

**THE IMPACT OF PEER MEDIATION  
TRAINING ON CONFLICT**

**LYNDA JUDITH VANKOUGHNETT**

B.A., Laurentian University, 1969

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## **ABSTRACT**

The problem investigated in this study relates specifically to high school students and their response to conflict. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not there is an improvement for peer mediators in handling inter-personal conflict situations after receiving peer mediation skills training. The effectiveness of this training was measured by using both the quantitative and qualitative methods. Cross-sectional surveys were distributed to a cluster sample of 18 grade 11 and grade 12 peer mediators and the resulting data were analyzed. Interviews with 7 peer mediators were also conducted. Although the sample group size may be too small to make conclusive statements, a relationship between peer mediation training and constructive outcomes in conflict situations was indicated for trainees in their inter-personal associations.

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## **Research Problem And Rationale**

### Introduction

The problem to be investigated in this study relates specifically to high school students and their response to conflict. This was chosen because of the increasing level of conflict in my school.

Conflict is an ongoing, normal occurrence in our everyday life at school. As long as people interact together, whether it is a student-teacher relationship or a student-student interaction, there will always be clashes. Most of the student-teacher struggles involve a lack of respect for authority, rules and property, whereas the student-student disagreements result from name-calling, rumours, gossip, threats, talking to one's girlfriend or boyfriend and losing or damaging property. Likewise, these conflicts as well demonstrate a lack of respect. Dr. Ann Cameron (as cited in D'Arcy, 1996), a psychology professor at the University of New Brunswick who leads a research team working on interventions to school conflicts wrote in her book, Stopping the Violence: Changing Families, Changing Futures, that "respect for others is vital in the creation of a peaceful learning environment"(p.3).

The actions a student chooses in response to a conflict will affect the outcome of that conflict. When conflicts arise, most students react with verbal or physical aggression, which often increases the problem and leads to violence. Philip S. Morse, an associate professor at State University of New York and Ron Andrea (1994), a director of pupil services with the Union Free School District in New York, wrote,... "the only two choices many students face today...fight or flee. Our approach to conflicts in our society has historically been adversarial. Seldom does such an approach effectively resolve the issue at hand. At worst, it leads to more conflict and animosity between the combatants" (p.75). When students bring their conflicts to their friends, the typical response is often "get

even”; therefore, confrontation is the method most commonly used in our school. This is a win/lose arrangement: the aggressor wins and the other person loses.

Pamela Lane, a child and family therapist in Phoenix, Arizona, and Jeffries McWhirter (1992), a professor of counselling psychology at Arizona State, comment, “Young people accurately receive a clearly conveyed cultural message: if one person wins, the other must lose” (p.15). Confrontation can also be a lose/lose approach when a student’s desire to punish or get even causes him or her to take vindictive actions that can harm him or herself as well as the opponent. When conflict escalates or remains unresolved, it can become very destructive. As a conflict escalates, threats increase! As we recently saw in our school, more people become involved and take sides.

Everyone in conflict has a choice-- to either turn conflict into a competitive, destructive battle or into a positive, constructive challenge where there is an opportunity for personal growth.

Communication is the key to cooperative interaction. Effective communication in conflict is proactive and produces win/win results. David Brown (as cited in D’Arcy, 1991), vice-principal of Southgate Secondary School in Campbell River, British Columbia ( B.C.) states, “ ... unless we have a win/win situation, then we haven’t solved anything. We want to have it win/win” (p.6). Effective communication requires empathic listening or listening with the intent to understand the person both emotionally and intellectually. Jim Cooze (1990), an assistant Professor at Memorial University in St. John’s Newfoundland, wrote of the importance in noting that the effective use of communication is critical to all the conflict resolution strategies and he stressed that every effort must be made to keep communication channels open in order to resist the common tendency for individuals who are involved in conflict to refuse to communicate.

When differences are discussed and a resolution is reached, conflict deescalates and threats are eliminated. The focus is on the problem rather than the person. Communication offers the best option for a lasting solution.

What better place than school is there for students to learn how to handle conflicts constructively in order to get along with others by using important life skills that promote peace?

It is my intent to implement a school-based conflict resolution peer mediation programme and to measure the effectiveness of this training.

#### Research Question

Do peer mediation skills result in more constructive outcomes in conflict situations for trainees in their inter- personal associations?

#### Definition of Terms

Peer mediation skills involve a process of conflict resolution in which students apply learned skills to solve their own problems more constructively. Core training includes understanding conflict, communication skills, dealing with anger, reducing prejudice and implementing the six stages of the mediation process:

- Step 1-Open the session
- Step 2-Gather Information
- Step 3-Focus on common interests
- Step 4-Create options
- Step 5-Evaluate options and choose a solution
- Step 6-Write the agreement and close (where appropriate)

Constructive Outcomes are resolutions achieved with less propensity for violence--uncontrolled anger, verbal threats, emotional abuse and physical altercations. Constructive outcomes are enhanced results which leave both parties mutually satisfied with the outcome.

Conflict Situations are altercations or differences including but not limited to friends, parents or authority figures. These altercations have the potential to escalate to violence.

Trainees refer to the grade 11 and 12 students who have successfully completed the conflict resolution and peer mediation training programme.

Inter-personal Associations refer to all inter- personal conflicts regardless of the nature of the conflicts and they are not limited to the school setting.

#### Justification of this Issue

##### 1. Why the issue is important?

In the majority of cases in our school, students were using destructive strategies that often escalated the conflict.

Conflict, especially when it escalates to violence, presents a challenge or threat to the safe and secure environment that must exist in school in order for learning to occur. In their review of school-based conflict resolution and peer mediation projects, Kenneth Powell, Lois Muir-McClain and Lakshmi Halasyamani (1995 ) indicate, "...physical fighting, weapon carrying, assaults, robberies and sexual assaults are too common among youth. As violence becomes a more prevalent concern for society, safety at school becomes an issue as well"(p.426).

Our current situation is that we are experiencing a growth of student conflicts as measured by teacher referrals to both the administration and the counsellor.

This research problem is particularly important in demonstrating whether or not there is an improvement for peer mediators in handling inter- personal conflict situations after receiving peer mediation skills training. Inferentially, it follows that if a relationship can be established between peer mediation training and reduced levels of conflict ; then, increasing the number of trainees in the school will also reduce the number and severity of conflicts that occur.

2. Is it timely?

My personal observations revealed a sharp increase during the last three years in violent-related acts with students in my school. This seems to reflect a current trend in British Columbia (B.C.) and elsewhere in Canada as noted by Janice Hamilton (1993): “Few young people today have not experienced some form of violence-either first-hand or involving a friend. Bullying, sexual assault, and violent incidents involving children and teens are happening more and more frequently across Canada, in big cities and small towns... in private and public schools” (p.A2).

D’Arcy Rickard (1991) states: “Conflict resolution is intriguing educators, who see such programmes as holding promise in the fight against violence, vandalism, truancy and suspensions. The key is to help disputants work out problems before they reach the boiling point” (p.6).

3. What got me interested?

In my counselling practice, it is evident that I am now dealing with more conflicts and violent-related incidents than ever before. Moreover, our current, traditional discipline procedures are ineffective because the conflicts are never actually resolved nor do students acquire any new skills to help them deal with future conflicts. The challenge, then, is to find the most effective method available to manage conflicts constructively between students.

The reasons for offering peer mediation are threefold: schools can help prevent violence by teaching students to manage their conflict and anger; students need to learn the skills to deal with school-based conflict; and students need to know that there are effective, alternative ways to dealing with conflict other than confrontation. Michael G. Jacobson and Robert H. Lombard (1992) in their article, “Student Mediated Conflict Resolution,” give numerous reasons for implementing conflict resolution.

- The use of mediation to resolve school-based disputes can result in improved communication between and among students, teachers, administrators and parents, and can, in general, improve school climate. Mediation can also provide a forum for addressing common concerns.
- Mediations used for conflict resolution can reduce violence, vandalism, chronic school absence and suspensions.
- Mediation training helps both young people and their teachers deepen their understanding of themselves and others and provides them with lifetime dispute resolution skills.
- Allowing young people to resolve their own disputes encourages their growth and enhances basic learning skills such as listening, critical thinking and problem-solving.
- Mediation training, with its emphasis on listening to others' points of view and peaceful resolution of differences, assists students in preparing to live in a multicultural world.
- Mediation provides a method of problem-solving that is uniquely suited to the personal nature of young people's problems and can frequently be used by students to solve problems they would not take to parents, teachers or principals (p.2).

4. What contribution are you going to make for knowledge and practice?

Establishing the validity of peer mediation programmes to create more constructive outcomes by reducing the number and /or severity of conflict situations will help determine the future direction of these programmes as they relate to the educational environment.

The Hypothesis

Working Hypothesis

Peer mediation skills will result in more constructive outcomes in conflict situations for trainees in their inter- personal associations.

## Variables

### Dependent Variable

In this study, the dependent variable is whether or not the trainees feel the outcomes achieved in their inter- personal associations are more constructive after learning peer mediation skills.

### Independent Variable

In this study, the independent variable is the peer mediation training.

## **Literature Review**

Discipline problems disrupt our classrooms and schools. Students bicker, tease, threaten, hit and fight one another. Conflicts which involve racial and cultural differences are increasing (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Burnett, 1992). Unresolved conflicts often result in verbal assaults, hurt feelings, loss of friends, disruptive behaviours and violence (Schrumpf, Crawford & Usadel, 1991).

Our current traditional discipline procedures - whether they be reprimand, detention, time-out rooms, suspension or expulsion, only teach students to depend on adult authority figures to help resolve their conflicts (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Burnett, 1992). None of these disciplinary methods is very effective because the conflicts are never actually resolved and more importantly, students do not acquire any new skills to help them deal with future conflicts. As a result, the pattern for coping with conflict continues to be ineffective.

The major themes and issues that emerge in the literature reviews are as follows:

the problem

the extent of the problem

the impact of peer mediation training

conflict resolution after training

application of skills outside of school-based disputes

### The Problem

In a recent U.S. Study involving the Johnsons (1996), they point out that the frequency and severity of conflicts is increasing. In fact, the number one problem confronting local public schools is 'fighting, violence and gangs' tied with 'lack of discipline' (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1994). Furthermore, the methods students use for managing conflicts are often not constructive and can create problems in the classrooms. This is particularly the case when students are from different cultural, ethnic, social class and language backgrounds.

The research reveals that Canadian schools have similar concerns.

### The Extent of the Problem

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Task Force on Violence in Schools (1993) noted some disturbing emerging trends.

