Fourth- and fifth-grade students as problem finders within the discourse of mediation

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Abstract
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The focus that emerged during analysis of data was the mediators' propensity for problem finding and solving within the mediation model with respect to issues of time, problems with students (teasing, joking, interrupting, honesty, no solutions to conflicts) and problems with co-mediators. Mediators perceived these behaviors as problematic because of their acquired knowledge of mediation Discourse and their expectations of what constituted a normal relationship to trust and confidentiality also developed as a result of adults' indirect involvement in the process.

Data were interpreted in two ways: mediation perceived by students as a complex social interaction and, at times, as an adversarial "us" versus "them" relationship that appeared to conflict with the cooperative problem solving beliefs of mediation. Parallel findings were related to the school's socially and economically diverse neighborhood, which was suggested as being a microcosm of the current urban American culture.

Keywords
Education, Elementary

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Fourth and fifth grade students as problem finders within the discourse of mediation

Ferrara, Judith Marie, Ph.D.
University of New Hampshire, 1994

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FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS AS PROBLEM FINDERS
WITHIN THE DISCOURSE OF MEDIATION

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Reading and Writing Instruction

May, 1994
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of Education, Fitchburg State College

Pearl Rosenberg, Assistant Professor
of Education

Thomas Schram, Assistant Professor
of Education

4/22/84
Date
To my husband, John
To my mother, Josephine
To the peer mediators

Duty

Fool, do not beat the air
With miserable hands—
The wrong is done, the seed is sown,
The evil stands.

Your duty is to draw
Out of the webs of wrong,
Out of ill-woven deeds,
A thread of song.

Mirror of the Heart:
Poems of Sara Teasdale.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Invisible stories and my heartfelt gratitude surround every name I set down on this page. When I look at the list, the silent movies of my mind begin while subtitles flash under the scenes in which each person starred—support, encouragement, faith, confidence, help, love, concern, curiosity, humor. Thank you.


Special appreciation to my committee: Tom Newkirk, Pearl Rosenberg, Tom Schram, Michele Moran Zide and Ann Diller.
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ABSTRACT

FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS AS PROBLEM FINDERS WITHIN THE DISCOURSE OF MEDIATION

by

Judith M. Ferrara
University of New Hampshire, May, 1994

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe from students' perspectives how a peer mediation program became part of one urban elementary school's culture during six months of program implementation. Peer mediation is a process which enables disputing students to voluntarily resolve conflicts with the help of a pair of trained student mediators and without the direct participation of adults. Descriptions of students' perceptions of the role of mediator and the mediation process grew from field notes, interview transcripts, video transcripts and print documentation gathered by the researcher in her roles as participant observer and mediation program coordinator/trainer.

The focus that emerged during analysis of data was the mediators' propensity for problem finding and solving within the mediation model with respect to issues of time, problems with students (teasing, joking, interrupting, honesty, no solutions to conflicts) and problems with co-mediators. Mediators perceived these behaviors as problematic because of their acquired knowledge of mediation Discourse and their xii
expectations of what constituted a normal relationship between mediators and disputants. Dilemmas connected to trust and confidentiality also developed as a result of adults' indirect involvement in the process.

Data were interpreted in two ways: mediation perceived by students as a complex social interaction and, at times, as an adversarial "us" versus "them" relationship that appeared to conflict with the cooperative problem solving beliefs of mediation. Parallel findings were related to the school's socially and economically diverse neighborhood, which was suggested as being a microcosm of the current urban American culture.
SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION: BEGINNINGS OF A CONTEXT
CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF TOPIC AND PERSPECTIVE

A basic tenet of descriptive research is that people in a setting do not necessarily "know how it is": seemingly everyday or routine behavior is worthy of scrutiny. The obvious is not so obvious after all. We want people to look more carefully, to analyze more critically, and to recognize that things are probably more rather than less complex than they seem, even as we search for ways to reduce that complexity enough to render understandable accounts. (Wolcott, 1988, p. 28)

When students have an argument or a physical fight in school, what happens? How is their conflict resolved? The purpose of the following narrative is to show how disputes were settled in the elementary school that became the setting for this qualitative research study. It will be followed by an introduction to the topic of peer mediation, a method of conflict resolution that is perceived as one antidote to the culture of violence present in schools today (Messing, 1993; Lam, 1989a).

Toward Resolving Conflicts in Hampton Campus School

"We're in trouble" was the message written on the faces of both fifth grade boys who slumped silently in chairs facing the assistant principal's desk one sunny October day. Danny Rodriguez shifted his small, thin frame away from his opponent toward the only window in the small room which was
filled with one too many pieces of every type of office furniture. He watched groups of college students outside drifting toward their 9:30 classes in C wing, which was off-limits to campus school students. Jamie Caron's brown eyes slid from the white tiled floor to Mr. Ronzoni's profile and saw a description of this feud play chase with the cursor on the blue screen.

**Discipline Action Report**

**SITUATION:** [WHAT HAPPENED?]

Danny and Jamie started to call each other names in class. Each of them says the other started it. The name calling escalated into a fist fight that they say the other started.

**PROBLEM/S**

Neither of these boys was doing what they were supposed to be doing.

**SOLUTION**

Please speak to your child about name calling and fighting.

**CONSEQUENCE**

They will lose their lunch recess today.

Mr. Ronzoni said, "Both of you will take a copy of this to your teacher and bring the other one home and show it to your parents. I will be mailing a copy to them." He sent them back to class.

Both Danny and Jamie knew it was only a matter of time before a print out of this dispute would begin a journey that could end up in their parents' hands. They could have been anticipating further consequences awaiting them at home once it arrived there. That meant double trouble, unless they could intercept the mail and effectively block their parents' participation in this conflict.
Ronzoni was experienced in dealing with students who had conflicts that ended in physical violence, and it seemed to have an effect on the way that he interpreted events outside Hampton's walls. Four months later, we stood in the corridor outside his office and talked about the morning's headlines: "Hotel worker beaten to death - Riverton man pleads not guilty." Peter Lindell, a 22 year old Anglo Riverton State business major who came from the next town, was the victim. Accused was Andrew Forman, a 24 year old African-American who grew up in a few blocks away and attended the campus school junior high a decade before. His photo brought to mind a well behaved student who earned average grades in my English class. The regional newspaper described from several points of view what took place in the parking lot of the hotel where they both worked:

Forman...instigated the fight, spitting in Lindell's face and taunting him, according to Assistant District Attorney James Vacare. The prosecutor did not say what caused the fight, but he said it ended with Forman pounding Lindell's head against the pavement...Witnesses to the fight...said that [Lindell] was defending a woman being harassed by Forman in the parking lot. When he intervened, Lindell became the target of the fight.

When Jim Ronzoni and I talked about the incident, he shook his head and said, "When I read how it happened, it was exactly what the kids do, just like my reports. You have a conflict, one person says something to another person and they give a hit, and of course they took it further. Once
you put your hands on someone, you have no idea where that's going to take you, I tell these kids. You don't know. The key is: keep your hands off." But, I wondered, what else could they have done to solve the problem? What other strategies had students acquired to help them solve a conflict?

Between September 4, 1992 and June 18, 1993, Ronzoni shared 351 discipline reports with me. The verbs were chilling: hitting, slapping, scratching, punching, shoving, pinching, kicking. Violence stemmed from racist, homophobic or sexist insults (chink, nigger, fag, bimbo, bitch) or revenge (as in, "That's for telling on me," ) or responses to exclusion from a play group or to teasing about a new haircut. The children involved were usually between 8 and 11 years old.

In May, Danny was suspended-in-school for the remainder of the year for bringing two knives into the building. He told his teacher and Ronzoni that he had them for protection from the posse in the neighborhood. The principal, Dr. Richard Camden, sent a letter to parents:

> As you may have heard, this week a youngster was found to have two knives in his possession on school property. His intention was not to harm anyone. However, we have suspended him indefinitely until a final decision is taken by the Superintendent's office.

> While it may seem self evident that students are not to carry a dangerous instrument on school property, I must inform you of School Committee Policy #510.
Danny sat in the office area doing school work provided by his teacher until the last day of school. He now attends the middle school several blocks away.

The Bigger Picture

It is not difficult to fit Danny's experience into a larger context. Urban American school violence currently receives intense media coverage. School board members and parents put pressure on school administrators to stanch the flow of blood and return schools to places that are at least demilitarized zones, if not safe havens for learning. Metal detectors and police patrols are two solutions to a problem that is as complex as and more troublesome than Johnny's inability to read was in the 1950's and 1960's. Both solutions seem dependent upon adults' ability to control children simply by overpowering them, which appears to repeat the very conflict resolution style they are trying to suppress.

Interpersonal conflict is often perceived as undesirable and destructive, while cognitive conflict is recognized as necessary to one's learning process (Piaget, 1975). However, interpersonal conflict is a natural and necessary part of
living and learning. Acceptance of the latter view will require a revision of culture-bound attitudes toward interpersonal conflict itself. Bruner (1990) suggested that "the viability of a culture inheres in its capacity for resolving conflicts" (p. 47). Deutsch (1982) and Johnson and Johnson (1979, 1983, 1986, 1991) constructed cooperative learning, conflict resolution and mediation theories and methods that work to help reframe conflict as a positive, mutual problem solving opportunity. In a study conducted in a suburban middle-class elementary school, Johnson, Johnson, Dudley and Burnett (1992) found the following:

After students received the negotiation and mediation training, the student-student conflicts that did occur were by and large managed by the students themselves without the involvement of adults. The frequency of student-student conflicts teachers had to manage dropped 80 percent. The number of conflicts referred to the principal was reduced to zero. Such a dramatic reduction of referrals of conflicts to adults changed the school discipline program from one that arbitrated conflicts to one that maintained and supported the peer mediation process. (p. 12)

Peer mediation programs, which use conflict resolution and negotiation strategies, appear to bring together antithetical views of conflict and make them work together constructively in creative tension.

While psychologists Shure and Spivack found that children as young as four years old could be taught problem solving techniques to reduce their aggressive behavior (Meredith, 1987), students halfway through middle childhood
(ages six through twelve) find themselves on developmentally firm ground for beginning experiences with the mediation process. By the age of eight or nine years, children's social development begins to favor stronger relationships with peers; their cognitive abilities develop as well, allowing them to follow a process and to understand others' perspectives (Piaget, 1975). Therefore, by fourth grade, disputing students can be given the option of talking out conflicts with peers who are trained to take on the role of neutral third parties and help them develop a mutually satisfactory agreement (Davis & Porter, 1985b). Benefits of children's involvement with this process can be understood within the framework of Erikson's psychosocial theory of development with respect to children's senses of trust, autonomy, initiative and industry (Hamachek, 1988). Deutsch (1993) showed that

as [urban high school] students improved in managing their conflicts (whether due to the training in conflict resolution and/or cooperative learning), they experienced increased social support and less victimization from others. This improvement in their relations with others led to increased self-esteem as well as a decrease in feelings of anxiety and depression and more frequent positive feelings of well-being. The higher self-esteem, in turn, produced a greater sense of personal control over their own fates. The increases in their sense of personal control and in their positive feelings of well-being led to higher academic performances. There is also indirect evidence that the work readiness and work performance of students were improved by their exposure to the training. Our data, further, indicate that "consumer satisfaction" with the
training and its results were quite favorable—the students, teachers, and administrators had generally positive views. (p. 2)

Program evaluations and research results supported beliefs that students could be taught non-violent strategies for settling disputes using the principles of mediation and negotiation and that they could become better equipped to deal with conflict in school, thereby helping to improve school climate (Beneson, 1988; Stuart, 1991; Davis & Porter, 1985a; Vermillion, 1989; Lam, 1989a; Welch, 1989; Lane & McWhirter, 1992; Satchel, 1992; Ellsworth, 1993).

What One Picture Can Show

I wondered what would happen when mediation Discourse was introduced into one school. Gee (1990) described the Discourse "tools" of culture as: "values, attitudes, gestures...ways of talking, writing, acting, interacting, [and] thinking" (p. 171). Mediation Discourse is played out in a ritual; mediators hold to a prescribed form and order: introduction, joint sessions, mediator caucuses, forging agreements and conclusions. Mediators and disputants learn a set of norms for participating in a mediation: be honest, agree to try to work on the problem, agree to no namecalling or interrupting, as well as learning a set of norms for reaching an agreement: specificity, shared responsibility, both disputants' ability to do what they promise, and the
permanence of solutions. Mediation has a rich vocabulary of terms, skills, and strategies: confidentiality, voluntariness, neutrality, trust, empathy, emotions, body language, dispute, agreement, brainstorming and active listening.

Peer mediation programs are like liquids that take the shape of their containers and can look quite different from each other. The purpose of this study is to describe how one program became part of a school's culture. The remainder of Section 1 explains how I became interested in mediation as a student, teacher and researcher and describes my return to Hampton Campus School.

Section 2 begins with several perspectives of life in the city of Riverton; they are presented in order to contextualize the findings which make up the remainder of the section. I will describe how a group of fourth and fifth grade students whom I taught the Discourse of mediation came to understand the process and their roles inside of it. I have chosen to emphasize the children's point of view as they have taught it to me and show how they grappled with several of the slippery, sometimes faulty parts of the model that I presented to them. Their story of discovery, problem finding and solving grew from field notes, interview transcripts, video transcripts and print documentation that I collected in my roles as participant observer and coordinator/trainer of
the school's first peer mediation program.

In Section 3, I will make recommendations that grew from my experience in these three roles. The study concludes with an epilogue that was written on the first anniversary of Hampton Campus School's peer mediation program. My overall goal is to communicate what became important to the children as they experienced the reality of the mediation process, "talked the talk," and donned the blue tee shirts that were recognized as part of their identity kit.
CHAPTER II

ACQUIRING A DISCOURSE

It is probably the case that human beings forever suffer conflicts of interest, with attendant grudges, factions, coalitions, and shifting alliances. But what is interesting about these fractious phenomena is not how much they separate us but how much more often they are neutralized or forgiven or excused. The primatologist Frans de Waal warns that ethologists have tended to exaggerate the aggressiveness of primates (including man [human beings]) while undervaluing (and underobserving) the myriad means by which these higher species keep peace. (Bruner, 1990, p. 95)

My interest in mediation began in fall 1991, when I chose to study a local community program that was affiliated with the local district court as a "strange" setting for a graduate course project required for "Issues and Methods in Ethnographic Research in Education." It was a good choice because the people were involved in a process about which I knew virtually nothing. Access to the site came through Lillian Comeau, a friend who was a mediator and the local community program's new director. She had taken on her new role during a two year period when we had lost contact with each other. Lillian agreed to let me observe and interview her and to allow me to approach others in the group. She became my "intermediary. . .[and] facilitator" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 43), allowing me access to people and documents that
would teach me about the process and this group of volunteers. A brochure that she gave to me on the first day described mediation in this way:

*Mediation is a process which allows two parties to come before a neutral third party, the mediator, in hopes of finding a mutually satisfactory agreement. A mediator helps people involved in a dispute explore ways of resolving a problem by listening, guiding discussion, clarifying legal and emotional issues, setting the agenda, and writing agreements. (see Appendix A)*

For eight weeks, I struggled as an outsider to understand how familiar terms such as confidentiality, neutrality, voluntariness, empathy and empowerment carried special meaning for mediators. I listened to mediators "talk the talk" and began to learn how they perceived their role, and how others perceived them when they sat down with disputants and participated in a ritual known as mediation.

Sociolinguist James Gee (1990) suggested that a

*Discourse is tied to a particular social identity within a particular social group and to certain social settings and institutions. Each is a form of life, a way of being in the world, a way of being 'a person like us', in terms of action, interaction, values, thought and language. (p. 174)*

Although I eventually used a different cultural lens to focus my project, it was an experience that upended me into a new world of language, behaviors, values, and norms.

Convinced that there was more worth learning about mediation, I found myself driving seventy miles to a private boys' boarding school in the New England's Berkshire
Mountains, the site chosen by a nearby community mediation program to hold a five day, thirty hour basic training. While March winds snapped the trees outside awake, sixteen women and eight men grouped and regrouped for activities that our quartet of trainers had carefully planned to immerse us in the process. We were social workers, lawyers, college administrators, teachers, recently graduated college students in search of a profession, retired professionals looking for new territory to explore; we came in many shapes and various shades of brown, black and white; we were of European and African descent; we were Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, agnostics and atheists; we were straight and gay; we were young, middle-aged and beyond; we were funny and serious. We were a reflection of the people in communities whom we hoped would choose mediation as a way to resolve their conflicts.

Our coaches used role play observations, role play participation, activities, discussion groups and lectures to "teach" us mediator Discourse:

'Teach,' (with a little subscripted 'a') means to apprentice someone in a master-apprentice relationship in a social practice (Discourse) wherein you scaffold their growing ability to, say, do, value, believe, within that Discourse, through demonstrating your mastery and supporting theirs even when it barely exists (i.e., you make it like they can do what they really cannot do). (Gee, 1990, p. 154)

All through my training, my classroom teacher's voice
insisted, "Kids can do this." It made sense that children could learn how to resolve conflicts, without the presence of adult arbitrators, by using talk instead of resorting to violence or retreat ing from the problem in defeat. Experiencing methods firsthand helped me to begin acquiring mediator Discourse and gave me insights into how I might teach children in the coming months. Gee (1990) gave meaning to our beginning mastery of a secondary Discourse when he stated that it "is a product of acquisition, not learning; that is, it requires exposure to models in natural, meaningful and functional settings..." (p. 154). We watched our coaches mediate disputes in role plays based on real cases, and they watched us fumble our way through our first attempts. We were integrating ways of using language that Gee described as the "being-doing-thinking-valuing-speaking-listening(-writing-reading)" (p. 174) combination necessary to acquiring the Discourse. In the context of mediation, we saw that "what you are and do when you say it" (p. 140) was as important as knowing how to manage the grammar of mediation.

We also became aware of the "god terms" of mediation, those "terms to which the very highest respect is paid" (Weaver, 1954, cited in Newkirk, 1989, p. 179): confidentiality, neutrality and voluntariness. This linguistic trinity became the hub of our understanding all
that we represented. Lectures and activities were designed to help us identify conflict styles, heighten our awareness of cultural differences and personal biases and to increase our understanding of empathy, as well as to give us practice in mediator skills: reframing conflict narratives, restating emotions, identifying underlying issues and positives, recognizing power imbalances, asking open-ended and clarifying questions, separating wants from needs, helping disputants generate options, acting as an agent of reality and forging balanced agreements (Fisher, Ury, & Patten, 1991; Mediator Training Manual, 1991). Throughout our training, we exchanged questions. We considered answers. We asked more questions. We coalesced into a group, albeit a temporary one.

I filled a notebook during those hours and days of training as I tried to capture every idea that flew through the air. Joe Lieberman, a portly dean from a nearby community college, leaned over at one point and said, "I never saw anyone write as fast and as much as you." What he did not know was that I was acquiring this new Discourse with the specific purpose of adding it into another group's repertoire: fourth and fifth grade students.

The Multiple Realities of Mediation

After my training, I asked Lillian Comeau to take me
into in the local community court program as an intern. Between June and August, I co-mediated four disputes either in the lawyers' conference room in the district court house or in an unoccupied school building across the street from a police station/court house in Lincoln, a city adjacent to Riverton.

I gripped the steering wheel tightly on the twenty-five mile ride home from each experience and wrestled with the ambiguities of being a mediator. How could I feel empathy toward a plaintiff in a property damage dispute whose list of grievances during an individual session included a snide, "You know, he loved this (male) roommate," or toward a fifteen year old defendant who rolled her eyes at me in an Archie Bunker-like gesture, when the plaintiff she had assaulted translated into Spanish what she has just said, so that her mother could understand? In order to earn the disputants' trust, a mediator suspends judgment and steps into their reality, even when it is homophobic or racist. I recalled reading David Fetterman's (1989) response to the "demands of personal tolerance and trust" when he realized while interviewing a sweet, friendly German immigrant in a senior citizen day-care center that she was "not a victim but a supporter of the Nazi movement." Fetterman wrote: "This ethical balancing act was one of the most difficult I have had to maintain as an ethnographer" (p. 133). When I read
Fetterman's description, I empathized instead as a mediator. I realized that trust-building, neutrality and empathy were going to be much more challenging than I had expected.

Other "god-terms" came into question that summer as I co-mediated disputes. How could I not be suspicious when the defendant in a minor criminal case let it slip that she had "done this before"? By voluntarily choosing mediation and fulfilling her end of the agreement, this case probably would not come before a judge. How many times had she used mediation to avoid a conviction? How could I come to terms with a strong feeling that a disputant was lying?

How could I deal with feeling, as I did during one mediation, that I was being dominated by my partner? We were supposed to be the disputants' model for cooperation. Did his treatment of me have to do with my relative lack of experience? Or was it gender-related, since he was male? Hanisch and Carnevale (1987) found that "male mediators were more forceful, more confident, and believed that their efforts were more influential than female mediators" (p. 7), who were more inactive "which involves letting the disputants handle the controversy on their own" (p. 4). I bring these issues up now because I believe that without actually facing these problems and dilemmas myself, I would have had limited understanding of and little appreciation for what the children would deal with in the months ahead.
CHAPTER III

EXTENDED PRELUDE TO A RESEARCH STUDY

Contexts are constituted by what people are doing and where they are doing it. People become environments for each other. (Erickson & Shultz, 1977, p. 147)

Before discussing my need to use ethnographic research methods to conduct this study, I will put into perspective my decision to begin negotiating entry for six months of field work in a squat red brick building that sits on the outskirts of a state college campus in New England. It houses, among other things, an urban campus school to which I have been connected for all but six years of my professional life. From January 1971 until 1978, I taught English to junior high school students in C wing. When a reduction in the city's enrollment eliminated seventh, eighth and ninth grades, I returned to elementary classroom teaching in A wing. In 1987, I became a member of the education department which is located in the building's B wing. Several college departments currently share classroom and office space in C wing. A few teachers, including myself, still refer to it as the old junior high. Initial access to this research site was through my role as participant: teacher.
Hampton Campus School was an ideal choice for this research study for three reasons cited by Schatzman and Strauss (1973): (1) its "suitability"—it was an urban elementary school with a diverse student population that did not have a peer mediation program in place; (2) its "feasibility"—accessibility was enhanced by the fact that I would be working in the building every day as a member of the education department; and (3) my long past history with the people there would enable me to negotiate entry because I was aware of "suitable tactics" to employ as I began the project:

whom to approach, and how. . . .information on the identities and power alignments of the principals at the site. . . .knowledge of the temporal work rhythms of the people there. . . .some history of the site. . . . including its succession of key persons, objectives and ideologies. (p. 19)

Before changing to the lens that will capture the children's story as they taught it to me, I will use this first section to explain my personal history and show how students, teachers, parents, administrators and staff who participated in this study placed me in the context of their school day. Not to acknowledge this relationship would be tantamount to ignoring a photographer and her equipment and simply assuming that she must have had some personal, intellectual and emotional investment in taking the picture. Eisner (1991) described this characteristic of qualitative researchers as "the self as an instrument" (p. 33). He stated that researchers "must see what is to be seen, given
some frame of reference and some set of intentions" (pp. 33-34). Occasionally, I set the self-timer and stepped in front of the camera; it was an option I needed to exercise because of the multiple roles I needed to assume.

When it came time to draft chapters, inspiration and instruction came from having read ethnographies by Sue E. Estroff (1981), Lorri Neilson (1989), Andrea Fishman (1988). By overtly placing themselves in the context of the study and then stepping aside to share their ethnographic material, they never left me wondering, "How did she find that out?" "Where was she when this happened?" Robert Coles (1993) taught me he "learned that the 'methodology' for a research project had to do with definition, first, and then vantage point, meaning the way a word such as 'service' [or mediation] is variously interpreted and the manner in which an observer looks and listens" (p. 13). I hope that attention to personal perspectives and biases at the start will be understood as necessary to connect me and my topic to the multiple realities of the people involved. Fetterman (1989) described what is meant by "ethnographic presence":

[The ethnographers'] purpose is to describe another culture as it operates naturally. However, ethnographers are honest. They recognize that their presence is a factor in this human equation. Thus, rather than present an artificial and antiseptic picture, ethnographers openly describe their roles in events during fieldwork. The ethnographic presence tells the reader how close the ethnographer is to the people and the data. (p. 116)
Reconnecting With Staff

That is not to say that there was not some confusion as to which role I was playing from hour to hour as I began the initial phase of the study. Early in September 1992, Dr. Camden, the campus school principal, allotted me twenty minutes in an already full agenda to speak with his forty-five member faculty and staff after school in the library. I wore a floppy fishing hat with labels pinned around its brim. I hoped that it was ugly enough to draw some snickers from the group. It was. I came prepared to illustrate what I would be attempting to accomplish during the year, because much depended on this group's understanding what I was planning to do.

The first label had the letters L.A. written on it: language arts professor looking for classroom placements for her students. I had already met with ten teachers who would work with me. They nodded or made eye contact. Then I twirled the hat to reveal S.T. Now I might be supervising your student teacher. A few more nods.

I twirled the hat. M. Now I am a trained mediator who wants to volunteer to begin a pilot program with the fourth and fifth grade students. It took fifteen minutes and a handout to explain that role since I assumed that many would be relatively unfamiliar with the details of peer mediation.
programs (see Appendices B-1, B-2). I told about how I had received funds for materials and advanced training from the college. I described meetings, past and future, with the superintendent, principal, assistant principal and the parents' group to gain permission start up a peer mediation program with fourth and fifth grade students in the campus school. I said that I intended to continue working with the program as long as I was a member of the education department. Why was I volunteering as coordinator/trainer of the city's first peer mediation program? Fetterman said that researchers "owe something in return" (p. 134). My awareness of reciprocity as a researcher supported what I already felt compelled to do as a former Hampton Campus School classroom teacher and mediator.

I twirled the hat to show the letter R. Researcher. During the previous two years, many of the teachers had worked with me on smaller research projects. This time, I wished to deliver a naturalistic, field-focused qualitative study because I saw a need to get behind the statistics proffered in peer mediation program evaluations and to add to the few quantitative and qualitative research studies completed to date (Lam, 1989a; Vermillion, 1989; Benenson, 1988; Ellsworth, 1993). My literature search showed that there were no ethnographic studies of elementary school peer mediation programs. I would be focusing on describing
students' perceptions of this new role in the context of Hampton Campus School's culture. What did it mean to "be a mediator," who shared in those meanings, and what did it mean to be involved in a mediation?

I told the group that I would be taking two years to study and write about how children used language to understand the mediation process. There was not enough time to explain that what I really meant by language could be James Gee's (1990) sociolinguistic Discourse with a capital D, or that I was wondering if a strong link to M.A.K. Halliday's (1975) functional language theory would emerge during the course of the study, or that I was interested in the possible intersection of mediation's belief system and Nel Noddings' (1984; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1991) theories of moral and ethical education. Not in fifteen minutes. I asked the staff to consider working with me during any of several stages of the research study. I paraphrased Hugh Mehan's (1982) description of the "open-ended character of ethnographic data gathering" (p. 61).

I will invite you to share comments with me or connections that the children seem to make. This study will focus on their perceptions of what mediation means. Part of the research method involves something called triangulation, which means cross checking the same information from several sources. You are important sources . . . This kind of research will give me a lot of data, and it will be like looking at a diamond with a lot of facets. During the different stages, especially now in the initial stage, I am standing in the sunlight and I'm blinded when the sun hits
one facet. I say, "Ohhhh, this could be about gender... or class!" When I watch children on the playground and in the halls, I want to see if I can observe instances of problem solving. Do they always approach you? In the cafeteria, when one student teases another, how does a student react to that? ... I'm just at the stage of absorbing everything. I [write] fieldnotes and try to figure out what's emerging at the time. It's a very uncomfortable time for someone like me because I like answers, and I like to know what I'm looking for. This is a new way of thinking for me.

The teachers, staff and administrators' expressions were serious, and they listened patiently. Many nodded in agreement when I spoke about the need to teach children strategies to deal with conflict other than classic flight or fight ones many used now. There were few questions. "Would this be for primary grades, too?" "Are you going to do this in other schools also?"

I twirled the hat to show the last label: H.B. I said, "That stands for 'human being' - I'm really glad to be back among so many familiar faces." When I reread the transcript of that meeting, I saw that I was asking them to trust me. Looking back, I can only be grateful for the countless ways they showed me that they did.

By that time, however, I was also becoming aware of multiple kinds of "access" I would find necessary to my project. Zahrarlick and Green (1991) pointed out that

Access... in an ethnographic study is never totally obtained. Rather, the ethnographer initially gains access to the setting, but must negotiate and renegotiate access to particular
sub-groups (e.g., students, . . . teachers in the school, parents, and administrators, among others.) Each time the researcher adds a component or elects a new focus within the study, the researcher will need to gain access anew. (p. 214)

Connecting With Students

The first stage of rapport-building with the fourth and fifth grade students was a slower process that took five months. Because I had attended graduate school full time for two years, I had not been in the building on a regular basis. I knew that I faced a challenge those first few weeks when I saw how difficult it was to make eye contact with most children as I passed them in the corridors or observed them in the cafeteria. To their way of thinking, I could be a new professor, student teacher or another lost college student looking for a class in the wrong wing. Campus school students see unfamiliar faces every day and learn to ignore them. They would get to know me if they needed to. That was how it worked in this school's culture.

After several weeks of cafeteria, corridor, playground and classroom visibility, some children came to know me as the wife of a fifth grade teacher, even though many demanded verification because I use a different surname; to others, I was their parents' old English teacher; still others recognized me as the woman with the clipboard who observed their student teacher during science, mathematics or reading
lessons; some knew me as the college teacher who came to talk with their teacher about methods students who read and wrote with them during their language arts time. Some students had trouble placing me at all. On the playground, as I scribbled fieldnotes, one third grade boy stopped mid-chase and asked, "Are you a secretary or what?"

During the weeks before beginning the peer mediation program, one of the routines I regularly observed was lunchtime. Children's animated conversations caught my attention as I circulated among tables where children sat grouped by class. Sean Boudreau, a sturdy blond, blue-eyed fourth grade student, held his tablemates in the sway of his observation about adults and their power over children: "You know, strangers run your life for you! People you don't even know, like teachers, are always telling you what to do." He talked, and the boys around him listened and nodded in agreement. As much as I wanted to become part of that conversation, I decided that my interest might be regarded with some suspicion, so I continued on my way. I was struck by the similarity of Sean's perception to that of Goodlad, Soder and Sirotnik (1990) who wrote:

Children are by nature defenseless. Children by tradition are taught to distrust strangers. But, parents, in complying with compulsory schooling laws, turn their defenseless children over to virtual strangers...The surrendering of children to the state's school's thus represents a considerable act of trust. (p. 73)
It seemed that here was one nine year old who was also thinking about his vulnerability inside Hampton Campus School's walls. Before I continued walking over to the third grade tables, I vowed never to assume that children only talk about the latest video games or television shows at lunchtime. As I passed one table, I overheard an Anglo boy chanting, "You got cooties. . ." over and over just loud enough for the Asian boy sitting silently across from him to hear. This interaction lasts less than a minute before the name caller decided to stop and resume eating.

There were times when a student's confusion about my role helped me begin to understand how conflicts were resolved in this school's culture and begin to contextualize data by "placing observations into a larger context" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 29). It is a researcher's way of putting two and two together, so to speak. Children would often mistake me for a duty teacher and ask if they could return their empty trays or use the bathroom. I would have to say, "You need to ask Mrs. Beauchamp." A small third grade Asian boy walked over to me and said, "He took my seat." He lifted his lunch tray in the direction of a bigger Anglo boy who was sitting at the end of a nearby table. I recognized him: he was the same child who endured the cootie chant days before. His opponent was the same Anglo boy. "What can you do about it?" His puzzled expression showed me
that he was doing what he was supposed to be doing about the problem. Didn't I understand that? "You need to see Mrs. Beauchamp, then." I watched as he walked over to the teacher and repeated his plight. She marched over to the squatter and said firmly, "Move." He did and the conflict ended. Or did it?
CHAPTER IV

INTERSECTIONS OF TOPIC AND METHODOLOGY

In October 1992 I began to establish the participant observer role that would bring the children, teachers, staff and me into line with the study that would begin four months later. Using the Sadalla, Holmberg and Halligan (1990) elementary curriculum, Clare Riley the guidance counselor, her intern Shari Rabinowitz and I began teaching a series of lessons on conflict resolution to ten classes who had first and second lunch and recess together. During the regularly scheduled Guidance Activity Periods in October, November and December, students participated in activities that helped them identify conflict situations, appreciate individual points of view and cultural differences, develop a vocabulary for recognizing and describing feelings, and experience active listening to solve problems. The last set of activities, "Resolving Conflicts," highlights peer mediation as a structured interaction that uses many of the skills from the previous chapters. I planned to use these, as well as others selected from Teaching Children to Be Peacemakers, (Johnson & Johnson, 1991) to recruit and train peer mediators in January.
Introducing Peer Mediation to Hampton Campus School

During the first week of January 1993, I pushed the VCR into eight fourth and fifth grade classrooms with the sole purpose of telling the children about a new program that I hoped would come to mean something to them. I asked students to predict what it might be about. Hands went up.

"Conflict?"

"Problem solving?"

