed to further explore the topic.
A longer study, pairing mentors with violent students for a full academic year, could provide insight into whether or not the mentoring process would then have a significant effect on GPAs. Such a study would not be without certain logistical difficulties, however. The primary problem is that the academic years of the public schools and local colleges and universities do not match. Colleges tend to end their year as much as eight weeks earlier than schools; their vacations for holidays are scheduled differently than those of public schools. Since the majority of the available mentors in this study came from a collegiate population from out of the state, this would mean that the longer the period of the mentoring, the more difficult it would be to ensure that the mentored students received consistent visitations. Moreover, with their own classes and schedules changing, the collegiate mentors might find it very difficult to commit to the program for more than a semester. In addition, some of the most enthusiastic mentors were collegiate athletes, most of whom admitted that they only felt that they had the time for the program in their sport's off-season.

A mentoring program wherein the mentors had received specific training in establishing a relationship would also be a useful subject for further study. This would allow a direct comparison with the results achieved in this study, and would
make it possible to determine if such training was cost-effective, or even necessary. The problem here is that the design of such a study would have to be created quite carefully in order to avoid contamination between the trained and untrained mentors. Most of the college students involved in this study knew each other, and it would have been difficult to keep them from sharing the benefits of any training.

A reasonable extension of this study would be to combine the efforts of collegiate mentors with specific classroom strategies designed to support the academic improvement of the violent students. This would allow the study to examine the best strategies for moving the mentored student from feeling better about academics to achieving better in classes. Again, however, there would have to be great care taken with the design of such a study.

Finally, a follow-up study that tracked the academic and behavioral progress of previously mentored students through the next year, in order to determine whether or not the mentors had effected a lasting change in the behavior of the violent students would be beneficial. Statistics could be collected in the same categories to determine if students continued to manifest improved self concept and better behavior after the mentoring relationship had ceased. Aside from the logistical problems inherent in following students,
many of whom changed schools during the next academic year, this study might or might not be able to help resolve the question of how long a mentoring relationship has to exist before it causes permanent changes in behavior. A negative result in such a study would require a return to the original mentoring study design in order to vary the length of the mentoring relationship.

All of these modifications and extensions of the original mentoring design hold out the possibility of more significant results as the effort and resources expended in such a program increase. Such increases, it must be remembered, necessarily complicate the program, and move it beyond the original intent, which was to implement a program that any school could afford, in terms of time and resources. This requirement has to be kept firmly in view when designing any mentoring program.
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Appendix

January 6, 1993

Dr. Joseph L. Crossen, Superintendent
Capital School District
945 Forest Street
Dover DE 19901

Dear Dr. Crossen:

Thank you for your prompt favorable response to my request to conduct a study of the effectiveness of the "Aim High" program at Central Middle School. I will be presenting the proposal to my dissertation committee in early January, and from there it will go to the College of William and Mary's Human Ethics Committee for final approval.

I will also present the essentials of the project, as you requested, to the Instructional Advisory Committee. It is my intent to present them the same precis that the Human Ethics Committee receives, and I have attached a copy of that document to this letter for your information. I will, of course, provide the district with a copy of the results of the study when it is completed.

Let me thank you again for your support in this matter.

Sincerely,

Faith R. Newton, Principal
I understand that as a participant in the "Aim-High" program as a student tutor that I am responsible for more than just the academic improvement of my students. I am working to be a positive role model to encourage my students to stay in school, make better grades, and avoid the use of drugs. Therefore, I acknowledge and agree to the following principles of the program:

—I will advocate appropriate behavior at all times, consistent with the rules established by the school district.

—I will consistently counsel my students against the use of drugs and/or alcohol, and will cooperate with school administrators in eliminating the same.

—I will work cooperatively with the students' teachers understanding that it is my task to reinforce what they are doing.

—I will commit to participation in this program for a full semester, taking care to advise the school ahead of time any week that I may be unable to attend.

—I will remember that the whole purpose of this program is to help the students, and I will use that principle to guide my activities.

Signature______________________ Date____________________

_______________________________ Date____________________
CMS Administrator
Dear Parent:

I am pleased to be able to inform you that Central Middle School is continuing to offer the "AIM HIGH" program to many of our students whose performance might benefit from personal attention. The program matches our seventh and eighth-graders with collegiate mentors from Delaware State College; this partnership has been an ongoing and extremely successful effort at C.M.S. for the past year.

As part of my doctoral dissertation I will be measuring the progress made by students involved in various programs to increase academic success, especially the "Aim High" program. This study has the approval of Capital School District and the College of William and Mary. Dr. James Strange, Professor of Educational Administration, will be supervising the conduct of the study. We are hoping to document the positive effect that a college student can have when he or she enters into a mentoring relationship with a middle-school student. In most cases, the college students from Delaware State will meet with their partners once a week to help them with their homework and give them some individual guidance.

I am requesting your permission to use statistical information concerning your child in this study. I can assure you that no one's individual records, with his/her name attached, will be released to any third party. In addition, your child will be asked to take a brief twenty-minute self-evaluation at the beginning and end of the program. This measures how your child thinks about school, grades, etc. Again, these results will be reported as a group, and no records of this evaluation will be kept in the district.

Please take a moment to sign and return the attached form. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me during the day at 739-5541. Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Faith R. Newton, Principal

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YES! I want my child to participate in the "Aim High" study. You may include _______________ in the group study at Central Middle School.

Signed ___________________________ Date ________________
Vita

Faith Richards Newton

Birthdate: July 8, 1958
Birthplace: Eastchester, New York
Education:

1988-1991  The College of William and Mary
           Williamsburg, Virginia
           Educational Specialist Degree

1984-1987  The University of Rochester
           Rochester, New York
           Master of Education

1976-1980  State University of New York
           at Cortland
           Cortland, New York
           Bachelor of Arts