Aggressive behaviour among children as young as five years of age includes incidents such as biting, kicking, or punching teachers and other children, as well as using extremely violent language.

Instead of one-on-one fights, the tendency is for group attacks on an individual. Children seem to resort to violence as a way of resolving conflict more quickly than in the past. The 'end point' of fights is changing because the attack now continues even after the victim is down.

Weapons are becoming more common. Knives or razors are the weapons of choice. "According to the McCreary Center Society's Adolescent Health Survey (1993), 35% of males and 5% of females in the Kootenay region reported carrying a weapon one or more days in the preceding month. In the Greater Vancouver Region the figures were 23% of males and 5% of females" (p.A24).

There is an increase in adolescent females as perpetrators of intimidation, harassment, or assaulting other students -- usually female.

More verbal threats are reported against teachers and students and their families. Consequently, this verbal form of violence creates a climate in which people generally feel more fear and intimidation.

An increasing level of challenge to authority and authority figures, including teachers, principals and the police has been noted. Young people seem to have less fear about the consequences of their actions.

Unprovoked random acts of violence are increasing. For example, students have reported increased caution in making eye contact with certain individuals. Although “curbing” incidents have been reported, they have not occurred on school sites.

Similarly, a survey prepared by the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (1991) cited that physical and verbal assaults have increased at an “alarming rate” in Ontario elementary and secondary schools. The survey found that major assault incidents in Ontario schools have increased by 150 percent over the period 1987 to 1990 and that minor incidents have increased over 50 percent over the same period. According to the survey, major incidents include physical assaults as defined in the Criminal Code and minor incidents include verbal abuse and damage to property (Roher & Elliot, 1993).

The problem facing schools is how to manage conflicts in constructive and healthy ways, but the major obstacle to solving the problem is the students’ lack of adequate skills in conflict resolution.

Therefore, it would be prudent to offer preventive programs at the elementary and secondary schools to help reduce the interpersonal violence.

Peer mediation programs can change schools from places where conflicts are handled by traditional methods - suspension, detention, expulsion into places where students learn the procedures, skills, and attitudes required to resolve their conflicts constructively in their personal lives, not only in school but also at home, at work, and in the community (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Burnett, 1992).

The National Association of Mediation in Education (as cited in Schrumpf, Crawford, & Usadel, 1991) provides convincing evidence that “(a) mediation is more effective than suspension or detentions in promoting responsible behaviour; (b) mediation reduces violence, vandalism, and absenteeism; (c) mediation reduces the time teachers and administrators deal with discipline problems; (d) mediation promotes peace and justice in our multicultural world through mutual understanding of individual differences” (p.95).

The research also suggests that mediation not only empowers students to resolve their conflicts constructively, but it also provides essential life skills at the same time.

#### The Impact of Peer Mediation Programs on Schools

Teachers and school administrators are finding that by allowing students to be joint architects in matters affecting them, it helps to promote feelings of control and autonomy. As a result, students feel that they have a more active, powerful role as part of their school community ; therefore, they are more motivated to become responsible, committed members of their peer group and school (Morse & Andrea, 1994).

When students are trained to manage conflicts constructively, they are empowered to act responsibly and take control over their own lives (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Burnett, 1992). Moreover, schools with peer mediation programs teach students how to deal with anger in a constructive manner, how to communicate their thoughts and feelings without abusive language and violence, how to think critically about alternative solutions and how to resolve conflicts so that all participants can win (Schrumpf, Crawford & Usadel, 1991).

According to MacDougall (1993), conflict resolution and peer mediation programs exist across Canada. Indeed, in the last five years, the growth of these programs...”just kind of exploded”. These programs are either board-wide initiatives or single school-based programs.

Despite the variations in the implementation of these programs, educators who are involved in them are all ardent program enthusiasts. MacDougall (1993) also noted that program coordinators cite a number of merits: improved student communication skills; student empowerment; an efficient use of resources; an increased sense of self-esteem, confidence, and responsibility for participants; and a positive impact on school climate.

Most boards across Canada encourage rather than enforce the teaching of mediation and conflict resolution in schools. For example, one of Canada's largest boards - the Scarborough Board of Education - invites schools to integrate conflict resolution into their school-based curriculum management plan. If the schools agree, then the board provides them with resources and support.

MacDougall (1993) also comments that the premise of these voluntary, student-driven programs is based on the belief that young people are inherently better equipped to understand and help their peers than are adults. Traditionally, in our school settings, adults have retained the authority to help solve problems or fix disputes, but this type of peer mediation program means handing the responsibility over to the young people themselves. Moreover, the study reports that when given the choice, students prefer their fellow students to help them solve a dispute (MacDougall, 1993).

In addition to the ability to deal with conflict effectively, research also reveals there is a change in conflict resolution strategies after training.

#### Conflict Resolution Strategies After Training

When examining the issue of whether a peer mediation training program could influence the strategies students used to manage their conflicts, the answer was clearly "yes". The study by Johnson et al. (1995) indicated that there were significant differences between the strategies used before and after training.

The research indicates that very few conflicts were resolved through physical violence or verbal attack during and after training. In fact, nearly 40% of the conflicts were resolved by negotiating.

The results of this study confirmed that without training, these conflicts were managed mainly by compromising and forcing the other person to give in, which in turn, resulted in either no resolution, winning, or an adult's imposing a solution. However, once trained in the negotiation and mediation procedure, the students tended to negotiate new solutions to these conflicts.

Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Burnett (1992) found that after students received training, the frequency of student-student conflicts that teachers had to manage dropped 80%. Likewise, the number of conflicts referred to the principal was reduced to zero.

Clearly, training students to negotiate and mediate changed the strategies students used to manage conflicts and the resulting outcomes.

Equally important, the research provides evidence to suggest that mediators also use conflict management skills in their inter-personal relationships.

#### Application of Skills Outside of School-Based Disputes

The study by Johnson et al. (1995) found that although the training took place in school and focused on school conflicts, there were no significant differences between the strategies used in school and in the home. In fact, students used the strategies learned in school just as frequently in the home as they did in the school. Parents involved in the study mentioned that students not only used the training with their siblings, but also with neighbourhood friends, grandparents, and pets.

There is also a consensus between Lam (1988) and Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Burnett (1992) that mediators were able to apply the skills at home with their siblings.

In the Canadian study conducted by Brown et al. (1992), secondary students who were trained in peer mediation, even if they had performed few or no mediations, stated

that the program influenced their personal lives. Conflict mediators found the training useful outside of their application to resolving school-based disputes. For instance, most stated they used the techniques outside of school; 85% disclosed that they helped their family/friends with their conflicts .

This is a crucial study because it involves a Canadian high school population and equally important, it offers support for my hypothesis that peer mediation skills will result in more constructive outcomes in conflict situations for trainees in their inter-personal associations.

### Summary

The research literature supports the proposition that peer mediation training will assist student development of conflict resolution skills. In addition, the application of those skills both within and outside the school system has resulted in a significant reduction in the consequential conflict behaviour.

Reductions in violence, aggressive behaviour, and school-based discipline has been documented.

The body of evidence outlined in the Literature Review strongly supports the use of peer mediation training. The growing trend of inappropriate and aggressive problem solving has been shown to respond positively when conflict resolution skills training is in place.

The effect of peer mediation training within the dynamics of a small, rural, and administratively unsupportive secondary school has not been found in the research. Available research to date is based on urban and suburban studies, not on small, rural secondary school environments.

The need in the rural setting relative to growing conflict problems is comparable to that found in the larger research settings.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the validity of the research results in the small, rural secondary school environment. In this setting, the positive results of the urban studies can be anticipated, but are not assured.

### **Methodology**

In deciding which research traditions, techniques, and strategies will be most appropriate for my topic, various methodologies and the potential problems associated with each have been investigated. In particular, two legitimate forms of scientific inquiry, the **quantitative** and **qualitative** paradigms, were compared. My ultimate choices were made and the rationales for each were evaluated once I had decided which questions needed to be answered to determine what effect, if any, peer mediation training has on graduates' management of their own interpersonal conflicts.

**Quantitative** methods are usually used by researchers employing the **positivistic** model as they attempt to be objective while developing an understanding of the world which is independent of their personal biases and values. They try to maintain positive interpersonal relations with those they study but strive to be personally detached so that their observations are as objective as possible. This detachment can be accomplished by using instruments with established psychometric properties, such as surveys, to collect data from the people they are studying. This data is, in turn, analyzed using statistical methods to draw conclusions. Thus, they try to keep themselves from influencing the collection of data and to function independently of the subject/s, although some interaction is inevitable. Various research strategies have been designed to minimize the effects of this interaction upon the research findings (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Within this methodology, researchers using the positivistic model recognize that there are human characteristics and processes that create a form of reality because they occur under a wide variety of conditions and therefore can be generalized to some degree.

Thus, different variables may be studied independently. This enables them to develop a body of knowledge in the form of generalizations that will hold to some degree over time and in contexts similar to those in which the generalizations were developed. For example, the effects of peer mediation on the management of students' interpersonal conflicts can be studied without studying all of the other variables that influence the management of students' conflicts. This type of inquiry can eventually merge into a picture of the phenomenon being studied and after sufficient inquiry the phenomenon can be predicted and controlled at levels that largely exceed chance (Borg & Gall, 1989).

By contrast, **qualitative** methods are usually employed by researchers using the **naturalistic** model as they aim to develop a body of knowledge that is unique to the individual being studied, so that it can be used to develop working hypotheses about the individual. In this model there are no human characteristics or processes from which generalizations can emerge and therefore, each subject or phenomenon is viewed as a distinct, complex phenomenon that can only be studied holistically. Although some level of understanding may be reached, it is unlikely that prediction or control will ever be achieved because the setting in which the phenomenon occurs is never the same (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Naturalistic researchers view themselves as primary instruments for collecting data and they rely partly or entirely on their feelings, impressions, and judgments. Much of the phenomena researchers are interested in concern internal events such as perceptions and feelings rather than overt behaviour, and qualitative researchers believe the only way to accurately understand these internal states is to form personal relationships with the people being studied. Consequently, they and their subjects interact to a major degree, influencing one another. Also, the research data arising from these interactions in the form of what people reveal to the researcher and the researcher's impressions are often reported

subjectively; as verbal descriptions based on the researchers' own interpretations of their data (Borg & Gall, 1989).

According to Borg and Gall (1989), a combination of the positivistic and naturalistic methodologies is superior to using only one method. They explain that in some studies the "quantitative data provided the basic research evidence while the qualitative data were used to round out the picture and provide examples"(p.381). Similarly, my research project will use both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms - the survey method from the quantitative paradigm to provide basic research evidence and the interview method from the qualitative paradigm to give depth to the research findings.