"Where's Miss Riley? Is she going to do this, too?" I told them that it did involve conflict and that I would be the only person starting up the new program. I cued the VCR to show them a four minute peer mediation role play from "Peacemakers of the Future" (Bankier & Dondlinger, 1991). I assumed that this would be the first time many students would see or hear the terms, mediation and mediator. "I'd like you to pay special attention to what the two boys in the video are doing." I observed them as their faces switched to a trance-like television-watching mode; they watched two boys and two girls who sat grouped around a table in an unoccupied classroom. Each pair had one African American and one Anglo American. The words "Elementary School Mock Mediation" appeared for a few seconds at the bottom of the screen. The fair-skinned, spectacled boy began:

Hello, my name is Patrick. This is Rashad. And you are? [He gestures toward the girls.] Sarah, [says the light brown-haired girl with luminous blue eyes.]
Nubian, [responds the brown skinned girl whose face is framed by a halo of black hair. She manages to sustain the offended air of a plaintiff from the start. Patrick continues.] We are trained to help you solve your problem. Nubian, do you want to solve your problem?

Yes. [Patrick elicits the same response from Sarah when he asks her the same question and then says,]

Before we begin, we need to get an agreement from each person for these five ground rules. [He asks each girl.] Do you agree to solve the problem? [After they agree, he continues,] Do you agree to no name calling, put downs and no physical fighting?

[At this point, Rashad takes over and asks each girl.] Do you agree to be as honest as you can? [When they both agree, he finishes the introduction:] We, as mediators, agree not to talk to others about this mediation. Everything said here is confidential, except for things about drugs, weapons, alcohol or touching on private parts.

[Patrick takes over again:] Nubian, you brought up the problem, so you speak first.

This new girl, Ariel, came to school, okay, and me and Sarah were supposed to be best friends, but all of a sudden, she started playing with her and, like, she left me out.

[Sarah interrupts:] No, I didn't!

[Nubian snaps back:] Yes, you did!

[Off camera, Patrick responds:] SShhhh! Nubian, anything else?

[She responds,] No, that's it.

[Patrick restates,] So, what you're saying is that when this new girl, Ariel, came to school, Sarah was playing with her and wasn't playing with you anymore? [He waits for Nubian's "Yes."] And you felt left out? [She nods.] And how does that make you feel?

[Nubian says,] Real mad!

[Patrick asks,] Why does it make you feel that way?

[Nubian pleads,] She's supposed to be my best friend. She's supposed to play with me!

[Rashad takes over.] Sarah, from your point of view, what happened?

Well, when Ariel came to school, she was being left out of everything, so I started being
her friend. And I didn't mean to leave Nubian out of anything.
[Nubian interjects,] Yeah, right.
[Patrick reminds her firmly,] Nubian, you agreed not to interrupt. (Bankier & Dondlinger, 1991)

When Patrick and Rashad restated the conflict, I heard Lashawna Winslow, an outspoken African-American girl, snort, "What's he saying it again for? Didn't he just hear her say that?" I observed girls making eye contact with other girls in the room, connecting Sarah and Nubian's problem to one that they may have had: they seemed to be realizing that this was about them. Rashad and Patrick asked both girls to restate the problem from the opposite point of view, and then asked for a public position from each one: "What do you want from this problem?" Then Sarah and Nubian each responded to: "What can you do now to solve the problem?" and heard Patrick restate their solutions, while Rashad wrote the agreement. Patrick asked both girls: "What can you do differently in the future?" Nubian said that she would "talk to Sarah" and Sarah said that she would ask her why she wasn't playing with her anymore. The mediation ended with the closing: "Tell your friends the problem has been solved so that they won't spread rumors. You did a good job!" All four shook hands vigorously.
"What did Patrick and Rashad do in this scene?" I asked.
Hands shot up. "Rodney?"
"Helped the girls solve their problem."
"Who came up with the solutions?" Fewer hands went up as they turned the scene over in their minds. "Cathy?"
"Nubian and Sarah did."
"They asked the Sarah and Nubian questions about the problem."
"Why did you suppose they did that?" Kristi Tesadore tipped back in her chair with an "I just figured out a good way to think about this" expression lighting up her brown eyes. It was a look that I would come to appreciate. "Kristi?" "Basically, mediators are researching the problem. They are kind of like researchers."

Seven Points of Intersection Between Topic and Methodology

Kristi Tesadore, a ten year old who would soon volunteer to become a mediator, saw in four minutes what I had been noticing for several months: there were intersections between the roles of mediator and ethnographic researcher. I had learned that mediators and ethnographers share beliefs, ethical concerns and behaviors and rely on similar skills and methods to do the work to which they are committed. Both Discourses intersected, "in terms of action, interaction, values, thought and language" (Gee, 1990, p. 174) and in synergistic ways that were too numerous ways to ignore. Becoming a mediator allowed me to see better as an
ethnographer and becoming an ethnographer helped me to think better as a mediator. Recognizing this hybridism of both roles, I began to think of myself as becoming the first (and to my knowledge, only) "ethnogramediatior."

Put another way, the two Discourses seemed organic: they were differentiated parts of one entity that had specific functions. This insight came from living inside both roles and from introducing the mediation process to a group of children. As an ethnographer, it threatened to become a finding in search of another dissertation, but I will be satisfied if it is accepted as a personal discovery used to satisfy my obligation to describe in some detail the methodology I needed to describe a particular Discourse community. The discussion that follows is not intended as an exhaustive look at either topic or methodology, but an explanation of a set of seven relationships that came into focus before I entered the field and became more clear once I began the project.

**Culture.** The first intersection that occurred to me seemed to be basic to understanding the nature of what it is that motivates ethnographers and mediators: an interest in some social phenomenon. Ethnographers are concerned with questions about people and their interrelationships within social institutions, such as schools (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Spindler, 1988); mediators are concerned
with helping people resolve interpersonal conflicts, thereby performing valuable community or social service. Spradley (1979) sharpened the focus for this study in the following statement:

Another way to synchronize human needs with the accumulation of scientific knowledge is through what I call "strategic research." Instead of beginning ethnographic research projects from an interest in some particular culture, area of the world, or theoretical concern, strategic research begins with an interest in human problems. These problems suggest needed changes and information needed to make these changes. (p. 15)

Sixty-two fourth and fifth grade student volunteers tapped into this shared interest when, in answer to my interview question: "Why do you want to become a peer mediator?", they said that they wanted to "help people talk out their problems with each other," "help people stop fighting," "give kids with problems a place to go," "help to solve a problem by asking questions," "help people solve problems and help myself because I have them, too." These matched the basic reasons for my own decision to take on the additional identity of mediator before engaging in this "strategic research" project. My research interest stemmed from my belief, as an experienced teacher and a trained mediator, that fourth and fifth grade students could acquire mediation Discourse and my curiosity about how mediation and peer mediators would be perceived by students, particularly those who volunteered to create a new role in Hampton Campus
School's culture.

**Change agent role.** The second intersection relates to the way in which ethnographers and mediators function in their roles. Ethnographers use an approach in which "natives [who have the means to control resources] design and implement the program or innovation" while the researcher works to "clarify issues and list a variety of options or alternatives for change in the community" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 125).

This second intersection of topic and methodology functions on two levels. Looked at from a mediator's perspective as a change agent, agreements are composed by disputants and evaluated in relation to a set of standards for a fair and balanced agreement. "What can you do to solve the problem?" "Are you both working to solve the problem?" The mediators' task is also to clarify underlying issues: "This is about your need to have someone who wants to borrow something of yours to ask your permission first." By working to help students resolve conflicts peacefully, peer mediators offer a valuable service to their school's community.

Looked at another way, by introducing a peer mediation model, I became a change agent who observed student change agents as they took it and reworked parts to make it function more successfully in their school.

**Impartiality/neutrality.** The third intersection is
crucial to understanding a key quality that ethnographers and mediators work hard to achieve: their ability to remain neutral throughout the research/mediation processes. Both are data collectors who take notes, ask questions and examine documents and artifacts in an effort to come up with a product (research report/agreement) that best communicates and represents the informants'/disputants' perspectives. They both use empathic skills for viewing a situation from different perspectives and yet call on their abilities to retain a nonjudgmental stance throughout. It is an emotional/intellectual tour de force that creates an active partnership between objectivity and subjectivity. For example, in my roles as researcher and Hampton's mediation coordinator/trainer, I wrote fieldnotes about my observations in the school and neighborhood, viewed video tapes of peer mediators during our after school program sessions, taped formal and informal interviews with students, parents and staff, and gathered printed material and artifacts that connected to my topic. While I collected data, my task became one of also clarifying underlying meanings that were either nested or tangled inside. I asked myself, as an ethnographer, "What is really going on here?" and "Whose point of view does this represent?" "Does this interview transcript contain a different meaning?" When I reexamined data, searching for themes that I could recognize and hold up
to the light of cultural theories, I was frequently confounded by apparently stable meanings changing in shape and appearance, like the Greek god Proteus, even as I held them. I felt limited and frustrated, more than knowledgeable and exhilarated, especially when I realized that my dilemma might be linked to efforts to impose my meanings onto data, rather than allowing the data (read: participants) to speak to me. Erickson (1984) supplied me with several "test questions" to keep asking myself as I constructed descriptions that would represent their points of view:

How did you arrive at your overall point of view?
What did you leave out and what did you leave in?
What was your rationale for selection?
From the universe of behavior available to you, how much did you monitor?
Why did you monitor behavior in some situations and not in others?
What grounds do you have for determining meaning from the actors' points of view? (pp. 58-59)

I checked back with participants and asked, "What do you think it meant when several students. . .?" "Could you help me understand what you meant when you said. . .?" I cross-checked those perceptions against other transcripts or documents, always asking myself, "Where else did I read that?" "Who else said something about that?" Eisner (1991) described this strategy in the following manner:

Structural corroboration, like the process of triangulation, is a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs. These data come from direct observation of classrooms, from interviews with
students and teachers. . .from the analysis of materials used. . ., and from quantitative information related to the interpretation or evaluation. We seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions. (p. 110)

I reread transcripts, looking for other possible meanings and asked myself, "What else could be going on here?" "What assumptions am I making?" My struggles with subjectivity matched or exceeded those I had experienced on those trips home from my first mediations months before.

To think like an ethnographer and mediator requires an ability to maintain a neutral stance and refrain from making judgments during the research/mediation process. Ethnographers must work to understand the "emic" or "insider's perspective of reality" so that cultural descriptions and interpretations may be constructed (Fetterman, 1989, p. 30). Both roles necessitated my anticipating the multiple realities of natives/disputants in order to begin understanding an emerging pattern or a complex problem. Erickson (1984) stated that "teacher culture, administrator culture, and student culture may provide cultural lenses through which the same event looks different." Heath (1982) described ethnographers' need "to learn the conceptual framework of members of the society and to organize materials on the basis of boundaries understood by those being observed instead of using a predetermined
system of categories established before the participant-observation" (p. 34). In the context of mediation, fact (or perception) gathering is critical during joint and individual sessions with disputants because mediators need to recognize and articulate underlying issues.

Mediators understand impartiality/neutrality as "the principle which affirms the parties' right to a process that serves all parties fairly and equally and to mediators who refrain from perceived bias or favoritism, either by word or deed" (Mediator Training Manual, 1991, p. 4). Mediators believe that agreements are reached and kept because they come directly from the sources of complaint and not from an outsider who knows "the right way" to solve it.

Finding themselves at this third intersection, mediators and ethnographers alike struggle to maintain a nonjudgmental orientation and refrain from making biased statements or actions; ethnographers use further controls for subjectivity, such as triangulation and contextualization in order to produce a balanced description of the particular culture being studied.

**Empowerment/self-determination.** The point of the fourth intersection begins with the mediator's promise to function as a neutral third party who refrains from generating options for disputants. In addition to violating a basic principle of mediation (neutrality), becoming a source of solutions
would also contradict the belief that disputants can and must be empowered to function as competent problem solvers.

Mediators and ethnographers believe that solutions to problems/conflicts reside within the abilities of the natives/disputants. Ethnographers and mediators have "to believe that the cause is worthwhile" and that "helping a group determine its own future is all well and good" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 125). This fourth intersection pinpoints the belief that supported my decision to bring a mediation program into an elementary school and to study how children would perceive it as an alternative to solving conflicts.

**Voluntariness.** Much of the work that ethnographers and mediators do depends on informants/disputants volunteering to become involved in the research/mediation processes. Informants/disputants are asked, "Are you doing this voluntarily?" Mediators, like ethnographers, inform participants that they can withdraw from the project/mediation at any time. This fifth intersection highlights the interdependency germane to the ethnographer-informant/mediator-disputant relationship.

**Informed consent.** The sixth intersection is the right of participants to know about the processes into which they are entering. Informed consent prior to a mediation is a crucial part of each introduction. Court-affiliated
mediators take time to explain the process and assure disputants that, if an agreement is not reached, their right to continue the case in court has not been forfeited.

Before beginning my research project, I met with Riverton State College's human subjects committee in October and received permission to conduct the study at Hampton Campus School; I submitted a protocol for the project to the University of New Hampshire's Institutional Review Board and received approval (IRB #1179). Before I trained the children, they and their parents/guardians signed a release form. Non-mediator students who gave assent for me to interview them signed a release form, along with their parents. Adults who consented to be interviewed also signed a release form (see Appendices C-1, C-2, C-3).

**Trust/confidentiality.** The seventh and final intersection between ethnographer and mediator relates to issues of confidentiality and trust-building. From the beginning of their relationships with informants, ethnographers use release forms, which are documents that insure confidentiality between researchers and informants. Similarly, adult mediators are under an oath of confidentiality and cannot be subpoenaed to testify in court. Besides a verbal assurance of confidentiality, all notes taken by mediators are torn up in front of disputants at the close of mediations. School-based mediators typically state
in their introduction: "Everything we say here is confidential, except for information about drugs, alcohol or weapons on school property and abuse or suicide." Mediators depend on trust-building strategies before they can expect disputants to engage in the problem-solving process.

Ethnographers and mediators are trained to use the same skills and strategies to build trust among participants:

a.) Questioning techniques - Interview questions need to be designed to put participants into a teaching frame of mind. After listening to each disputant's response to "Can you tell us what brought you here today?", mediators ask other open-ended questions that permit them "to express their perceptions and feelings in their own words and in their own order, without interruptions" such as, "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" (Mediator Training Manual, 1991, p. 20).

Jackson (1987) stated that, "Every question makes a statement...[and] tells what you're interested in...Other than 'Do you want the change in quarters or dimes?' there aren't many neutral questions" (p. 95). When I designed formally structured interview questions, my purpose was to find out meanings that students were attaching to the mediation process and the role of peer mediators (see Appendix D) in order to compare responses and put them "in the context of common group beliefs and themes" (Fetterman,
1989, p. 48). After asking students to discuss several conflict situations in and out of school, I asked them to forget that I was the mediation coordinator/trainer and said, "Imagine that we are waiting in line to get lunch in the cafeteria and that I am a new student at Hampton. I want to know what is going on with those kids in the blue tee shirts at the tables on the other side of the cafeteria. What will you tell me?" Students appeared to have little trouble explaining their perceptions of mediators and the mediation process once they became involved in this role play situation.

Informal interviews "do not involve any specific types or order of questions, and can progress much as a conversation does, following the turns of the participant's or the questioner's interests" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 49). The central event that precipitated informal interviews in this study were the weekly after school programs, which were video taped. A portion of the ninety minute sessions was devoted to program debriefing. Peer mediators initiated and controlled discussions, while I occasionally asked, "What do you think it means when... " It became "a completely open forum, ripe for discovery, balance[d] with an implicitly shaped structure designed to explore specific issues and concerns" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 49). The after school program resulted in a series of richly textured, natural, meaningful
exchanges among mediators and between the mediators and me.

b.) Active listening techniques – Ethnographers and mediators are aware of informants'/disputants' abilities to decode interpersonal signals they are sending and receiving during interactions. The role of listener is especially important because it is functions as a means of communicating to participants the following message: "What you are saying is important." Active listening strategies, as summarized by Sadalla, Holmberg and Halligan (1990) in their conflict resolution curriculum, are intended to encourage empathy and to build trust among participants:

1. Put yourself in the other person's place to understand what s/he is saying and how s/he feels.
2. Show understanding and acceptance by nonverbal behaviors: tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture.
3. Restate the person's most important thoughts and feelings.
4. Do not interrupt, offer advice, or give suggestions. Do not bring up similar feelings and problems from your own experience. (p. 5-4)

The value of practicing active listening was best described by Fetterman (1989), who is an ethnographer and not a mediator: "Of the hundreds of useful interviewing strategies, the most successful place the interviewee/disputant at ease, acknowledge the value of the information, and reinforce continued communication" (p. 57). The rationale behind this seventh and final intersection is simple: ethnographers and mediators need their
informants/disputants to teach them about the problem from their unique points of view. Fetterman (1989) stated:

As people learn that the ethnographer will respect and protect their conversations, they open up a little more each day in the belief that the researcher will not betray their trust. Trust can be an instant and spontaneous chemical reaction, but more often it is a long, steady process, like building a friendship. (p. 132)

It seemed that fourth and fifth grade children in this study would not only be acquiring the Discourse of mediation, but thinking at times like ethnographers as well. It is important to understand that the preceding discussion should not be construed as an assertion that I believe children who acquired the Discourse also became ethnographers, but rather that it became useful for me as a mediator, a trainer of fourth and fifth grade mediators and an ethnographer to view these roles in light of many shared layers of meaning. Writing about the intersections of seven terms helped me to understand that this research experience was made richer because of my special vantage point as a member of both Discourses.

I thought about Kristi's insight and recalled one other instance of this intersection of topic and methodology: the final chapter, "Learners As Ethnographers," in Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) ethnography, Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms. Heath described how she and a science teacher instructed fifth grade students in
the use of ethnographic methods to study their own environment. By handing over my newly acquired ethnographer and mediator tools, these peer mediators could study conflict and take on the job of helping to change their school's landscape.

A Final Beginning

I attribute the success of the January recruiting presentation largely to the video performances of Patrick, Rashad, Nubian and Sarah. In four minutes, students were able to see what went on during a mediation. I asked each group of students to think of conflicts they had experienced in school, and we brainstormed a list of types of problems that might be appropriate for mediation: broken friendships, unkept promises, rumor spreading, property disputes, namecalling, teasing and threats. I told them that Mr. Ronzoni and I had agreed that conflicts involving physical violence would still go to him.

We talked about qualities that mediators Patrick and Rashad seemed to possess: they were fair, honest, dependable, hard working; they had the ability to keep secrets and were good listeners. Most importantly, they were willing to help people solve their problems. I laid out the terms of the commitment necessary for any student to volunteer to become trained as a mediator: they would have to be on duty one or
two times each week, which meant that they would have to give up one or two recesses. They would be required to attend an after school program every Thursday from 2:00 until 3:30 during which we would talk about our experiences and do activities that would improve our skills as mediators. I explained that I would be studying how they were using talk to understand what mediation was about and that our after school program would be videotaped so that I would have a record of our discussions. Finally, each student filled out a volunteer/nomination form which allowed me to interview them if they checked off "Yes"; I asked them to nominate any other fourth or fifth grade students whom they thought had the qualities we had just discussed. I interviewed thirty-nine girls and twenty-three boys who volunteered out of a group totalling 160 students (see Appendix E).

The day that I finished the eight recruiting presentations, seven classroom teachers and two special needs teachers volunteered to help me in the next phase of the selection process. We met in the principal's conference room and talked about how important it was that this group of approximately twenty-five fourth and fifth grade children be representative of the school's population. We needed to consider factors of gender, race, ethnicity, and positive and negative leadership qualities. Positive leadership was easily understood: students who were like the traditional
"good student, who did well academically and actively participated in the school's available leadership roles" would be logical choices to become peer mediators. The category of negative leadership provoked more discussion. It meant that students who were at risk, possibly having below average academic standing or were perceived by students and teachers as tough or bad, would be helping students solve problems (Vermillion, 1989, p. 15). We spent nearly an hour talking about the sixty-two students on the list. Salvatore was a peacemaker who was perceived by two teachers as a natural mediator. Carolyn had poor attendance. Alana was popular with her peers, but never finished her work and could turn out to be a quitter. Allison was well-liked and a caring child who might make a good mediator. Zack was an outright bully and a manipulator who would very likely not use this role to help others.

That night, I developed a sociogram (Spindler, 1988, p. 25) to help me see which students were perceived by their peers and teachers as having the most potential for becoming good peer mediators. I sorted student volunteer/nomination forms into two groups: volunteers and students who did not volunteer. Using a set of class lists, I sub-divided nominations into seven columns: in-class, out-of-class-4th grade student, out-of-class-5th grade student and teacher. I chose three colors to code the students' and teachers'
selections: girls (pink), boys (blue) and teachers (brown). By the time I finished entering every student and teacher nomination, thirty student volunteers had emerged as strong candidates. I made a second chart and looked at gender, race and ethnic factors. There were twelve boys and eighteen girls, approximately the same ratio of boy to girl volunteers (23:39), but not the same ratio of fourth and fifth grade boys to girls (83:67). Two students were of African-American descent, two were bi-racial, eight were Hispanic-American, three were Asian-American and fifteen were Anglo-American. I was satisfied that it was a group that reflected Hampton's diverse population.

Between January and June, students and I experienced what it meant to "start up" a peer mediation program. Two students did not return their permission letters on time for the scheduled training. During two full school days, I trained twenty-eight fourth and fifth grade peer mediators using techniques from which I had learned myself. One student left the program after one day of training saying, "This is too confusing. I don't want to do it." On February 1st, twenty-seven peer mediators were inducted in a ceremony in the school's auditorium which was televised and broadcast on the city's local access channel. On that same day, they began their duties on rotating schedules that I posted each Monday morning on a large bulletin board outside the library,
in the corridor and in the cafeteria. They pulled on the large blue tee shirts that identified them as mediators and set up their stations at two tables on the unoccupied side of the cafeteria. They sat ready to mediate students' disputes with clipboards holding mediation forms (see Appendices H-2, 3, 5), pencils and a box of books to read if there were "no customers." A second pair went on recess duty and walked around on the playground wearing a blue name tag that read "Hampton Campus School Peer Mediator."

By June 18, disputing students or their teachers wrote 46 referrals requesting mediations; 37 mediations took place during which 33 agreements were reached. Peer mediators attended a weekly after school program on Thursdays from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. during which they developed a group identity, reinforced and added to their conflict resolution skills and had time for ongoing discussions of previous sessions and program logistics. As program coordinator, I was in the building Monday through Friday collecting mediation referrals, screening disputes and scheduling mediations (see Appendices B-1, F); I was the adult volunteer on duty with them every day during lunch and recess, assigning mediations and staying within sight, but not sound, of the students.

My inquiry continued as I participated within the group as teacher/coordinator, observing student2s in the context of their roles as peer mediators, formally and informally
interviewing them and others in settings inside and outside of the weekly after school sessions and collecting related documents and artifacts. From this immersion at the research site, I collected a prodigious amount of empirical evidence which I sorted, transcribed and began to analyze. All the while, I tried to have faith that I was using the best methods at the right times and was asking the most fruitful questions. I hoped that I would be able to interpret meanings from the mountains of data and construct cultural theories as the project progressed.

The Research Context and Data Collection

Zaharlick and Green (1991) explained the research context that was the orientation of this study:

[It is] TOPIC ORIENTED as opposed to a comprehensive or community-oriented ethnography. That is, the focus of the study is on a particular aspect of the culture of schooling, the English language arts [in this case, the children's understanding and use of mediation Discourse] and not on the totality of schooling and community life. . . .Topic-oriented ethnography requires observation of the 'piece of culture' of a social group through a complete cycle of occurrence. (p. 122)

By the end of August, I collected eighteen categories of data that related to how mediation Discourse took hold in Hampton Campus School. Much of it will not find a prominent place in this dissertation. Wolcott (1990a) pointed out that "what has been observed of everyday life is recast into an

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account that sacrifices most of the data in order to feature some of the data with untoward attention" (p. 57). It was useful for me develop a weekly data collection calendar on which I recorded what I collected each day. A typical entry is as follows:

February 25

-interviewed by newspaper reporter-article 3/3/93
-fieldnotes-cafeteria, corridor
-after school session-video; mediator journals
-interview with assistant principal

All data were divided first into two categories: tape and print. Video tapes included 17 after school programs, which frequently took on the characteristics of group interviews, one installation ceremony assembly and one local access television program that was devoted to the peer mediation program. Audio tapes included 37 interviews with fourth and fifth grade students, five with teachers, two with the guidance counselor and one with her intern, three with secretaries, three with the assistant principal, and four with parents. I transcribed audio and video tapes into print. I sorted 37 student interviews in this way and looked for similarities and differences in their responses:

19 peer mediators
14 students who were not peer mediators
4 students who withdrew from their role as
mediators

Of the 14 students who were not peer mediators, 6 had volunteered in January, but had not been selected, 5 had never been to mediation and 8 had been disputants in at least one mediation. Other audio tapes included my presentation at a portion of the September 1992 faculty meeting, one classroom lesson on conflict and one fifth grade class writing mediation poetry with their teacher.

Print material included fieldnotes that I used to record observations in classrooms, corridors, offices and in the cafeteria, on the playground and in the neighborhood. I also collected 46 mediation referrals (see Appendix H-1), 39 mediation reports, and 39 sets of mediation follow-up reports; 351 office discipline reports; 27 mediator journals; two surveys given in ten classrooms (see Appendices I-1, I-2); 63 volunteer interview notes; student nominating data; 22 classroom observations; mediation symbol contest entries, samples of mediation literacy, such as original plays and poetry, sets of questions from students about mediation, student role plays, notes and cards from students to me; daily school notices; topical newspaper stories; a local radio broadcast log; official city maps and directories; and three profiles of the city (book form).

In my role as researcher and mediation program coordinator/trainer, I observed and interviewed participants
and collected documents related to the mediation program within the context of one elementary school setting. I analyzed data that represented fourth and fifth grade students' perceptions of mediation's Discourse, that is, the role of the mediator and of the mediation process itself as it came to be understood by them. I analyzed and interpreted children's verbal and non-verbal expressions of their experiences with peer mediation. Key meanings that emerged were related to students' problem-finding with respect to the program's design, interpersonal problems that were connected to the role and ritual of mediation, and dilemmas related to confidentiality.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RESTATEMENT OF TOPIC

In Section I, my purpose was to construct a permanent scaffold around my research site, in order to hoist the reader to my side and present an introduction to the students and staff of Hampton Campus School and show some of the ways student-to-student conflicts were managed. I described experiences that influenced my decision to become an architect and builder of this specialized structure, one that would shelter a Discourse community called peer mediators. As a mediator, I had acquired an insider's view and understanding of the specifications and needs of group members who would be trained to help students from their own age group solve disputes. I acknowledged that my personal interest in the topic as both mediator and teacher developed into a research interest for this project. What has been expressed so far is essential to a basic understanding of the mediation process and for orienting the reader to the topic.

I described how I prepared the site and secured all materials necessary for beginning. Since mediation programs have been in schools for only a decade (see Appendix G) and are not yet widespread, it was necessary to describe how I prepared the population for what was to come. Faculty,
parents and staff supported my plan to implement a peer mediation program with fourth and fifth grade students and consented to allow me to study the ways that the Discourse of mediation took hold in their school's culture. I hoped to clarify cultural meanings that were shared by these particular students who assumed a role new in their school. Even though I was to build the basic structure by apprenticing and teaching them the Discourse (Gee, 1990, pp. 146-47), peer mediators were the only ones capable of transforming it into a living, useful and recognizable part of their community.

When I searched for studies to extend my knowledge while I was developing my research plans, I found that this was the first one using ethnographic research methods to house such a young Discourse community of mediators. As a participant observer, I could document how they came to understand their new role and how others in the larger community perceived them.

I described advantages and disadvantages caused by my familiarity with the site. I explained which research tools I used to complete the project, but expressed my concern over how the raw data of rough boards, beams, plaster, mortar, nails and glass would ever turn into something recognizable and inhabitable. I showed how I conformed to building and safety codes during construction by presenting specific
quality controls for subjectivity: (1) confronting biases—My past history and relationships with the population could obstruct my "attempt to view another culture without making value judgments" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 33). Because of my familiarity with the setting, it was imperative that I examine any and all assumptions I made about what I was seeing and who I was seeing do it in order to manage a non-judgmental orientation; (2) use of triangulation—I named data sources that I collected in an effort to build, confirm or reject hypotheses; and (3) use of contextualization—This control is accomplished by "placing observations into a larger perspective" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 29). For example, I was able to depict how conflict was managed in Hampton Campus School in Section I by observing students and teachers in the cafeteria and interviewing administration and staff.

Before climbing down and entering the building, I invite the reader to turn around from this vantage point and look out at the city and neighborhoods that surround Hampton Campus School. The view will be narrated by people who will describe what it means to live, work or go to school in Riverton.
SECTION 2

ETHNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL
CHAPTER VI

THE MULTIPLE REALITIES OF RIVERTON

Hampton Campus School is one of five elementary schools in Riverton; its students will attend either of two middle schools (grades 6 through 8) and finish their secondary educations at the high school on upper Main Street or a regional vocational technical high school, which is located at the northwestern edge of Riverton. In 1993, 118 of the 167 students graduating from the high school were accepted at colleges or universities.

The purpose of this section is, first, to present demographic, economic, geographic, and historic information that is necessary to further contextualize the setting. I drew information from profiles of Riverton that were published jointly by Riverton State College, the local Redevelopment Authority and the Industrial Development Commission, all of which include 1980 U.S Census Bureau and 1990 state government statistics. In addition, I collected newspapers, public school newsletters, official city maps and directories, and a two-volume history of Riverton. I kept a log of local radio broadcasts as I traveled to Riverton from my home approximately twenty-five miles south. I will not directly reference published sources because of my need as a

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researcher to protect informants' identities (see Appendices C-1, C-2, C-3). Second, I will construct a view of the school's neighborhoods from the perspectives of three parents and one fifth grade student who live there (Figure 1, p. 63). Each one volunteered to respond to the question: What is it like to live in this neighborhood? Third, I will offer cultural interpretations of their perceptions.

**Demographic and Economic Characteristics**

Riverton's population of 41,194 is comprised of 90% Caucasian, 3.5% African-American, 2.7% Asian and Pacific Islands, 0.2% Native American and 4% from "Other Groups"; 10% are Hispanic. The three largest employers are Black and Decker Manufacturers, Bentley Hospital and Riverton State College. Workers in Riverton earn an average of $4000 less than others employed throughout the state. One possible reason for this could be related to the relatively large number of college-age residents attending Riverton State (3,476 undergraduates) and the elderly (6,591) who reside there. A possible consequence related to the earnings factor could be that, out of 14,088 households with children, 11,658 Riverton students come from families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Forty-two percent of the 547 children who attend Hampton Campus School participate in the free or reduced lunch and breakfast program. Jeanne
Figure 1 - Riverton State College neighborhood
Carbone, one of Hampton's secretaries, said, "It should be higher. Some parents are so proud that they won't fill out the papers."

The River

The main reason for Riverton's reputation as one of the most prosperous mill towns during post-Industrial Revolution New England was the Cobblestone River. It meanders through the city like a big, powerful, dark snake. Settlers in the 1700's used the river to power gristmills and sawmills; later, textile, paper mills and machine shops dominated its banks. The river that ran free and teemed with fish for thousands of years found itself harnessed with dams and used as the major sewer pipe for prospering businesses.

By the 1960's, so many chemicals, dyes and other industrial wastes had been dumped into the river that it was declared ecologically dead. People still talk about driving along the river and seeing it run red or green or milky white, depending on which factories were dumping waste that day. The smell was so bad that it was necessary to drive along with your windows rolled up. Riverton's progress came at a price, which is not a new story in any industrial city.

When the first Clean Water Act was passed in 1965, the volunteer Cobblestone River Cleanup Committee went to work to reclaim the river. Paper companies and other industrial
users along the river built two wastewater treatment plants. By 1979, fish and birds were able to return to the river. But, the 1980's also saw the closing of the largest paper mills, one of the city's largest employers. Other businesses scaled down or moved out and Riverton became another reflection of the malaise that affected the regional and national economy.

The Land

The river was the early binding element of Riverton's economy because extensive farming was out of the question. Rocky hills dominate the city's landscape, making the area a geologist's dream, especially one interested in ancient metamorphic or igneous rock formations. Hampton Campus School faces a rocky hill encrusted with garnets. Students who go on a rock hunting expedition can easily find glistening pieces of mica, pink or white feldspar or black or green hornblende.

Driving into Riverton, it is difficult to ignore Stone Hill, a huge slab of granite that looms 360 feet above the river. Another geological treasure sits in a place of honor across from the post office on upper Main Street. At the end of the Ice Age, a glacier deposited a 100 ton granite boulder from New Hampshire on top of Stone Hill. It was a landmark for native Americans and settlers and an object of interest
to geology students, but later became a vexation for quarry workers. In 1929, the latter group wanted to destroy it, but the voices of the local people rose to save it. The solution included several sticks of dynamite and a move to the Upper Common, where the pieces were reassembled.

The City

While the authors of the city's most recent directory boast of Riverton's "strong, diversified economic base" in one sentence, they try to coax "young, growing and expanding industries" with space available in "modern industrial parks and older mill buildings" in the next. The valiant and tenacious Industrial Development Commission invite local artists to display their work (pending the approval of building owners) in vacant storefronts. It is an amelioration of a reality filled with echoes.

Attracting residents to Riverton is no less problematic: sixty percent of its houses were built before 1940; half are owner and half are renter occupied. There are more sellers than buyers, as upwardly mobile families look to the suburbs. Meanwhile, realtors cope with the fallout of Riverton's front page drug-related notoriety. Residents know that there are many fine neighborhoods and good schools, but it is difficult to convince outsiders.

Riverton has a rich cultural heritage derived from
people who immigrated and worked along the banks of the river. The author of the city's two volume history devoted the second volume to stories of dozens of nationalities that settled here; the Finnish, Irish, Italian, Greek, English, Scot, Scandinavian, French Canadian, African, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Puerto Rican, Poles, Lithuanian, Armenian, and German people receive careful attention in her chapters.

In the first chapter of volume one, which was written in 1971, ten paragraphs headed "Stressful Times" recount the story of shrinking tax dollars and resultant municipal blight, the rising tax rates' dampening effect on new industry, the upwardly mobil homeowners' migration to nearby suburban communities, and the substandard housing in the heart of the city. Twenty years ago, she wrote that marijuana and LSD were sold in local dives and on side streets, and added that "now and then there is death by violence."

I read the words "Now and then. . ." and wondered what the author would write about Riverton today. In order to travel two blocks north from Main Street to get to Riverton State's campus, I drive by one of those "dives" every morning. Past Johnny's Bar on Nathan Street is an abandoned factory, a remanufacturing shop, and a locksmith. The neighborhood is a conglomerate of brown, gray or white two and three decker houses, as bleak as stones, many built so

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close to the street that there is no space for front lawns; most of the few remaining single family homes have been converted into apartments. Many of the surviving patches of front lawn are either beaten down to mud or left untended to return to their natural state as wild grassy tufts. An old bedspring is propped against an outside wall, and boarded up cellar windows prevent easy access by intruders. Occasionally, an upholstered chair that has given enough years of service in a living room serves out its last months on a porch. Brave attempts at aluminum or vinyl siding coexist with broken screen doors. Signs displayed in windows beckon: For Rent. Residential space is punctuated by Riverton State's paved parking lots. The condition of most housing on these streets is a visual oxymoron since it reflects the presence of a growing number of absentee owners.

Defiant shouts of color inside loopy shapes of graffiti have been added to the cement handball court that sits on the corner across from the college library. Several staff members told me that they choose a longer route in order to avoid coming on campus from its south side.

On most mornings or afternoons during the six months that I maintained a field notebook, no matter what weather conditions prevailed, prostitutes waited or paced along these streets. I watched as they made eye contact with other passing drivers. Some stood across the street from the
school bus stop. Most mornings, I waved to students who waited for the school bus or a ride to school. Three men who teach or work at the campus school told me about getting approached at one time or another. One teacher calls them "nightingales," adding "they are not nice birds, you know" for emphasis.

In June, a 7:00 a.m. local radio station broadcaster reported that police had made nine arrests in the neighborhood during the night for soliciting sex and possession of drugs. This brought the two week long crackdown total to twenty. That same morning, as I crossed the intersection of Nathan and Grant, I saw two women rushing along the street on foot: one, who looked about twenty years old, was dressed in tight black clothes. Her arms were folded in an closed, defiant position. Alongside her walked an older, plainer woman, clutching her handbag, who looked straight ahead. Her loose short sleeved blouse and beige polyester slacks were neatly pressed. I surmised that she was trying not to be late for work in spite of having to make bail for her sister or daughter.

Across from Johnny's Bar is a doughnut shop. Mayor Campbell was buying breakfast for his family recently when two women tried to flag him down in the parking lot. A shocked mayor reported the incident to the police who arrested one suspect and charged her with being a "common
nightwalker."

According to local and regional newspapers and residents, crack cocaine turns up in nearly every drug arrest that has taken place during these last few months. This is a very dangerous neighborhood. Hampton teachers like to believe that school is a six hour safe haven for children who come from this section of its district.

The worst problem in the neighborhood used to be rowdy keg parties thrown by college students living on their own for the first time in apartments. Now, shootings and stabbings vie for Riverton's attention. In October, one newspaper article listed a six month chronology of twelve violent incidents in Riverton. Half of them took place on the streets bordering the south side of Riverton State College.

One sweltering August afternoon, I sat alone on the front steps of an apartment house on Cobbler Street, waiting to visit a peer mediator. Within twenty minutes, I saw two police cars cruise through the silent neighborhood. There are seventy full time members of the police department. Newspapers reported that the mayor and law enforcement officials were filing grant requests to increase police presence in the neighborhoods. I wondered what it was like to live on these streets and in other parts of Hampton's school district.
The People

Joan Carpinella. Joan Carpinella grew up in Riverton and is an active member of Hampton Campus School's Parent Teacher Organization. She and her husband and their two children live in a single family home on Perry Road that has been in Joan's family for over eighty years. It is situated on one of the quiet residential streets that abut the north side of Riverton State's campus. This is a neighborhood where families take pride in keeping up their property, building additions instead of buying a bigger house in a more affluent town; they remodel kitchens and bathrooms, refinish woodwork, plant shrubbery and gardens and build patios. It takes Joan's son, Charles, less than five minutes to walk to Hampton Campus School each day.

I grew up a half mile from here on Hester Street. In fact, my parents still live there. I used to play on Riverton's campus as a little kid - there were just a few buildings then. I used to run all over the city - it was a safe community. Some of my friends used to live on Periwinkle Street. It was a beautiful area, then. When I was twelve or thirteen years old, my friends and I would walk down from Hester Street, past the college to Main Street. That was no big deal. But now, my kids don't leave the immediate
neighborhood that much.

My husband grew up in the next town, and after we were married, he took a job that required a lot of traveling. I said, "I don't mind you traveling if I'm in my hometown and I've got my family and my friends nearby." My grandmother lived in this house since 1946, and it was getting to be too much for her to keep up, so she approached us. So that's how we landed here almost fourteen years ago.

When I became involved in the debt exclusion a few years ago, I saw Riverton from another perspective. I realized that there were a lot of people who really didn't care about the school system. Twenty percent of the voters are 65 or older and cared more about their taxes than the next generation. They see the future by looking down Main Street and watching what walks out of Riverton High School. They don't relate to these kids because the color of their skin is not the same. I spent a lot of time that year just talking to people: You need to educate these kids no matter what color their skin is. They're going to end up breaking into your houses, and then you will be paying for them to stay in jails. It's a
lot more expensive to keep them in jail than it will be to educate them.

I also found out that 50% of the kids during the 60's went to parochial school. I was one of them. Historically, Riverton didn't support their public schools because their attitude was: "Well, they're not my kids!" But, many of the parochial schools are closed now.

When I worked with the debt exclusion group, I also became aware of the racism in this city, and that was something I wasn't really aware of before because it didn't touch me. My kids don't see color. That's one of the reasons why I sent them to public school. When I grew up, there were two black families in Riverton. They were professional people, more or less. They weren't low income; there weren't as many low income people then.

I have friends who think I'm crazy to have my kids in public school in Riverton. They have this horrible perspective of what they see in the newspaper. They think the schools are bad. I hate to say it, but I believe it's racism. These are the same people who with brought up with the same Christian values as I was. It's as if they
were saying: I don't want my kids mixing with those kids who look different and speak a different language. I have friends who ask, "Why are you still living in Riverton?" Economically, we could leave now, but I think that my kids are being enriched being here.

Last year, a Vietnamese boy in Charles's class wore a little jade Buddha. They had a discussion about what it was and why he wore it. The boy told him that they did not have a temple in Riverton, but that his family had a shrine at home. I didn't have the vaguest idea of Buddhism until I was in college, and here's a kid in fourth grade who is learning about it. To me, that enriches Charles, and he is better for it.

People say there is no discipline in public schools and that they water down academics. I don't sense that at all in the elementary schools, but I'm not sure yet about the middle schools. I listen to my friends whose kids go to public school in Abbington, where my husband grew up. They say that my kids are suffering academically. That is the only thing that bothers me about being here in Riverton and choosing public school. The per pupil cost here is the fifth lowest in the
county. What if I put my middle school daughter, Allison, up against kids from Centurion Country Day or Saint Lawrence? I know that she could hold her own socially, and I don't think that those kids are as enriched as Allison is. I believe that she could go into any situation, even going off to college, and handle herself pretty well because she knows how to deal with people who don't look the same as she looks or speak the same language. That's the difference. Both my husband and I have traveled and gone to college and come back to our roots. We see what's out there.

People say that all this recent violence is not in my neighborhood, but it's pretty darned close because it's on the other side of the campus. There was a time when I'd go anywhere in this city. Now I don't go out at night or go on the south side of the campus alone. There was a time when I never locked my door, but now I do. We have a watchdog. I'm nervous, sad and scared. Riverton has all the problems big cities have. When I'd go to Boston or New York before, my awareness of what was going on was heightened. When I'd come home, I wouldn't have the same feeling. Now, I do. It bothers me. I think it
comes down to drugs. We've become too tolerant. Drugs. Prostitution. I have a friend I grew up with who is a probation officer in Riverton. He said, "There are things I won't tell you because you would be too scared to live in town anymore." He moved out. I don't know what the answer is. More police. More drug prevention. Personally, I think it's education. You've got to educate the kids to see that this is not the way to live. Unfortunately, they see the money that can be made by twelve year old kids hustling drugs.

As for the violence, people are going to have to get mad. Yes, open the window and say, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!" It's not just "those people." People say, "Oh, that's Boston," or "That's New York." No, it's right here in Riverton. The violence worries me. Charles may get caught in the crossfire. I talk about it with other friends of mine. We go to meetings at the middle school and the administrators are saying, "Your kids are safe." I feel that they are trying to convince themselves as much as us. They are doing as much as they can. I have a lot of confidence in the administrators right now. I have seen Allison's
transition between Hampton and the middle school. I know that she will be safe because the administrators know me. I hate to say it, but I think that's part of it.

I have no qualms about Hampton, though. A lot of people say that, because of the closeness of the campus, it isn't safe. But the people who work there - teachers, secretaries, custodians - are all watching out for the kids. It's a very open building because of the college classes. So, it's not a very secure building. But there is a heightened awareness there, like when you go into the city. If they see someone who is a stranger, they talk to him or her. I've been in and out of that building a lot, so I know.

Laura Felenzo. Laura Felenzo came to Riverton from a middle class suburban community outside of Boston as a college student in the 1976. She lived both on campus and in apartments in neighborhoods south of the campus. When she married a Riverton native whom she met during her senior year, they bought a house on Cobbler Street, which is on the southern edge of the campus. They lived there for ten years, until a few months ago when they moved into a custom-built home in a new development north of the campus. Three of her four children attend Hampton Campus School; Laura drives her
youngest to a private pre-school each day.

When I came to Riverton, it was a culture shock: where I came from, you never had to lock your door at night. You went to public school and did what you were told. You never talked back to teachers. If there were any problems, your parents were called, and you were gone. No debate, no question. It was understood. It was also white - all white. It was quite an adjustment being away from home. When I started college, I don't think I knew three or four people whose parents weren't together. When I came up here, every other person I met came from a divorced family.

When my husband and I first bought our home on Cobbler Street, our big problem was trespassing by the college students. The police would come to break up the parties and, because we had a fenced in back yard, the kids would go there and stay until the police would leave. Or they would sit on the front steps of my house, as if they lived there. The police would assume that that's where they lived. They would urinate all over the place and throw all their debris over our stone wall when the police came. We used to find cases of
beer. My husband worked nights and I was home at night with the children by myself. That was the big problem when we moved in ten years ago.

It slowly changed when some of the college students moved out and more single mothers moved in. Welfare mothers. It turned into Section 8 housing. First, it was black, then Puerto Ricans and Asians. They didn't all get along. There was a Puerto Rican corner, a black corner, and some Asians over here. If it was warm weather, it would start in the afternoon and go on until three, four, or five in morning. It was territorial: certain people would walk on certain sides of the street - it would be like an avoidance thing.

Some conflicts come from mothers fighting over their children. Screaming. They would drag their children and make them stand right there and face up to it. Or they would walk into each other's homes. Just walk right in. It got really bad, just like on TV.

One time, I saw someone go by carrying a rifle. I was so naive that I thought it was a toy. The kids told me it was a real gun. When the shootings started all around us, my husband
decided that we had had enough. My kids were at Hampton by then, and we wanted to keep them there because we liked what was going on. We bought a piece of land up on North Star Road about three years ago, but we didn't finish building our house and move in until a few months ago.

There were four homes surrounding the college parking lot behind our house on Cobbler Street; three were owner lived in, which is [getting to be] unusual for that neighborhood. When there was trouble there, no one had any jurisdiction. If there was a fight and you called the city police, they said that they couldn't come because it was Hampton State's property. The campus police don't carry weapons, so they wouldn't even get out of their cars. Absolutely not. We would report drug deals happening right out in the open front of the kids. [The dealers] had guns and would show them to each other.

So we built our home and moved in March. It has an alarm system and if my husband sets it off by coming through a door wrong, the police are there in a minute. They'd never come before. They would drive by, but not when you'd call them. Now, the stupid alarm goes off, and they're there

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if your address is North Star Road.

It's not even like living in Riverton. It was a very hard adjustment for me more than for the kids. They moved in and relaxed. I used to walk around the house when I first moved in and just kept looking out the windows. There was no activity, no traffic; there were no people and no houses close by. I kept hearing things. My ears were always tuned in for sounds, neighborhood sounds. It was like being locked in a tunnel because all those distractions were gone overnight. I couldn't sleep. There was no noise. I kept waiting to hear it.

My new neighbors would come over wanting to see my new house. I wasn't used to opening my door for anybody. They were ready to be friendly: "Hi, how are you?" "What does your husband do for work?" Before, I would never tell anybody anything; I'd have no more conversation than necessary and went from the car to my house or into the yard. I didn't walk around the neighborhood or share my life with anybody there. I never had my neighbors call to have my children come over. So, the biggest adjustment was for me.

I have noticed a difference in my son, too.
He is more relaxed. Now we have a dog. We couldn't before. We had rabbits, but they were stolen and killed by the neighborhood kids. We had fruit trees that my husband planted in my back yard. The neighborhood people waited for me to go out and would pick every piece. The fruit wasn't even ripe. Every single piece. None left. Blueberry bushes. Same thing. There was a family who lived next door who was white. They had eight kids. The father was over seventy years old, and the mother was about thirty-five. There would be fighting, and the police would come. Their kids would shop lift at the mall, get caught and the police would bring them home. It was always something. Or they would stand on their porch and throw all their glass trash into the street. These were things that the parents could have stopped if they were at all concerned with what their children were doing.

Now, we have cooperative neighbors who respect each other's property. Most of these people are from the same age group and are all white collar. They haven't been exposed to what my family has experienced. They have no patience with it. I'm prejudiced. I can say that because
I have dealt with it. When I lived in my home
town, I would have been the first one to say I
wasn't prejudiced. But now I've lived with these
problems. My new neighbors never have.

We can afford to send my children to private
or parochial school, but we send them to Hampton.
My oldest children went to parochial school until
third grade. When my son came to Hampton, he had
no idea of the differences among people. He
called black people brown. My kids will know how
to interact with children who are not the same
class, color or culture.

The benefits far outweigh anything they could
get in parochial schools now: there are after
school programs, they will get individual help if
they need it, they have access to computers, and
discipline is making a big comeback. Hampton
parents are involved with the school for reasons
other than getting tuition reduction, which is
what happens in some parochial schools.

Some of my new neighbors send their kids to
private or parochial schools and some go to public
school. One girl goes to Centurion Country Day
School and when she comes over, my daughter helps
her with her homework. Her mother believes that
Centurion has accelerated programs. I tell her about Hampton, but she had it in her mind: public schools are not that good. I talked with Hampton parents first and was willing to give it a try. It has worked out great for my kids.

Ana Villatoro. Ana Villatoro and her husband, Saul, have been trying to sell their house for five of the ten years they have lived on Pleasant View Terrace, where houses are close together and sit right on the street. Pleasant View is situated on the southeastern edge of the campus, four blocks from Cobbler Street. It would take their two younger children, eleven and six years old, about ten minutes to walk across campus to get to Hampton, but Mrs. Villatoro prefers to drive them each day. She used to work for a government research group, but left full time employment to be home to raise their three children.

People get the wrong idea about living in this section of Riverton, because it is so close to the college. I don't say that we don't have problems. We do notice a difference when the kids come in because they make a lot of noise, and in the summer we have a peaceful time here. People don't understand. Whatever happens, they blame the area, but they don't blame themselves. When things start happening, vandalism or screaming,
it's the college kids. When they come in, you hear screaming at midnight, and they're outside making noise. I've gone out and said, "Could you keep it down? The kids are sleeping." It gets rowdy. When they go to the police and ask them, they say that it's not the people, it's the college kids. The people say that the college students make trouble, and that the trouble is not their fault.

On this street, we feel pretty lucky because we don't have that many college kids right now. The college built more residences a couple of years ago, and it took a lot of them out of apartments. That helped. But, try to sell your house. In the beginning, we rented to students and bought another house in a more residential area with sidewalks in a different part of Riverton. We lived there for three years, but my son missed this house. He was used to Hampton School, so we moved back here.

My kids play in the neighborhood. They have points where they can go. To the corner, and that's it. They drive pretty fast on Hester Street. So, they can go from the garage to there and maybe two or three houses down. They don't go
further than that. Further up, there are college kids there and other people. If my kids want to go somewhere, I'll take them. No matter where I lived, it would be that way: You want to go to the park? Wait, I'll take you there.

I grew up in an apartment in Brooklyn, and my father would take us to the park and stay with us. We would play and come back home. Sometimes, we would go to the Botanical. It was nice seeing flowers and trees. We had sidewalks and the building around us.

A lot of Hampton kids who live up toward Cobbler Street live in apartments. They feel like they're in the city. When they come to Ricky's birthday party or something, they say that it's different because we have a backyard or things to do, like go to the park. I don't want to let Ricky go alone with them. The difference is that they are more independent and do things on their own. Those kids are more daring. Here, the neighbors all look out for each other. We are not nosy, but it is a little group here. If we say something to our kids, they listen. But if it's a kid from up there, they'll tell you off.

I don't understand how parents can let their
kids go on their own and not worry. I've had kids in the house in the winter because it was freezing outside. Once, they brought a little girl about three years old. I offered them a snack and wanted to see how long they would stay. They were here four or five hours, and I asked, "Do you want to call your mom?" And they would say, "No, it's okay." No, it's okay. Three years old. I feel bad for the kids who don't have the attention.

I won't let Ricky go up there, unless I know the parents. It's drugs and worse. One day, when I was driving my fourteen year old daughter to the high school, she asked, "Who's that woman there?" I said, "Wait a minute, that's too close to home. She's working. So early in the morning, she's waiting to see who will stop to pick her up." People don't realize that it's in our neighborhood.

My kids are happy going to Hampton. I believe that when a child likes a school, keep him or her there. I have heard people say that there are a lot of minority kids there, kids with parents on welfare. Some parents want to better themselves, so they don't want their kids there. I think that since Hampton's affiliated with
college that you get a lot more from it than regular schools. They're up on doing everything new, like computers. It's better for my kids to be there right now. The teachers are great. I'm always in there, so I know.

**Jason Militades.** An article appearing on the front page of The Riverton Gazette reported the latest round of violence in the neighborhood south of Riverton State's campus. A twenty year old Hispanic man from Lincoln, a city that borders Riverton, was visiting friends. As they were standing outside on the sidewalk, a short, heavily-built African American man appeared and randomly shot at the group with his 9mm semiautomatic weapon, hitting the man in the thigh. The shooter turned, walked away and could not be found by police. The police captain was amazed that more people were not struck by any of the 11 rounds that had been fired. The reporter interviewed several neighbors, who said that the shooting was probably linked to drug dealers. They described the brazen attitude of dealers who sell drugs "while loitering, fighting, making noise and setting fires in the neighborhood." David and Hannah Weston, grandparents of Jason Militades, a fifth grade student at Hampton, told the reporter that they had lived on Grant Street for 28 years, but that "this has been going on for a couple of years and just keeps getting worse." Jason's grandmother "saw about 30
people on the street before the gunshots, which left the couple's three grandsons, ages 8, 10, and 11, unable to sleep the rest of the night."

Jason is a soft-spoken boy with short blond hair and blue eyes who already excels in sports, making his own headlines on the local sports pages as an outstanding soccer player. In September 1993, he volunteered as a peer mediator at Hampton Campus School.

We live on the third floor, and my aunt, uncle and cousin live on the first floor. My aunt is in the most danger because they live so close to the street. She is going to have a baby any day now. Whenever I hear hollering or a big bang outside, I crawl to my brother's bedroom window at the front of the house and peek between the blinds.

One night, I heard people fighting on the sidewalk and looked out. A woman was hitting a guy with a big, black stick screaming, "Get off my boyfriend" because the guy was choking him while he held him across the hood of a car.

Another time, I saw a guy on the sidewalk get in a fight, and they broke his nose. The next time I saw him from my window, he had it all taped up. These people are from The Fruit Belt [the
other section of Riverton noted for drug traffic and violence], Lincoln and from New York City. They come here to deal drugs. Once, when my younger brother and I were walking home, there were some people on the sidewalk and when we walked by them, one held a white bag out in front of us. We kept on walking.

I play only in my back yard, and I never go out at night.

Them/Us: A Cultural Barrier

[E]thnographers. . .weav[e] the descriptive strands together to speculate how the members of some particular group organize their lives to manage everyday routines, communicate what they know and what they expect of others, and cope with forces within and beyond their control. (Wolcott, 1990a, p. 51)

When viewed in the larger context of Riverton, Hampton Campus School and its surrounding neighborhoods appear to be dominated by two realities: the presence of Riverton State College and that section of streets held in the sway of drugs, prostitution, violence and keg parties. Tangled in the webs of conflict in Riverton are three causes basic to all conflict: perceived threats to resources (housing, land, students, funding), psychological and/or physical needs (self respect, respect from others, safety, shelter, clothing, food), and culturally-imbued values.
By using a cultural framework, it becomes possible to consider how a "them" versus "us" barrier has been erected between the area's owners and renters. Owners can be subdivided into two groups: first, homeowners, like Ana, Laura, Joan, and Jason's grandparents and second, Riverton State College, which slowly expands year after year by gulping up available houses or vacant lots and replacing them with a parking lot or a new building. Living among the owners on and around Cobbler Street are blue collar renters, college students and welfare families. Because of the widely diverse population, it seemed that Hampton Campus School's district could be a microcosm of the larger American society.

Owners versus renters. When Ana described neighborhood conflicts, she said, "Whatever happens, they blame the area, but they don't blame themselves." Owners perceive renters, specifically college students and the poor, as sources of problems. College students bring noisy parties and lack self-control, while the poor bring crime and lack good parenting skills, as seen in Laura and Ana's descriptions, which threaten their psychological and physical needs and traditional values.

While Laura and Joan voiced their appreciation of Hampton Campus School's multi-cultural student population, they recognized that many come from families living below the poverty line. During the 1980's, the growing number of poor,
such as those living on and around Cobbler Street, threatened
the larger society's equilibrium and continue today to be a
major irritant to the shrinking middle and upper classes. As
Laura said of her new neighbors, "They have no patience with
[them]." Poor residents could represent threats on all
three fronts: resources (tax appropriations), needs (public
and personal safety), and values (religious, moral and
ethical).

A cause of conflict for the college administrators
appeared to exist in their relationships with students who
live off campus and with residents in the neighborhood. The
student group's behavior could be placing the college in a
double-bind because, to lean too far into off-campus
students' lives could hamper their ability to attract and
keep students, thus threatening key funding resources. When
viewed from this perspective, to enforce off-campus behavior
restrictions would be biting the proverbial hand that feeds
them.

In June 1993, Riverton State College's president Dr.
James Malone received the first report from the Neighborhood
Task Force which he convened in January to look at "the
relationship of the college to the immediate neighborhood."
The second section, "Neighborhood Concerns," listed five
issues that appeared to coincide with those that were implied
or articulated by informants:
1. There is a perception in the neighborhood that the college is largely apathetic about the city and its residents.
2. There is no broad-based and formal college/community link.
3. There is lack of formal college representation on important community committees.
4. There is no clearly identified point of contact for the community with the college.
5. Faculty and administrators who devote time and energy to the local community do not feel that their contributions are recognized as important to the college.

Recommendations included the establishment of an Office of Community Relations and the appointment of a racially and culturally diverse College-Community Advisory Committee to address the issues identified by the task force. Since this problem-solving effort is a recent innovation, there is little evidence on which to base a discussion. If the College-Community Advisory Committee attracted a culturally and economically diverse membership, then it might begin to bridge the communication gap that this interpretation of data shows as existing between owners and renters.

The concept of "owners" versus "renters" role definitions seemed to emerge from the interviews, but was further verified when I drove Ana's son, Ricky, home after school one day. As he got out of my car, he looked up at a man working on a roof across the street and said, "That's Allison's father." (She was another fourth grade student at Hampton.) I said, "Looks like he's fixing his roof." Ricky nodded, but found it necessary to add one more piece of
information: "They rent."

Visibility/invisibility. The homeowners' pattern of responses to conflicts could be interpreted using the concept of visibility/invisibility. The key to coping with conflicts in this neighborhood's culture seemed to be the ability to exert control over one's presence in a given place. Ana, Joan and Laura use their visibility as a source of action when it comes to their children's safety in Riverton's schools and neighborhoods; Joan said of her daughter, Allison: "I know that she will be safe [in the middle school] because the administration knows me. I hate to say it, but I think that's part of it." The mothers' high opinion of Hampton seemed to be related to their active presence in the school.

All informants, including Jason, seemed to become invisible by restricting their activities in specific ways in an effort to protect themselves from violence in the surrounding streets. Laura moved away from Cobbler Street to a better neighborhood, while Ana and her husband are still trying to sell their house and continue to monitor their children's whereabouts carefully. Joan is reluctant to move away from the home that has been in her family for generations, in spite of its close proximity to the more violent, poverty-stricken section of streets on the south side of campus.
Summary

As I developed these interpretations of what it meant to live in Hampton Campus School's neighborhoods, conflict became a broad, almost impersonal term for me. It seemed that the more abstract (and impersonal) it became, the easier it was to think about. I submitted a theory that "them" versus "us" role definitions apparently at work in Hampton Campus School's neighborhoods could be understood by relating them to universal causes of conflict: threats to resources, needs and values; the residents' actions/inactions were further delineated by the owner-renter roles defining their perspectives.

Fetterman (1989) wrote:

The typical model for ethnographic research is based on a phenomenologically oriented paradigm. This paradigm embraces a multicultural perspective because it accepts multiple realities. People act on their individual perceptions, and those actions have real consequences--thus the subjective reality each individual sees is no less real than an objectively defined and measured reality. (p. 15)

It was the "subjective reality" of each person whom I interviewed that kept returning to my thoughts. Fetterman's theory caused me to think about Laura's difficult adjustment to her new home. I reread her comments about the differences in police response between her two homes and understood her sardonic attitude. I also pictured Jason crouching at his brother's bedroom window whenever he heard gunshots or
hollering outside. I recalled Joan's changed attitude toward the city where she was raised, and saw her locking herself and the dog in after her children left for school each morning. One set of common denominators in these multiple realities was wariness, fear and frustration. Another was confidence in Hampton Campus School's ability to educate their children and keep them safe from the culture of violence and poverty that surrounded them. On July 22, Juanita Mendez sent a letter to Jim Ronzoni, the assistant principal:

Mr. Ronzoni,  
I felt compelled to write this letter. I hope you pass it on to all your staff and teachers. I heard such horror stories when I moved to Riverton six years ago. I was told the town and schools were awful and very tough. I can truthfully say these people were very misinformed! Hampton Campus School has been a godsend for my [two] children and myself. Not only are they so far advanced in their curriculum and programs, they are blessed with the best teachers I've had the pleasure of knowing. Caring, compassionate and intelligent are meager words to describe these teachers. I want to thank you for allowing me to wander your halls in the mornings and speaking with me [emphasis mine]. I shall miss this school as much as my children. May you all continue your excellent teaching. Never give up to rumors that are outside your walls. [emphasis mine]

It seemed easy to understand why Mr. Ronzoni would post Mrs. Mendez's letter in the faculty room. It represented one parent's revised thinking about Hampton. The study will now tell the story of students who redefined their roles in a new set of relationships at Hampton--mediator and disputant.
CHAPTER VII

MEDIATION DISCOURSE

"If we had two mediators for every country, then peace would break out."

Elaine Lindquist, Hampton Campus School peer mediator

Up to this point, my goals were to establish a context for initiating a peer mediation program in an urban elementary school and to provide a cultural framework from which to study its Discourse. Gee (1990) used culture as the dominating concept to define Discourse:

Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people. . . They are always and everywhere social. . . Each of us is a member of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities. (xix)

Between January and June, the new Hampton Campus School mediators were engaged in a difficult task: they knew that their identity depended upon disputants choosing mediation to solve their problems. The mediators' challenge lay in convincing students and themselves that they could step into this role and mediate disputes successfully. My purpose now is to describe how the Discourse of mediation took hold in one school and came to be understood by its students.

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The Process and the Program

When disputants chose to mediate their conflict, they had specific expectations about what would happen. Since the mediation process is uniquely substantiated in each setting, I will explain the key features of Hampton Campus School's program. Disputants voluntarily began the process by filling out a referral form (see Appendix H-1) and either giving it to me or depositing it in my in-school mail box, which was attached to the large mediation bulletin board near the fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Disputants expected to be brought through the process by two mediators, who would use a green five step program guide (see Appendix H-2) to conduct the mediation: introduction, conflict statements, brainstorming solutions, choosing resolutions and wrap up (Wharton, Garrison & Saul, 1987). Students understood that mediators would record conflict descriptions and agreements on a blue report form (see Appendix H-3). Disputants learned that everything said during mediations was kept confidential and that mediators would not takes sides in the dispute. All of these features were highlighted during the February assembly. When I visited each classroom the following week, I told students that in my role as coordinator, I would keep the original report form after making copies for each disputant and the assistant principal, Mr. Ronzoni. I would mail disputants' copies home with a letter explaining
mediation (see Appendix H-4). The final step in the process was a follow-up interview between peer mediators and each disputant several days after the mediation (Lam, 1989b, pp. 22-23) (see Appendix H-5).

By the last day of school on June 17, there was evidence that mediators were achieving recognition in their new role: thirty-eight disputing students and eight of their teachers wrote forty-six referrals; disputants forged thirty-three agreements. Conflicts developed over harassment: namecalling (13), teasing (14); relationships: broken promise (1), friendship (4), boyfriend/girlfriend (3); property (5); rumors (4); and threats (2). From the perspectives of the peer mediators and other observers, there were forty-six reasons to believe that the program was beginning to be accepted by students.

A Discourse Takes Hold

When I visited classrooms and asked students to tell me how they learned about mediation, they named several sources: my classroom presentations in January, March and May, the February assembly, their friends and their participation in an interaction called Open for Questions, which is described in chapter VIII. Through their verbal and non-verbal behavior, students also began to teach me what they understood about the mediation process and Hampton's program.
One way students did this was through language play. In February, while on duty as mediation coordinator in the cafeteria, I circulated among the fourth grade lunch tables. Jared caught my eye and pretended to punch Randy; in mock horror, he said, "We need a mediation!" It is a scene that was repeated a number of times as students interacted with me in classrooms, corridors and on the playground. Their joke-making told me that mediation Discourse had begun to be assimilated into the school's culture.

On April 13, I observed an example of the power of its language. At the end of recess, students flowed from all directions into two lines to stand on the sidewalk that runs along the edge of the building. As play areas emptied, I saw a small knot of boys who were conspicuously rooted to their spots near the swing set, about five yards away from where the line was forming. Their body language was easy to read, even though I stood on the opposite end of the playground: fight about to begin. Three boys formed a semi-circle around two red-faced opponents who were toe-to-toe with fists poised. Eighty students fell into silence and watched. As a teacher headed toward the warring parties, Francesca, whose voice had a natural chuckle trapped inside it, sang out from the line, "Hey, you need a mediation!" Laughter broke out everywhere. Not mean, or "rude" laughter, as Francesca would later describe it. Just laughter. The two relaxed their
arms, smiled and looked relieved. The word, coupled with humor, seemed to allow them to save face and diffused the potential fight. They parted and walked into line.

I did not discover the nature of the problem or if the dispute was finally resolved, but the incident depicted how a single new word carried meaning sufficient to prevent physical violence, at least for that moment. Francesca, the language user, knew when and how to use the word in the context of a violent situation and relied on her humorous tone and inflection to carry her message. That her meaning and intent were shared by the group was clearly illustrated by the behavior of over eighty students on the playground.