Since my research concerns self-reported behaviour and because **surveys** can be used to measure behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, opinions and expectations, it is appropriate to use the survey method (Neuman, 1997). A substantial proportion of research done in the field of education involves surveys because a wide range of educational issues can be investigated in survey research. School surveys can explore and evaluate various aspects of the school system and in this instance, a small-scale, local survey conducted in my own school will be used for the purposes of internal evaluation and analysis of the peer mediation program (Borg & Gall, 1989). Because surveys have been used in my school previously, they are instruments with which the students are familiar.

The survey as a projective technique seems appropriate for my situation because it would not be possible to observe the participants reacting to the actual situation under study and it also has appeal because the information collected is quantifiable.

The basic design in survey research that most closely matches my purposes is the cross-sectional survey in which standardized information is collected from a sample drawn from a predetermined population at one point in time (Borg & Gall, 1989). Cross-sectional research is often the simplest and least costly alternative (Neuman, 1997).

Another advantage of the cross-sectional survey is that it allows researchers to design items to explore relationships between two or more variables. Investigating such relationships in the survey data, allows for a more substantial research contribution than students who limit their data analysis to single variable descriptions (Neuman, 1997).

My survey consists mainly of multiple-choice items in the form of Likert attitude scales so that information can be tabulated as it is collected. This method of systematic data collection is logical and uses statistical procedures for analyzing data. The data-collection tools used in survey research obtain standardized information from all subjects in the sample and therefore, the analysis can be carried out efficiently (Borg & Gall, 1989).

“The simple use to which survey data can be put is a description of how the total sample has distributed itself on the response alternatives for a single questionnaire item. These are sometimes called the ‘marginal tabulations’” (Borg & Gall, 1989 p.419). For example, in my study on whether the peer mediators’ methods of resolving conflict have changed since they became peer mediators, these findings could be reported in terms of marginal tabulations such as, 50% of the sample agreed that their methods had changed, 30% disagreed and 20% were unsure or didn’t know. The Likert scale design provides data which makes this type of normative description possible [see Appendix C] (Gay, 1992).

Also, some questionnaire items may refer to past, present or future phenomena. If the relationships between questionnaire items that can be temporally ordered relative to each other are studied, then the data analysis is referred to as “time-ordered association” (Borg & Gall, 1989). For example, in my survey peer mediators are asked to recall what their methods had been prior to the training, to report their current methods of resolving conflict, and to predict their future methods. Thus, the survey provides time-ordered data since the person’s current methods of handling conflict were reported for a different time than were the previous methods even though all data were collected at a single point in time.

In my study, the questionnaire on **Conflict Techniques Before and After Training** was developed from two main sources including research from the literature review article “The Impact of Peer Mediation Training on the Management of School and Home Conflicts” by David Johnson, Roger Johnson, Bruce Dudley, Marty Ward and Douglas Magnuson as well as the Peer Mediation Conflict Resolution in Schools Program Guide by Fred Schruppf, Donna Crawford and H. Chu Usadel.

The Program Guide mentioned that the actions in response to conflict include **avoidance, confrontation, and communication** and that these actions, in turn, affect the outcome of the conflict. Therefore, these three important conflict techniques were used as the main areas that I wanted to evaluate before and after peer mediation training.

Since people attempt to avoid conflict by **withdrawing** from the situation, **ignoring** the problem, and **denying** the existence of the conflict, these three items were used as subheadings under the avoidance category. The literature review article referred to **giving in** so it was included as well. The last item **changing the subject** was based on my own personal observations in my counselling practice.

The Program Guide also discussed that confrontation in a conflict is characterized by **threats** and **aggression** and often involves **bribery** and **punishment**; therefore, these items were included in the confrontation category. Lastly, the Program Guide points out that effective **communication** requires empathic **listening** in order to get inside another person’s frame of reference to see the problem as that person does and to realize that person’s feelings, therefore, that item was incorporated as **seeing both sides**. In addition, effective communication is proactive which means that people take responsibility for their actions without blaming and when people take charge of their actions and feelings, resolution is possible. Consequently, **admitting differences** was derived from these statements. Since the actual steps of the peer mediation process involve creating options and evaluating those options, the subsection **discovering options** was added.

In order to rank the inter-personal associations of the peer mediators in conflict situations, this section of the survey was devised using the research from the studies involving Johnson et al.(1995) and Brown et al. (1993-1994) along with basic common sense.

When using cross-sectional survey data to explore time-ordered relationships, a serious source of error is that respondents may not remember, accurately, information relating to a previous time. As Borg and Gall (1989) explain, “Although factual information may be recalled accurately, the respondent’s recollection of past attitudes or opinions may be distorted by present attitudes” (p.421).

In order to circumvent this problem, the time frame is at the most one year and at the least several months, depending on whether last year’s or this year’s mediators are sampled. Also, students were asked to log their conflicts during training so this record should facilitate their recollection of events.

In surveys where hypotheses are confirmed, possible cause-and-effect relationships can be identified but it would be erroneous to conclude from these data alone. That is to say, while survey research cannot establish causal relationships with any degree of certainty, it can be used to explore relationships such as peer mediation training and improved conflict outcomes in a relatively economical way. If important relationships are found, then questions about causality can be resolved by means of an experiment (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Survey procedure will be reviewed in a group meeting where each mediator will be given a written questionnaire on which their answers are to be recorded. It is important that the administrator not manipulate any situation or condition, in order to avoid creating “interviewer” bias. The students will simply answer questions within a defined time period. The answers to their questions will generate data to be collated and analyzed, resulting in percentages, tables, or graphs in order to get a picture of what the mediators

think about their mediation training. From this information, it should be possible to generalize the results from this sample to the larger group from which the sample group was chosen (Neuman, 1997).

An advantage of giving the questionnaires directly to the students rather than mailing them is that it is more economical and time efficient. Also, this method is advantageous because the survey can be conducted by a single researcher and, by giving the questionnaires directly to students, the response rates will be high, eliminating a major problem of a low response rate.

The conditions under which the questionnaire is completed are controlled and the researcher's presence in the room will allow for clarification of questions. It will ensure that all items are answered by the appropriate person in one sitting, therefore, eliminating the problems of someone other than the sample respondent completing the questionnaire without the researcher's knowledge and completing the survey in a different order or in a different time frame than what the researcher intended (Neuman, 1997).

Numerous steps must be followed in order to ensure that the survey is sound. This information is based on the textbook, Social Research Methods by W. Lawrence Neuman and Educational Research by Walter R. Borg and Meredith D. Gall.

#### Step 1: Defining the Questionnaire Objectives [Appendix B]

The first step for a satisfactory questionnaire study is to define your research problem and list objectives to be achieved or hypotheses to be tested by the questionnaire. A survey blueprint is essential to develop beforehand so that there is a clear understanding of what you hope to obtain from the results.

De Vaus, in his article in Surveys in Social Research as cited in Borg and Gall, (1989) suggests that there are five questions that can help focus your survey topic:

1. What is the time frame of your interest?
2. What is the geographical location of your interest?

3. Are you interested in a broad descriptive study or do you want to specify or compare different subgroups?
4. What aspect of your topic do you want to study?
5. How abstract is your interest? For example, are you interested in reporting facts or do you want to interpret the facts, relate the acts to a broad social context, or develop theory from the facts?

Borg and Gall (1989) also point out that when you prepare your objectives you should also take into consideration the methods of data analysis that you will apply to the returned questionnaires. Borg and Gall state that, "Survey data can be used to achieve objectives other than description of how the responses of the total sample are distributed on each questionnaire item. The study of relationships between variables may also be an objective" (p.425); therefore, exploring possible causal relationships can be an objective of the study if the data are time-orderable. As an illustration it could be hypothesized that students with peer mediation training will likely have more constructive outcomes in their interpersonal conflicts than those students without the training.

As Borg and Gall (1989) explain, surveys can have various objectives which should be identified at the beginning of the study so that appropriate decisions regarding selection of a sample, construction of the questionnaire and methods for analyzing the data can be determined.

### Step 2: Selecting a Sample

After the objectives are clarified, the target population should be identified. Obviously, it is common sense to select subjects who will be able to supply the information you want and in my study that group is apparent - the peer mediators. The peer mediators are either Grade 11 or Grade 12 students in a rural secondary school in the East Kootenays.

The sampling technique commonly used in educational surveys is cluster sampling where the unit is a naturally occurring group of individuals. Again Borg and Gall (1989)

comment: “Cluster sampling is used when it is more feasible or convenient to select groups of individuals than it is to select individuals from a defined population” (p.225, 226).

### The Actual Sample

In 1996, ten peer counsellors were given peer mediation training. There were two males and eight females who participated at that time. For this particular study, only eight of the ten students completed the survey and one participated in the interview. The one male and seven females from this group of former grade 12 students will be known as **Group A**. Surveys were mailed out to these students because they were no longer attending high school.

In 1997, another ten grade 11 students successfully concluded the training. There were three males and seven females; all ten students completed the surveys and six students including two males agreed to be interviewed. This younger group is known as **Group B**. Surveys were administered to this group at one sitting with all ten respondents present.

Sex: My study replicated the literature review findings in that the number of participating students was predominantly female (Brown et al. 1993-1994). Out of a total of eighteen students, fourteen were female. The number of males, four out of eighteen, is too small to assess whether there are any sex-based differences.

Age: The age range for Group A is 17 to 18 years while Group B is 16 to 17 years of age.

### Step 3: Writing the Items

The questions should flow smoothly and introductory remarks and instructions for clarification should be given and survey questions should measure each variable if it is a good questionnaire.

There are two main rules “for good survey questions: Avoid confusion and keep the respondent’s perspective in mind. Good survey questions give the researcher valid and

reliable measures. They also help respondents feel that they understand the question and that their answers are meaningful” (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 233).

Question writing is more of an art which requires skill, practice, patience, and creativity (Neuman, 1997).

#### Step 4: Constructing the Questionnaire

Questions should be framed in language that the respondents will understand (Borg & Gall, 1989). Therefore, I have tried to keep my questions and instructions short and clear for my high school students.

I have also attempted to avoid some of the frequent problems that Neuman has listed for question writing on pages 233-236.

1. Avoid jargon, slang, and abbreviations.
2. Avoid ambiguity, confusion, and vagueness.
3. Avoid emotional language and prestige bias.
4. Avoid double-barreled questions.
5. Avoid leading questions.
6. Avoid asking questions that are beyond respondents’ capabilities.
7. Avoid false premises.
8. Avoid asking about future intentions. [I did ask students if they were likely to use their peer mediation training in the future.]
9. Avoid double negatives.
10. Avoid overlapping or unbalanced response categories.