The Meanings of Mediation

At this point, students will describe meanings that collected around three terms: mediation, mediator and disputant. I used data from interviews, video transcripts, and fieldnotes to construct descriptions of six mediators; these are followed by monologues in which they explain how they perceived their new role and how they thought others perceived them. The next segment shows how students who were not mediators perceived the process and the mediator and disputant roles. Rather than filtering the students' voices through my own, I will have them speak directly to the reader. My goal is to avoid writing that Wolcott (1990b)
described in the following manner:

My assessment of qualitative studies in education is that they reveal a tendency toward heavy-handed or intrusive analysis, particularly among educational researchers who feel they not only know their educator audiences but know what is best for them. Informants in their accounts do little talking; the researcher does a lot. Every reported observation or quotation seems to prompt comment or interpretation on the part of the researcher (now turned theorist), something like the chatty guide who becomes rather than gives the tour—and assumes that, without such a monologue, we would not know what to think. (p. 29)

In weaving together the children's words around themes, such as their perceptions of the mediator's role or, later, problems and dilemmas that they experienced, I hope to convey some of their liveliness and spirit. They taught me what they thought about these questions: How did mediators and disputants behave during a mediation; what signals did mediators and disputants send and receive, and how were they interpreted by each other? How did they conceptualize "whatever they need[ed] to know in order to operate in a manner acceptable to others. . .[and] what forms of verbal and nonverbal behavior [were] appropriate" during mediations (Goodenough, 1957, cited in Erickson & Shultz, 1977, p. 147)?

Mediators' Perceptions

Elizabeth Garrett. Elizabeth Garrett, a fifth grade student, was described by her teacher as an avid reader and skilled writer who was used to being the smartest in her
class. Adults and peers had to impress her with something they knew that she didn't. Elizabeth would tell you that she was smart and her peers agreed, nicknaming her "Bookworm" or "Brain." Elizabeth chose her friends carefully and "did not suffer a fool's behavior," as John Grayson, her teacher, put it. In response to an after school program activity, she wrote that if she had one wish, it would be "to be able to freeze and unfreeze time," and that three words she would like to have people use to describe her were "pretty, smart and athletic." In January, when I asked her why she wanted to be a mediator, she replied, "I fight with my [third grade] sister, so I know what it feels like. And I like the idea of mediation."

Elizabeth talked about her perceptions of the role and process:

I'd be happy to mediate anybody. I think that kids would rather talk to kids their own age, and talk about a solution and decide. Sometimes, even if they don't come to an agreement, at least they've talked to someone their own age about their problem. They feel better getting it off their chest.

You can talk to the mediators about problems, but we can't help you come to a resolution without everyone being there. And you have to have a
problem that is big enough to go to mediation. Just saying, "Shut up!" "No, you shut up!" and then you both start laughing is not big enough. But my spending too much time with Natalia and not with Cindy could be. Natalia would probably make out the referral because she would be feeling left out. If we went to mediation, we would have to be serious about solving the problem.

Last week, I was mediating two kids who had had an argument and they were being really silly, cracking jokes and interrupting each other, like they didn't care. I said, "You'll have to stop this or we'll end this mediation." And one said, "You guys are too serious." I said, "Well, that's our job and if you keep being this silly, then you probably don't want to do this." But we went through and we finished [came to an agreement]. I hope I don't have to go through that again.

I think that I make a good mediator because I think I know how to keep my head in tight situations. When we started, I thought I would freak out if kids started arguing, but I didn't. And I can think of the right questions to ask. One disputant says, "Well, she started bothering me, so that's why I teased her." I ask, "Why do
you think she was bothering you?" And she says, "Well, I was kind of pulling her hair." Disputants want to blame the other person.

The easiest thing about being a mediator is putting on my tee shirt. I'm transported. When I put on the tee shirt, I'M A MEDIATOR. I don't take sides with my friends. I'm just a mediator.

Elizabeth's journal entries frequently showed her excitement and curiosity about her new role: "I hope I get to mediate next week. I mean really mediate, not just be on duty. How do people do recess duty? I don't exactly understand. Oh, well, there's a lot I have to learn. Zip a dee do dah, zip a dee ay!"

Sean Boudreau. Sean Boudreau was described by his teacher, Jean Cranston, as a bright and popular fourth grade student who was quick to point out his own faults, and when he was asked to write something good about himself in class couldn't because he would be "bragging." She thought of him as caring and gentle and recalled an incident that made her choose those words. A lesson was going off track, so she reminded the class that they needed to "get back on." Then Billy Glenn made a statement about another topic and Sean, who sat next to him, leaned over and said quietly, "Mrs. Cranston just said we have to get back on track." Billy nodded that he understood, and the lesson went on. It was
Sean's sensitive tone of voice that made her remember the incident.

When I interviewed Sean in January, he spoke about why he wanted to volunteer as a mediator: "I think that I can make a difference by helping people solve their problems. People with problems should have a place to go. And my teacher said that, by helping others, I can solve my own problems." As part of an after school program activity to be shared with the group, Sean wrote: "If I had one wish, it would be that all of my family would be safe from harm or illness." And, "I would like to improve my life by being less hateful to others." He wanted to be thought of as "nice, loving and caring."

Sean talked about his perception of the mediation process and his role in it:

I would be happy to help by talking about a problem if it's at home, at school, wherever it is. We're really here for school problems, but if we shut kids down, and they don't want to talk at home about it, then they can talk about it with us. We don't tell them what to do to solve their problem, but we kind of guide them through. We're not going to be like their parents and tell them to do this and that. We're not going to boss them around. We're going to make them figure it out
for themselves because then they can use that [solution] at another time in a later conflict.

There are some rules you have to go through first and then you try to find how think of ways to resolve the problem. If we didn't have rules, then the mediation would not be able to go on. If you were with someone and started to give a punch at him or calling him bad names, and after a while, we might have to stop the mediation. So that's why we have rules. No physical fighting.

You have to come up with two or three ways to work out the problem. You can't use "to punch the guy out." We'll accept what we think is a reasonable solution--good ways, but if it's going to just cause more problems, we make you think about it more. If you go there to fool around, then you shouldn't even go. That's getting nowhere, but if you really want to put your mind to it to solve the problem, then you're the right person to go. I like it that when you're done, you know that you helped someone have a better time and that feels good.

I had this mediation once and I asked, "Why do you want to solve this problem?" And this kid said, "I want so-and-so not to cut me in line."
Then I got to the other kid and asked him the same thing, and he said, "Because I want to help him solve his problem." And I'm thinking, "You're supposed to be ready to punch this guy out!" I couldn't understand, and I was thinking to myself that it was great for this kid and the other kid because he doesn't want to beat him up. They still wanted to be friends. We were going through [the mediation] and this kid says half the stuff before I could even think about it. He should be a mediator. Everything came natural for him. Some people, like me, it doesn't come natural. I have to think about things for a second, but this kid was gifted. I couldn't believe that he was there because he wanted to solve the other kid's problem. Usually he wants to do something to the other kid. I was just shocked.

One thing I learned is that if you're doing a mediation and someone doesn't cooperate, you're doing the best that you can. If they say no, they don't want to do mediation because it's boring, I try not to take it to heart because I know that I'm doing the right thing. You've got to keep going until it gets so bad that you have to say, "We'll have to stop the mediation." That happened
to me once.

If you're in a mediation and get put down by the other kids, you can look at the good side and say, "At least I tried and I did my best to help them. I tried. I can feel proud." Even if you had to stop the mediation, you at least took control. You have the confidence to tell them that what they're doing [arguing, interrupting each other] isn't right, and that they agreed to the rules. You've got to keep reminding them and if the mediation doesn't come out smoothly, at least you know that you tried.

If people get involved as mediators and don't learn anything, that's just wasting their time. And they could be doing something a lot more fun or learning something more than just sitting there learning nothing.

Kids tease mediators sometimes. Say, if you were in racketball or basketball, would they make fun of you? No. It depends on what you do and how popular it is.

Sean's early journal entries began with great enthusiasm for the program. "I think we have some very special people here," he wrote of his fellow mediators. He expressed concern during March that we weren't "getting more business."
In his eagerness, he wanted mediations scheduled for every lunch period, but we were averaging about one every two and a half days between February and May. He was also "feeling stressed" because of his role in the upcoming school play, "The Elves and the Shoemaker." He was, like many of the mediators, involved in other after school programs and activities.

Natalia Durgin. Natalia Durgin, was described by another mediator as someone who "likes to use sophisticated words all the time." Another said, "She is doing her accents (British, Valley girl) all the time. Like my mother said the other day, 'Natalia needs to find herself.'" John Grayson, her fifth grade teacher noted that she was an extremely verbal, average student who could be very opinionated, outspoken and argumentative. Even though she understood problems and was able to put forth an argument, he perceived her biggest weakness to be that she thought of herself as having the right answers to every problem and knowing the best way of doing everything. "She would solve your problem, even if you didn't want her to," he said. He thought that she had only a few friends. In Natalia's first mediator journal entry, she wrote of her admiration for Elizabeth, who was her "best friend" and how she had "lots of friends," and proceeded to name her mother, her siblings, her teacher, four other classmates and God. Natalia's one wish was "to see
racial problems absorbed into thin air." She wrote that she would like to improve her life "by losing [her] pride" and would like to be thought of as "smart, intelligent and caring."

When I interviewed her in January and asked why she wanted to become a mediator, she replied, "Other schools don't have mediation. And I like to help people. It will feel good when someone can walk away with a problem solved, and I know that I helped to solve it. I have problems, and it will help me to see the other person's point of view."

When I asked her if there were anything that she might have a problem with, she said, "Sort of, like telling people how to solve their problem. Sometimes, I'm bossy, but I can learn."

Natalia described her perceptions of her new role:

We're kids who help other kids solve disputes. They're solving the problem, not us. It's a big pressure to be a mediator. You have to make them feel wanted or they won't want to come back again. You have to congratulate them. If you're not there with a full heart, they're not going to want to come back. They can feel the vibes.

I can feel the vibes. When I'm on the other side of the table [as a mediator], I can tell when
[my partner] doesn't want to be there from their body language. Like, if a mediator would just sit there and ask questions with a blank tone of voice and look across the cafeteria to where their friends were sitting, no eye contact. I've mediated with people like that, and I don't enjoy it because they're not into it and it's just a one mediator thing. Like, get back to reality: help these people solve their problem. That's what we're here to do. And if there is a decision to be made, such as whether to stop the mediation because the disputants won't stop interrupting each other, the two mediators have to agree. If we start arguing over whether to give them another chance or not, then that has an influence on what we're supposed to be doing [as mediators].

You have to be confident in yourself. I can do this. I can do this. I can do this. Run it through your head a million times. It's hard because sometimes you think: I can't do this. Sometimes I don't want to be there. I have to fix myself up for wanting to be there. I have to say, "Everything else is behind me. I have to help these people solve their problem" and I do it. I just do it.
Even mediators aren't perfect. It's hard to look at someone and think: This kid is so dense. He doesn't even know how to answer a question. A million things run through my head, but I've got to stay calm and just help them figure a way out of the dispute.

I think it's so hard when [disputants] come with the problem, and you already know what you could do to make a good agreement. It's hard not to tell them. It's like, "Oh, my gosh, you're so weird, you don't even know the solution." It could be solved, like that [snapped her fingers]! It's hard, as a mediator, to keep our mouths shut and not tell them.

Now that we've gone through a lot of practices, we are so much like pros. Like, I'm at lunch and I happened to look over and I see these mediators with great eye contact, everything down to a beat, all planned out ahead of time. It's not like we're all discombobulated people, just going around trying to figure out someone's problem. That's not what we are. We're trying to help you find a solution, not us finding it for you. It took me a couple of weeks to get into this. At first, half of me was outside at recess
and the other half was in the cafe. And then after a while, I said, "This is serious business." These two people just left unhappy because they couldn't get their problem solved. It's because we're at face [face-to-face] with these people that we know.

At the beginning, I got really excited--like, "Oh, my gosh, I'm going to help someone out, and it's going to be great." You start getting into it, and they start to not cooperate. So, it starts one way and turns into something totally different. It feels kind of weird. Like getting near the part about shaking hands, and I think, What will happen when I ask these two to shake hands? Will they say, "EEEE-eewww, why would I want to shake hands with you?" A million things run through your head.

One thing that I learned is that I can take over more responsibility and not watch people fight, like some people who say, "Hey, check out that fight over there." I wish everyone knew that kids can do just as good a job [mediating] as adults. Like, adults argue, well, kids argue just as good. And when they go to mediation, we're there to help them out. I think of mediation as a
non-sexist, educated interaction between boys and girls. [!]  

T. J. Jackson. T. J. Jackson earned C's and D's during the first quarter of his fifth grade, but by the end of the year, he took home B's, according to his teacher. He began the year coded as learning disabled in reading and math, but since the fifth grades were piloting an inclusive model, special needs teachers came into his classroom and worked with him and other non-coded students.  

Mr. Grayson described him as highly verbal and "a natural reteller of what he knows." What started out as a poor self image as a learner improved throughout the year, as T. J. chose freely from among the hundreds of books in the room and wrote about topics that had meaning for him. He often volunteered to share his reading and writing in front of the group. At first, he read slowly and rocked and swayed, like a pendulum. As he became more experienced and confident, Mr. Grayson and his classmates noticed that the rocking stopped.  

Socially, T. J. was well-liked and had an honest, open personality. He spoke up for others, as well as for himself. He took responsibility for his own actions, good or bad. Between September and December, he was involved in four fights that were serious enough to be brought to Mr. Ronzoni's office. According to one discipline report
involving T. J. and an Anglo student began "because they were calling each other racial names." During mediation training, when we were discussing the language of the introduction, specifically "no physical fighting," he asked, "What other kind is there?"

When T. J. completed an activity to be shared with his fellow mediators during one after school program, he crossed out his first wish (to be a millionaire) and wrote in its place "world peace." He would improve his life by "being a lot smarter," while three words he'd like to have said about him were: "smart, strong and nice." Something difficult that he was glad about doing was "entering mediation." When I interviewed him in January, he said answered my question about his reason for becoming a mediator in this way: "I like helping people and seeing two best friends who were in a fight become friends again. And it looks like fun."

T. J. talked about how he saw himself in his new role:

People might not want to go to mediation because they think that I don't like them. What I want you to know is that, even though I may not like you, once I put on this shirt, I leave all my personal stuff behind.

Disputants go to solve their problems with words instead of fighting. We're not here to tell you what to do. We help you solve your problems

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by getting your point across.

Sometimes, when I'm on the other side, I know how to act like the perfect disputant, no interrupting. But I get sooo maaaad. At the very beginning, kids [mediators] thought that if they got into a fight, they would get thrown off. Kids thought that mediators were straight A students who never get into fights. If mediators take their conflicts to mediation instead of fighting, kids will think, "If the mediators do it, it must be something special." When I'm mad at somebody, I think, "Should I mediate this or should I just talk it out?" Before I would be mad. But now if I take it to mediation, I'd say, "I'm mad at her because she said something about me, and it hurt me." I learned that I am a lot better at solving problems than starting them.

At first I was confused about doing mediations with best friends who I was used to fooling around with. I had to keep myself from laughing. Kids look up to you because you're a mediator. Some make fun of you and call you names because it's a new program and they're not used to the concept. What I don't like is when some kids see a mediation going on, and they get mad at you
because they don't want to see the problem solved.

They just want to see a good fight.

T. J. was one of seven mediators who took their own disputes to mediation. Before he became a mediator, he was involved in four physical fights (p. 115); between January and June, he took part in one violent incident that ended up in Mr. Ronzoni's office.

Elaine Lindquist. Elaine Lindquist was "the brightest student" her fourth grade teacher, Harold Arseneau, had seen "in a long time." Her talents netted her leads in school plays, a spot as a cheerleader for the Reading Is Fundamental program, and some of the attention she longed for in her own words: "If I had one wish, it would be to be the most popular girl in school." Mr. Arseneau observed that her habit of bringing gadgets into school from home was a bid for controlling center stage and getting friends. During the after school program, Elaine wrote, "I would like to improve my life by having a best (cooperative) friend." In January, when I asked Elaine why she wanted to be a peer mediator, she said, "Instead of playing at recess, I could help people solve problems instead."

Elaine perceived mediation and her role in the following way:

When I first heard "peer" mediation, I thought it was like "peer pressure." So I was
thinking it was going be people under pressure. They have to do something. Then I saw the video and said, "Well, okay, it's bigger than I thought it was." Last year, peer mediation wouldn't even have crossed my mind. Now it's part of my life.

When I was thinking of whether to do mediation or not, I thought it was something I could do, something I could be in. Now, I look back on what I thought and I think how stupid I was.

Mediation means helping people with problems so that they can be friends again. You have them talk it over and say what they feel and you try to have them, (but you don't make them), shake hands. You need to be a hard worker and work at it. If you mess up, you can't start over again. You have to keep going. You have to depend on another mediator. Disputants have to know that we are serious. And, even if one of the disputants is someone we can't stand, we are neutral.

One thing that I liked was when a girl said, "When do we sign our names?" She knew exactly what to expect. It was like she was happy about it, waiting to do it.

If someone asked me to tell about what
happened during a mediation, I'd say, "Sorry. I like the program, and if it gets out, if someone even hears us talking, it could hurt the program." That's happened to me. And it's hard.

I've learned that I can actually help someone solve an argument by talking with them. Some people think that we are really big, and we take all big problems. But I wish everybody knew that we take teeny-weeny little problems, too.

After her training in January, Elaine asked in her journal: "What do we do if a classmate makes fun of us? I'm lucky. Nobody has said anything about it." In March, she wrote about an incident:

Two of my friends played a trick on me. They pretended to have a fight, so I mediated them. After I did it, they said that they made it up to see if I was honest. But they did say I was honest, so it was good!

Elaine wrote that she thought about quitting in mid-March because her duties as mediator "move[d] over [her] whole schedule," meaning that she was involved in many extra-curricular activities that competed with mediation.

Kristi Tesadore. Kristi Tesadore volunteered to become a mediator because it "sounded kind of neat and interesting" and she liked "to do new things." Mr. Grayson, her fifth grade teacher, described her as "very gifted and worldly, and having a sense of humor." Kristi's reading habits were wide-
ranging, and she would cite newspapers and magazine articles during classroom discussions. She was a self-directed learner who had the potential of being an A student, but chose to "go her own way" academically. She was mature and intelligent, but "could be cold and cutting, therefore, not accepted by all of the kids." Her mother described Kristi to her teacher as "ten going on twenty-one."

Kristi spoke about her role as a mediator and how she perceives disputants:

We help people see what their problem is and how they think it should be solved by coming up with reasonable solutions to the conflict. They should be able to take the green sheet themselves and work it out. Some people [who] we mediate cooperate so much that they could be mediators, too.

It's more than a blue tee shirt, a green sheet and a pencil. We do more than ask those questions. I think it means experience in knowing how to ask questions and finding out more about the problems than you knew at first. It means being sensitive because if you're in a mediation and someone has a problem and you start laughing, it's not good. You need to be serious about it and not tell them how to solve the problem. You
need patience, too, because if someone's thinking, you can't rush their thoughts. They can tell if you're looking at your watch.

I wasn't so sure about keeping confidentiality at first. I thought, "Oh, good, I get to solve other people's problems and spread them around school." I changed my mind when I did my first mediation and it was a serious one. I knew how they felt about their problem with rumors. It hurts.

How Mediators Thought Others Perceived Them

When I asked Kristi and other mediators how they thought others perceived them, I was surprised by their answers. Family members were described by mediators as generally "proud" and more than half of them had at least one parent, grandparent, uncle or aunt attend the February assembly when they were inducted. Everyone had at least one family member come to an after school reception for mediators on June 17. Billy Glenn's reason for thinking his mother was "kind of happy" about his new role was that "she'll come to the June 17th reception, and she was up in back at the [induction] assembly." Sean Boudreau remarked, "My grandmother called me up to congratulate me when I made it, and was kind of interested in it herself. She kind of forgot about it now."
Amber Cormier said, "If kids have a conflict, I think [students] say, 'She'll be my mediator for today.' Some kids see us as mediators because of our blue tee shirts and really want to be mediators next year." When I asked her how she thought Mr. Grayson, her fifth grade teacher and Mr. Ronzoni thought about her, she said, "I don't know." At home, it was the same, but "my mom feels kind of proud. I don't really know how I know that."

Kelly Felenzo described Mr. Arseneau as not "minding at all" that she was a mediator because "once when I had a mediation with Elaine, and we came in late, he didn't even say anything. And we sat down and the kids asked, 'Where have you been?' I said, 'None of your business.' But he (Mr. Arseneau) didn't say anything because I think he knew." When I asked her what Mr. Ronzoni thought about her as a mediator, she said, "Well, I don't think he exactly knows me. I think we're getting more cases than he does."

These responses were indicative of the remaining mediators' perceptions of how they were viewed by others: recognition came from other students in the form of teasing or praising, while their teachers and the assistant principal, who is responsible for discipline at Hampton, showed little or no overt recognition of them in their new role. When there was recognition, sometimes it was perceived as negative because it came as a result of a mediator's own
involvement in a conflict. During an after school session discussion, Kelly said that when a teacher or student expressed disappointment with her behavior, she told them, "Well, I try." Natalia supported her with this advice: "You could easily tell them that you will always have problems, and that people will get angry with you. But it doesn't mean that you are not a good mediator. I think that sometimes that's a good example--mediators aren't perfect." T. J. added, "Some people believe that mediators are supposed to be perfect angels, and they yell at you. I don't want to get smart, but I'm not perfect." Kristi came up with a response that caused several pleased and amazed gasps: "I think that you can always say that we weren't trained not to have conflicts." Elizabeth clarified Kristi's idea for herself by stating, "We're trained to help solve conflicts, not to be immune."

I had expected to hear mediators talk more about adults' positive attention to this role. When parents or other relatives were credited with supporting them, mediators connected it to their presence at either of two school functions that featured them in their role. Parents' and relatives' visibility meant that they were "proud" or "happy."
Other Students' Perceptions of the Process and Role

During the last week of March, one month after the mediators began their duties, I visited the ten groups of students who have lunch and recess during first and second lunch periods. I asked them to describe what mediation meant and what they thought it meant to "be a mediator" (see Appendix I-1). I returned a month later and administered a second survey (see Appendix I-2). At first, I was attempting to learn what meanings students were developing with respect to the new program and its mediators. Motivation for the second survey was based on my wondering why more students were not bringing their conflicts to mediation. Mr. Ronzoni's discipline reports depicted several non-violent conflicts that, had students chosen to do so, could have been resolved in mediation. By the end of March, we were averaging one mediation every two days. I wondered if my decision to make the second survey anonymous would result in more truthful responses.

When I first scanned both surveys, I was impressed by how well students had learned a cultural model for mediation, as Gee (1990) defined it:

I think of cultural models as something like 'movies' or 'videotapes' in the mind. We all have a vast store of these tapes, each of which depicts prototypical (what we take to be 'normal') events in a simplified vision of a possible world (that we conventionally take to be, or act as if they were, actual) and in terms of which we make the choices and assumptions that...constitute the
production of meaning. (p. 87)

Students wrote that "mediation helps people solve problems in different ways," "without weapons" or "violence." While it could "help you to know your friends better," or "become friends again," it "might help change what you think of other people." They noted its usefulness: "for arguments," "name calling," "rudeness," and "meanness." They saw it as a way for disputants to "share their feelings" and "cool their tempers." A fourth grade student wrote: "Mediation helps you deal with the problem, not the person." One fifth grader saw it as "a civilized way to solve problems." Another mentioned it as a choice to be made: "If you get in trouble, you can go to the office or go to mediation." A fourth grader wrote: "I think mediation is a good thing because you solve problems without violence, and you don't have to go to the principal's office and get a bad letter sent home." One pointed out that the process "gets kids involved in helping others."

Students' descriptions of mediators showed how they expected them to behave, interact, think, and speak: mediators were "confident," "patient" "peacemakers" who were "kids, like us." They "kept secrets," didn't "take sides," and "asked questions about the problem," but wouldn't "tell you what to do." Mediators "listened to you," and "let you talk and didn't talk over you." Several mentioned that mediators were "trained" "professionals" who "didn't laugh at

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your answers." They worked to "make people happy again" and "bring people together." One offered: "If you need to talk, they will help you." One fourth grade student equated peers mediators with "D. S. S. [Department of Social Services] because they fix the problem by talking, and D. S. S. does the same thing." Another described mediators as a "good group because they volunteered for something that they really didn't have to do, and instead of going out to play, they help people." Students saw them as rule enforcers, wearing "blue tee shirts" and sitting with "good posture" at "faraway tables" who said, "No violence or screaming at each other." Mediators wore blue because it "stands for peace and power — they attack the problem." They used blue and green sheets "to help them make sure it is fully over." They were "caring," "intelligent" people who "helped you feel comfortable by not saying, 'Well, you did this...'."

There were students who questioned the mediation process or mediators. One student wrote, "I think peer mediation is good in a way because people help you when you need help. [But the mediators] are not really good because how do you know they're going to keep the secret? How do you know that they won't take sides, even though they say it?" A fourth grade student would not use peer mediation to work out a conflict if "people will still not be my friends and keep being the same people again and again. They say sorry to
you, but when they're finished talking, they're still the same person." A fifth grade student would use it to work out a conflict if "it was just an argument between me and a good friend," but would not if "the person pushed me, spit or threw something as me, or swore at me. I'd get revenge." A fourth grade student thought that it was "all right. I kind of like it. But parents can deal with the problem better." A fifth grade student wrote, "I would not use peer mediation to work out a conflict if I didn't know the people that well. I don't think I could trust them that well with private stuff." Another student wrote that peer mediators "get a little too nosy" and that they "asked too many questions. It can get annoying." A fifth grade student thought that peer mediators were "good, but only some of them. I know some of them, and they are bad. Are they supposed to be bad?" One would use peer mediation to solve a conflict "if they would stop repeating, like they say the same thing right after you," but then came to this conclusion: "I wouldn't use it because it stinks." One student, who thought favorably about the program ("a pretty cool program because it helps kids and kids together") and the mediators ("helpful, caring, normal kids because they give up their time to solve problems"), would only use it if he/she "really had to - a huge problem" and added, "I don't want notes going home" (see Appendix H-4).
In an effort to have children who were not mediators expand on what they had written in the surveys, I visited each class and asked for volunteers to be interviewed (see Appendix D). Fourteen students requested and returned release forms (see Appendix C-2).

When I asked them what the most important thing to know about mediation was, they responded in ways that supported previous perceptions: "you solve the problem by yourself. The mediators just help you to do that," "that they have to calm down the people with the problem," "everyone has to agree to do it" and "it's confidential." I found that comments they made during the interview about the process and the role generally supported perceptions that have been reported previously.

At this point, I will relate a sequence of events involving T. J. Jackson, a peer mediator, and Jimmy Patton, both fifth grade students in Mr. Grayson's class. I believe that their story is an important one to document because it illustrates how one stormy relationship was affected by experience with the mediation process and gives qualitative life to quantitative data: mediations number 5 and 29.

An incident that took place on January 22 was logged on an office discipline report as follows:

SITUATION: [WHAT HAPPENED?]
These two boys stated to make fun of each other while they were in the cafeteria. They cannot agree to who pushed first but they got into a
pushing match. This is the second fight that they have had this week.
PROBLEM:
Both boys acted violently.
SOLUTION:
They are both going to try to be better friends.
CONSEQUENCE:
Both boys were suspended [in school] for 1/2 day today. [Discipline Action Report]

T. J. was involved as a disputant in four mediations between February and June, and Jimmy participated in three. In each case, T. J. initiated the mediations by writing referrals. Two of T. J.'s four mediations involved Jimmy. Jimmy described what he thought mediation was about and then he talked about T. J.:

There are all different kinds of situations that can go to mediation. If it's a fighting situation, I'd go now. If someone hurt my feelings, I'd go because it's going to turn into a fight. It works for some people, it doesn't for others because they don't learn anything from it.

One time I was home with T. J. and we were having a fight, and I was thinking that it might end up in mediation. We went twice, so now we can sit down and talk with each other.

When I asked Jimmy if that had ever happened, he said, "Yes."

T. J. talked about Jimmy:

I've known him since third grade. Sometimes I get mad at him and I hate his guts. Sometimes
we get mad and call each other names, but the next
day, we'll be friends again. When we go to
mediation, we get to be friends right in the
middle of it.

When I asked T. J. why thought that happened, he shrugged and
said, "Talking it out."

DISCUSSION

While I participated in the daily routines and observed
the rituals of Hampton's peer mediation program, individual
students taught me how they understood the process and roles
that they and others assumed once they were inside of it.
From what I learned and what I hope has become evident in the
previous text, I submit the following interpretations or
possible explanations. While I am not making the claim that
Hampton's fourth and fifth grade students subscribed to or
knew certain sociolinguistic, psychosocial or ethical
theories, I am suggesting that these frameworks could be used
to make sense of what they said and did within the context of
this study.

First, children acquired mediation's Discourse through
their experience with a model (Hampton's program) and
practiced within social groups (actual mediations and role
plays). Gee's (1990) acquisition process takes place "in
natural settings which are meaningful and functional in the
sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to so function" (p. 146). With mastery of this Discourse came their expression of the belief that they could transform themselves and others; they recognized that they were capable of changing themselves from bossy kids into good listeners, from fighters into talkers and from observers of conflict into managers of it. Using Erikson's psychosocial theory, some peer mediators appeared to demonstrate a "sense of initiative" that connected directly to their role. Their talk and demeanor seemed to reflect "a strong sense of personal adequacy" when they "accepted new challenges" by wearing the blue tee shirt (Hamachek, 1988, p. 357). Given the context of Riverton and Hampton Campus School's neighborhood, it seemed some students, such as T. J., were perceiving mediation as one possible way to deal with their conflicts and as an alternative to the culture of violence that existed outside, and sometimes inside, Hampton's walls.

Second, Hampton's children appeared to want the chance to learn something new, but did not want their time wasted with meaningless activity. They seemed to think that learning mediation Discourse was for something and appeared "to enjoy 'making things happen,'" another characteristic of "people who have a sense of initiative" (Hamachek, 1988, p. 357); some saw it as useful for resolving conflicts in the
present, while others, such as Jimmy and Sean, saw it as applicable to future conflicts. Both could be thought of as important, socially-grounded reasons for learning mediation Discourse. They seemed to understand that

it all starts with a school admitting that the school is a community. Strangers don't mediate. It is the interest in an on-going relationship that motivates people to resolve a dispute. . . . Ethics deals with conduct, with ways we treat others. Schools with mediation programs are schools that recognize that they are communities. (Dreyfuss, 1990, p. 26)

Once students accepted the challenge and acquired mediation Discourse, they appeared to have it "down to a beat," as Natalia put it. And the more they talked about it with each other and me, the more they "learned" about it, in the sense that Gee (1990) described it:

This teaching or reflection involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter of being taught, some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter. (p. 146)

That many of Hampton's students had acquired and learned mediation Discourse seemed evident to me whenever I watched them from across the cafeteria as they faced each other as mediators and disputants, or whenever I listened to them "talk the talk" of mediation, some of which has been rendered in the previous pages.

Third, Hampton students seemed to want the opportunity to do serious work, and they wanted to be taken seriously
when they did it. This can be interpreted in light of the fact that conflict is serious and that mediations dealt with students' own problems, as Kristi, Elaine and Natalia pointed out. From the perspective of how the role could be regarded by others in the school, it was one of being "a contributing person" (Noddings, 1984, p. 65) who was entrusted with a serious and frequently difficult job. A mediator's role could be construed as "in relation" (Noddings, 1984) to disputants: that is, it could not exist unless they voluntarily placed themselves in their roles of "one-caring" and "cared-for" (mediator and disputant). The issue of "reciprocity" (Noddings, 1984, pp. 69-74) seemed to become important to the students: not only were disputants expected to "follow the rules" (no interrupting, no name calling, etc.), as Sean and others stated, but they were to maintain a serious attitude throughout the process. Therefore, disputants or the "cared-for" as Noddings might see them in this relationship, were expected to send signals to the mediators that they were taking the experience seriously. Students, especially mediators, expressed concern about "kids who fool around." Looked at another way, the latter group interfered with the process and the mediators who were "inclined to get on with what need[ed] to be done and remains task-persistent until [they were] finished," which is a characteristic behavior of "people who have a sense of
autonomy" as Erikson identified it (Hamachek, 1988, p. 356). I will discuss this issue in more detail in the next chapter, which focuses on students' perceptions of problems with the program and how they handled them.

Fourth, children said that they wanted to help others and were willing to sacrifice their time and risk being unpopular doing it, as Elaine and Sean said. Noddings (1984) stated that "the child in the process of building an ethical ideal needs practice in caring. Simply talking about or writing about caring is a poor substitute for actual caring" (p. 122). It seemed that the doing of mediations ranked high on mediators' list of priorities. Saying that they wanted to help was one thing; taking on a responsible role that showed they cared was another. When a student wrote that "mediators were weird to give up their recess," or when Sean talked about mediation not being "popular, like racketball or basketball," it made me wonder about their motives for remaining in the program. Not everyone who was trained stayed with the program. Seven students dropped out before the end of school year, citing overloaded schedules or increased home responsibilities which made it difficult to attend the after school program as reasons. My perception of it was that, in some cases, dropping out had to do with some students being "susceptible" to peer pressure influences, a characteristic behavior that Erikson identified with people.
who have "a sense of identity confusion" (Hamachek, 1988, p. 359). But eighteen stayed with the new program until the end of the school year and seemed to identify strongly with the role. Robert Coles (1993), in The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism, explored the question of motivation in detail. During a visit to a jailed civil rights worker, Coles asked, "I'm wondering why you keep at this, given the dangers and the obstacles" and was "stopped in [his] well-meaning tracks by the young man's three-word reply: 'The satisfaction, man!'" (p. 69). Even though some mediators told me after I got to know them that they initially volunteered because it "was something to do after school," they added that they came to learn that this was a serious and important job.

Fifth, peer mediators appeared to want to be viewed as "normal kids;" that is, that they had their own share of problems. They appeared to understand that maintaining this image worked to their advantage in two ways: they were able to empathize or "to relate" to disputants, and their "not perfect" image supported their credibility with troubled students. I had not discussed with them the positive-negative leadership qualities that contributed to the final phase of the selection process ("A Final Beginning," p. 48). Given that they came from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, some could have just as easily perceived of themselves as an elite group, somewhat akin to being in the
"top reading group," with its hierarchically inspired snobbery. Two rituals (the February induction assembly and mediators' beginning their duty by donning their oversized blue tee shirts) were **not** perceived to cause a "change of status" as Erickson (1984) defined it:

This holds true in such high school rituals as awarding athletic letters and initiation into a national honor society, which publicly acknowledge that not only have certain individuals entered new and higher statuses but that they also have entered new forms of social relations with former peers, who are now outsiders of lower relative status. (p. 57)

Instead, I was surprised to find that mediators perceived a relative lack of response from adults (parents, relatives, teachers and the assistant principal). T. J.'s statement that "kids look up to you because you're a mediator" was counterbalanced with mediators' talk of being perceived as "normal" and not of higher status.

Sixth, **Hampton's students seemed to believe that they could help each other solve conflicts without adult intervention**. Adults were frequently perceived by the children as bosses or punitive judges. Just how strongly they showed me their belief in this perception will be described in chapter IX which is devoted to the ways students confronted issues that emerged around adults' involvement in the mediation program.
CHAPTER VIII

PROBLEM FINDING

I have shown how Hampton Campus School students demonstrated through their talk and behavior that they mastered the Discourse of mediation and had a "prototypical (what we take to be 'normal') event" in mind when they talked about or participated in a mediation (Gee, 1990, p. 87). My purpose at this point is to enhance the picture with respect to the peer mediators' perceptions of specific problems that arose during the six months that it took to establish Hampton's peer mediation program. James Gee (1990) wrote that a "cultural model not only defines what is normal and to be expected but also sets up what counts as non-normal and threatening" (pp. 89-90). I believe that it is important to document these events and perceptions by exploring meanings that were conferred on individual words and acts, not only because the study would be incomplete without it, but because Hampton's elementary peer mediation program could be ahead of a wave of more programs to come. Problems that these fourth and fifth grade students identified and struggled with could be of interest to people who will become involved in implementing similar programs.

However, the analysis and interpretation included in
this chapter should not be construed as a program evaluation. Program evaluations place an outsider's perspective in the foreground and have different purposes, such as showing how mediation programs effect a school's rate of violent incidents or suspensions or gathering perceptions either about changes in students' self esteem or in a school's climate (Vermillion, 1989; Lam, 1989a). Rather, this is an effort to present fourth and fifth grade peer mediators' perspectives as they worked within a program model and engaged in what Donald Graves described as "a higher literacy [that included] 'problem finding' as one of its components" (Brown, 1991, p. 34). The children's perceptions enabled me to construct interpretations related to psychosocial or sociolinguistic theories that seemed to be at work within the context of Hampton Campus School's peer mediation program.

Problems that the mediators found as they experienced "starting up" a program are organized in the following manner: 1) time-related problems with the program as it functioned in this setting and 2) interpersonal problems within the context of program roles, that is, problems between mediators and other students, including disputants, and problems between mediators. Dilemmas that mediators and other students faced concerning issues of confidentiality will be presented in the next chapter. I will begin by a describing the particular setting where much of the talk
about problems occurred.

Context for Problem Finding

In my role as mediation coordinator, I was responsible for extending the peer mediators' training and giving them an opportunity to discuss their experiences. As a researcher, I was interested in having them teach me what meanings were taking shape for them in and around the process and the roles they had acquired. The setting for the centerpiece of my learning was the college classroom that I reserved for Thursday's after school program. It was bleak and unadorned, compared to the mediators' own classrooms. Instead of eye-catching posters and bulletin boards lining the walls and desks or tables spilling over with books and papers, we worked surrounded by bare white cinder block walls and empty bulletin boards.

Minutes before each hour and a half session was to begin, I shoved red, yellow and blue metal tablet chairs into a circle, replacing the professors' neat, lecture-ready rows. Every Thursday as the ear-splitting 2:00 dismissal bells finished ringing in A wing, the mediators and I met outside the library and walked through a connecting corridor toward the forbidden C wing. The mediators vied for first place in line so that the lights, tripped by motion detectors, would come on when they entered the room. They threw their coats
and backpacks against one wall, eyed our soda and cookie
snacks on the green metal teacher's desk in what used to be
the front of the room and read the agenda that I had written
on the chalkboard. They typically saw the date followed by:
  - journal entry
  - role play
  - snack
  - issues and concerns

During the seventeen after school program sessions, that
portion of time devoted to "issues and concerns" gradually
pushed its way to the top of the agenda. It happened because
a mediator would say, "Could I just say something about what
happened today?" And that would begin an outpouring of talk
that went on, sometimes for forty-five minutes. There were
days when I was discouraged by how little the peer mediators
talked about the positive side of the job for which they had
volunteered. I knew that in my role as coordinator, I needed
to spend time with them in advanced training, such as
participating in role plays or evaluating language in
agreements. However, sessions were replete with talk about
problems that they were encountering. In January, sixty-
three volunteers declared that they wanted to help kids solve
their own problems. I worried that the mediators were
becoming discouraged enough to give up their role. It took
time for me to adjust my agenda and realize that they needed
to talk about problems they were experiencing with their new role. At times, their problem finding would be coupled with trial-and-error problem solving that was grounded in the context of this particular program.

Problems with Time

Problems with time emerged as an important theme when I searched for and coded meanings that seemed important to the mediators and students. In the right margins of transcripts and fieldnotes, I identified explicit or implicit subjects of their verbal and non-verbal behaviors; on the left, hunches about what their talk or actions seemed to indicate. For example, perceptions that focused on not being able to finish an entire mediation during lunch or recess periods were coded on the right with the word, "Time" and on the left, "Problem."

Time. There seemed to be too little or too much of it, depending on whose point of view was being considered (mediators' or disputants'), or whether or not there were mediations that day. Four time-related problems that mediators identified were: what to do when mediations took longer than one period, when to offer mediations, what to do when there were no disputes to mediate and what it meant when disputants seemed impatient during mediations.

It order to contextualize the problem of time, it is
necessary to describe a change in Hampton's lunch and recess schedule. Prior to the 1992-93 school year, lunch and recess were thirty minutes each. According to Jim Ronzoni, who was the assistant principal and the final stop on matters of discipline, "Seventy-five percent of the problems happened [ended up in the office as discipline referrals] during the last ten minutes of lunch and recess," so he "eliminated those two times" by reducing both periods to twenty minutes. Ronzoni perceived the last ten minutes of lunch as "setting [students] up, because they sit there with nothing to do." He seemed to believe that his decision would result in controlling students' behavior.

On the other hand, lunch and recess periods were the only school-sanctioned socialization times. In my initial meetings with parents, teachers and administrators, I had promised that the mediation program would not cut into students' school-sanctioned instructional time. Lunch and recess were the only times that seemed available. Therefore, when the program began in February, a pair of mediators were on duty for twenty minutes in the cafeteria, while another pair were scheduled on the playground for the twenty minute recess. Mediators who ate after their duty instead of going out to recess, waited for disputants to get their lunches and come to the mediation table on the unoccupied side of the cafeteria.
I recalled my experiences as a mediator and wondered if the abbreviated lunch and recess periods would have an impact on the mediation program. I thought that it might take more time for students to talk out complex problems. But, when the mediators and I reviewed the portion of the "Peacemakers of the Future" video (Bankier & Dondlinger, 1991) that showed a mock mediation, we saw that it took approximately five minutes from start to finish.

The following discussion, compiled from several after school program transcripts, shows how mediators identified their problems with time. To begin with, nine mediations took two lunch periods to resolve and two took three periods. Some mediators perceived this as a problem.

Kristi: Could we talk about expanding time? I started my first mediation, but it took two or three lunch periods before it was resolved.

Natalia: We're not getting to help solve that problem if they're leaving before we're done. And then they'll have to start all over again.

Elizabeth: I think if we had a little more time, then we could get more done than we do. I didn't get past saying that we were neutral because they didn't come until late [into the twenty minutes].

DK: And then, the next day, the mediators didn't know what happened.
Crystal: Sometimes, when it takes more than one time to do a mediation, some of the problems are real interesting, and I want to know more about how they solved it.

Billy: When we pick up with them the next day, we start to go through the introduction and they say, "We did that already." And we said, "Sorry, we have to do this part."

Ferrara: How could we handle this?

Billy: Maybe we could check where we left off on the green sheet if we don't finish, and the next mediators could just pick up from there.

Natalia: But then, we have no defense if they start to interrupt. How can I say, "You agreed not to interrupt"?

Elizabeth: You can say, "You agreed to the rules yesterday."

Ferrara: How does that sound? If you are unsure about their remembering the rules, could you ask them to tell you which ones they agreed to and remind them of the ones they don't remember? The solution entailed leaving the green sheet (see Appendix H-2) marked in the margins: We left off here, or Start here. Both
mediators could agree on whether or not to restate the rules or have disputants restate the ones that they remembered.]

Elaine: I was wondering if we could not have mediation during everyone's meal. Some say, "I want to eat my meal."

Ferrara: When should we offer mediations?

Several voices: Recess.

Elaine and Richard: They don't want to give up their recess!

Ferrara: What have we asked the disputants?

Several voices: Do you want to solve the problem?

Ferrara: Then they have to give up something. An angel won't come down from heaven and solve it for them. It takes time.

Kristi: I think we should have it all day long. [A burst of laughter erupted. She held up her hand in a "just listen to this" gesture.] Kids could do work in their classrooms, but when a conflict comes up, they could mediate it right then and there. Any time. That would solve the problem totally.

Ferrara: That would mean that every classroom would need two mediators. One room only has one mediator, and the two third grades don't have any.
Kristi:  There could be two sets of mediators on
duty, and one could do the first half of the day
and the second set could do the second half.
Natalia:  The teacher could call the office and
say, "I need two mediators to come."  Some
problems don't take long, so we could do it and go
back to class.
Billy:  But when two mediators are on call, it
could keep them running all the time.
Sean:  In and out of their rooms, going back and
forth.  Like, WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?  We would go
crazy, pulling our hair out.  It's a good idea,
but mediators got to do work.  Say there's a
really important math test, and he happens to be
on duty and gets called to do a mediation.  Then
he goes to get the other kid and interrupts the
teacher.
T. J.:  Some teachers could say, "No, you can't go
because you have work to do."
Natalia:  I'm starting to agree with T. J. and
Sean more now because if you happen to be a
mediator, kids in class might get jealous and say,
"You can get out of class any time, and we have to
stay."  I wouldn't want that to happen.
Ferrara:  Is there anything else about the issue
of time?

DK: Some disputants are very impatient during mediations. They move around and look around. When we ask questions, it takes time to write down what they say (conflict statement).

T. J.: Some of the younger kids have short attention spans, like fourth graders. Could we speed it up?

Richard: The thing I didn't like was when they kept telling us to skip everything. They said, "We already know that part. Skip down."

Sean: One time, this kid was saying what I was supposed to be saying. He was taking my job away from me. This was a short [mediation] and the kid comes to us after and says, "One thing I don't like was that it was long." I go, "It wasn't long. Some take as long as three lunches." And while he was in it, he kept looking around.

**Perspectives on Time**

When mediators' problems with time emerged, it caused other perceptions to come into focus as well. Kristi and Natalia began by recognizing that the truncated lunch periods might impair their ability to help disputants. They appeared to see themselves as individually responsible for following
a mediation through to the end. Because the program's rotating duty schedule was not designed to accommodate mediators staying with disputants whenever there were longer mediations, it became necessary for mediators to step in and out of the process. Kristi and Natalia seemed to see themselves individually connected to a particular dispute and expressed frustration over this interference with their interpretation of the role.

Crystal seemed frustrated by the same flaw in the program, but for a different reason. When she said that "some of the problems were real interesting, and I want to know more about how they solved it," she seemed to expect to learn something from the mediation interaction, as well. It was part of what she valued in the role and expected to receive from the relation (Noddings, 1988, p. 219).

When faced with a part in a two or three day mediation, Billy and Natalia appeared to equate their repeating the introduction with either individual trust-building or control insurance ("We have no defense if they start to interrupt"). Elizabeth, on the other hand, perceived disputants' agreement to the rules the day before as adequate to get on with the business at hand: having disputants work on solving their problem. To Elizabeth's way of thinking, if a mediation were likened to a bus trip, then a change of drivers would not necessarily compromise the success of the trip. In other
words, the group or "team" (Goffman, 1959, pp. 78-92) identity became more important than their individual one. If students viewed all mediators as trained, competent, neutral third parties, then the process became the glue of the experience, not the individual mediators.

Whether or not disputants' viewing of mediators individually or as a team could be construed as a positive or negative feature is open to interpretation in the light of more evidence. Whenever a mediation was still in progress near the end of the period, I walked over to the table and told the students that time was running out. I then asked the disputants if they wanted to end the mediation or continue it at recess or the next day. No one ever chose to end the mediation because time had run out. Occasionally, a disputant would ask, "Will we have different mediators?" If Natalia was perceived by some disputants as "too strict," then a change of mediators might have altered some mediations considerably. I was not surprised that some students held strong opinions about mediators. Recall T. J.'s statement: "People might not want to go to mediation because they think that I don't like them. What I want you to know is that, even though I may not like you, once I put on this shirt, I leave all my personal stuff behind." Deirdra, a neighbor of T. J.'s who told me about a history of feuds in and out of school with him, said that she would try to mediate a dispute
she had with another student "as long as [T. J.] isn't the mediator." It seemed to matter to mediators that they be regarded as neutral third parties, but the dynamic of long standing relationships could work against that hope. An assumption I made when I began the program was that all students would be at least acquainted with each other, so when Deirdra responded in this way, it was not unexpected. What did bewilder me was that, during interviews and on surveys, some students and mediators expressed discomfort over engaging in this ritual with fellow students whom they did not know very well. It seemed that students valued knowing (even if it meant not trusting) a mediator over not knowing a mediator well enough to trust him or her.

What appeared to be more important to disputants than a change of mediators was not having to give up their recess. Disputants resisted giving up their play time to go off into a quiet section of the playground to do mediations. This perception was supported whenever I asked disputants scheduled for a mediation whether they wanted to meet while they ate lunch or at recess or to continue it at recess. All chose to return the next day at lunch. No one ever decided to give up recess to mediate a problem. With barely fifteen minutes to play, they were reluctant to even do follow-up questionnaires (see Appendix H-5) during recess. The result was the mediators' decision in March to drop
recess duty and put both pairs on at lunch times. It was one of several changes they made in the model that I presented to them in January.

Kristi's suggestion to have mediators in every class, available to mediate the conflict "right then and there" supports Johnson and Johnson's (1991) recommendation:

While the teacher may mediate conflicts among students, the teacher may also train all students to be mediators, each day (or week) select a pair of class mediators, and then refer to them all conflicts. It is important that all students are given the opportunity to be a mediator as it will increase students's negotiation skills. Peer mediation gives students an opportunity to resolve their disputes themselves, in mutually satisfactory ways, without having to engage the attention of a teacher. This empowers the students who sometimes feel like they are victims of the "arbitrary" whims of the teacher. It also reduces the demands on the teacher, who can devote less time to arbitration and discipline in general, and more time to teaching. (p. 1:15)

It seemed interesting that a ten year old problem solver could conceptualize revising the new program in this manner. Between February and June, one teacher told me that she relied on two mediators' skills to settle a conflict that disrupted her classroom, although there were two or more mediators in all rooms except two (third grades) at the beginning of the program. This could have been as a result of the teachers being unsure how to organize or monitor such opportunities in their classrooms or their perception that students could spend their own time (at lunch and recess) to take care of their conflicts. Others could have seen their
permitting mediations in their classrooms as interfering with the new program.

Even though mediators initially appeared to want to expand the time and enhance opportunities for students to use mediation to settle disputes, they abandoned solutions when they considered negative effects it might have on others' view of them in their role. Sean stated that his being on call would not only interfere with his own responsibilities as a student, but he would also have to interrupt a teacher to carry out his duties and possibly be considered a troublemaker himself. His perception could be construed as a recognition that, although he played an additional, empowering role in school (Davis & Porter, 1985a), it did not come within the mediators' power to challenge adults who had control over classroom and school schedules: teachers and administrators. (Recall Sean's pre-mediation program statement in the cafeteria about adults' power over children on page 27.) Natalia's perception was that she did not want other students to "get jealous" because she would be able to "get out of class any time." It seemed that solutions to problems had to be in line with Sean and Natalia's perception of the role--"we're normal kids"--meaning that they did not want to disrupt their student role to assume their mediator role and pay the price of unwanted status among friends.

The mediators' concern over time could be attributed to
their abilities to empathize with disputants and to read their body language well enough to decide that they were becoming impatient. When disputants were "looking around" or at their friends on the other side of the cafeteria, it seemed to make mediators uncomfortable because they interpreted the behavior negatively. Mediators, such as DK, appeared to expect disputants to reciprocate by mirroring their own "professional" body language during each step of the ritual.

Sean saw a disputant's "saying what [he] was supposed to be saying" as usurping his role and "taking [his] job away." Richard did not like it when disputants said, "We already know that part. Skip down." Goffman (1967) described what Sean and Richard might have been feeling when they perceived disputants as breaking a rule:

These rules, when followed, determine the evaluation he will make of himself and his fellow-participants in the encounter, the distribution of his feelings, and the kinds of practices he will employ to maintain a specified and obligatory kind of ritual equilibrium. (p. 45)

Stepping on Sean's lines or telling Richard to skip a part could also be interpreted as the disputants' effort to hurry the process along. When faced with impatient disputants, mediators perceived it as an erosion of their effectiveness or a challenge to their competence. I recalled my experience during adult mediations, which frequently take three hours or more, when I felt similar pressure brought on by disputants
looking at their watches. I noted that T. J.'s understanding of disputants' impatience grew out of his appropriation of teachers' folk wisdom (Erickson, 1984, p. 57) when he asked about "speed[ing] it up" because of younger children's shorter attention spans.

While much of the mediators' talk about time was concerned with there being too little time to do mediations or about disputants' pressuring them to hurry up, they also identified the problem of having too much time. This occurred when there were no mediations or follow-up questionnaires to do. One solution came from fifth grade teacher, Mr. Grayson, who donated paperback books for mediators to read while they were on duty. A second solution came from students. Three days after the program started Wanda Alamieda, a fourth grade student who was noted for her anti-social behavior and who also had volunteered in January, asked me at the end of lunch, "Can we go ask mediators questions if there are no mediations?" I said that I would check with them and let her know.

The next day, I told Richard and Crystal about the request and Richard said, "Sure. Why don't we have a sign to let people know we will answer their questions?" That afternoon, I constructed a large folding sign that, when it was dropped over the side of the table one way, read: Mediation in Progress, and when reversed, it read: Open for
Questions. Richard seemed to be aware of a need to communicate to others on the far side of the cafeteria that a situation different from mediation was taking place in the "front region," which Goffman (1959) defined as "the place where the performance is given" (p. 107). His suggestion helped to communicate to others in the setting that students sitting across from mediators should not be viewed as disputants.

From that day, a regular stream of curious students sat with mediators and asked about the program. It evolved into a method to educate students about the program, which was identified as necessary by mediators and other students, like T. J. who said some students were not "used to the concept" of mediation. By the end of June, students asked dozens of questions and participated in an added ritual which served to inform students about the program; it also gave mediators an opportunity to verbalize their understanding of the process and program. I had listened in during the first week because this event was not confidential, as mediations are. However, I noticed that students seemed to be very aware of my presence and also that mediators seemed to rely on my giving them support when they answered questions. So I withdrew and observed them from other side of the cafeteria while I circulated among the lunch tables.

What I observed was students teaching each other about
the program. Their body language communicated their professional demeanor, made explicit by their learned Discourse roles: serious expressions, occasional smiles, their use of clipboards as props to show curious students the mediation guide, report form, and follow-up questionnaire. Eventually, several students requested permission to make up conflicts and do role plays with the mediators if there were no "real mediations" scheduled.

During the second week of Open for Questions, Jasmine Rodriguez asked me, "Shouldn't we be writing these down, so you'll know what they're asking?" From that day, mediators wrote down questions and gave them to me at the end of their duty. Students' questions were about mediators feeling "scared" or "nervous" during training and mediations, and mediators getting "kicked off" if they "got in trouble" or "got bad grades," or what would happen if mediators "messed up and took someone's side." One asked if mediators had to "take tests" or have "mediator homework." Many asked what mediators did during the after school program. Students wondered about mediators becoming "scared" "when a friend asks for a mediation" or on the other hand, "when you have to work with someone you don't know." Others asked if mediators ever went to mediation themselves. They asked what would happen if mediators "forgot what to do." They were curious about what it was like to "work for Ms. Ferrara" and asked,
"Will she be here next year?" and "Do you want to be an adult mediator when you grow up, too?" One student wanted to know: "Do they pay you?" while others asked, "Why do you want to help people?" and "Do you feel special?" Some wondered if there "was ever any violence during a mediation," and if disputants were "forced to come." One student asked, "How do you feel when you have three disputants and only two talk?" Another wondered, "What would happen if there was a problem you could not solve?" and "What do mediators do when one person wants to solve the problem, but the other doesn't?" Several asked, "How do you feel when people tease you about mediation?" and "What is it like when you get kids who won't listen to you?"

Students' abilities to formulate questions for Open for Questions showed as much about what they knew and felt as what they did not know about mediation. Their curiosity taught me that they understood how difficult a task the mediators had undertaken. Some students' questions alerted me to anxieties that they felt with respect to learning something new or their fear of violence erupting during mediations. Their last two questions about teasing and interrupting bring up the next subtopic to be explored: problems between mediators and other students, including disputants.
Mediators' Problems with Students

In addition to time-related problems, mediators perceived problems with disputants that occurred during mediations, some of which led them to create a category of people as "not the mediation type." They also identified problems that occurred when they were not functioning in their mediator role. Their problem finding included teasing and joking, interrupting during mediations, disputants' perceived lack of honesty during mediations or follow-up interviews, disputants not being able to come up with solutions and disputants' perceived impatience.

Teasing

DK: Sometimes kids make fun of us because we are mediators. [She imitates another voice:] "Someone took my pencil." I don't know what to say when someone hurts my feelings like that.

Several mediators: That's happened to me, too.

Billy: One of the guys in my class says, "Hey, guys, let's start a conflict so we can go to mediation." They fool around and it hurts my feelings. I really want to say, "This ain't no joke or nothing," but I don't want to hurt their feelings.

Natalia: I don't think you should let them get to
you. In my class, some people say, "Natalia, I'm going to try to get into a conflict today so that I can see what you guys are really doing." They think we're trying to fool around and stuff. I said, "You guys can't do that because if you come, we'll ask you: Do you really want to solve the problem and if you are giggling and fooling around, it won't work."

T. J.: It's hard to read the green sheet and write at the same time. Sometimes, I keep stopping. And one time, after mediation, I was walking up to get my lunch and this kid said, "I've got a dog that reads faster than you do." And sometimes, I stutter when I get nervous.

D. J.: Well, a lot of my friends make fun of me, but they're always playing around, the way friends do. You just have to try to ignore them. Tell them to get off your back. If not, tell the teacher. This program is really new and they may be jealous of you because they didn't make it [as a mediator]. Most of them treat me like any person just doing a job.

**Joking**

T. J.: You know, when kids jump around and say,
[deep, dramatic voice] "He took my apple," I say, "Well, GIVE IT BACK!" [laughter] And they say, "Some mediator you are."

**Richard:** I had this mediation and [the disputants] made me laugh, so I didn't think it was right. So I talked it out with my uncle. It made me feel better. Because when you're a professional mediator, you don't want to laugh in front of everybody.

**D. J.:** If mediation is to help kids, it's not strict down the line--no smiling, or you'll get kicked out. There's no fooling around, but I was on duty with Elaine and the disputants were wisecracking and telling jokes, and I laughed.

**Jasmine:** Once I had a mediation to do by myself because my partner had somewhere else to go, and the two people were laughing and joking around. I said, "You guys had better stop because I have to talk and write at the same time." They kept on going like this until the end [fifteen minutes], but it was amazing, we got through the whole mediation.

**Elizabeth:** Some kids are interested in it. They don't want to fool around, but they want to witness a mediation. In the lunch room, Kelly and
I were sitting together and four girls came running over and said, [mimicking an excited voice] "Two kids are yelling at each other!" And we weren't even on duty.

**Perspectives on Teasing and Joking**

I interpreted teasing and joking about mediation as a sign of acceptance among Hampton's students (page 100). When the mediators talked about it, however, they expressed a range of perceptions about it. Using Erikson's psychosocial framework may help interpret their responses. Elizabeth, who was a confident and articulate child, seemed to take it as a healthy sign of curiosity. D. J. dismissed it as teasing "the way friends do," even though he admitted that it bothered him sometimes. D. J. recognized that the program was child-centered and that meant that to be too serious about it could be at odds with the group's peer-to-peer relationship. Both Elizabeth and D. J. appeared to be able to "focus on the positive aspects of others' behavior," "listen to their own inner feelings when deciding what is . . . appropriate or inappropriate" and to "have a strong sense of personal adequacy" (Hamachek, 1988, pp. 355, 356, 357). To use an expression that Sean used to cope with the stresses of being a mediator, they seemed to be able to "go with the flow" because of their strong self concepts.
Richard, on the other hand, took his role of "professional mediator" very seriously and tended to be less flexible in his perceptions of the role; he seemed to view his laughing as an "unmeant gesture" (Goffman, 1959, p. 52) that could be interpreted by others as unprofessional within the context of his role. He admitted being bothered by guilt over his laughing so much that he had to talk it over with his uncle.

Some interpreted teasing and joking as sour grapes behavior if mediators were being teased by someone who volunteered, but was not selected. They may have had to acknowledge that their wish to perceived as "normal" was not entirely possible and that they were indeed "special." It seemed that they were caught between two opposite points that were bound up in their role: they were "trained professionals" who were "just normal kids."

It appeared that mediators who I perceived as less trusting or autonomous, such as Billy or DK, found it more difficult to shrug off teasing and joking, while the more secure and self confident ones, such as Elizabeth or D.J., could objectify it.

T. J., on the other hand, appeared to vacillate between bravado and pathos. He could be quick with his wit and comebacks and frequently made us all laugh, but when someone hit a raw nerve (his years of being coded as a poor reader in
Chapter I pull out classes), he was wounded and said so. He seemed to want his new self respect to carry over after he hung his blue tee shirt up in the cafeteria's storage room (the "back region" [Goffman, 1959, p. 123]) and resumed his student identity. If there is one image I could leave with the reader, it would be of T. J. telling the mediators his story of the student who insulted him about his slow reading and stuttering. He finished describing the incident and then slumped his head down on top of his hands and looked at me, like a tired puppy. It was as heart-breaking for us to listen T. J. as it must have been for him to tell it. Empathy was written on every face in our circle.

Natalia, who was perceived by some students as bossy, became more "strict" when teasing or joking threatened to undermine her mediator authority, so she appeared to add a "strict teacher" role to her mediator role. As Elizabeth pointed out, Natalia could assume many "voices" (roles) and when one didn't work, she quickly drew another from her repertoire. Unfortunately, her choice of strict teacher role could have been a poor one because it conflicted with her "just normal kid" mediator role. Natalia was not able to effectively combine the two roles because she chose a secondary role that was an adult, whose presence was unexpected (and even unwelcome) within the context of peer mediation.
Interrupting

Craig: We had a lot of interrupting during a mediation.

Ferrara: What can you do in that situation?

Craig: You could say, "You agreed to the rules."

Elaine: After a couple of times, you sound like a broken record.

T. J.: When we have to say, "You agreed not to interrupt," they say, "Well, you're not my mother!"

Jasmine: But if you go on with the mediation, they would think they could do that.

Sean: One thing I learned is that if you're doing a mediation and someone doesn't cooperate, you're doing the best you can. You gotta keep going until they get so bad that you have to say, "We'll have to stop the mediation."

Once, during a mediation, one disputant couldn't get a word in, like if I asked her something, the other two would interrupt and put me or her down, so she couldn't give her answer. I think I just came up with a brainstorm! Maybe they didn't want us to see them as the bad guys and they didn't want to get everything out because if she did, she was going to give her a piece of
her mind, and maybe they thought that they would look bad and that we'd tell everybody else that they were mean. I know I wouldn't do that and neither would Ricky [the other mediator].

**Natalia:** I had a kid cry when he didn't know how to answer a question, and I had to figure out a way to help him get out of the dispute. I always say, "Do you want to be at the mediation?" This kid did not want to be at the mediation and I felt so bad. I think at first he wanted to go, but after a while, with the name calling and interrupting, he gave up and changed his mind. I gave him a chance to escape it. It made me feel bad because two girls were making fun of him and he was breaking down in tears. The [third] girl was helping him answer the questions and the other two were making fun. I gave them a two-warning chance. I say [official voice]: "I don't want this to happen again." Whenever I say it a third time, I say, "You guys are not really into this mediation." You've gotta say it. We know what they are up to.

When I feel there is someone across the table looking back at me with sad eyes, body language that is not acceptable, I have to say, "Do you
still want to do this?" I can't go to the next question without knowing that. One person may be mature enough to answer the questions, the other one may not be if they're there with dirty looks and interruptions. You have got to know that you are there for a reason. If not, that's another problem you've got besides the one you're there for in mediation.

**Perspectives on Interrupting**

In their interpretations of what it meant when disputants violated the "no interrupting" norm, the mediators appeared to draw on their tacit knowledge of human social behavior. During our discussions, we tried to view it as a problem that could not be solved in any one way because of the unique dynamics (people and problems) of each mediation. Jasmine saw the need to uphold the "no interrupting" rule because to allow it would send the message that "they could do that." She seemed to be asking a reasonable question: "Why make a rule, and then let disputants break it?" Her knowledge of the role also meant that mediators needed to control the disputants so that they could focus on the problem at hand.

But what did mediators think it meant when disputants kept interrupting even though they had agreed not to minutes
before? Sean interpreted it as an effective face-saving strategy for disputants who did not want to look bad in the mediators' eyes (Goffman, 1967, pp. 5-45). His empathy took him one step beyond when he posed a "low sense of basic trust" (Hamachek, 1988, p. 355) as a reason: disputants thought that mediators might "tell everybody else that they were mean." To Sean's way of thinking, effectively blocking the other disputant during a mediation would save further erosion of a disputant's already damaged reputation.

Natalia thought that she knew what some disputants were "up to." She told her version of the story of one disputant, a bundle of inter and intrapersonal problems who was known throughout the school. He was a fifth grade student, Tim Dalton, who voluntarily participated in mediation three times: once before and once after the one Natalia described. Tim had spit on the slide at recess because the three girls behind him had called him fat. The girls called him fat because he would not move up the steps fast enough for them. His non-verbal gesture said what he could not say in retaliation for the insult about his weight. Natalia's perception was that mediation, with its reliance on talk to move through the process, put Tim at a disadvantage because she perceived him as not being "mature enough." Her evidence was that he cried when "he didn't know how to answer a question." She noted that one girl tried to help him, but
the other two dominated the situation by interrupting. By recognizing the boy's verbal limitations, Natalia perceived a power imbalance so obvious to her that she had to help him "escape" it. She was interpreting a part of her role that promised a level playing field to the disputants. Her empathy with Tim told her it was not. The girls' breaking the "no interrupting" rule helped her decide what to do. She and her co-mediator stopped the mediation. Not only were the disputants "up to" something—so was Natalia when she employed "protective practices".""to save the definition of the situation projected by another" (Goffman, 1959, p. 13), that is, to help a disputant out of what she saw as an impossible situation.

When T. J. enforced the "no interrupting" rule, he was accused of acting like an adult (mother) telling the disputant what to do. Some students did not view adults favorably within the context of peer mediation. In fact, this half-joking accusation foreshadowed a major dilemma with the program that emerged which I will discuss in a later section devoted to issues of confidentiality. Could disputants be interpreting reminders not to interrupt as a form of domination? It seemed possible that disputants could confuse mediators' efforts to insure uninterrupted turn-taking with a challenge to their promised autonomy within the process. If that were the case, then the mediators' behavior
would be at odds with the principle of self-determination which supports the belief that disputants "have the ability and right to define their issues, needs and solutions and to determine the outcome of the process without advice or suggestions" (Mediator Training Manual, 1991, p. 4). I am making this point for the following reason: it made me realize how a situation designed to empower individuals could be misconstrued by the very people it was designed to help because they could perceive it as yet another effort to overpower them.