Most of the questions in my study are closed form which permits only certain responses such as the multiple-choice questions. In a few situations the open form was used with a choice as other (explain) so that students could make any response in their own words although space is fairly limited. The little research that is available suggests that the

two formats produce very similar information. (Bradburn, 1982, as cited in Borg and Gall, 1989). In the nonattitudes and middle positions there is a debate whether to include “not sure” or “don’t know” categories because of the errors that can be made: “accepting a middle choice or ‘no attitude’ response when respondents hold a non neutral opinion or forcing respondents to choose a position on an issue when they have no opinion about it” (Neuman, p.242). It is best to present responses on a continuum with the middle or neutral position in the middle (p.242).

My questions were predominately designed in closed form so that quantification and analysis of the results could be efficiently carried out (Borg & Gall, 1989).

The questionnaire should be as attractive as possible with a high-reproduction method such as laser printing. Similarly, the questionnaire should be organized so that it is as easy to complete as possible and the instructions should be brief, clear and printed in bold type. The questionnaire should be as short as possible consistent with the objectives of the study (Borg & Gall, 1989).

As in most educational studies, respondents are asked to identify themselves (Borg & Gall, 1989) and in my study I have asked for the name, but have indicated in the instructions that it is not essential that the student identify himself or herself.

#### Step 5: Pretesting the Questionnaire

Besides checking for ambiguities in the questions, a thorough pretest of the questionnaire should be carried out. A sample of individuals from a population similar to that from which you plan to draw your research subjects should be selected. For example, I will pretest with a group of Grade 11 and 12 male and female students in my school. Students will be able to comment on the questionnaire so that it can be improved.

#### Step 6: Preparing a Letter of Transmittal [Appendix A]

Although I am administering the survey to the sample group directly, I have still included a letter of transmittal. It is recommended that the letter be brief; moreover, it is

essential to give the subjects good reasons for completing the questionnaire. The purpose of the study should be explained in such a way as to make the subject feel that the study is important. A certain amount of subtle flattery is useful and this can often be accomplished by emphasizing the value of the information the group can supply. It is also advisable to associate your study with a professional institution with which individuals in your sample might be expected to identify. There should also be an assurance of confidentiality included (Borg & Gall, 1989).

#### Step 7: Sending Out Your Questionnaire and Follow-ups

This step is not applicable to my situation so I have not elaborated on it because my response rate for the questionnaires distributed to my class of peer mediators should be 100% and therefore no follow-ups will be required.

In conclusion, survey research, a distinct technique, is one of the more widely used research techniques in education. Re-reading the lecture notes and research books has helped me to learn some principles of writing survey questions. The survey is used in research as a process that asks many people the same questions then examines their answers. The survey allows researchers to translate a research problem into questionnaires. Then from the answers, quantitative data is analyzed to address the research problem. Although I have tried to minimize some of the problems typical to surveys, I anticipate this particular design will provide valid and legitimate results for my study. Copies of each of the three survey questionnaires are included overleaf. Survey 1 assesses the main reasons peer mediators took the training. Survey 2 assesses the conflict techniques used before and after peer mediation training. Survey 3 assesses the agreement or disagreement with statements regarding peer mediation training.

\*\*\*\*\*P M S\*\*\*\*\*

**PEER MEDIATION STUDY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS -- Survey 1**

It is very important for educational personnel to know how you feel about peer mediation training. This information can only come from you. Your data will be compiled and written up as a study that will be presented to the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge.

Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire and answer all questions as completely and as honestly as you can. If you feel uncomfortable putting your name on this paper, it is not essential that you identify yourself.

Name:

The main reason I took peer mediation training was [select from the following list]:

1. I was asked to
2. My friends did
3. For credit for work experience
4. My parents wanted me to
5. To help myself
6. To help others
7. To add to a resume
8. To get leadership experience
9. other (explain)

Rank the listed reasons in order from most important to least important, with 1=most and 8=least, by writing a number in the box at the end of each item.

## PEER MEDIATION STUDY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS --Survey 2

My usual ways of dealing with conflicts have changed since I took Peer Mediation Training (PMT). The techniques I used before, and use now are rated from 1 to 5 as follows:

1=never; 2=seldom; 3=sometimes; 4=often; 5=always

	BEFORE PMT	AFTER PMT
<b>I. Avoidance</b>		
a. withdrawing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. ignoring	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. denying	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. giving in	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. changing the subject	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>2. Confrontation</b>		
a. aggression & threats	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. bribery	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. punishment	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>3. Communication</b>		
a. listening	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. seeing both sides	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. admitting differences	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. discovering options	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

My own conflicts have been with [rated from 1 to 5 where 1=never; 2=seldom; 3=sometimes; 4=often; 5=always]:

a. parents	1 2 3 4 5
b. friends	1 2 3 4 5
c. teachers	1 2 3 4 5
d. brother/s &/or sister/s	1 2 3 4 5
e. neighbours	1 2 3 4 5
f. employers	1 2 3 4 5
g. co-workers	1 2 3 4 5
h. other students	1 2 3 4 5
i. other [specify]	

**PEER MEDIATION STUDY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS -- Survey 3**

Please consider the statements below carefully and indicate whether you agree or disagree with those statements. Use a five-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=I don't know; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree:

- a. My methods of resolving conflict have changed since I became a peer mediator. 1 2 3 4 5
  
- b. Peer mediation has helped me learn to resolve my own conflicts more constructively than I did in the past. 1 2 3 4 5
  
- c. As a result of my peer mediation training, I have been able to help others resolve their conflicts. 1 2 3 4 5
  
- d. Peer mediation has provided me with effective life skills. 1 2 3 4 5
  
- e. I am likely to use my peer mediation training to resolve personal conflicts in the future. 1 2 3 4 5

Additionally, my research project will use both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms - the survey method from the quantitative paradigm to provide basic research evidence and the interview method from the qualitative paradigm to give depth to the research findings. According to Gay (1992), the interview is mainly an oral, in-person, administration of a questionnaire to each member of a generally small sample. If an interview is well-conducted, it can produce in-depth data which is not always possible with a questionnaire. The interview is most appropriate for asking questions of a personal nature that cannot be effectively structured into a multiple-choice format. The interview, in contrast to the questionnaire, is flexible because the interviewer can adjust the situation to each subject. By building rapport and a trust relationship, the interviewer can usually elicit information that would not be given on a questionnaire. Moreover, the interview may also produce more accurate and honest responses because the interviewer can describe and clarify both the purpose of the research and individual questions. Similarly, the interviewer can follow up on incomplete or unclear answers by asking additional questions.

In conducting an interview, the steps of selecting and defining a problem and formatting hypotheses are essentially the same as for a questionnaire. The Interview Blueprint and The Rationale for Selecting Transcript Format and Coding are appended [see Appendix D & Appendix E]. Samples of subjects with the desired information are selected in the usual manner although the sample size is typically smaller. There are also some major differences between an interview study and a questionnaire study in the nature of the instrument employed (an interview guide versus a questionnaire), communication and interpersonal relational skills, and methods for recording responses (Gay, 1992).

It is imperative for the interviewer to have a written guide which indicates what questions are to be asked and in what order. All interviews must be conducted in

essentially the same manner in order to obtain standardized, comparable data from each subject involved in the study (Gay, 1992).

There are similar guidelines for constructing questionnaires that also apply to constructing interview guides. Questions should be worded as clearly as possible and leading questions should be avoided. Equally important, the interview should be as brief as possible (Gay, 1992).

The Interview Guide is included below.

## **The Interview Guide**

### Introduction

#### Purpose of the Interview

I am a Master's student at the University of Lethbridge and I'm researching peer mediation for a project that I am working on. Since you have recently completed peer mediation training, and have knowledge in that area, I was hoping that you would consent to allow me to interview you.

#### Taping

In order for me to be accurate and able to concentrate on the interview, I would appreciate it if we could tape our conversation. The tape recorder will be off to the side on this desk.

#### Confidentiality

Prior to the interview, students will be assured of confidentiality in that no names will appear in this report, only their comments would be recorded. Consent will be obtained before the interview proceeds.

#### Time & Place

To avoid class disruption, interviews will be scheduled during students' preparation periods. All interviews will be held in the counselling office.

### Interview Technique

Prior to the first session, I will reread my notes on interviewing and decide on a brief format with open-ended questions using the funnel method if possible. I will remind myself to let the respondent do all the talking and to actively listen and not interrupt. Then I will check my Interview Blueprint to ensure my questions are open-ended, simple and clear. Next, I will make notes on the various probes and conscientiously try to incorporate them in the interview.

### Closure

At the end of the interview, each student will be thanked for his/her participation.

### Interview Questions

1. Can you give me an example of how you used your peer mediation training?
2. Can you give me an example of how you used this training in your personal life?
3. Would you suggest that a fellow student take the training?

Slightly edited versions of the interviews have been included to eliminate some of the uh's and um's in order to facilitate reading [see Appendix G].

## Findings

The full data of the quantitative results involved in the study can be found in Appendix C. The pertinent facts are found in the text.

### Reasons for Taking Peer Mediation Training

These results are based on the peer mediators' responses for **Survey 1**. The peer mediators' responses were divided into Group A and Group B. For each response, the student's ranking was recorded, then divided by the number of students that responded to that ranking on the list. The mean rank was calculated for each response for Group A and then Group B. Finally, both Groups' mean ranks were divided to obtain a combined score for comparison purposes.

In my study, the first choice for both Groups was 'to help others'. The second choice for Group A was tied with 'to help myself' and 'I was asked to'. The results generally reflect those found in the literature review article (see discussion in Lam, 1988). For Group B, their second choice was 'to get leadership experience'.

In conclusion, the general view of helping others as the main reason for taking the training may indicate a particular personality type, but it does not impact on the application of the research question. It could, however, indicate high personal motivational levels which may account for the students' applications of the principles of the training.

Table 1

**Rank Order of Reasons for Taking Peer Mediation Training**

<b>Group A</b>		<b>Group B</b>		
<b>Reason</b>	<b>MR</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>MR</b>	<b>Combined</b>
1. To help others	2.6	1. To help others	2.5	2.5
2. To help myself	3.1	2. To help myself	3.0	3.1
2. I was asked to	3.1	3. To get leadership experience	3.1	3.1
4. To get leadership experience	3.5	4. I was asked to	3.9	3.7
5. My friends did	4.1	5. To add to a resume	4.3	4..2
6. To add to a resume	4.6	6. My friends did	5.6	5.1
7. For credit for work experience	6.8	7. For credit for work experience	5.7	6.3
8. My parents wanted me to	7.6	8. My parents wanted me to	7.3	7.5
9. to empower myself with the knowledge and ability to help others and guide them	9.	a. I thought it would be fun. b. So I have training for future need; like I might need it later on in life.		

**Note.** (see Survey 1) Reasons 1-9 are in order of importance as ranked by students who took peer mediation training. MR equals mean rank. Combined equals Group A's and Group B's mean rank.

**Conflict Techniques Before and After Training**

These findings are based on the peer mediators' responses for **Survey 2**. The results are portrayed in Table 2 on pages 36, 37, and 38.

Once again, the peer mediators' responses were divided into Group A and Group B. For each technique of dealing with conflict, student responses were recorded, then

divided by the number of students in the Group in order to calculate the mean rating. The responses for each category were calculated before and after the peer mediation training. Then both Groups' mean rating were divided to obtain a combined score for comparison purposes.

To calculate the gain score for each item, the pre scores were subtracted from the post scores. For example, for Group A, under withdrawing, the pre score (2.1) is subtracted from the post score (3.2) to obtain the negative gain score of -1.1.

The directions and magnitude of all gain scores for all groups support the hypothesis that peer mediation training aids in conflict techniques.

Under the **Avoidance** category, the techniques of **withdrawing and ignoring** are slightly lower for Group A after peer mediation training while the techniques of **denying and giving in** are slightly lower for Group B.

**Withdrawing and ignoring** are in higher use with the younger group (Group B) but **denying and giving in** are used less by them. The technique of **changing the subject** is about the same for both Groups.

Although the data group is small (18 students), a maturity factor may account for the slight differences between Group A and Group B.

More research would be required to explore the maturity factor relative to conflict techniques, but preliminary observations suggest that techniques may become more sophisticated with age.

Group B grade 11 students are more confrontational and less communications orientated than their higher status grade 12 Group A counterparts. Again, this may possibly reflect the social status and maturity level of the older students.

Generally, there was significant improvement and less use of negative techniques in dealing with conflict after peer mediation training. For example, under the **Communication** category, the techniques of **seeing both sides** and **listening**

especially showed meaningful increases. Similarly, in the study conducted by Johnson et al. (1995), there were significant differences between the strategies used before and after training. Before training, the children used strategies that focused on achieving one's goals while disregarding the relationship with the other person, but after training, the children used negotiation which focused on achieving one's goals while maintaining a quality relationship with the other person.

The highest conflict levels for both groups were their siblings followed by their parents. Parents were slightly higher with Group A, the older students. The third conflict level category with difficulties for Group A was their friends perhaps reflecting conflict over the interplay between the sexes regarding competition, values, choices, and friends. However, for Group B their third selection was other students perhaps reflecting their social status establishment process. These interesting observations warrant further study.

In conclusion, age, status, and sex may determine the type of conflict. The highest conflict levels for both Groups occur outside the school with siblings and parents, but students may, in fact, bring their problems to school. These peer mediation techniques help to resolve conflict wherever the problem exists.

Table 2

**Conflict Techniques Before and After Training - Group A**

	MR BEFORE PMT	MR AFTER PMT	Gain Score
<b>I. Avoidance</b>			
a. withdrawing	3.2	2.1	-1.1
b. ignoring	3.2	2.1	-1.1
c. denying	2.6	2.0	-0.6
d. giving in	3.1	2.6	-0.5
e. changing the subject	3.5	2.3	-1.2
<b>2. Confrontation</b>			
a. aggression & threats	2.3	1.5	-0.8
b. bribery	1.6	1.5	-0.7
c. punishment	1.6	1.3	-0.3
<b>3. Communication</b>			
a. listening	3.7	4.3	+0.6
b. seeing both sides	3.2	4.5	+1.3
c. admitting differences	3.0	4.0	+1.0
d. Discovering options	2.8	4.2	+1.4
a. parents	3.1		
b. friends	2.8		
c. teachers	2.3		
d. brother/s &/or sister/s	3.4		
e. neighbours	1.4		
f. employers	1.4		
g. co-workers	1.5		
h. other students	1.2.6		
i. other [specify]	Roommates, boyfriends, children that I babysit.		

Note. (see Survey 2) MR equals mean rating. Before PMT and After PMT indicates before and after peer mediation training. Gain Score is to subtract mean rating after PMT from mean rating before PMT to calculate the resulting gain score.

Table 2 Continued

**Conflict Techniques Before and After Training - Group B**

	MR BEFORE PMT	MTR AFTER PMT	Gain Score
<b>I. Avoidance</b>			
a. withdrawing	3.5	2.9	-0.6
b. ignoring	3.9	3.4	-0.5
c. denying	2.3	1.8	-0.5
d. giving in	2.3	1.9	-0.4
e. changing the subject	3.0	2.6	-0.4
<b>2. Confrontation</b>			
a. aggression & threats	2.3	1.7	-0.6
b. bribery	1.3	1.2	-0.1
c. punishment	2.0	1.6	-0.4
<b>3. Communication</b>			
a. listening	3.9	4.5	+0.6
b. seeing both sides	3.9	4.7	+0.8
c. admitting differences	3.8	4.5	+0.7
d. discovering options	3.0	4.0	+1.0
a. parents	2.9		
b. friends	2.1		
c. teachers	1.7		
d. brother/s &/or sister/s	3.6		
e. neighbours	1.2		
f. employers	1.1		
g. co-workers	1.4		
h. other students	2.3		
i. other [specify]			

Note. (see Survey 2) MR equals mean rating. Before PMT and After PMT indicates before and after peer mediation training. Gain Score is to subtract mean rating after PMT from mean rating before PMT to calculate the resulting gain score.

Table 2 Continued

**Conflict Techniques Before and After Training - Combined**

	BEFORE PMT	AFTER PMT	
	MR	MR	Gain Score
<b>I. Avoidance</b>			
a. withdrawing	3.3	2.5	-0.8
b. ignoring	3.5	2.7	-0.8
c. denying	2.4	1.9	-0.5
d. giving in	2.7	2.2	-0.5
e. changing the subject	3.2	2.7	-0.5
<b>2. Confrontation</b>			
a. aggression & threats	3.3	1.6	-0.7
b. bribery	1.4	1.3	-0.1
c. punishment	1.8	1.4	-0.4
<b>3. Communication</b>			
a. listening	3.8	4.4	+0.6
b. seeing both sides	3.5	4.6	+1.1
c. admitting differences	3.4	4.2	+0.8
d. discovering options	2.9	4.1	+1.2
a. parents	3.0		
b. friends	2.1		
c. teachers	1.9		
d. brother/s &/or sister/s	3.5		
e. neighbours	1.2		
f. employers	1.2		
g. co-workers	1.4		
h. other students	2.4		
i. other [specify]			

Note. (see Survey 2) MR equals combined mean rating. Before PMT and After PMT indicates before and after peer mediation training. Gain Score is to subtract mean rating after PMT from mean rating before PMT to calculate the resulting combined gain score.

### Statements About Peer Mediation

These findings are based on the peer mediators' responses on **Survey 3**.

The peer mediators' responses were divided into Group A and Group B. For each section, student responses were recorded, then divided by the number of students in the Group to calculate the mean rating. Then both Groups' mean ratings were divided to obtain a combined score.

The general responses indicated that participants agree with the statements which reflected positive change. The findings point out that peer mediation training is worthwhile because peer mediation skills result in more constructive outcomes in conflict situations for trainees in their inter-personal associations.

On the five responses there were no major differences between the two Groups of peer mediators except for question A. There is a slight anomaly in that there is a relatively larger difference between Group A and B. However, the sample size is so small that one response might affect the results. It should be noted that out of 18 responses, only 2 "didn't know" and 1 student "disagreed" whether her methods of resolving conflict had changed since she became a peer mediator. (The one student who disagreed explained later in the interview that her methods of resolving conflict were already successful before taking the training.)

Table 3

**Statements About Peer Mediations (Percentage who agreed)**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>MR</b>	<b>A%</b>	<b>MR</b>	<b>B%</b>	<b>Comb</b>
a. My methods of resolving conflict have changed since I became a peer mediator.	4.0	88%	4.7	80%	3.9
b. Peer mediation has helped me learn to resolve my own conflicts more constructively than I did in the past.	4.1	88%	4.2	100%	4.2
c. As a result of my peer mediation training, I have been able to help others resolve their conflicts.	4.1	88%	3.8	70%	4.0
d. Peer mediation has provided me with effective life skills.	4.2	88%	4.4	100%	4.3
e. I am likely to use my peer mediation training to resolve personal conflicts in the future.	4.0	63%	4.1	70%	4.1

Note. (see Survey 3) MR equals mean rating. % indicates those mediators with 4-”Agree” or 5-” Strongly Agree” with the Survey questions. A and B refer to Group A and Group B. Comb indicates combined score of Group A and Group B.

### Interview Findings

Seven out of the eighteen students consented to be interviewed with one student from Group A and six students from Group B. There were two males and five females involved in the interview study.

Six out of the seven students interviewed were involved either in conducting a mediation or facilitating the process as co-mediator.

All seven students stated there was application of the mediation skills in their personal lives, mainly in their relationships with friends. This finding parallels the study conducted by Brown et al. (1993-1994) where the researchers explained that students who were trained in peer mediation, even if they had performed few or no mediations, stated that the program influenced their personal lives.

One student observed that she practised the skills subconsciously when she was involved in a dispute. Interestingly, none of the students indicated that they were able to apply the training in situations involving their parents. Perhaps this is a reflection of the diversity in the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the mediators where there would be strong sanctions against engaging in conflict situations with their parents. Yet another possibility may suggest that the personality types of these particular students prevent them from engaging in confrontational situations with their parents because it is not in their nature to do so. This factor would necessitate further exploration to offer feasible explanations.

Although it was not one of the original interview questions, five of the mediators noted a difference before and after training in how they handled conflicts. One male student from Group B explained that the training has given him more options in dealing with conflict than he previously exercised. Likewise, a female student from Group A expressed that the training has enabled her to have a wider perspective on problems in that she is now able to consider the other person's viewpoint as well as her own.

All the interviewees were unanimous in their recommendations that a fellow student should take the training. For instance, six out of the seven students endorsed the 'cadre approach' as opposed to the entire student body proposal because in their opinion, not all students would take the program seriously (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). The same young lady from Group A commented, "It's got to be something you want to do. If you don't want to do it, you're not going to put any effort into it, so it would be just a waste."