A key to understanding the interaction seemed to be the manner in which mediators presented themselves (Goffman, 1967, pp. 5-45). A mediation could be a virtual tightrope act for mediators: keep disputants under control while making them feel empowered within the process. While performing this feat, they had to keep in mind other aspects of how they thought they were expected to behave in their role: they were kids who were trained to help other kids figure out ways to solve conflicts and who would not make things worse by blaming them for what happened or by getting them into more trouble with adults (parents, teachers or the assistant principal). Ronald, a disputant who was one of the most difficult for mediators to control because of his interrupting, said to me during an interview: "Some people fool around and butt in when [the other person is] speaking,
so you need to get stricter so you can work on the problem. But some people think it's boring when you get too strict." He seemed to be saying: Too little control interferes with the process, but too much turns disputants off.

**Honesty**

_Natalia:_ During the follow-up (see Appendix H-5), I don't think people are being honest. Sometimes you hear hesitation in their voices or they seem to want to get it over with. You can sort of tell because of the hesitation that he wanted to answer something else, but didn't. So I felt uneasy. And the ones where we say, "because..." he couldn't put an answer to them. Or a disputant sits there shaking his head, looking around, answering in a low tone of voice.

_Ferrara:_ What do you think that means?

_Natalia:_ He doesn't really have an answer for it, or he's hesitating and not saying the truth. I can just feel it--bad vibes. Usually when you have an answer, you say it. He might feel like he's being forced to answer the right thing because their friend could have been the mediator and they don't want their friend to get into trouble. Like if their friend was mediating and took that person's side, they wouldn't want to
answer honestly. Or if the person was pressured by his friends. Like, when we ask, "Is the agreement working for you?" You can tell if the person is hesitating.

You know what I think we should do? Put on the follow-up form to tell people to "please, be honest" because if they aren't honest, it doesn't go anywhere. If they really want to get the problem solved, it's got to be honest so we can know what's going on. We're confidential. These people shouldn't be scared of anything. If they are going into [a follow-up interview], and someone says, "You'd better say the right thing," that person is scared out of their wits. So even if they know it won't go anywhere besides you, they're still scared. They think, "If I don't answer these questions in the right way, this person's going to come after me." Kids are really scared about everything that's going on in society. I'm scared to walk out of my front door in the morning. I don't know what's going to happen. And it's just as bad in elementary school.

**Elizabeth:** Sometimes, people do tell the truth. I had one who said, "No, we're not getting along
better." During the follow-up, some never want to finish the questions that have a "because" or "why." They don't seem to know what to say. Sometimes, it just is because people are just getting along better. They don't really have to have a reason. Maybe they just don't want to say they're not really communicating better.

Natalia: I think we should put something at the beginning that we ask them to answer honestly. And what if disputants give different answers on the follow-up, like one says it's working out and the other says it isn't?

Ferrara: They might. What if they do? They are being interviewed separately.

Natalia: Well, if they're different, then obviously, one has to be lying.

[Outburst of objections]

Richard: It's their opinion. If they both think differently, it could be that one person is acting in a way that the other person didn't really like or understand.

Cristine: They both could have different points of view about it, so they wouldn't be lying.

Sean: I had a mediation last week, and there was this one girl. When I asked the two other people,
"Do you think the problem is solved?", they went, "Yeah, yeah." The third one [Sean hangs his head and looks down to show] you could tell she wasn't telling the truth. The other two said, "Hurry up!"

**Kelly:** I had a mediation where someone wasn't telling the truth. It was complicated. Me and D. J. were trying everything we could think of, and I was getting kind of aggravated. This person finally said, "I'll just give [the pen] back to her. I don't care anymore." And I wasn't sure if it was right or not. I thought, "Well, this must be the other girl's pen, and she'll get it back." But then I thought, "What if it isn't and she's doing it just to get it over with and get out of here?" It gets me kind of mad because you can't tell who's lying and you don't want to accuse somebody because you're trying to be fair.

**Perspectives on Honesty**

To confront and evaluate suspicions and hunches that disputants were violating the norm of honesty, mediators called on their skillful reading of body language, supported by their intuition. Natalia felt "bad vibes" and cited hesitation in a disputant's voice as a signaling a contrived
response during a follow-up interview. When she said, "Usually when you have an answer, you say it," she seemed to "see real performances as something not purposely put together at all, being an unintentional product of the individual's unselfconscious response to the facts of the situation" (Goffman, 1959, p. 70). Natalia and others appeared to think that adding a sentence to the beginning of the follow-up questionnaire would help by reminding disputants that they were expected to be honest during this part of the ritual, as well. Their insistence on verbalizing the need for honest responses could be interpreted as an act of faith in the power of the written word. As mediation Discourse members, they appeared to believe that if you read/said "Be as honest as you can," it would make disputants be more honest during a follow-up interview.

With the discussion of honesty came a test of the mediators' ability to accept differing points of view and the ambiguities that could result from being able to do so. The other mediators were quick to point out that Natalia's belief/judgment that one disputant had to be lying seriously interfered with her need to be an unbiased and neutral third party. They seemed to be able to recognize that, within the Discourse role, a mediator could not decide someone was lying and be done with it; wearing the blue tee shirt meant having to reconsider an apparently contradictory statement as a
representation of another person's perspective.

Kelly struggled with another aspect of honesty. She realized that the agreement she mediated was not fair if the "true" owner of the pen had to give it up. Kelly seemed to be unsettled by the challenge to her ability to tell truth from deception when all she had to go on were the performances of both disputants. Her frustration was over her role in trying to help disputants come to a "fair" agreement, but she reasoned that she could not do that if they were not being honest. She was "mad" because she saw lying as at odds with the Discourse's valuing of honesty. The consequence of lying was to violate and interfere with her ability to write a fair and balanced agreement; a "normal" mediation did not include agreements spun from lies. Was the written agreement fair or unfair? What upset her was that she could not know. She cared about the fairness of the agreement. Her intuition about the disputant agreeing to give up the pen "just to get it over with it" could have been right. She had picked up signals that made her suspect that (little eye contact, long silences). If someone knew the truth and was not telling it, then what looked on the surface to be a fair agreement was clouded in ambiguity for Kelly. She wanted to receive both disputants as truthful people and appeared hard-pressed to let that go. To accuse someone of lying would conflict with Kelly's understanding of what
mediators believe they are: fair and neutral third parties. After much deliberation, Kelly seemed to accept that, indeed, she might never know "the truth" about who really owned the pen. (The above text is abbreviated from three different talks we had about the mediation).

Natalia and Sean perceived fear of retaliation and suspicion as reasons for some disputants not responding truthfully during mediations or follow-up interviews. Could there be a connection emerging between the quality of some students' involvement inside the process and the quality of life outside, in Hampton Campus School and its neighborhood? The peer mediation process depends on cooperation and trust. I wondered if some students were experienced enough with either to benefit from this process.

No Solutions

Ferrara: Is it too much to ask each disputant to come up with three solutions?

Natalia: One is enough.

Richard: I think they should come up with at least two.

Elaine: How about "Come up with as many as you can"?

T. J.: You need a back up.

Susan: When we ask, "What will you do to solve
the problem?" they just sit there because they can't think of anything. I'm trying to help them, but I don't know how. They can think of what the other disputant should do, but not what they can do.

T. J. And when I say, "Put yourself in his shoes," they joke around and say, "Well, his feet are bigger than mine."

Elizabeth: The toughest thing for disputants is to come up with solutions. I say, "We'll get back to you." A few times, I had three disputants and they all said, "I don't know." They just sit there. I say, "Try to think what YOU can do about this." They want to solve it, but don't know what to do.

Perspectives on No Solutions

Mediators identified problems arising from their expectation that disputants would come to mediations equipped with ways to solve their own problems. The five minute start-to-finish mock mediation shown in the Peacemakers of the Future video (Bankier & Dondlinger, 1991) helped to form that expectation during their training. Our discussions were based on the assumption that disputants would recognize they would have much to gain by working hard to create their own
solutions rather than being told what to do by someone else (a judge, arbitrator, assistant principal, teacher or parent). By valuing resolutions because they had created them, disputants would be more apt to live up to their agreement. However, the belief that disputants held within themselves the power to solve their own problems was put to the test during each mediation. Resistance or perceived inability to come up with solutions was "non-normal" (Gee, 1990, p. 90) because it challenged a basic belief of mediation Discourse, that of self-determination as discussed on page 41.

Elizabeth and Susan were willing to act as neutral third parties, but appeared frustrated by the added burden of teaching disputants negotiating skills, all within a fifteen minute mediation. So, it seemed that they needed to place limits on what was expected of them in their role. The problem might have been "non-normal" in mediation Discourse, but it was not unusual or unexpected from my perspective. When peer mediators complained that some disputants seemed unable to come up with solutions, they were duplicating discussions I had participated in with adult mediators as we prepared to leave or sat in advanced training sessions. We found that adults lacked the same skills.

Elizabeth's description of three disputants all saying "I don't know" to "What can you do to solve the problem?" may
be related to the elementary mediation model, which recommends joint sessions instead of an alternating series of joint and private meetings with disputants. Private individual sessions allow disputants to come up with solutions without having to be first to declare in front of the other disputant what they would be willing to do to solve the problem. A disputant could think, "I'll wait to hear what the other person will do, and then decide that I'll do something in relation to that." The joint-session-only model puts disputants into a reactionary mode which stalls the process if the first speaker says, "I don't know." Like game of checkers, a disputant's next move would depend on his/her opponent's. If the question, "What can you do to solve the problem?" is perceived as part of an adversarial relationship rather than a shared cooperative problem solving one, then the ritual could push opponents farther apart, as the mediators seemed to understand. During an after school session devoted to writing fair and balanced agreements, Elizabeth said, "We shouldn't be the only ones learning how to do this, you know. Everyone should know this." She appeared to understand the value of teaching negotiation strategies to the entire student population, a recommendation of Deutsch (1982, 1993) and Johnson and Johnson (1991) and that could work to eliminate the "no solutions" problem.

Could disputants' difficulty with creating solutions be
interpreted developmentally? Susan and T. J. seemed to see that part of the difficulty could come from disputants' inability to "decenter" (Piaget, 1975) and notice other aspects of a problem that might conflict with their original perception by viewing it from the perspective of the other disputant. Satchel's (1992) discussion of anti-social behavior could support this interpretation:

Students who exhibited antisocial behaviors lack cognitive problem solving skills which are necessary for social interaction. Children who can not take the viewpoint of other children or adults find it difficult to manipulate activities which involve the ability to take the role of others, as well as being able to interpret, feel, and accurately meet the needs of others. Children who have difficulty in learning to solve problems intuitively during the [pre]operational period of development according to Piagetian theory, are often self-centered and do not recognize that objects have a permanence of their own which do not depend upon the wishes and actions of children. These children are strongly dependent on how events seem rather than on logic or the principles that govern events. (p. 23)

Because mediation is voluntary, some of Hampton's anti-social students never chose mediation to resolve a dispute. On the other hand, some Hampton disputants could have been labelled as anti-social, but others could not be. Hamachek (1988) looked at ego development using Erikson's psychosocial theory and stated:

The self's development can be either enhanced or inhibited during any of the psychosocial stages, depending on the particular constellation of life events that one experiences. We do not always know what those experiences have been, but we can see some of the behavioral consequences of those
experiences once we know what to look for. (p. 356)

When disputants failed to come up with solutions to their own conflicts, it brought to mind the "them" versus "us" relationship that seemed to be present in Hampton's neighborhoods. Living and learning within an environment of fear, suspicion and mistrust could be related to some students' apparent lack of trust and autonomy when they attempted to mediate their disputes.

Some of Hampton's disputants' cooperative problem solving difficulties could be linked to a diminished capacity for trusting others. Recall how disputants are asked to restate the problem from the other's point of view ("Sarah, could you repeat what Nubian just said?"). This request is a powerful linguistic equivalent of stepping into someone else's shoes. It could be virtually impossible for a child with difficulty trusting others to submit to this empathy-building step in the mediation process. Again, it is a way of thinking that is needed to understand and participate in mediation Discourse: the belief that in order to understand the problem, one needs to view it from many perspectives, or at least from the opponent's. It is an affective and cognitive tour de force that begins with an ability to trust others. Therefore, children whose home-based and neighborhood-based Discourses (Gee, 1990, pp. 145 - 149) were grounded in fear or suspicion might exclude themselves from
participation in the mediation process.

It is important to look at it another way. Students' perceived cognitive inability to generate solutions to conflicts (recall Natalia's facile way of assessing some disputants as being "so dense" on page 113) could be related to the amount of experience students have had with cooperative problem solving. If disputants lacked much real experience in cooperative problem solving, then it could have an effect on their efforts to enter into the mediation process, with its emphasis on cooperatively negotiating a fair agreement (Johnson & Johnson, 1979, 1986, 1992; Deutsch, 1982; 1993). Deutsch (1982) explained what he found in his studies and that could be presented as a possible explanation for some students' perceived inability to invent solutions:

The characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship also tend to elicit that type of social relationship. Thus, cooperation induces and is induced by a perceived similarity in beliefs and attitudes; a readiness to be helpful; openness in communication, trusting and friendly attitudes; sensitivity to common interests and de-emphasis of opposed interests; an orientation toward enhancing mutual power rather than power differences. . .Similarly, competition induces and is induced by the use of tactics of coercion, threat, or deception; attempts to enhance the power differences between oneself and the other; poor communication; minimization of the awareness of similarities in values and increased sensitivity to opposed interests; suspicious and hostile attitudes; the importance, rigidity, and size of the issues in conflict. (p. 10)

If some disputants were encultured at home and/or at school
in competition (Goldman & McDermott, 1986), that is, using another version of the "them" versus "us" frame, rather than cooperation, could they be expected to engage successfully in the mediation process? Difficulty with thinking up solutions may have less to do with a lack of intelligence, as Natalia suggested, than with the nature and amount of experience with cooperative problem solving in home, school or neighborhood cultural settings.

The mediators' frustrations with students who had difficulties with the mediation process led to their creation of the following category: "not the mediation type." It is a phrase that emerged early in our after school discussions.

**Not the Mediation Type**

**Kelly:** There was this mediation a couple of days ago, and this kid was banging his head on the table. I said, "Well, please, you agreed to be in on the mediation." It didn't look as if he wanted to stay there. It was not really good. I always figured that he wasn't the type for mediation.

**Jasmine:** Some people are troublesome and would rather go to Mr. Ronzoni's office. And some don't like a lot of questions. And some people are not patient and think a mediation's too long.

**T. J.:** It's not good for everybody. Some kids
just don't like it. It's only right for people that think it's right. The other kids, if they don't want to do it, that's their thing.

DK: To some kids, it's kind of boring and they don't really want to solve their problems. Or they don't want to get into trouble. So they hide the problem. Sometimes they tell it to their friends.

Richard: Some people like to keep their problems secret.

T. J.: That's like some people who don't do mediation because they like to keep everything bound and don't like to tell people about it. So they'd settle it with the other person instead of involving two other people in it.

Natalia: Some kids have a lot of pride. They don't want kids helping them solve their problem.

The mediators' talk led me to explore what it meant to be "not the mediation type" with non-mediator students who volunteered to be interviewed at the end of the school year.

Philip: Kids think they're cool or think other kids are making fun of them.

Laura: People don't go because they just want to let [the problem] go on. Sometimes they can go down to Mr. Ronzoni's office.
Terry: Some people just think it can't help them. What problems they have would happen again, so they would rather fight or have an adult solve it.

Mandy: Some people want the problem to stay and like getting into a fight. Or they don't want to lose their recess and take the time for it. Or if the other person was unpopular or rich or poor. That's not nice, but people do that.

Francesca: A rude or mean person wouldn't want to go. They won't change. They wouldn't get it. In-between people, like me, would be helped. Someone not too rude or mean or nice.

**Perspectives on Not the Mediation Type**

Gee wrote that "languages are social possessions, possessions that partly define who count as 'real' members of the group, 'insiders'" (p. 78). Students who created the label, "not the mediation type," seemed to be trying to make sense of, and perhaps morally scrutinize, outsiders who chose not to resolve disputes through mediation, or who acted in non-normal ways during the process, or who were openly critical ("It's dumb. . .boring. . .stupid.").

There are several ways to interpret what students (mediators and non-mediators) said about students whom they would not expect to see participating in this ritual.
Richard and DK seemed to make the assumption that those children whose family and neighborhood standards of behavior would necessarily exclude mediation as a way of dealing with problems by hiding them or keeping them secret to avoid more trouble. Gee (1990) said, "The cultural models of the student's own home culture can conflict seriously with those of mainstream culture. And some of the values of mainstream culture are complicit with the oppression of some students' home cultures" (p. 90). Two isolating maxims that were told to me or that I often overheard students saying would, if obeyed, conflict with participation within the mediation process. They were: not to tell anyone your business ("Some don't like a lot of questions.") and to stay out of other people's business. Looked at from the home/neighborhood perspective, disputants were being asked to tell their "business" to two peer mediators, whose school-sanctioned role was to be in their business.

Natalia and Philip saw the possibility of students worrying more about how others thought about them ("cool" versus "uncool"). They reasoned that if a student's image was that of fighter who "just want[ed] the problem to go on," then she or he would not be "the type for mediation." Terry and Francesca appeared to expect that there would be students who "wouldn't get" mediation. Perhaps they recognized that students who would "rather fight or have an adult solve [the
problem"") would not opt to use a process that fit in with the way they expected or were expected to settle conflicts.

Mandy's statement seemed to indicate that she thought class issues could be a factor that might exclude some students from the process. What she seemed to be implying was that if a student had a dispute with a friend, then he or she might consider mediation. But having to sit down next to someone who was "unpopular" or not in the same economic or social class might make a mediation into an uncomfortable and threatening situation to be avoided. Mandy's perception creates another layer of meaning to the word "outsider" in that being outside might not always be by choice, but exclusion by others because of class. It should be noted that Mandy herself was an "outsider" because she had just moved into Hampton's district from Lindenville, an affluent town that bordered Riverton.

Mediators' Problems with Partners

Goffman (1959) defined a "team" as "any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine" (p. 79). An important facet of training students to mediate in pairs has to do with their successfully projecting a "team" image of cooperation and competence to disputants. This belief is based in part on the following premise: if feuding students see a pair of mediators known by the group to have
had problems with each other, then it will somehow set the stage for the interaction by sending the message: "If we can work together, so can you." Or as D. J. advised me in June during an interview: "If two mediators are rivals, I think you should pair them up more often so they would get used to each other. If people saw that, they'd be surprised."

I wondered how Hampton's mediators would describe problems that they were experiencing with each other. Each Monday morning, I delivered copies of the weekly duty schedule to the mediators in their classrooms. Inevitably, when they took it, their eyes scanned the paper to find their mediator number. When I told them that I wondered why they did that, they answered either, "To see when I'm on" or "To see who I'm on with."

During the after school session role plays, mediators taught me through their verbal and non-verbal language about problems they were experiencing a part of a "team." I observed bored expressions as Ricky or Amber slowly and laboriously wrote the conflict statement while their partners and disputants waited. I noted Sara's reaction to her co-mediator, T. J., during a role play. At one point, she turned her whole body towards him and away from the disputants, grabbed his arm, and said with eyes widened with exasperation and magnified by her large glasses: "JUST ASK HIM!" Ava, who was playing a disputant, watched them
intently. In the debriefing that followed, Natalia asked, "Don't you think if Sara and T. J. start arguing [that] it has an influence on what [mediators] are supposed to be doing?" Ava concurred with a scowl, "I didn't like it when they were fighting."

I compiled the following dialogue among mediators from after school program and interview transcripts. My purpose is to highlight many of the facets of their working relationship as seen from their perspectives within the role.

Billy: It was kind of scary doing my first mediations. Me and Kristi were messing up the lines. But when you get to the wrap up, it gets to be real fun. When I was [mediating] with Ricky, I got down to the middle, and he started to switch lines. So we had to change.

Richard: When I had a mediation with Ava, the disputants were interrupting, and she kept saying to give them one more chance.

Kelly: Well, sometimes it gets kind of hard when you do a mediation, and you don't like the other mediator. The mediation still goes on, but I don't really feel comfortable with that because the other person will hog the whole thing. Sometimes I try to say a part, and she will correct me. So then she says it's my turn and I
say my part.

**Cristine:** I think it's hardest when even the mediators aren't focused on the problem. You can tell because they are looking all over the cafeteria.

**Valerie:** Sometimes there are mediators who are too lazy to write and always have the other person do it.

**Amber:** When you're writing up a conflict, usually one talks and one writes down. And the disputants go, "Hurry up." And then I write fast, and it comes out messy.

**Perspectives on Mediators' Problems with Partners**

The mediators' expressions of problems with their partners could be interpreted using Goffman's (1959, 1967) frameworks of social interaction, specifically his definitions of "demeanor" and what it means to be a "team" member. Mediators, skilled in the Discourse of mediation, recognized was meant to be "'well' or 'properly demeaned'" by displaying certain attributes: "sincerity; . . . command of speech and physical movements; self-control over his [or her] emotions. . .[and] poise under pressure" (Goffman, 1967, p. 77).

It is "through demeanor the individual creates an image
of himself [and herself], but properly speaking this is not an image that is meant for [her] his own eyes" (p. 78). Each of Billy's examples seemed to speak of embarrassment over making a mistake during the mediation performance. He appeared to understand that his and Kristi's "messing up" and Ricky's line switching mid-stream were caused by inexperience. The scariness he described could be his recognition that these mistakes might cause a breakdown in the image he was trying to maintain for the sake of the disputants. Goffman (1959) suggested that "in many interaction settings some of the participants co-operate together as a team or are in a position where they are dependent upon this co-operation in order to maintain a particular definition of the situation" (p. 91). In support of Billy's perception that disputants were reading mediators as expertly as mediators were reading disputants was Francesca's description of a mediation in which she participated: "Last time when it was with D. J. and some other girl, it was [big D. J. voice] 'No, you do this.' It was funny. They had to figure out who would read what." Another disputant, Jeannette, mentioned that she noticed it when one mediator "asked the wrong question" and was told so by his partner. More than one non-mediator student suggested that teams be made up of mediators who "got along together" and "worked together." Goffman (1959) stated, "It seems to
be generally felt that public disagreement among the members of the team not only incapacitates them for united action, but also embarrasses the reality sponsored by the team" (p. 86). Cristine's discomfort with the poor demeanor of her partner who was "looking all over the cafeteria" could mean that she was aware of a message being sent that was quite opposite from the one she believed they needed to convey.

While Natalia pointed out that open disagreement between mediators in front of disputants interfered with what they "were supposed to be doing" by creating what Goffman (1959) called "a false note" (p. 88), more disturbing to Valerie and Amber were inequities perceived while immersed in their role. Prior to mediations, mediators took a few minutes to decide who would do which parts. During training and the after school program, we frequently discussed a fair distribution of the work during the process, such as rule stating, restating conflicts and recording agreements. Even so, Valerie and Amber perceived an imbalance of responsibilities over who did the writing and who did the talking.

Kelly felt the dissonance caused by a dominant partner who tended to "hog the whole thing" and gave her permission when to say a part. Her feelings could probably be read by the disputants. When Kelly and I talked about it, I told her that I wondered why she didn't speak to her partner privately. She answered, "Because this person really likes
doing mediations, so I let her [hog it]." Rather than openly confront her dominating partner, she convinced herself that her partner's needs took priority over her own or that of her role as a team member. When Kelly returned as a mediator in September, she told me about a change that she thought would be good to add after the mediation was over. She said, "I'm going to ask my partner how I did and if I let her do her parts." I wondered if her dominating partner would think of doing the same thing.

Summary

Problem finding requires a certain amount of risk-taking, especially within a group situation. Because I believe this to be true, I will end this section with a simple statement of praise for these nine and ten year old children who amazed me with their intelligence, openness and willingness either to revise their thinking or to tenaciously hold to their beliefs. I will never forget something Kelly said to me when we were talking about the ambiguity of "the pen" situation. She (rightly) sensed my anxiety over her frustration with facing so many conflicting "truths" tangled inside the problem. Kelly made me realize how much I was underestimating her when she said finally, "It's okay, because I like to think about really hard things."
CHAPTER IX

DILEMMAS

In the preceding chapters, I described how a group of academically, socially and ethnically diverse fourth and fifth grade students acquired and learned the Discourse of mediation (Gee, 1990, pp. 145-149). Peer mediation is a ritual open to students with conflicts who choose to sit together and create solutions with the guidance of trained neutral third parties, student mediators. In the mediation program described in this study, volunteer peer mediators practiced their new role in relation to disputants as they sat across from each other at tables situated in an unoccupied corner of the school's cafeteria during first and second lunch periods (Chapter VII).

The pre-kindergarten through grade five school setting for this study could be described as moving, pendulum-like, between being unique and ordinary. It was unique most notably because of its location on the campus of a state college. It was ordinary because it was essentially a neighborhood school in a small city. It was unique because Hampton Campus School's district was comprised of several diverse and fragmented neighborhoods and drew its children from surrounding streets that housed white and blue collar
workers, college students, and welfare recipients. A fifteen minute walk north from the Riverton State College's campus would place the reader on roads where middle or upper middle income bracket single family homes were protected by expensive security systems or watch dogs. Leaving campus due south would place the reader on narrow streets crowded with double and triple decker houses and single family homes that had been converted to apartments. These homes to blue collar and welfare families and college students were surrounded by flagrant drug traffickers and prostitutes. The security system employed by tenants or owners, some of whom have lived there for two decades and witnessed this neighborhood's deterioration, was to stay off of the streets. Hampton Campus School's neighborhoods were ordinary because cultural barriers erected from fear of violence and class-inspired suspicions seemed evident in the residents' talk and behavior. These barriers were interpreted using a "them" versus "us" framework (college students versus families, blue and white collar workers versus welfare families, law abiding citizens versus lawless "neighbors") that made it akin to virtually any other urban American neighborhood in 1994 (Chapter VI).

Beginning in February 1993, campus school students from these diverse neighborhoods who had conflicts involving other students could voluntarily select peer mediation as a means
to settle their disputes using the model that I presented to them in my role as mediator/program coordinator (Chapter IV). As weeks passed, mediators talked with each other and me about their experiences within the Discourse of mediation. Their problem finding became the theme that I chose to highlight in this study because it seemed to emerge as central to their understanding of the Discourse (Chapter VIII). They expressed their frustrations with some problems because they either could not solve them once and for all, or because the ground under solutions seemed to shift as each new situation was considered. But our talks during the after school sessions every Thursday helped them to give voice to "non-normal" behaviors (Gee, 1990, pp. 89-90) that they were finding, such as disputants being perceived as dishonest or who kept interrupting each other or who were unable to come up with solutions to their own conflicts.

The mediators were able to solve some problems: they adjusted the mediation schedule to use only lunch times instead of recess because disputants resisted giving up their playtime, and they added an Open for Questions option during lunch period for curious students who wanted to learn more about mediation. The most important change that they made will be examined in this chapter because it sets the stage for dilemmas that collected around one of the "god terms" (Weaver, 1954, cited in Newkirk, 1989, p. 179) of mediation:
confidentiality. It also taught me about the complexity of children's perceptions of their relations with more powerful adults.

"The Letter Home"

Recall Danny Rodriguez and Jamie Caron sitting the office watching Mr. Ronzoni type their Discipline Action Report into his computer (pp. 2-3). My interpretation of their situation was that it meant "double trouble" for them: first, they were in the assistant principal's office for fighting in class and would face the consequence of losing recess that day and second, copies of the report that would be mailed in unmarked envelopes to their homes might result in another set of consequences. I arrived at the crossroad of understanding what "double trouble" meant to students the hard way.

Dreyfuss (1990) criticized traditional disciplinary procedures because they were

unimaginative, noncreative, and stifling. Discipline policies fail to prepare students to live in a democratic society or an unsupervised world. . . .The critical flaw in school discipline is its emphasis on punishment. It thwarts the development of student responsibility, leadership, independence, and interdependence. It works against the stated curriculum objectives of critical thinking and problem solving. . . .Students are told that natural consequences will flow from their act. But justice is often delayed and fact finding is flawed. School discipline fails to be convincingly fair, impartial, or supportive of human dignity. (p. 22)
As I began formulating plans for Hampton's peer mediation program, I felt confident that its disciplinary system did not fit into the traditional patterns that Dreyfuss described in her article, "Learning Ethics in School-Based Mediation Programs." A description of the "pro-social approach" that was included in a cover letter accompanying the assistant principal's Discipline Action Report helped me begin to understand what Hampton's students were experiencing from an adult's point of view:

When a problem is referred to the [Hampton] office, regardless of where it occurred, all the parties involved get together to discuss the situation, the problem, the solution and determine the consequence. The content of the discussion is typed on a form (attached). Copies are then sent to the referring teacher, the homeroom teacher, the guidance counselor and one is mailed to the parent(s).

During an interview prior to my beginning the peer mediation program, I remarked on the similarity between the cooperative problem solving nature of Hampton's discipline model and mediation. Ronzoni agreed and described how, in addition to the pro-social approach that he used, adult mediators from the community mediation program had come into the school during the 1991-1992 school year "probably six or seven times" to settle disputes. His involvement was minimal: "We [he and the principal] wouldn't have any part of it. The mediator would show up, both kids, both parents, and they'd go off to the room that we found for them, and the only thing
I would get is the agreement."

I remember being glad that the term "mediation" might not be completely unknown to students, but Jim Ronzoni's final statement alerted me to the fact that it was time to face a dilemma that coordinators share when starting up a program: who receives copies of an agreement made by nine and ten year old children? Should parents know about mediated agreements? Administrators? This is a sensitive and complex issue that has implications for everyone involved because it affects confidentiality and trust in important ways that I will describe in this chapter.

Mediators promise during the introduction, "Everything we say here is confidential," and the written agreement is a private document usually held by the disputing parties and the program coordinator. I assumed that the strength of the program would come from two features: the peer aspect ("kids helping kids," with no adults involved during the mediation) and the fact that solutions to the conflict would come only from disputing students themselves, as opposed to an adult arbitrator or judge (in this case, Mr. Ronzoni). Hampton's peer mediation program, with its confidential talk and letter sent home with the agreement (Appendix H-4), seemed to me to be a natural and connected extension of the existing pro-social approach to solving conflicts.

My assumptions may have been correct when viewed from an
adult's point of view, but they were grossly off the mark from many children's perspectives. If I had viewed the culture of the school and neighborhood with students eyes when I began the program, this chapter would have turned out quite differently.

**Searching for James.** In my mediation mailbox one day in March, I found a referral for a conflict over namecalling that was written by Juan Mendez, one of the two disputants involved. When I went on duty in the cafeteria, I found Juan and said, "I have this referral for a mediation between you and James. First, I have to ask you: Are doing this voluntarily?"

"Yes, I am. I've been to mediation before on another problem. And so has James."

"I don't see James. I have to ask him the same thing. Where is he?"

"I think he's upstairs in our classroom working."

Juan and I left the cafeteria. Because of the delay, I knew that if James agreed to mediate the conflict, it would have to be scheduled for the next day. When we arrived at their fifth grade classroom, we saw James there with a few other students and their teacher. When she looked up, I caught her eye and pointed to James. He had already seen Juan and me and was walking toward the doorway. By the time he reached us, he was crying. We stepped out into the
deserted corridor.

"Why are you upset, James?"

"Because when I mediated last week, you sent the letter home, and my father hollered at me."

I found it difficult not to be devastated by this child's tears and explanation. I quickly offered to call his father and talk with him about mediation and how it was different from being disciplined by Mr. Ronzoni. No, he did not want me to do that. What followed was my promise to write a note at the bottom of the letter to James's father saying that we were proud of him for choosing mediation to solve his conflict and that we [adults] needed to support children in their efforts to work toward peaceful resolutions. The words that I had reached for came directly from my own mediation coordinator Discourse, but they felt hollow in this situation. I told James and Juan that they did not have to take this conflict to mediation. James stopped crying halfway through our discussion, and he ended up agreeing to try mediation the next day, much to my surprise. Their conflict over namecalling seemed secondary to the one I was feeling. As Juan and I hurried back to the cafeteria, he said to me, "You know, some parents don't understand that this is a good thing to get a letter." And then he added ominously, "You don't know how some parents are." The way he said it made me wonder if James's father
did more than "holler" at him.

Between February and May, I scheduled an average of one mediation every two and a half days. The discipline reports that Jim Ronzoni shared with me every day described several conflicts that I thought could have been mediated, had the students chosen to do so. Ours was a new program, the mediators and I reasoned. It was taking time for students to trust the mediators and the process.

About a month after the incident with James, I received a referral written by Diane, a fifth grade student complaining about being bothered during the school's breakfast program by a fourth grade girl, Ada May. When I found Ada May in the library, I drew her aside and told her about the referral because Diane had checked off "Haven't asked" under "Agreed to mediate" on the form (Appendix H-1). Ada May's eyes widened as she said, "I know what that's about. She's always botherin' me, making faces an' all."

"Diane wants to know if you want to sit down and talk about it in mediation."

"Naaaa Uhhh. I ain't gettin' in no trouble at home over her!"

I wanted to know more about her reason. "Do you mean the letter we send home would get you into trouble?"

"Uh huh." She nodded, then looked at the floor.

Ada May was the only one to refuse to try mediation
during the regular screening process. But my sense was that her refusal represented more than one person's feeling toward "the letter home."

_Punishment for being human._ When I decided to take my dilemma to the next after school program, I learned about how nine and ten year old children perceived themselves in relation to adults. Without mentioning names, I began by describing Ada May's refusal to the mediators.