Does this imply the students' recognition of the importance of motivation and reasons for taking the training? One male student from Group B pointed out that everybody should receive peer mediation training because "it is a great skill to learn and once you learn it, it will be useful when you grow older or useful to put on your resume or in your job."

All seven mediators emphasized that the training was worthwhile and this is also supported in the previously mentioned study by Brown et al. (1993-1994) where students also confirmed that they had gained valuable benefits in their application of mediation skills outside of school-based disputes.

The last interview was challenging because both the interviewer and the respondent were distracted by the excessive noise level in the hallway. This interview should have been retaped under better conditions. Also, this student was frustrated because the recent mediation that she conducted was extremely difficult because it actually ended up involving three disputants rather than the usual two disputants thereby impeding the process.

A potential source of bias may exist in this interview because the researcher and subjects closely interacted during the training and then the study. The question arises as to whether students were trying to please the researcher by constructing answers that they knew would be well-received.

## Discussion

The sample group size may be too small to make conclusive statements; however, the study group was sufficient to indicate a positive relationship between peer mediation training and constructive outcomes in conflict situations for trainees in their inter-personal associations. These results replicate those of Johnson et al. (1995) who noted that the training for elementary school students had significant impact on the strategies students used and the resulting resolutions. These findings provide further evidence that training changes the conflict strategies students use and when students have a choice, they will choose constructive conflict strategies over destructive ones.

Inferentially, it follows that if a relationship can be established between peer mediation training and reduced levels of conflict, then increasing the number of trainees in the school will also reduce the number and severity of conflicts that occur.

It is probable that the more trainees who take the program (or the higher the percentage of trainees) in a given school environment, the greater the positive impact will be on the environment as a whole. Johnson and Johnson (1996) recommend, however, that all students should be taught negotiation and mediation skills. Furthermore, the authors suggest that a schoolwide peer mediation program should be implemented to empower students to manage conflicts constructively.

In my study, the impact or positive results may not relate as well as would be predicted given the study group because the volunteers in this study were and remained highly motivated towards peer mediation training. Therefore, more research would be required to assess the role that motivation plays in students' acquiring and applying these skills.

Likewise, this study does not examine the impact of age as it relates to the positive outcome of peer mediation training. It would be logical to anticipate that the earlier the training begins, and the more it is reinforced, the better the outcome would be. This claim

is also substantiated in Johnson & Johnson, ( 1996) as mentioned earlier in this paper.

With the sharp increase in violent-related acts in our schools, it is vital to develop a pro-active approach to this serious problem. If students don't learn these skills in school, they are not likely to learn them elsewhere. Conflict, especially when it escalates to violence, presents a challenge or threat to the safe and secure environment that must exist in school in order for learning to occur.

What better service could our schools provide than to teach our students life skills that would accompany them to each relationship and situation that would require conflict management. Peer mediation programs help to inspire students involved in conflict to change the experience into a positive, constructive one where there is an opportunity for personal growth. These programs are essential in the fight against violence so that all students may have the opportunity to learn in an environment that is safe and secure.

In conclusion, in returning their questionnaire packages, two former students from Group A included the following messages that I would like to share. The first one was from a young man who is now a first year student himself at The University of Lethbridge.

“My sister and I appreciate what you have taught us. For us, it is a life-long knowledge that will better us wherever we shall go.”

The second letter was received from a young lady who is currently attending Lethbridge Community College.

I just wanted you to know that before I was asked to take part in the Peer Mediation course, I knew nothing about it. I found it very beneficial. Because of Peer Mediation, I was able to become more aware of my listening and problem-solving strategies. In my first year at college, I took two Communication classes as part of the Rehabilitation Program in which my Peer Mediation training was very beneficial. Because I already knew about body language, active listening, eye contact, and having the person come up with his own

solution(these are just a few of the skills we learned), I felt I had a better grip on the class and I managed to do well in these classes. I just wanted to let you know that this course [Peer Mediation] would be a real asset to any high school student as almost every program at the College requires that students take Communications 162. Even in everyday life situations, this Peer Mediation course is very beneficial to have. It has been a major asset to me and I know it would greatly benefit anyone else who decided to take it. This course alone was enough to give me a good understanding of the role of the helper. Thank you for including me in this program. The knowledge you shared is greatly appreciated and I believe it will make me a better helper in my future career.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Methodology**

This letter would be given to students to explain the nature of the study prior to their answering the survey questions.

Dear Student,

Would you mind being a part of this study on the impact of peer mediation training on the management of school and home conflicts? Your participation is completely voluntary and you can refuse to take part if you want.

Why were you selected? You, and you alone, are the only ones who have the knowledge and necessary qualifications; therefore, your input is very important to determine the future direction of this program. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. If you feel uncomfortable putting your name on this paper, it is not essential that you identify yourself. Please answer all questions as completely and as honestly as you can.

If you have any questions regarding this study you can contact Dr. Craig Lowen, chairman of the Ethics Committee at the University of Lethbridge:

PHONE: (403)329-2455 FAX: (403)329-2252

Once again, for those of you who agree to participate, thank you for your assistance. It is greatly appreciated.

Your Instructor,

(Mrs.) L. Vankoughnett

## **Appendix B**

### **The Survey Blueprint**

#### Theory

Conflict resolution skills means conflict resolution success.

#### Hypothesis

Peer mediation training is related to a reduced number and severity of conflict situations for graduates in their inter-personal associations.

#### Operational Terms Defined

Did peer mediation training result in better conflict outcomes in inter-personal associations?

Peer mediation training factors in learn conflict situations.

Did peer mediation training affect your ability to resolve conflict? If so, how?

#### Survey Questions

1. My methods of resolving conflict have changed since I became a peer mediator.
2. Peer mediation has helped me to resolve my own conflicts more constructively than I did in the past.
3. As a result of my peer mediation training, I have been able to help others resolve their conflicts.

How significant a factor was it in conflict resolution?

4. Peer mediation has provided me with effective life skills.
5. I am likely to use my peer mediation training to resolve personal conflicts in the future.
6. My usual ways of dealing with conflicts have changed since I took peer mediation training. The techniques I used before and use now are rated from 1 to 5 as follows.
7. My own conflicts have been with the following (with the following rated from 1 to 5).

## Appendix C

Table X

**Rank Order of Reasons for Taking Peer Mediation Training**

Reason	Ranking	N	MR	Ranking	N	MR	Combined
1. 1-711633	22/7		3.1	4646541836	47/10	4.7	3.9
2. 84426252	33/8		4.1	8768777768	71/10	7.1	5.6
3. 7767----	28/4		6.8	7183458345	48/10	4.8	5.7
4. 86-8-788	45/6		7.6	7767788588	71/10	7.1	7.3
5. 512-4424	22/7		3.1	4243161135	30/10	3.0	3.0
6. 31351124	20/8		2.6	2154215222	26/10	2.6	2.5
7. 66433546	37/8		4.6	1615634653	40/10	4.0	4.3
8. 32125537	28/8		3.5	35 223 22341	27/10	2.7	3.1
9. to empower myself with the knowledge and ability to help others and guide them				a. I thought it would be fun. b. So I have training for future need; like I might need it later on in life.			

**Note.** (see Survey 1) Reasons 1-9 are the possible reasons students took peer mediation training. Ranking indicates student responses in order of importance. 1 - 8 indicates ranking of reasons for taking the training. N equals number of respondents. MR equals mean rank. Dashes (-) indicate no response by student. Combined equals Group A's and Group B's mean rank.

Table X + 1

**Conflict Techniques Before and After Training - Group A**

	BEFORE PMT			AFTER PMT		
	Resp	N	MR	Resp	N	MR
<b>I. Avoidance</b>						
a. withdrawing	23453333	26/8	3.2	22322222	17/8	2.1
b. ignoring	23434433	26/8	3.2	23222222	17/8	2.1
c. denying	22433223	21/8	2.6	22222222	16/8	2.0
d. giving in	52133524	25/8	3.1	34132323	21/8	2.6
e. changing the subject	43335334	28/8	3.5	32332222	19/8	2.3
<b>2. Confrontation</b>						
a. aggression & threats	21252421	19/8	2.3	11231211	12/8	1.5
b. bribery	21141112	13/8	1.6	21131211	12/8	1.5
c. punishment	11141311	13/8	1.6	11131211	11/8	1.3
<b>3. Communication</b>						
a. listening	43434534	30/8	3.7	54444545	35/8	4.3
b. admitting differences	33332433	24/8	3.0	44344454	32/8	4.0
d. discovering options	33232433	23/8	2.8	44444554	34/8	4.2
a. parents	42423532	25/8	3.1			
b. friends	35332222	22/8	2.8			
c. teachers	32241222	18/8	2.3			
d. brother/s &/or sister/s	2252-544	24/7	3.4			
e. neighbours	21211121	11/8	1.4			
f. employers	21111122	11/8	1.4			
g. co-workers	12122112	12/8	1.5			
h. other students	233--332	16/6	2.6			
i. other [specify]	Roommates, boyfriends, children that I babysit.					

Note. (see Survey 2) Resp. indicate student responses. Numbers after techniques indicate student responses. N equals number of respondents. MR equals mean rating. Dashes (-) indicate no response by student. Before PMT and After PMT indicates before and after peer mediation training.

Table X + 2

**Conflict Techniques Before and After Training - Group B**

	BEFORE PMT			AFTER PMT		
	Resp.	N	MR	Resp.	N	MR
<b>I.Avoidance</b>						
a.withdrawing	3333345533	35/10	3.5	3254224412	29/10	2.9
b.ignoring	3354544533	39/10	3.9	2344354522	34/10	3.4
c.denying	4241221421	23/10	2.3	1131111513	18/10	1.8
d.giving in	4221113342	23/10	2.3	2332111312	19/10	1.9
e.changing the subject	4131244443	30/10	3.0	1333323413	26/10	2.6
<b>2.Confrontation</b>						
a.aggression & threats	3244212311	23/10	2.3	1122113312	17/10	1.7
b. bribery	1111131211	13/10	1.3	1121211111	12/10	1.2
c.punishment	4134111311	20/10	2.0	1131112213	16/10	1.6
<b>3.Communication</b>						
a.listening	4445344443	39/10	3.9	4445545554	45/10	4.5
b.seeing both sides	3545343534	39/10	3.9	5454545555	47/10	4.7
c.admitting differences	3535253534	38/10	3.8	4453555554	45/10	4.5
d.discovering options	4334242323	30/10	3.0	3443434555	40/10	4.0
a.parents	3231534332	29/10	2.9			
b.friends	2222223312	21/10	2.1			
c.teachers	2222112311	17/10	1.7			
d.brother/s &/or sister/s	2343534453	36/10	3.6			
e.neighbours	1121121111	12/10	1.2			
f.employers	1121111111	11/10	1.1			
g.co-workers	1121122311	14/10	1.4			
h.other students	3133123322	23/10	2.3			
i.other [specify]						

**Note.** (see Survey 2) Resp. indicate student responses. Numbers after techniques indicate student responses. N equals number of respondents. MR equals mean rating. Before PMT and After PMT indicate before and after peer mediation training.

Table X + 3

**Statements About Peer Mediation**

<b>Group A</b>			<b>Group B</b>			<b>Combined</b>
<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MR</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MR</b>	
a. 44344544	32/8	4.0	4244434444	37/10	3.7	3.8
b. 45544443	33/8	4.1	4454454444	42/10	4.2	4.1
c. 43444554	33/8	4.1	3445444433	38/10	3.8	3.9
d. 54543544	34/8	4.2	4545454444	44/10	4.4	4.3
e. 34533554	32/8	4.0	3335545454	41/10	4.1	4.0

Note. (see Survey 3) Letters a. to e. indicate statements about peer mediation. See Table 3. Numbers following statements indicate levels of student agreement. N equals the number of respondents. MR equals mean rating. Combined equals Group A's and Group B's mean rating.

## **Appendix D**

### **The Interview Blueprint**

#### Theory

Conflict resolution skills means conflict resolution success.

#### Hypothesis

Peer mediation training is related to a reduced number and severity of conflict situations for graduates in their inter-personal associations.

#### Operational Terms Defined

Did peer mediation training result better conflict outcomes in inter-personal associations?

Peer mediation training factors in conflict situations.

Did peer mediation training affect your ability to resolve conflict? If so, how?

How significant a factor was it in conflict resolution?

#### Interview Questions

1. Can you give me an example of how in you used your peer mediation training?
2. Can you give me an example of how you used this training in your personal life?
3. Would you suggest that a fellow student take the training?

## Appendix E

### Interview Rationale for Selecting Transcript Format and Coding

<u>CONVENTION</u>	<u>MEANING</u>
I:	Interviewer
R:	Respondent
(Laugh)	Indicates laughter
I will do so...	Dots indicate silence, where each dot represents approximately two seconds.
They had been understood- uh-huh.	Dashes at the end of a speech indicate second speaker has interrupted first speaker.
They each- You know, we sat at a round table	Dashes indicate speaker has ‘interrupted himself’, that is, abruptly changed subjects mid-sentence.
-maybe a good place	Dashes at the beginning of a speech indicate first speaker has continued speaking in spite of second speaker’s vocalization/interruption
I: (Yeah)	Indicates vocalization by interviewer or respondent while the other is talking, which does not interrupt the other’s speech. That is, second speaker’s vocalization has
occurred	during a natural pause in the first speaker’s speech.
OK	Indicates okay.
-----	Indicates the name of a person mentioned in the interview.

Transcript format involved the coding with either the interviewer (I) or respondent (R) as the designated speaker with a space (tab) before their actual speech. This format was selected because it was simple, logical and easy to understand.

## Appendix F

### Transcript of Interviews

#### Interview 1 - Group B Female

- I: Can you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training?
- R: In my life?
- I: I'll ask you about in school, then in your personal life.
- R: In school .. first I learned that I shouldn't -- if I do get mad I learned not to aggressively go out and call them names...I don't do that but before I used to kinda (laugh) Yah, so yah, that's helped. Just to be calm and to know that there's a way to solve a problem and not just by fighting.
- I: So that's in your personal life.
- R: Yah
- I: Have you been able to use it in any other ways in your personal life with your friends, with your family, with your siblings?
- R: Yah
- I: Could you tell about that, please.
- R: If say me and my friend aren't getting along I won't keep what I feel inside. I won't keep it bottled up. I will tell her about it so it doesn't get worse.
- I: And is that different from how you used to handle conflict?
- R: Yah, cause before I used to keep it inside.
- I: Could you just explain how you think the peer mediation training helped?
- R: Well, cause we read about different types of anger like the passive kind and the aggressive and we learned which ones would help and wouldn't help so I just applied those to myself.
- I: Is there anything else that you could add about how it applied to your personal life?

- R: Um.. if I do get into a conflict, I talk to them about it instead of fighting. I try to go over that sequence of steps, you know, covered with ways to solve problems instead of a fight.
- I: Now in school. Can you tell me how you have used it in school ...your peer mediation training? Have you been a mediator in school, for example?
- R: Yes, I have.
- I: How did that go?
- R: When I mediate, it goes well because people are cooperative. You are there to help them so you just have to help them get through it.
- I: And you felt that the mediation process worked?
- R: Yah, it did
- I: In the mediations that you were involved in?
- R: Um huh
- I: OK, would you suggest that a fellow student take the training for peer mediation?
- R: Yah
- I: Can you say why?
- R: Well, it helps a lot especially when you come to dealing with anger and stuff and conflict. It not only can help you help other people with it but it helps yourself. When it comes to different, you know, conflicts in your life so you know how to handle it.
- I: OK. Great. Would you recommend that the whole school body take peer mediation or just like we do it now - just a select few people? What do you think would work better?
- R: I think people who want to do it should do it. Not everyone should undertake it cause some people don't feel comfortable with it or just don't feel they can help. They just - it's not in their interest, but I think people who have it in their interest

should just take it. It should be their own choice. But it's a good program. I mean to take, it helps a lot, but if you're not up to it.

I: It should be optional?

R: Yah

I: Ok, great. Is there anything else you could add to .. any other comments about peer mediation?

R: It's a good program, it helps you a lot.

I: Thank you.

### Interview 2 - Group B Female

I: Can you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training?

R: Like an example

I: In school, for example, have you had an opportunity to mediate a conflict in school or co-mediate a conflict?

R: I co-mediated a mediation. \_\_\_\_ was the mediator so I actually I did mediate a conflict.

I: In that mediation that you were involved with -- how do you feel that it went when you had the disputants there? Can you tell me how you thought the process worked and how it turned out? What your feelings were?

R: I think it went fine, but maybe there were some parts that we maybe have missed out or something or we didn't point out something to them that they probably haven't discovered yet, but I haven't heard any problems from either of them lately. I think it's going well.

I: Now when you say you may have left out some parts do you mean -- I'm not sure I understand you - some parts of the process were left out or could you explain that a little bit more for me.

R: Well, I think we sort of missed some information. I mean they probably told us but...

I: Oh, I see. Ok. Gathering information that something was missed. You felt that going through the process for the disputants worked ok.

R: That worked fine.

I: Ok, so you were involved in one mediation in school.

R: Just one

I: Ok. Could you tell me if you have been able to use peer mediation in your personal life?

R: Personal life?

I: Relationships with your friends, your family, your sisters, brother, parents.

R: I guess sort of subconsciously. (Laugh)

I: Can you tell me some more about that?

R: It's not something you'd actually put actual thinking into unless you're asked to go through an actual mediation, but if you are confronted with a dispute of some sort maybe you try to avoid it in your own way. It's just in there.

I: Ok. It's not like you consciously say, "Ok, now I'm going to use the steps in peer mediation."

R: Exactly... Ok. Exactly...it just comes naturally. It just comes up.

I: In relationships when you have had conflicts with friends and so on, have you noticed --

R: I guess

I: With friends, is there a difference in how you handled conflicts before you took the training?

R: A lot more

I: OK. Could you just tell me a little bit about that?

R: Um, well, like instead of - I try to say "Ok", you know if it's an opinionated argument. "Ok, that's your opinion. I will respect that and my opinion is"... and I'll give my opinion, but I'll try to keep it at a friendly level and I won't try to raise my voice or anything like that. I try to keep it at a very friendly level.

I: Ok. What about at home? Have you been able to use it at all with sisters and brothers, with parents?

R: I don't really fight much with my parents lately.

I: Would you suggest that a fellow student take the training?

R: Yah, I would.

I: Ok. Could you say why?

R: It teaches a person to handle their temper and not be so stubborn and be very opinionated.

I: Would you recommend that it be taught to the whole student body or just a select few like we do now?

R: It would probably be good if it went to the whole student body, but I don't think everyone concerned would take it seriously, so I think we should stick to the selected...

I: Selected number?

R: Um huh

I: Is there anything else you could add or do you have any other comments about the peer mediation training?

R: No, it's fine..

### Interview 3 - Group B Male

I: Could you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training?

R: Well, whenever there has been any conflicts in the school, the vice-principal or the counsellor will send the disputants into the room and that's where you pick up a couple of peer mediators to try to resolve the conflict. I have used it once and I have been a co-mediator to solve a conflict.

I: Ok

R: And sometimes if I have disputes like with my brother or anything, I try to avoid that, and I try to use the steps of peer mediation to try and settle the disputes.

I: So, you said that you have been a peer mediator once.

R: Yes.

I: Ok. Could you just tell a bit about how it worked out when you were peer mediator and when you were co-mediator? Can you describe how you used that peer mediation training at that time?

R: Well how I used it...I followed the steps. I asked the right questions and tried to get the disputants talking so I know both sides and everything went confidential and everything went well when I was mediator. I didn't take any sides.

I: Ok, Thank you. Now you said that you have been able to use it in your personal life as well. You said specifically with you brother you were able to use it. Could you tell more about how you have been able to use it in your personal life..the training you received?

R: Yah, if I have a conflict with my brother, for example, let's just say we've been fighting over a CD (it's not true) but well what I would do is I would ask questions if he wanted it and if I wanted it.. if we could make a collective agreement. When to use it? What tunes to listen to? Which CD's? I would try to get an agreement from both sides.

- I: Ok. Have you been able like in your personal life like your relationships at school or at home or in the community to use it in any other way besides your brother? Has there been any other way you have been able to use it in your personal life?
- R: Well, not other than family members.
- I: Have you been able to use it with any family members other than your brother.
- R: Um. No.
- I: Would you suggest that a fellow student take the training or would you recommend to a fellow student or would you suggest to a fellow student that they take the peer mediation training?
- R: Yes.
- I: Could you tell me why?
- R: Well, I think peer mediation is a great skill to learn and once you learn it, it will be useful when you grow older or useful to put on your resume or in your job.
- I: When you say it may be useful when you grow older, can you tell me more about that?
- R: Well, say you get a job and if you want to solve disputes with fellow workers at the work environment well, you could use your skills to solve disputes if needed.
- I: Ok. Great! Super! Is there anything else you would like to add?
- R: Well, it is - the training was good. I would like to add that. I'd like to say again it was useful. It's a good skill to learn for everybody. I think everybody should take it.
- I: Do you mean in a general sense, it should be taught widespread in the school to the general population or just like it's been done in the past with specific individuals?
- R: I think anybody could take it if they stay...if they stick with the program. Stick with what you're doing. You have to..what am I saying here? Just use the training.