**Ferrara:** What do you think she meant?

**Ricky:** She doesn't want her mother to know that she was in a fight with someone else.

**Billy:** Maybe her mother is real strict, and she didn't want her to know about it because she might get into more trouble.

**Kristi:** I think that maybe she doesn't want her mom to get in trouble with the school because maybe she worries a lot.

**Sean:** Maybe she's having a hard time in her family right now. You don't want to hear more bad news. You're sick of it - more bad news. You just don't want to tell people because you don't want them to get more hurt.

**Elizabeth:** I know parents who think their kid is perfect. Then the kid gets in trouble and that kid doesn't want a letter home so that [she
assumes a parent's voice], "Well, what the heck is my perfect child doing in a program like this? She never gets in trouble." On the other hand, the parent knows that the kid had a problem and it's solved.

Elaine: Well, this isn't really about what I think it means, but I don't think we should send a letter home. Why is it there? Why do they need to know? [Everyone looks at Elaine. Sean gasps.]

T. J.: When kids find out that no letter gets sent home, they'll pick mediation because they might not get into trouble for that. Say they get into a pushing fight - you said we could take pushing fights, right? You've got this choice - go to Mr. Ronzoni or go to mediation. What would you [here he pokes his pencil out into the air] rather do - go to Mr. Ronzoni or go to mediation and get no letter?

Cristine: Could we ask [disputants] if they want a letter sent home, or could it depend on the conflict?

Natalia: They will ALWAYS say no! Is the kid going to say "I want a letter sent home to my mother"? Kids don't want to do that! I think that kids don't want a letter because parents
usually think that when they get a letter, it's bad. Most of the time when it goes "To the parent or guardian of," it always looks bad. I've only gotten a letter home from Mr. Ronzoni's office once, and it wasn't bad. And my mother said, "All right, what did you do this time?" And I didn't even do ANYTHING WRONG!

Richard: I have two things about the letter. I have been to Mr. Ronzoni's office about five times [everyone chuckles knowingly]. If you just go to his office for something you didn't do - like my whole bus stop went there because of one person was teasing another - there was fighting involved. And if you go to Mr. Ronzoni's office, he sends home a letter and it becomes more like not what you did or didn't do, but "your child has been involved" in this whole fight. And I wasn't even involved in the fight, and he sends home an entire thing with every detail of what happened. The other thing is I think I agree with Cristine that it depends, but [disputants] shouldn't decide - we should if it's not serious enough [to send a letter home].

T. J.: If I'm going to get a letter sent home from a pushing fight - this is me - I'd rather
duke it out and get a letter home from Mr. Ronzoni.

Billy: If they got into a conflict, they would take the easy way out, and we'd get a lot of business. We still should send a letter.

Ricky: Someone told me that he won't go to mediation because the letter gets sent home.

Kristi: I think that it's better that we send the letter so that parents know what's going on at school. [assumes a parent's voice] "What happened at school today?" [switches back to a child's voice] "Ohhh, nothing." [Parents] won't know.

Natalia: I think people are petrified to have the letter sent home. If the kid is really honest, the first thing you do when you get home is tell what happened. Like when I go home, it's like, "GUESS WHAT!"

Richard: I think it's like I get used to getting bad notes home for being a bad student. Most of the parents think it's trouble when they get a note, like one that had "To the parents of Richard McCarthy." And I was really scared 'cause I thought it was about a fight I just had. But is was just that I didn't have my physical [all laugh with relief]. If we do a note home, it should be
more [pauses] telling it's from mediation.

Billy: Some kids try to beat the letter home and say [assumes sweet child's voice], "I'll get the mail" and then shove it under their porch.

Kristi: I'm not criticizing Mr. Ronzoni, but when you go to his office, you don't really solve the problem. People keep going back there and going there and going there.

Elizabeth: He sits there at his computer and writes it up.

T. J.: You'll come back to school the next day and you're going to be even madder at that kid.

Kristi: He punishes you for being human! People have problems, you know.

T. J.: Most kids think when it's addressed to parents that they're in trouble, and they chuck it away or hide it. Why don't we address it to the kid?

Elizabeth: To the kid and his parents. I have an idea: the two mediators sign the letter at the bottom. It seems like you are sitting with us, and we are running it. Some parents might think it's that you're doing all this, and we are. It will seem a little less formal. It's teacher language, like Dear Mr. and Mrs. So and So. It's
so formal.

I wondered about the punishments that seemed to overwhelm students who imagined their parents tearing open "the letter home." Later, I asked seven of them privately to tell me what they meant by "more trouble at home." They responded with these consequences: "grounding" them, preventing them "from seeing the other disputant," never letting them "go back to mediation again," transferring them "to another school," "calling the school" and having an "angry" confrontation over the mediation, getting "hit," "spanked," "beaten," "yelled at," being "put into a corner for thirty minutes," being "locked in their bedroom without television" and getting "teased" by siblings. The majority of these responses could be categorized as situations in which adults were perceived as overpowering children "for being human," as Kristi said when she described Mr. Ronzoni.

That day in May, we decided that "the letter home" would be eliminated. When we met the following Thursday, I divided the mediators into groups of three to brainstorm lists of "what, if anything, might replace the letter." Some of their ideas would have put the college's marketing majors, who usually sat in the same chairs, to shame.

The mediators' ideas included sending pictures of flowers and rainbows ("They mean peace and happiness."); conferring a "mediation diploma with the problem on the
back; giving away stickers; offering "treats - not doggy treats," clarified Natalia; giving everyone a dollar, a "fake mediation dollar bill" or a "mediation scratch ticket"; having disputants write out their own problem and do the follow up at home and return it themselves; sending a "go-home-mediation kit" with instructions to get four chairs and talk out a problem - included would be a diploma that said: "You have graduated from mediation school"; giving disputants a pen with our symbol on it; sending cards or certificates that said: "Great job! We're PROUD of you!" When Jasmine noted, "This is getting expensive," Elaine said, "We could have a fund raiser!"

The final exchange between Sean and T. J. brought us full circle to face the dilemma:

**Sean:** We could give the letter with the top part folded over and taped. Kids could open it. It would say congratulations and all good stuff. On the bottom, it could say: PARENTS DO NOT OPEN. It gives them confidence! And the other have could be "To the Parents" with a description of the problem and the agreement.

**T. J.:** [after further discussion of folding puzzles and stickers] To get back to Sean's idea. Not everybody is as honest as he is. I don't like the "To the Parents." Some kids are going to open
that part to see what it says [he pantomimes unfolding a paper and sneaking a peek at it].

Sean: On the bottom, put "Hey, you're not in trouble. Don't worry!" We sent this letter to your parents because we want to notify them that you solved a problem.

The Certificate

That week, I worked on a certificate (see Appendix H-6) that I thought combined some of the ideas the mediators were trying to communicate. I brought a draft to them the next Thursday for their response. Kelly began by saying, "I like how it's the clipboard because it's something that we use." Sean said, "This is exactly what I meant! [He repeats this and then puts in hands and arms in baseball's "safe" position.] Everything is A-okay. If I was a kid, I would DEFINITELY want this sent home to my parents." When I told him that, because of our discussion the previous week, I thought we could let each disputant decide whether or not to take it, he said, "Oh."

D. J. and T. J. asked about having mediators sign the certificates. I told them that I had thought about that because of what Elizabeth had said the week before ("....we are running this"), but that I had decided not to put individual names on the certificate. Sean said to them, "You
might not want your name out there where you don't know about it. If the kid gets into trouble, the parents might see your name and come asking you about it. They might get mad and try to shut [us] down." Natalia added, "Maybe [parents] have something against peer mediation or might not know much about it and wonder, 'What's this kid telling my kid what to do for?'"

On the following Monday, May 24, I visited the ten classrooms with the purpose of giving students a mediation progress report. I told each class that since the program had begun in February, there had been twenty-eight referrals for disputes such as teasing, namecalling, threats, borrowing things without asking, and not keeping promises. I asked students to describe what they thought happened during a mediation and listed the steps in order on chart paper. When they said, "And then you send a letter home," I told them that there was going to be a change in the program. I finished by saying, "What is helping us make this decision is that the mediators and I think that some students are staying away from mediation because of the letter home. Instead, we will offer you a certificate to take if you want it." At this point, I showed students the blue certificate. By the end of that day, there were five referrals for mediations in my mailbox. Between then and the close of school, there was an average of more than one mediation a day. This was a

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quantitative difference that seemed to be related to one factor: the letter home. However, twenty-five out of thirty disputants opted to take a certificate at the close of the follow-up interview. Did they take it home? The answer to that question could become the focus of yet another study, but it made me wonder how students and parents viewed school-to-home communication in Hampton's culture and what that meant.

Perspectives on "The Letter Home"

In the introduction to The Moral Life of Children, Robert Coles (1986) discussed his interest in the ways that children are "caught between the complex and often contradictory inclinations" of adults (p. 6). "The letter home" was a communication that seemed to create a host of dilemmas from the mediators' points of view. To my way of thinking, I had inadvertently introduced these dilemmas into the program by sending a double message to students: "Peer mediation is confidential, and you are trusted to create and keep fair agreements; however, I will send your parents a letter about mediation and your agreement, just in case you can not be trusted to do either or both." It is important for me to state that the following text should not be construed as a warning not to send letters to parents because of events at Hampton or as a proposition that children should

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not face consequences for harmful behavior. Rather, I hope that it is viewed as a discussion that examines what it might mean to students when schools communicate with their parents.

The mediators seemed to assume that virtually any communication from school would be interpreted by parents as negative feedback about students' behavior. Misinterpretation of the mediation letter, according to Elizabeth and Richard, was fueled by its "official" look and language (To the Parents of...) which could lead disputants and parents to confuse it with a discipline report from Mr. Ronzoni, the assistant principal. The relieved laugh that followed Richard's story spoke volumes about the mediators' empathy for him and his anxiety over the contents of the dreaded letter, which turned out to be about his physical. It appeared that Hampton students believed letters from school meant trouble for them, and that could have had an impact on their decision to mediate a dispute.

The look at dilemmas attached to "the letter home" is organized in the following manner: first, meanings the mediators attached to their decision either to send or not to send home a mediation document; second, the dilemma caused when they considered signing a mediation document that left the building, that is, to sign or not to sign. Finally, I will discuss their search for solutions as they worked toward changing students' and parents' perceived attitudes toward
mediation.

To send or not to send. The mediators faced moral conflicts of no small proportions that rose to the surface when Elaine stated, ". . .I don't think we should send a letter home. . .Why do they need to know?" The mediators' responses suggested that to continue sending a letter home from the mediation program might result in compounded and undesirable consequences for the hapless student. Should they risk the possibilities of upsetting parents (Sean's perception of "more bad news") and getting students into trouble with their parents by continuing to send a communication home?

First, disputing students might reason that no matter what conflict solving route they chose, they would "get a letter sent home," so they might just as well opt for violence and "duke it out," as T. J. pointed out. This would certainly conflict with a belief that is central to mediation Discourse: we want people to choose talk, not violence, to resolve their conflicts.

Second, if students had a problem that was not serious enough to reach the office (students called a dispute like Ada May and Diane's a "talking fight"), then it might go unmediated because of their fear of the letter home, as Ricky suggested. The dramatic increase in referrals from the day that I visited all classrooms to tell about our no longer
sending it could be used to support that possibility. Students appeared to be sending a return message to me: "Trust us to solve our conflicts without any adult intervention, or we will think twice about using this process." Some students' interpretations of "without adult intervention" and confidentiality were clearly different from mine. Confidential meant no parents to those students who chose mediation after the letter home was dropped. Only when it seemed as if their point of view was being taken seriously did they change from resistance to acceptance.

Third, choosing mediation to solve one conflict and then deciding to intercept the letter home put children in the position of choosing the lesser of two evils: punishment for "getting into more trouble" (even though Mr. Ronzoni's consequences for an act of wrongdoing or conditions in mediated agreements had been fulfilled) or punishment for getting caught intercepting the mail. During an interview with Jim Ronzoni, he admitted that he received "less than twenty or twenty-five percent" return on his discipline report, which asks that parents sign and return it to school. When I asked him if he wondered about the other seventy-five or eighty percent that were not returned, he said,

In some cases, it may be a child I have seen once. If it's a child I've seen ten - fifteen times, then I wonder. . . If I talk with parents of a repeat offender, then I go through the data base and say, "I sent it on this date and this date." We used to send them out, and it said Riverton
State College. Now we wait a few days and send out blank envelopes to try to confuse them. Some of them are slick. Some of them have the job of getting the mail, so they can intercept anything. If they're in trouble only once or twice, then I don't worry about it. If they say, I'm not going to get in trouble any more because my mom will find out, then GREAT, if that's what keeps them out of trouble.

Ronzoni saw students' fear of parents' retribution as a positive feature if it worked to keep students under control while they were in school. Students seemed to understand that they were taking a risk by intercepting mail postmarked Hampton. But I wondered about the high price they seemed to be paying to play the game: fear, deceit, guilt and even less experience in cooperatively and peacefully resolving problems using talk. The odds seemed lopsided to me when I empathized with a child who remembered being unjustly (or justly) punished: to solve a problem using mediation and get an easily misinterpreted, troublesome letter sent home about it became an unappealing combination.

Not to send a letter home, on the other hand, also had its disadvantages. T. J. and Billy seemed to think that it was an invitation for some students to take "the easy way out," as if some disputants were also being "morally scrutinized" for a certain lack of character (Coles, 1986, chapter IV). They appeared to believe that justice might not be served if some parents were not informed about their children's conflicts. Could it mean that they believed "kids
only" input into an agreement might not equal adult punishment? It seemed that the mediators were using beliefs and expectations from the older, more entrenched system of justice (and one with which they seemed to have had more experience) and trying to fit them together with the Discourse of mediated cooperative problem solving. Cristine and Richard were at odds over whom should have the right to decide about sending any communication home: she believed in students' right to self-determination, while he believed that mediators should hold that power over disputants. A question I failed to ask Richard was: "How will you decide which parents will be informed?"

A second disadvantage seemed to be linked to Kristi, Billy, and Sean's perception of parents' right to know what happened to their children in school. There appeared to be a conflict between their sense of loyalty either to their parents or to their peers; it was a conflict that seemed to be further complicated by their devotion to the belief of self-determination and a growing awareness of differing circumstances among disputants. When Coles (1986) interviewed children, he found that they talked of their struggles with similar issues: "the tension between loyalty to one's friends and loyalty to one's own memories, habits, yearnings; the tension between one's competitive side and one's regard for others; the tension between one's wish to
win and one's willingness to help others" (p. 142).

To sign or not to sign. Mediators wrote their names on the agreement at the beginning of the mediation, along with disputants' names, but they did not sign the cover letter. To sign or not to sign documents, such as letters or certificates, appeared to be viewed differently by mediators. They seemed to move between wanting recognition outside Hampton's walls (Elizabeth's "We are running it") and fearing it (Natalia's "][Parents] might get mad and shut us down" and Sean's "If the kid gets into trouble, the parents might see your name and come asking you about it"). Elizabeth and T. J. seemed to feel inaccurate program ownership information was being communicated because the letter was signed by only Mr. Ronzoni and me, and not by them. My rationale for signatures was based again on an adult's perspective: it was an assurance to other adults that the mediation program was sanctioned by the school. Elizabeth and T. J. statement was another "wake up call" for me because of my assumption that the mediation program generally worked to enhance students' self esteem. The specific message I was sending by not having their signatures on letters and documents, according to Elizabeth and T. J., was one that compromised their ownership in the program.

Searching for solutions. The mediators' solutions suggested their awareness of a communication gap between home
and school. Sean, who contributed many ideas to the group
during brainstorming, seemed to maintain a position to send
something home based on his loyalty to parents and their
right to know. He seemed to be saying: "Inform parents in
a positive way about the dispute, and you will be educating
families about the mediation process." Up to that point, our
efforts had included: the induction ceremony, which included
two role plays, that was shown (repeatedly) on the local
access cable channel; an appearance by six mediators and me
on the school-oriented cable television show, "Class Act";
three local newspaper articles; two sparsely attended
parents' nights; two items in Hampton's monthly newsletters;
a paragraph in the Student Handbook; and a handout (Appendix
B-2), included in every letter home.

In their efforts to grapple with the perceived
communication gap that "the letter home" exposed, mediators
seemed to favor making it easy and appealing for disputants
to choose mediation to solve their conflicts. Their
suggestions seemed to go right to the heart of the problem:
until culture-bound attitudes toward conflict are changed,
mediation might be misunderstood. Their methods tapped into
culture's pleasure symbols: scratch tickets, money, stickers.
They could be described as attempting to make mediation "user
friendly" by supplying parents with a "go-home-mediation
kit."
The mediators also seemed to understand the powerful role that *language* played in their bid to educate children and adults about mediation. Richard's astute example from a discipline report showed his sensitivity to the subtle ways words are used to implicate students ("Your child has been involved. . ."). Sean's insistence on using phrases that "say congratulations and all good stuff" to assure the child and "give them confidence" revealed a keen understanding of mediation's rhetoric.

**Summary**

A note that Robert Coles's wife wrote on a transcript of his seemed to be an appropriate way for me to end this chapter because her insight reflected what I learned from my talks with Hampton's mediators.

> Children receive all kinds of moral signals, and they have to figure out which ones to consider important and which ones to ignore. Sometimes they can't ignore what they've decided they'd better try and ignore, and then they're in a jam. (Coles, 1986, p. 8)

Sending "a letter home," which included the disputants' agreement, seemed to send a mixed message to some of Hampton's students: "You are trusted, but not completely." Since mediation is voluntary, some students chose not to mediate their disputes. Hampton's peer mediators grappled with a complex set of dilemmas that emerged around the issue of confidentiality and trust when they considered the impact
of not sending a communication home. They appeared to move between their loyalty to parents, which included their right to know about their children's experiences, and fear of being overpowered and unjustly punished for doing a good thing: peacefully resolving a conflict using mediation. The mediators suggested that one way to change students' and parents' misunderstandings about mediation would be to educate them by connecting the school-sanctioned program to the Discourse of the culture outside Hampton's walls.
SECTION 3

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EPILOGUE
CHAPTER X

RECOMMENDATIONS: CONNECTING "THEM" WITH "US"

One of my husband's favorite comic strips is "Calvin and Hobbes." He likes it because of the thoughtful and frequently poignant ways cartoonist Watterson portrays a child using imagination to understand and cope with reality. One day last year, John showed me the strip (Figure 2, p. 225). I asked him to clip it for me because it seemed to be saying something important about children's relationships with adults in general, not just with parents. As I collected material in a folder for the time when I would write this chapter, Calvin's terrified grin kept resurfacing. He seemed to be trying to tell me something, although I did not know precisely what at the time. I think I do now, but it took two experiences to help me interpret Calvin's message and the ways in which it relates to the children in this study: first, my writing the chapters on Problem Finding and Dilemmas and second, my understanding something that Billy, a fourth grade mediator, said when he talked about what he had learned during the first months of our program.

Billy started out by saying, "When I was a little kid," but then corrected himself in an important way, "when I was littler, I thought I was bad and couldn't be just--you know--"
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Figure 2. Calvin and Hobbes

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-good. Then I got into mediation and learned that it wasn't so bad doing something wrong once in a while." He seemed to be saying that he could learn from his mistakes and not view them with the shame or fear conveyed by Calvin through his rigid body language and frightened facial expression. Billy seemed to be reflecting on his role as a mediator in a way that could be at the center of revising how he thought about himself in the light of his own vulnerability, fallibility and limitations. He appeared to have moved toward what Erikson described as a higher level of "self acceptance" (Hamachek, 1988, p. 359). Billy also seemed to appreciate being able to pinpoint that place on the time line of his own childhood. It made me recall a quotation from Papacostaki (1988): "It is very empowering for children to experience themselves as participants in the enfolded of their lives rather than passive objects to which things are done" (p. 27). I hoped that adults could appreciate Billy's new insight as well.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to suggest ideas that adults might consider when thinking about adult-child relationships with respect to conflicts and problem solving. I organized my recommendations using general to socio-political roles and relationships because they reflected key understandings that emerged during this study: adults and children, schools and students, program coordinators and peer
mediators. Following that, I will point out areas for further study to researchers who are interested in children who take on the secondary Discourse of mediation.

**Adults and Children**

**Recommendation 1.** In Chapter IX, I showed how children read and reacted to situations in which they felt overpowered by adults and how far they would go to avoid perceived consequences: for example, some students opted to stay away from mediating their disputes. *It may be useful for adults to monitor their non-verbal, verbal and written responses to children's conflicts and to take time to explore with them the messages they are receiving during those interactions.*

During an after school program, Sean said something that he hoped students knew about peer mediation: "We're not going to be like your parents [or teachers or assistant principals] and tell you to do this and that. We're not going to boss you around. We're just going to make you figure [it] out for yourselves 'cause then you can use that at another time in a later conflict." While the latter part of his statement described a key goal of mediation, the first part said much about using mediation to bypass the powerful "them" versus powerless "us" jam that he perceived children were tangled in. The first recommendation grew from my increased awareness of the price adults may be paying in terms of
stunting children's problem solving abilities by the negative responses to them when they have a conflict. Two benefits might be gained: adults' images, from children's perspectives, could improve when they move from a judgmental to a more empathic approach, and children might cease to construct fearful scenarios around adults communicating with each other about them.

Recommendation 2. In the first chapter of this study, I presented views that supported a revision of culture-bound perceptions of conflict. Adults, especially those who are in a position to pass their beliefs and attitudes on to children, need to understand that conflict is a natural and necessary part of living in a community and an opportunity to solve problems rather than an undesirable experience to be avoided. The need for this recommendation grew from the children's perceptions of conflict, as they described them in chapters VII, VIII and IX. It makes sense that children need time, support and acceptance from adults more when they experience conflicts and make mistakes than when they have solved a problem quickly and easily. The presence of a peer mediation program in an elementary school sends a powerful message to students that adults recognize their need to learn how to talk out their conflicts. If adults communicated a sense of trust to children who were taking the risk of solving their own problems non-violently, then they would be
providing an important and necessary safety net for children.

**Recommendation 3.** A recurring theme of "them" versus "us" emerged during this study. It seemed to be a framework operating inside and outside Hampton's walls that roused suspicion and fear in adults and children and eroded their sense of belonging to a community. Because trust and confidence are necessary components of the mediation process, cautious or hostile attitudes made it difficult for some children to take advantage of the process. When I spoke with Jim Ronzoni, the assistant principal, about starting up a peer mediation program, his knowledge of Hampton's students prompted him to express doubt: "I don't see kids accepting other kids." It proved to be a prophetic remark when placed alongside the student who asked on a classroom survey, "How do you know they're going to keep the secret? How do you know that they won't take sides, even though they say it?"

During the spring of 1964, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a speech that was tape recorded and transcribed by Robert Coles (1993). Unfortunately, thirty years have not diminished the suitability of his remarks:

> They call us names, so we call them names. Our names may not be "redneck" or "cracker"; they may be names that have a sociological or psychological veneer to them, a gloss; but they are names, nonetheless—"ignorant," or "brainwashed," or "duped," or "hysterical" or "poor white" or "consumed by hate. . ." You all know, I think, what I'm trying to say—that we must try not to end up with stereotypes of those that we oppose, even as they
slip all of us into their stereotypes. And who are we? Let us not do to ourselves as others (as our opponents) do to us: try to put ourselves into one all-inclusive category—the virtuous ones as against the evil ones, or the decent ones against the malicious, prejudiced ones, or the well-educated against the ignorant. You can see that I can go on and on—and there is the danger: the "us" or "them" mentality takes hold, and we do, actually, begin to run the risk of joining ranks with the very people we are opposing. I worry about this a lot these days. (p. 32)

Students come to school equipped with lessons that they learned at home, their primary Discourse community, and in the neighborhood, which is one of many secondary Discourse communities to which they will belong (Gee, 1990, pp. 149-154). If the available Discourses are ones that identify others using the adversarial "them" and "us," then why is it surprising when they balk at resolving their conflicts peacefully and constructively, are suspicious or disdainful of others or are unable to tolerate others? Adults, especially those who stand to influence children, may need to consider examining fears and suspicions that separate them from members of their communities. Such reflection could benefit children who may not recognize traps that bias and prejudice set around them.

**Schools and Students**

**Recommendation 4.** Ellsworth (1993) stated, "If school is to be a refuge from violence in the community, adults have to be prepared to help students whose lives may be touched by
despair or physical harm" (p. 243). The nature of that preparation is the focus of this recommendation. I will begin by describing a casual discussion I had two years ago with a woman in my aerobics class who teaches in a public elementary school in a city about twenty-five miles from Riverton. When she asked me what topic I was thinking about for my dissertation, I mentioned conflict resolution and peer mediation. Her quick response was, "Oh, I know about that—we were given that big, white curriculum to do [The Community Board Program which contains a chapter on resolving conflicts using peer mediation]. It's still sitting on my desk. I haven't had time to look at it yet." I believed her because my experience as a classroom teacher was constantly punctuated with "new" curricula being handed down from central administrative offices. I cannot recall ever being notified that any program was to be deleted from the wide range of "lessons" crammed into an already overflowing school day. My friend's response and her lack of investment in peer mediation did not surprise or disappoint me; to the contrary, she helped me to make the following recommendation. Mediation is a powerful and complex process, not a textbook-driven curriculum. It requires a serious commitment of time, effort and funding to implement and sustain a peer mediation program that begins with interested adults first being trained as mediators themselves. The latter portion of my
recommendation places me at the high end of acceptable levels of preparation for adults interested in school-based mediation. In chapter II, I described my thirty hour mediation training and summer internship, but it becomes important now to reiterate part of my final statement: "I believe that without actually facing these dilemmas myself, I would have limited understanding of and little appreciation for what the children would deal with in the months ahead." Because of the current pressure on administrators to quell violence in schools, peer mediation programs are being implemented across North America. In "The Fourth R", The National Association for Mediation in Education newsletter, its editors speculated that last year's forty percent increase in membership from 685 to 968 was "due to exploding national interest in the field of peer mediation and conflict resolution" (Townley, 1993, p. 6). However, this widespread sense of urgency may result in misunderstanding terms (conflict resolution and mediation do not mean the same thing [Messing, 1993]) and an underprepared or uncommitted staff responding to one more top down decision. Ellsworth (1993) observed the following:

> It is impossible under the most favorable conditions to bring a comprehensive change to a school if all staff cannot be trained and given opportunity to reflect on how conflict resolution is or is not a part of their personal philosophies and education. The result is that a program that goes to the heart of one's everyday interactions may instead be incorporated partially at first as
an add-on or new buzz words and catch phrases. It becomes objectified as a notebook full of lessons, a curriculum package. (p. 199)

Recommendation 5. Even if a core group of committed, trained mediators (teachers, administrators, parents, community mediators) implement a peer mediation program, its success is still dependent on classroom teachers providing all students with experiences in cooperative learning, conflict resolution and negotiation skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Kreidler, 1990). For example, the school-based mediation model was designed to encourage disputants to brainstorm several solutions in order to settle on a few that would be written in the final agreement. A rule of brainstorming is that all ideas are acceptable (Sadalla et al, 1990, p. 1-7); it is at the later evaluating stage that they are revised or ruled out. Working on the premises that two or more heads are better than one and out of a seemingly "off the wall" idea could come a valid resolution, brainstorming during mediation requires experience with cooperative problem solving and the convergent and divergent thinking it fosters. Brainstorming and other cooperative learning strategies can be woven throughout the fabric of content found in all curricular areas (Shatles, 1992; Satchel, 1992).

While I hope that this study has confirmed a belief in students as capable and natural learners, it is important to
understand that they do not seem to be naturally prepared to engage in cooperative problem finding and solving activities. This lack of experience seemed to parallel the lack of success that the mediators observed in some Hampton disputants who had trouble coming up with solutions to their own disputes (chapter VIII). Classroom teachers need to give students abundant experience in cooperative learning strategies within the context of meaningful content that is connected to their lives and in the community.

Program Coordinators and Peer Mediators

Recommendation 6. Mediators are skilled listeners, as well as careful readers of body language. When adult mediators take on the additional role of school program coordinator, these skills become even more important if mediation is to become accepted by students as part of the school's culture and an alternative to violence or submission as a response to conflict. Program coordinators need to listen to peer mediators and their perceptions of student culture with respect to the ways it relates to their particular mediation program. I believe that I was fortunate to have Hampton students, mediators and non-mediators alike, openly confront issues and features, such as "the letter home," which were being perceived in negative ways. But I also took time to observe and listen to what they were trying
to tell me and to work with them to make changes, even though at times it must have seemed to them that I took too long to think about their advice.

**Recommendation 7.** Dozens of program descriptions that I read over the past two years suggested bi-weekly or monthly meetings to engage mediators in activities designed to enhance their skills and to debrief. Hampton's after school program took place every Thursday afternoon from 2:00 until 3:30. It resulted in a long day for students that began at 8:00 a. m. There were times when I sensed a letdown in everyone's energy levels including mine, even when a snack of cookies and soda provided an boost. However, I came to learn the value of that time with mediators was not in advanced training activities, but in debriefing, which is a military term that seems oddly at home in mediation. It is through talk that complex and strategic meanings were reflected upon and reshaped, reformed and abandoned, considered and reconsidered. It also became a time to discuss the incredibly wide range of emotions that only mediators can know and understand. It was through talk that mediators learned about what they were experiencing during mediation and what that role was coming to mean to them. In June, when I asked Kristi if she had any advice for me, she said, "**Keep the after school program every week because people have too much to discuss if there's a mediation every day.**" I believe
that she was right and that program coordinators owe this
time to these young volunteers who have taken on a serious
role in their school's community. In the early 1970s, Robert
Coles (1993) rode the buses that carried Boston students to
better schools in the suburbs. These students were also
volunteers who were trying to make a difference. One girl
talked of "the social and economic disparities that bothered
her," and went on to make another point: "'There's a lot
riding on you kids,' some of those people say, but it's us
who are doing it, the riding..." (p. 29). Her statement
meant this to me: children who become mediators need the
careful attention and support of program coordinators,
parents, teachers and administrators. Whenever we point to
them with pride, it seems important not to forget that it is
they who are doing "the riding."

Recommendation 8. Because program coordinators become
liaisons to administrators, parents and the community, their
skills in educating others about mediation are crucial to a
program's success. In her study of an urban middle school
peer mediation program, Ellsworth (1993) found that "even if
all the staff had been handpicked and had had extensive
training, the lack of community understanding, use, and
support of problem solving conflict resolution would have
made program implementation difficult" (p. 197). If families
are expected to support mediation programs and encourage
their children to consider using the process when a suitable conflict arises, then families need to know what it means to go through the process. As simplistic an idea as Sean's "go-home-mediation kit" on page 210 was, he offered it as a remedy to the problem of uninformed or misinformed parents.

The challenge of educating the community falls to program coordinators/mediators who need to be sensitive to and informed about the ways in which mediation supports or conflicts with existing patterns of conflict resolution in the community. Teaching the community at large about school-based mediation programs would be beneficial because schools would become connected to the community in a positive and powerful way.

**Recommendation 9.** During a conversation with a parent, I talked about the responsibilities that made up the role of program coordinator. When I finished, I had talked about my own training and preparation, meetings with and presentations for Riverton's public school and state college administrators and Hampton's parents' group, classroom visits to teach students about the process of mediation, recruiting, selecting, training mediators, assemblies, making weekly duty schedules and planning the after school program, she said, "It sounds like you have a full plate." Her comment helps me to bring up an important issue: the problem of the solitary coordinator. Ellsworth (1993) concluded that, "a program
cannot be institutionalized if it rest solely on the extraordinary gifts and energy of one person, no matter how desirable it is to have such a person heading the implementation" (p. 208). My experience has led me to support Ellsworth and The National Association for Mediation in Education (Appendix B-1) which calls for the following: "2 or more coordinators" and "a core group of other faculty and staff" are necessary to sustain a successful program. Cooperative planning and teaching, along with shared responsibility for duties would provide a model for students who may have only seen their teachers and administrators working in isolation from each other or reacting to situations within the confines of their hierarchical relationship.

Finally, Cohen (1987) cautioned others interested in implementing a peer mediation program about obstacles that they needed to consider:

For every successful school mediation program functioning today, there is another program that has failed or is currently struggling to survive in the face of serious difficulties. This is not because of deficiencies in the concept of mediation; rather the result of numerous obstacles which hinder the institutionalization of school mediation programs. . .the coordinators will more likely find themselves discouraged and "burned out" from the work they have been doing on their own time, and there will be few others in the school willing to take over their leadership roles. . .Extensive planning should. . .also be done to address such issues as funding, training needs (initial and on-going), coordination, scheduling, and space. Finally, assistance from
outside agencies should be pursued if it is available. (pp. 1-4)

In the epilogue I will describe how certain issues that Cohen raised related to Hampton Campus School's peer mediation program from a vantage point that only time could provide: its first anniversary. First, I will share several questions for future research that emerged during the course of this study, but which I did not pursue.

Connecting Researchers with Peer Mediators

When I make the assertion that the mediation process and its connected social interactions are conceivably among the richest sources for new research available today, I am not thinking hyperbolically. During my first faculty presentation, I talked about the particular strengths of a qualitative research methodology which gave me tools and materials (observation, interviewing, artifact gathering) to construct an interpretation of a peer mediation program from the fourth and fifth grade mediators' points of view. My purpose was to tell their story as they taught it to me and record how they seemed to be making sense of the new Discourse as it became a part of their school's culture. I compared my research process to looking at a faceted diamond in the sunlight and becoming "blinded when the sun hits one facet."