Interview 4 - Group B Male

- I: Can you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training?
- R: Well, we had to solve a conflict in the school between two peers.
- I: How did that go?
- R: I feel it went fairly well, but I don't know if it will work because the people (disputants) weren't really trying to participate. They just wanted to leave
- I: Can you account for why that was?
- R: I feel they really didn't want to solve the conflict and they felt they were too worked up at the time. They just didn't try to cooperate to finish the program.
- I: In that particular case, did it end up coming to a resolution of some sort or did the mediation actually finish or no?
- R: Well, we actually finished but I feel that some of the resolution, I feel they stuck to it, but I feel that the resolution was made more because they wanted to leave than because they wanted it to finish....
- I: Can you give me an example of how you have used mediation in your personal life?
- R: At home I have not got into as many arguments and same as at school, I guess.
- I: Can you tell me more about that and how that worked?
- R: Well, It just gives you more options that now you know about and that you practice and so instead of... whereas before you would have only a few courses of action so it's opened up a lot more of what you can do and what should be done instead of getting all mad and just storming out or whatever.
- I: When you say at home do you mean with your brother and what about with your parents - have you been able to use it?
- R: I don't usually fight with my parents anyway.

- I: Would you suggest that a fellow student should take the training for peer mediation?
- R: Yah, because I feel that if everybody took it then there wouldn't be as many conflicts or fights. It would just help people deal with it in a grownup way.
- I: So when you make that statement, do you mean you like think the whole school body should take it or it should continue with just a select number of students?
- R: I feel that the select number of students -- it would be easier because that way you would know who was doing it and you would also have a better background of if the person really wanted to do it. And because not everybody has the skills to be it or they would have to practice long and hard to learn those skills.
- I: Is there anything else you would like to add?
- R: I just think it is a really worthwhile course.

Interview 5 - Group B Female

- I: Can you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training?
- R: Um, like if I am in a fight and I am fighting with my friends, I try to sort the problem out instead of just ignoring them.
- I: Ok. All right. So ignoring was the method you used before?
- R: Yes.
- I: Ok and now you are using something different because of your training, then?
- R: Yes.
- I: Ok. Can you tell me what's different, or like what method you are using now?
- R: Um, I talk to them and I tell them that I'm mad and then we sort out the problem from there.
- I: Ok, so you identify your feelings and tell them what you're feeling like and then talk it out. Ok, all right. Ok, is there any other way that you have been able to use the peer mediation training in your personal life...?

R: Um...

I: Like with your friends? Have you been able to use it any other way?

R: I have been able to make an opportunity not just between me and my friends but between my friends and each other.

I: Oh, can you tell me more about that?

R: Like, if they're fighting. I help them. I help them sort it out if not, they just give each other the silent treatment (Laugh).

I: Oh, ok, so you sort of do a mediation informally with your friends.

R: Oh, ok.

I: How is that working out?

R: Good

I: Ok, so you have been able to use it with your friends in particular, and what about at home with siblings, parents?

R: I don't really have big fights with my parents.

I: Ok, all right. The last question that I have is, would you suggest that a fellow student take the training?

R: Yes

I: Ok. Can you say why you would say that?

R: It's really helpful when you have a problem with somebody. It sorts it out a lot faster than most people use.

I: Ok. All right. Would you recommend or suggest like the entire student body should take it or it should currently be done the way it is now with just a select few.

R: I think now is ok because I don't know if there is a lot who would want to take it but...just the way it is done now.

I: Ok. All right.

Interview 6 - Group A Female

- I: Can you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training? Other than in school, or during a mediation...during a mediation.
- R: Ok, um, actually I use it with all my friends.
- I: Ok, can we start with the mediation first, and then like what your experience has been with the mediation with you actually doing it in school as a mediator.
- R: I think I have only done one real mediation in our school, but I have done it in Grade 6 or Grade 7 when Mr. \_\_\_ was teaching it. We did a whole bunch of mediations down there with various people.
- I: Oh, ok, and what about the one you did here in the high school since you were trained at the high school, you did one then?
- R: Yah
- I: Ok, was that last year?
- R: Yah, I think it was, yah, when right after we did our mediation stuff.
- I: Ok. Do you remember how it went?
- R: It's foggy in my mind. (Laugh)
- I: Can you give me an example then of how you have used it in your personal life?
- R: I use it with my friends like when they're like when two of my friends are arguing with each other. I'll help them talk it out and get them to figure out what their problem is.
- I: Oh, ok. So, can you tell me a little bit more about that..like do you take the role of mediator?
- R: Yah?
- I: And informally take them...
- R: Well, yah, informally take them, yah it's nothing like how we do in school, I go like what's wrong to like one of my friends and they will tell me and then I'll go

“What’s wrong with you?” and they’ll figure it out from there, it’s really informal, it’s nothing like the set-up we use.

I: Right. Ok. How has that been working?

R: Oh, most of the time it works, but sometimes they are having petty differences (laugh) that you can’t solve or mediate.

I: Ok, all right. Have you been able to use it in any other ways in your personal life other than your friends?

R: No, definitely not at home!

I: Oh, ok, all right. You say definitely not, could you...

R: It doesn’t seem to work..my parents aren’t ones that like to talk about things.

I: Oh, ok, all right and what about... you have siblings. Have you been able to use it with them?

R: No, with siblings, they sort it out physically. (Laugh)

I: Ok, would you suggest that a few students take the training for peer mediation?

R: Yes, it’s definitely worth it.

I: Ok, can you tell me why you say that?

R: Well, it gives you...it helps you look at the other side of a problem even like for yourself. If you got a problem you go well, the other person must be thinking, then you can look at both sides. It gives you a wider perspective on the problem instead of like a little narrow idea of what the solution is.

I: Ok, all right. Do you think it would be an idea to have the whole school trained or just to stay with a select few people to be trained?

R: I think you should have those who are willing to do it cause there are a lot of students in the school who it would be just a waste of time. They don’t want...it’s got to be something you want to do. I think of it as a skill cause you get better at it as time goes on and if you don’t want to do it, then you aren’t going to be good at

mediation anyway. If you don't want to do it, you're not going to put any effort into it, so it would be just a waste.

I: Ok. So, if you're keen on the process, then would that also mean, that like in your case because you're interested in it, that's why you've applied it in your personal life as well.

R: Yah.

I: Is there anything else you would like to add?

R: Not particularly.

#### Interview 7 - Group B Female

I: Can you give me an example of how you have used your peer mediation training?

R: Um...

I: Like have you done any mediations in school?

R: Yah

I: Ok. Can you tell me about that? Like details or ....

R: Yah

I: Tell me about how you used it, how many times you used it and maybe what you thought of the process...

R: Well, we went through the beginning of the process and it didn't really work and it didn't really at the end because it was something that we couldn't handle but I think the process is basically a good one. There probably could be some changes somewhere though depending on the situation.

I: Ok. And what do you mean exactly by "there could be some changes somewhere" like can you tell me?

R: I don't know.. I guess you don't really have to go in a certain order just as long as you get everything done. It makes it easier to go in an order so when you try and go in that order sometimes it doesn't work out as well as it could if you didn't.

- I: Oh, ok, all right. So it's just a case of if you just alternated the steps, then that would make a difference? Is that what you mean?
- R: Sometimes
- I: Ok. All right. How did that work out then with the mediation in school?
- R: What do you mean?
- I: Ok. I'm having a hard time because there is so much (Laugh) noise out there. Ok, like you said, "that it didn't work out in the end", I think you said.
- R: Well, it's because we were trained with two people and there was really three people and the two people that had the so-called problem, you couldn't really fix it without the third person and the third person was just like "Yah, whatever" sort of "Yah, I'll sign this", but it was just a game to them.
- I: Ok, so they didn't really buy into the concept then?
- R: No response
- I: Ok. Did not take it seriously?
- R: No.
- I: So you had one experience with peer mediation in school, is that right?
- R: Yes
- I: Ok, can you give me an example of how you have used the training in your personal life?
- R: Well, I've always handled my conflicts pretty good but ever since I took the training... I don't know I see it from a different view like I've always seen it from the same view. I just see it better now. Like I can..... instead of thinking this is a situation, it will just blow over, I always go talk to the person now.
- I: Oh.

- I: Ok. Good. All right. Is there anything else you could add...to anything about the mediation?... My next question is would you suggest that a fellow student take the training?
- R: Yah
- I: Ok, can you say why?
- R: Well, it's a good process to learn and if you're open minded you're probably good with dealing with conflicts already. But if you take this and you're open-minded then it might help. If you're really narrow-minded, then you probably won't even think twice about it.
- I: Ok. So would you recommend that the whole school body take it or just a select few like that's currently doing it now?
- R: Well, I think the people that take an interest in it and feel that they want to should, but if they don't feel like they want to then I don't think they should have to.
- I: OK. All right. Well, I would like to thank you for taking part in this interview and I appreciate you giving up your time. Thanks a lot.
- R: You're welcome.

- R: Instead of just, I always talked to the person before too, but if it was just a little situation I thought it would get better but now I just make sure everything is clear just to be safe.
- I: Ok. So when you say to make sure that everything is clear so that's where the difference is now with using the peer mediation skills.
- R: Yah, before I never talked to them all the time like every time I had a problem.
- I: Ok.
- R: And now if I have a problem I always talk to them and find out. I always like find out how they feel and their point of view and then I don't pay any attention to me. I always understand how the other person feels too so that it's easier.
- I: So now you're trying to understand both sides, so you know your side and you're trying to get more information as to how the other person is feeling.
- R: Yah.
- I: And where they're coming from with the conflict.
- R: Um huh
- I: All right. Have you been able to use it in any other way? Like that's with your friends, right? Ok, what about at home, have you been able to use it at home?
- R: No (Laugh)
- I: Ok, all right. Is there any other way that you have used it in your personal life that you can think of?
- R: Well, I sort of use it when I give advice, in a way I use it. Cause if somebody has a problem with somebody else and they ask me "What should I do?" Then I always tell them, "Well find out how that person feels and take their feelings into consideration." I try to even it out but I never.. I don't do a mediation. When I give advice, I take everything into consideration.