A year and a half later, I reflected on what I meant by
that comparison. While I was immersed in the setting every
day, month after month, I constantly asked myself, "What is
really (culturally) going on here?" and "What might the
students think is going on here?" I expected to be
temporarily "blinded" by a cultural theory that could
eventually be analyzed and interpreted--"This could be about
gender. . .or class." While "blinded by" means that I came
to some new understanding, it also meant that I was
temporarily "blind to" everything else that might have been
going on. Eisner (1991) said, "...labels and theories are
not without their costs. The very order that they provide
generates expectations that often impede fresh perception"
(p. 67). So, I looked again for other relationships and
continued to test my capacity for theory-building. The
purpose of this section is to describe some temporary
stopping points I made when I recognized other frameworks
that could have been applied to data, or when I became
fascinated by questions nestled inside this research
experience. Hopefully, other researchers might find them
equally interesting. However, a critical issue that needs to
be considered is the fact that actual mediations are
confidential and therefore, closed to anyone not involved in
the dispute and mediation. Also, the presence of an
outsider, especially an adult, may seriously compromise the
outcome of the mediation. It is a situation that poses an
ethical dilemma for researchers whose interests might draw them to that interaction.

**Cognitive issues.** A question that needs to be examined more fully concerns the ways in which the theories of cooperative and developmental learning intersect with, support or conflict with children's thought processes as they experience mediation. Do children entering middle childhood seem to understand the mediation process in ways that are different from adolescents or adults?

It became apparent to me that children's participation in mediation Discourse could involve them in **all seven** categories of language functions identified by M. A. K. Halliday (1975). Using Halliday's framework, Pinnell (1975) studied primary classroom talk. She found that while Halliday stressed that "the full range is necessary for the development of the fully communicating human being" (p. 319), "several functions did not appear as frequently as they might be expected" (p. 325) in classroom interactions. Researchers might explore the nature of the relationship between Halliday's functions and mediation.

**Cultural issues.** How do details associated with the ritual of mediation support or conflict with group conflict patterns with respect to mediator and disputant seating positions, eye contact, gender groupings? Also, I observed instances of confusion or discomfort when mediators restated
disputants' conflict narratives, feelings and solutions. I wondered about meanings students attached to active listening strategies employed during mediation.

During the first five months of the program, seven students quit their role as mediators. Why do mediators change their minds about continuing to volunteer to do what was perceived by others as a service to the school community? What effect does this seem to have on the mediators who remain in the program?

What types of conflicts do children deem as "appropriate" for mediation? When I surveyed and interviewed students, I was surprised by the wide range of answers they came up with. How do their meanings for "appropriate" relate to adults' perceptions?

Gender questions surfaced frequently during the past two years, beginning with my noticing that virtually every adult mediator event that I attended had a 2 to 1 ratio of women to men. What surprised me even more was the consistency of that ratio when students volunteered. Are mediators, with their non-adversarial, non-judgmental demeanor rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness fundamentally tied to "a feminine approach" to conflict resolution (Noddings, 1984; 1991/1992)? There is a need for researchers to continue looking at gender with respect to conflict and mediator styles (Miller, Danaher & Forbes, 1986; Hanisch &
Carnevale, 1987).

Evidence of "successful" peer mediation programs is often based on claims of lower rates of suspension and physical violence. School climate is frequently "improved" when a mediation program enters a school's culture. What is meant by "successful"; who perceives a program as successful; are there differences among students' and adults' meanings of the term? I wondered if some conflict went underground when the program became "successful."

What do students perceive as the structure of a mediation? Does it have a beginning, middle and end? When I asked fourth and fifth grade students, including some who were mediators, they envisioned it differently from one another. While some perceived it as being framed by the ritual itself (introduction - congratulations), others decided that the mediation began with the conflict itself and ended when the disputants resumed their relationship on a friendly basis. How might that expectation have an effect on how successful they thought mediation was?

How do children conceptualize their ability to be neutral? What does it mean to them when they "put on that blue tee shirt," and face their best friend, worst enemy, a relative or relative stranger? Are they perceived by others as neutral third parties?

What does it mean when a disputant agrees to mediate a
dispute when the coordinator asks, "Are you doing this voluntarily?" What does it mean when mediators perceive that disputants are not in mediation voluntarily?

Summary

Nel Noddings (1988) considered what educational researchers could do to "play a more constructive role" in improving our troubled schools. She suggested:

First, by giving some attention to topics involving affective growth, character, social relations, sharing, and the pursuit of individual projects [such as mediation programs?], researchers can give added legitimacy to education goals in all areas. A sign of our neglect is the almost total omission of such topics from the 987 pages of the third Handbook of Research on Teaching (Wittrock 1986). Second, researchers can purposefully seek out situations in which educators are trying to establish settings more conducive to moral growth and study those attempts at some length, over a broad range of goals, and with constructive appreciation. (p. 226)

Researchers could help to connect school-based mediation programs with communities and support the larger society's goal to produce children who know how to resolve conflicts peacefully.
CHAPTER XI

EPILOGUE

Inside Hampton's Walls

It is February 1994, one year after Hampton Campus School's peer mediation program began and the day after the school's variety show. At noon, I finish my duty with two teams of mediators and walk out of the cafeteria toward my office to prepare for today's after school program. I check the program calendar in my folder and notice that so far this year, we have had only twenty-two referrals for mediations. I wonder about what that could mean. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot a remnant of last night's variety show: one of the placards carried across the stage to announce each act has found its way to the cafeteria and is propped against the wall under the uneven, colorful line of winter coats. I assume that the performer wants it as a souvenir of her piano debut. The placard reads: Karla the Peacemaker. It occurs to me that a year ago the word might not have been used or understood in quite the same way it is today. It seems that peacemaking has become part of this school's Discourse.

I think about how all but seven of the original group of mediators have either moved up to sixth grade in Riverton's middle schools or moved away. Elaine, Ricky, Billy, Kelly,
Jasmine and Craig, now fifth grade students, volunteered for another year in September. When school started, I met with them, and they agreed to do mediations on an "as needed basis" until the new group was trained.

I remember one day at the end of September when Kelly and Ricky mediated a dispute between two third grade girls who were quarreling over an unkept promise to share a snack. After the disputants signed their agreement and left the table to line up for outdoor recess, I walked over and asked them how it went. Ricky said with a shrug and a smile, "It was easy!" I said, "Sometimes, they are." They both nodded wisely.

I think about my classroom recruiting visits to the fourth and fifth grades which resulted in nearly half (75) of the students volunteering to become peer mediators. When it was time to select about two dozen new mediators for the early October training, I asked the six experienced mediators if they wanted to work with me during that process. I remember how eagerly they agreed. I asked them to come up with a set of interview questions. Elaine said, "Can we ask them if they're really going to be committed to this?" They decided on four questions: "What makes you sure that you want to be a peer mediator?" "Are you willing to give up your recess and eating lunch with your friends two times a week and go to the after school program every Thursday?" "Are you
willing to commit to volunteering for one year?" "What made you decide to volunteer?" Their questions seemed to show their need to find out if students realized how difficult a task they were volunteering for with respect to the real middle childhood sacrifices—the socially centered ones that meant less time with friends.

Elaine, Ricky, Billy, Kelly, Jasmine and Craig donned their blue tee shirts and interviewed seventy-five potential mediators one at a time during several lunch periods. I recall how proud I was as I observed them from across the cafeteria. It seemed to me that they were giving "the impression that their present poise and proficiency [were] something they [had] always had and that they never had to fumble their way through a learning period" (Goffman, 1959, p. 47). I was a witness to how hard they had worked to affect that demeanor (chapter VIII, IX).

I sent a notice to all teachers and administrators to come to a selection meeting in the principal's conference room. Three of the teachers who came were now mediators, having been trained during the summer with funds provided by the public school administration and the college. The six young mediators sat shoulder to shoulder with six teachers and me as we worked to select about two dozen new students. It was a unique and important shared decision-making experience that connected teachers and students. The
teachers and teacher/mediators agreed to let the student/mediators lead the discussion. This time, it was the peer mediators who brought up issues of commitment, trust and dependability.

The two day training in early October was led by the three Hampton teacher/mediators and me; we coached the new mediators in role plays, discussed issues of confidentiality, voluntariness and neutrality, and participated in activities that helped us get to know each other. The adults were as amazed as I was last February at the children's ability to quickly grasp meanings and "talk the talk" of mediation.

In order to begin analysis and interpretation of what had accumulated into mountains of data, it was necessary for me to reduce the number of days I spent at Hampton from five to one. At a faculty meeting, I told the staff that the mediators and I needed adults to supervise lunch time mediations. It would mean extra duty, and since most staff already had assignments, I held little hope for covering the remaining eight slots for the week. The second lunch team had scheduled a third person on their duty roster every few days; they agreed to let the third person assume the mediation duty on some days. The art teacher volunteered, and so did a special needs teacher and the librarian. When the principal from another elementary school in Riverton visited the school and was told about the Hampton teachers
volunteering, he said bluntly, "My staff would never do that."

A parent volunteered to come in to fill another slot. By January, the second duty team changed their calendar and were no longer able to help. I went back to the Parent Teacher Organization's president and told her. Now we have five parents who work with the mediation program. I believe that their presence in the lunch room might be sending a message to children: We are learning about mediation and trust that you are capable of solving your own conflicts.

But what about conflicts in the school? During the first five months of the program, the number of office discipline referrals did not drop. According to Cohen (1987), this is a typical response to a new program: "At the conclusion of their first year the coordinators will likely find that their program statistics lack the sort of undeniable glow necessary to convince skeptical administrators" (p. 3). However, a change came about in the following school year. In our October "exit" interview, Jim Ronzoni said,

Things are quieter this year and I would think that mediation is part of it. In fact, so far this year, I have had zero social conflicts [such as] "She said this about me." No namecalling, no teasing this year at all. On any given week, I would get four, five, six of those and I get zero. That is a tremendous savings of time for me. I think the kids are used to knowing what could go to mediation because what I get is physical [fighting], a lack of respect for adults--
that's what I deal with--they know what the separation is. . .I think that they know more how to solve their problems or where they can go to solve their problems. I know that more people have come into the building [this year] and have noticed a definite difference in attitude. . .

In fact, when compared with the same time period last year (September through February), the number of discipline reports from the assistant principal dropped from two hundred to one hundred. The presence of a peer mediation program may be one of many factors that has produced what some might point to as "improved school climate." However, it makes me curious to know how students would interpret the meaning of that phrase.

There is another effort to help Hampton's students cope with conflict that is currently being implemented, so I can do little more than describe it theoretically. A year ago, Kristi and Elizabeth talked about the school's discipline not seeming to be very effective because the same students kept "going back" to Mr. Ronzoni. In fact, he verified their perceptions with a finding of his own by developing a database showing that sixty-seven percent of the incidents that he handled over a three month period involved the same fourteen students. (It was a phenomenon also noted by Satchel [1992] in a study on increasing pro-social behavior.) Based on this information, the staff psychologist, Mr. Ronzoni, and two guidance councilors developed a proposal for Hampton as a "Good Behavior School." Aimed at transforming
the behavior of the small number of troubled students during a number of after school sessions, the proposal suggested that they would be taught specific ways to deal with conflicts; "enlisting the services of peer mediators" was the second strategy mentioned.

**Outside Hampton's Walls**

In January 1994, Mayor Campbell gave his fourth inaugural address and praised Riverton's citizens for their efforts to "preserve" their neighborhoods. In a follow-up interview reported in the local newspaper, Campbell responded to a question about a "year marked by shootings in the troubled neighborhoods of [the Fruit Belt district] and lower Main Street [Hampton's neighborhood]." He cited efforts to bring jobs back to Riverton, to increase police staffing [foot patrols], "an alternative education program for at-risk students" and "a peer mediation program" [emphasis mine]. Hampton Campus School's program was the only one to be found in any of the city's elementary or secondary schools.

Two weeks later, another article appeared under the headline "Students learn to mediate disputes"; it described the planned March training of 24 fourth and fifth grade student mediators at the William Street School. Although the public schools' health director and the school's vice principal are quoted, the key teacher involved in
implementing the program was trained by the local community program last July. The William Street School students' training was part of an effort to set up peer mediation programs "in all the city's elementary schools this year." It appears that peer mediation programs might be finding their way into Riverton's school culture.

Riverton State College's alumni association publishes its report four times a year; the Winter 1994 "Parents' Page" was written by the college president, James Malone. He raised the issue of relationships between college students and neighborhood residents:

Local situations also affect student safety. A large number of our students rent apartments in the neighborhood on the southern edge of campus. Since the state increased the drinking age years ago, large keg parties in off-campus apartments--once a minor irritation--have become a major detriment to student safety.

Following our analysis, we began to attack the problem where it is most acute: at the keg parties. We hired special duty police officers to patrol the area, and back police efforts with swift suspensions of any students involved. We banned campus groups caught hazing or sponsoring key parties and started a system of safety alerts to inform students about incidents in the neighborhood.

President Malone went on to describe long range plans that focused on decreasing alcohol abuse among students. He ended by pointing out that "an active neighborhood coalition has joined with the college to pursue a number of additional actions that will heighten safety."

While it appears that hopeful words abound outside
Hampton's walls, only time can show if the rhetoric of peacemaking will result in a safer neighborhood.

From the beginning of my involvement with the process of mediation, it made sense to begin by heightening children's awareness of the possibilities of understanding how to use talk to deal with conflicts. It also made sense that understandings starting at an individual level could have an effect on the community. Hearing about the following interaction underlined that belief for me. One Sunday last May, Mr. Grayson, one of Hampton's fifth grade teachers, stopped by a variety store on Hester Street. When he stepped into line to order two cold drinks to go, he noticed Ricky waiting ahead of him, so they started to talk. Suddenly, their conversation was overpowered by an argument that was escalating between the woman being waited on and the clerk behind the counter. Soon everyone's attention was riveted on the disputants as they argued over the woman's coffee order. Ricky smiled and looked up at Mr. Grayson as he said, "Sounds like they might need a mediation."
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDICES
A. COMMUNITY PROGRAM BROCHURE

WHAT IS MEDIATION?

Mediation is a process which allows two parties to come before a neutral third party, the mediator, in hopes of finding a mutually satisfactory agreement.

WHAT DO MEDIATORS DO?

A mediator helps people involved in a dispute explore ways of resolving a problem by listening, guiding discussion, clarifying legal and emotional issues, setting the agenda, and writing agreements.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF MEDIATION?

All the decisions about the outcome are made by the people involved and the solutions are often a Win-Win situation. Mediation is a quick, convenient, and nonconfrontational process. Consult with the Mediation Office or with your attorney to see if your case is appropriate for mediation.

WHO ARE THE MEDIATORS?

The mediators are community volunteers who have been trained and certified by

HOW DO I REQUEST MEDIATION?

COURT REFERRALS

In Small Claims matters, check off the "MEDIATION" box in Part 5 of your complaint form when you file at the courthouse. The Mediation Office will contact you to schedule a mediation.

Small Claim mediations are held on Mondays and Tuesdays from 9:00-3:00 and on evenings or Saturdays by special arrangement.

Minor Criminal complaints such as disturbing the peace, trespassing, assault & battery, are referred to the Mediation Office by the Clerk-Magistrate. You may indicate your willingness to mediate these disputes to the Clerk-Magistrate when you file your complaint or at your Show-Cause hearing. Mediations of this type of complaint will be scheduled only at the request of the Clerk-Magistrate.

Mediations can be arranged in Eviction cases and Landlord-Tenant disputes by phoning the Mediation Office before the trial date or by approaching the mediator at the courthouse on the day of the trial.
A. COMMUNITY PROGRAM BROCHURE (continued)

Fee Schedule
The following is an outline of the basic fee schedule in effect for Mediation programs.

Please note that the private mediation fees include a non-refundable administrative fee charged to the party initiating the mediation and a flat fee for an initial session of up to two hours. There is no fee charged for the time spent by coordinators and mediators in preparation for the first session or for preparation and document review time beyond the first session.

Court Mediation. Small claims, minor criminal, eviction, and housing cases where application for court process has already been filed.

No fee

Monitoring Service. Offered to parties who desire that their agreements be supervised by. Monitoring includes communication between parties needed to ensure that the terms of the agreement are held to. The mediation office acts as a conduit for the transfer of payments between parties. The office receives and forwards payments, maintains records, and acts as a liaison to the court.

$25.00

Private Mediation. Mediation requested in business, community, family, neighborhood disputes.

Administrative fee $10.00
Initial session $100.00
(split among parties)
Each additional hour $50.00
(split among parties)

No one is refused mediation on the basis of inability to pay. Phone the Mediation Office for information on a sliding fee scale.

COMMUNITY REFERRALS
also provides mediation at the request of area residents. If you would like to settle parent-child difficulties over children’s curfews, chores, or school attendance, work, and behavior or neighborhood disputes over noise, friends, parking, visitors, etc. You should phone or write to the Mediation Office to discuss the matter with a Mediation Coordinator.

also takes referrals from the Department of Social Services and from Probation Officers.

WHAT IF WE DON’T SETTLE?
If no agreement is reached the case is sent back to the court and will be heard before a judge. Prejudice to trial is never forfeited by participation in mediation.

WHAT ABOUT AGREEMENTS?
In Small Claims and Eviction cases the agreement becomes a court judgment. In minor criminal cases and community referrals it is a good faith agreement between the disputing parties.
B-1. CONFLICT MANAGER PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET

The Community Board Program, a pioneer of student mediation programs, began a pilot Conflict Manager program in the San Francisco schools in 1982. In 1984 the program received special commendation from both Bill Honig, California's Superintendent of Public Schools, and the California State Legislature for its "exemplary curricula and student-to-student conflict resolution process." Community Board's Conflict Manager program has become a model for similar programs across the United States and Canada.

Conflict Managers are trained student conflict resolvers who help disputing students to identify and express their concerns and come to their own resolutions. The students in conflict often feel a diminished sense of fear and hostility, and experience a sense of responsibility resulting from the voluntary participation in the resolution of their problems. Conflict Managers gain confidence in their leadership and communication abilities, and provide models of effective communication and cooperation for fellow students. School staff spend less time on discipline and problem solving, and the overall school climate can improve. The Conflict Manager program is an on-going resource which complements other school rules and disciplinary procedures as well as other types of educational programs.

In elementary schools, trained Conflict Managers work in pairs, mainly on the playground, to help resolve problems which might otherwise call for adult intervention. They are on duty for recess and/or lunch periods, and wear clothing identifying them as Conflict Managers.

At the middle and high school levels, students who are referred to the Conflict Manager program are scheduled on a case-by-case basis for a session with pairs of students Conflict Managers. Conflict Managers deal with disputes which occur in class, at lunch, in the halls, or anywhere on the school grounds. The problem may be handled by Conflict Managers immediately or at an appropriate future time.

At all school levels, bi-weekly or monthly meetings with Conflict Managers are held in order to build cohesion among Conflict Managers, reinforce and add to conflict resolution skills, and provide time for ongoing discussion of previous Conflict Manager sessions and program logistics.

In each school, program coordination involves initial planning of the program, coordination and conducting training of new Conflict Managers, conducting bi-weekly or monthly meetings with Conflict Managers, scheduling mediation sessions or Conflict Manager duty, securing meeting space for program activities, encouraging teacher and student participation and serving as a liaison between program, faculty, and parents. The time commitment for coordination is about 2-4 hours per week once the program has started, and is best shared by 2 or more coordinators.

A core group of other faculty and staff often assist with Conflict Manager training as other planning tasks. Training these adults usually takes a minimum of 8 hours for elementary and middle schools, and 16-18 hours for high schools.
B-1. CONFLICT MANAGER PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET
(continued)

The student body is introduced to the Conflict Manager program through an assembly or classroom presentations. After the introduction, students nominate Conflict Managers by classroom. The Conflict Managers are selected from those nominated, with consideration given to qualifications, interest, grade level, reflection of a cross section of the student body, teacher recommendations, and parent approval. After the Conflict Managers are trained, a Graduation Assembly may be held, and the program may begin immediately. At least three months usually pass from the initial coordinator training to the commencement of the Conflict Manager program.

For middle and high schools, general faculty participation is minimal; classroom teachers assist in conducting classroom nominations of Conflict Managers and refer cases to the Conflict Manager program.

Faculty participation varies at the elementary level, as there are two ways to implement the Conflict Manager program. One option requires all 3-6 grade teachers to teach the communication and problem-solving skills building activities in their classrooms. This exposes all students to conflict resolution and describe in detail the Conflict Manager program. After the activities are presented (about two months for seventeen 25 minute classroom activities), Conflict Managers are nominated and trained in two 3 hour-sessions. The second option does not involve activities for the general student body, requires five 3-hour sessions for training of Conflict Managers.

The middle and high school Conflict Manager training takes 15 hours and is designed to be conducted over two and a half full school days. The number of Conflict Managers varies based on the school size, but a minimum of 20 Conflict Managers per school is recommended. Conflict Manager training at all school levels usually occurs once per year.

More implementation information and materials can be found in the manual, "Starting a Conflict Manager Program," by the Community Board Program. This manual is given out at the Community Board Conflict Manager training, or may be purchased separately. Ideally, those attending the Conflict Manager training should include future coordinators.

Elementary and secondary classroom curricula, with topics in communication skills and interpersonal conflict resolution, are available to supplement the program. Additionally, numerous special applications of the Conflict Manager program are possible. The Community Board Program can help tailor a program to fit your particular needs, with its on-site trainings and consultation. Please call Aimee Chitlayat, Programs Coordinator, at (415) 552-1250 for information on trainings and curricula.

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TEN REASONS FOR INSTITUTING 
A SCHOOL-BASED MEDIATION PROGRAM

A review of program descriptions reveals that the following reasons most commonly motivate those who wish to promote mediation in the schools.

1. Conflict is a natural human state often accompanying changes in our institutions or personal growth. It is better approached with skills than avoidance.

2. More appropriate and effective systems are needed to deal with conflict in the school setting than expulsion, suspension, court intervention and detention.

3. 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 the school climate as well as provide a forum for addressing common concerns.

4. The use of mediation as a conflict resolution method can result in a reduction of violence, vandalism, chronic school absence and suspension.

5. Mediation training helps both young people and teachers to deepen their understanding about themselves and others and provides them with lifetime dispute resolution skills.

6. Mediation training increases students' interest in conflict resolution, justice, and the American legal system while encouraging a higher level of citizenship activity.

7. Shifting the responsibility for solving appropriate school conflicts from adults to young adults and children frees both teachers and administrators to concentrate more on teaching than on discipline.

8. Recognizing that young people are competent to participate in the resolution of their own disputes encourages student growth and gives students skills—such as listening, critical thinking and problem-solving—that are basic to all learning.

9. Mediation training, with its emphasis upon listening to others' points of view and the peaceful resolution of differences, assists in preparing students to live in a multicultural world.

10. Mediation provides a system of problem solving that is uniquely suited to the personal nature of young people's problems and is frequently used by students for problems they would not take to parents, teachers or principals.

Dear [Name]:

Your child, [Name], has volunteered to become trained as a peer mediator in the Campus School conflict management program. A peer mediator's role is to help students resolve their disputes peacefully by cooperatively constructing a mutually satisfactory agreement.

I will be coordinating the program and studying how children use language to understand the peer mediation process as part of my dissertation requirement in the Ph. D. in Reading and Writing Instruction program at the University of New Hampshire.

I presented information about this new program during the first Parent Teachers Organization meeting on September 2, 1992 and during a special information session on January 6, 1993. Enclosed is a copy of “Ten Reasons for Instituting a School-based Mediation Program” by Albie Davis and Kit Porter which I distributed at the latter meeting. I started meeting with administrators, staff and teachers in June 1992 so that the program could begin by January 1993. Since October, I have been co-teaching preliminary conflict management lessons in the fourth and fifth grades with Miss [Name], the guidance counselor and her intern, Miss [Name].

During the first week of January, I shared with students and teachers specific details of the conflict management program, the role of the peer mediator and the nature of the research in which I am asking them to participate. As a result of these experiences, your child has volunteered to become trained as a peer mediator.

I am writing to you for two reasons. The first is to ask permission to train your child as a member of the conflict management team. Training is scheduled on January 14 and 15 from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.; children will be excused from regular classes to participate in the training, but have lunch and recess with their classmates. On January 25, peer mediators will begin their duties with teachers and students during lunch or recess on a rotating schedule. Since your child's participation is voluntary, he or she may withdraw from the program at any time.

Beginning on Thursday, January 21 peer mediators be required to attend a weekly after school session from 2:00 until 3:30 during which we will reinforce peer mediation skills through discussion and activities. This session will be designated as an "after school program" as described in [Name]'s Handbook (see attached permission letter). I am asking permission to videotape or audiotape these sessions in conjunction with my research project. I will be looking at ways in which children use the language of mediation to understand its process. Recording the sessions will help me to accurately transcribe the experiences.

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C-1. PEER MEDIATOR RELEASE FORM
(continued)

There are no experimental or evaluative procedures involved in
this project. Your child's participation is voluntary. My primary
responsibility as a researcher is to protect the confidentiality of
those who participate in the study. Pseudonyms will be used for
each student; the school and community will also remain anonymous
in any written account of the project.

I am available to answer your questions or discuss your
concerns about this project at - (home) or - (extension)
Education Department, Campus School
State College. I ask that you sign and return a copy of
this letter to me; the other copy is for your records. Thank you.
Sincerely yours,

Judith Ferrara,
Associate Professor
Education Department

Dr. 
Principal/Associate Dean
Campus School

*****************************************
The purpose of this project has been explained to me and my
child. I understand that his/her participation is voluntary and
that he/she may exclude him/herself from the peer mediation program
and study at any time. I further understand that the
confidentiality of all data associated with my child's
participation in this project, including his/her identity, will be
maintained to the fullest extent possible.

Yes, I give my consent for my child to participate in the
School conflict management program as a peer mediator and as a
participant in the research project.

No, I do not want my child to participate in the
School conflict management program as a peer mediator and as a
participant in the research project.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

*****************************************
Yes, I want to participate in the School conflict
management program as a peer mediator and as a participant in the
research project.

No, I do not want to participate in the School
conflict management program as a peer mediator and as a participant
in the research project.

Signature of student Date

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C-2. NON-MEDIATOR RELEASE FORM

Dear ____________________________,

I am beginning a two year research project at the University of New Hampshire. The purpose of this project is to enhance understanding of school and school-based intervention. I am seeking the permission of students, parents, school staff and community members; I am writing to you for permission to interview your child as part of this project. If you agree, I will confirm with your child whether he or she wants to be interviewed. Participation is voluntary and has no influence whatsoever on your child's grades or school standing. There are no experimental or evaluative procedures involved in this project. Interviews will be scheduled according to your child's convenience. They will not take place during - and will not in any way disrupt - normal instructional periods at school. Should you agree to permit your child to be interviewed, I am asking your permission and your child's to tape record the interview. This will allow me to accurately transcribe interview data.

A student who consents to participate in an interview will have the aims of the interview explained to him or her. Your child may choose to end the interview at any time.

If your child agrees to talk with me, he or she will be asked to discuss, in open-ended fashion, some or all of the following topics:

1. general attitudes toward school
2. typical interactions and events experienced at school on a daily basis
3. perceptions of existing problem-solving strategies
4. perceptions of peer mediation
5. perceptions of the mediation process

Your child's responses will remain strictly confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for each person that I interview, the school and community will also remain anonymous in any written account of the project.

I am available to answer questions or concerns about this project at (home) or Department, Campus School, State College. I ask that you and your child sign and that one copy of this letter be returned to me; the other copy is for your records. Thank you for your interest and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Judith M. Ferrara,
Associate Professor, Education Dept.

Dr. Principal/Associate Dean

__________________________
Yes, I give my consent for my child to be interviewed.

__________________________
No, I do not want my child to be interviewed.

__________________________/
Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

__________________________
Yes, I agree to be interviewed.

__________________________
No, I do not agree to be interviewed.

__________________________
Student signature Date

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C-3. ADULT RELEASE FORM

Date: ______________________

Dear ______________________,

In September 1992, I began a long term research project at the Campus School as part of my dissertation requirement in the Ph. D. in Reading and Writing Instruction program at the University of New Hampshire. The purpose of this project is to enhance understanding of school peer mediation as it functions at the intermediate elementary grades and to explore the ways in which children make sense of the mediation process. I am seeking the input of students, parents, teachers, administrators, staff and community members. The purpose of this letter is to obtain your consent to be interviewed as part of this project.

There are no experimental or evaluative procedures involved in this project. Your participation is voluntary. If you consent to be interviewed, I will ask you to discuss some or all of the following topics:

1. perceptions of the mediation process;
2. perceptions of peer mediation;
3. experiences with the mediation process;
4. perceptions of existing problem solving strategies with respect to discipline management;
5. general background information about your role in the school and/or community.

Your responses will remain strictly confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for the school, the community and each person whom I interview. I am asking your permission to tape record the interview so that I may accurately transcribe interview data. You may choose to end an interview at any time.

I am available to answer questions or concerns about this project at
Campus School, State College. I ask that you sign and return a copy of this letter to me; the other copy is for your records. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

[Name]
Associate Professor

The purpose of this project has been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may exclude myself from this study at any time. I further understand that the confidentiality of all data associated with my participation in this project, including my identity, will be maintained to the fullest extent possible.

____ I consent to participate in this project.
____ I refuse to participate in this project.

Please print full name. ___________________________ Signature and date

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D. STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PURPOSE: I want to understand what you know about peer mediation. You can teach me by talking with me about conflicts and peer mediation.

1. What does it mean to have a conflict? a fight?
2. What are some kinds of conflicts/fights that are likely to happen at school? in the neighborhood? at home?
3. What are some ways students solve conflicts in school?
4. If I were a new student in your class, and I asked you, "What goes on at those tables on the other side of the cafeteria?" what would you tell me?
5. What's the most important thing I should know about it?
6. What would you tell me about students who are peer mediators?
7. Who uses mediation and who doesn't?
8. What would you tell me about students who go to mediation?
   What about those who have conflicts, but don't?
9. How did you learn about mediation?
10. Since we started the mediation program, we have changed and added/subtracted some things. Could you talk about anything that you know we do differently?
11. What would/did your family say if they knew you went to mediation? your friends? your teacher?
12. If we want kids to use mediation to help solve problems, what should we keep the same and what should we change?
13. What kinds of things would make a student decide to stop going to mediation? What kinds of things would make a student decide to stop being a peer mediator?

FOR PEER MEDIATORS:
14. How do you see yourself as a mediator? How do you think other people see you?
15. What's the easiest thing about being a mediator? the hardest?
E. STUDENT VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

DATE_____________  NAME________________________________________
GRADE_________   TEACHER_______________________________________

1. Why do you want to be a peer mediator?

2. What made you to decide that you wanted to volunteer?

3. Looking at the qualities a mediator needs (fair, neutral, honest, able to keep a secret, an active listener, dependable, willing to help others solve their problems), which one do you think are your best?

4. Looking at the same qualities, which ones do you think that you will need to work hardest at being or doing?

5. Can you think of anything that will interfere with your being able to be a peer mediator? (After School Program every Thursday? lunch or recess duty once or twice each week?)

*****Language preference for permission letter to be sent home?

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F. GUIDELINES FOR SCREENING DISPUTES

SCREENING DISPUTES

These are suggestions that will help you to know if a dispute is appropriate for peer mediation:

> If violence (punching, hitting) has already been used, it is not appropriate.

> After you ask "What's this about?" and in your judgment, it is the type of conflict that you think could be resolved through talking it over with their peers, then it is appropriate. Make sure that all key people involved in this dispute are present.

> You can give disputants these choices:
  a) talk it out between themselves;
  b) ask for help to settle it: teacher, Mr. , peer mediators on duty.

> If each disputant chooses peer mediation voluntarily, then send them to the peer mediators on duty or fill in a referral form and return it to Judy Ferrara who will schedule a mediation and contact the disputants.
G. HISTORY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOLS

National Association for Mediation in Education

A Brief History of Conflict Resolution in Schools

There are many sources of today's school-based conflict resolution programs. All have been inspired to some degree by advances in the behavioral sciences which have, in turn, added to our understanding of anger, communication and the ability to generate options in situations growing out of conflict.

In the 1960's and 1970's, religious and peace activists began to understand the importance of teaching conflict resolution skills to young children. At about the same time, teachers began incorporating dispute resolution lessons into their curricula. In the 1980's, Educators for Social Responsibility organized a national association to advance the independent activities of teachers. Their central question, "How can students learn alternative ways of dealing with conflict?" was precisely what peace educators had addressed for years.

At the same time, law related education (LRE) was increasingly becoming part of Social Studies education in the United States. LRE's instructional strategies gave students a larger role in instruction and classroom governance. Early in the 1980's, leaders in LRE worked to increase student understanding of dispute resolution mechanisms in our society and to involve students in governance issues in their school and community.

While educators were developing conflict resolution programs and curricula, neighborhood justice centers were gaining the support of legislatures in an increasing number of states. Established to be a more responsive and accessible justice system, these centers offered mediation services for interpersonal and community disputes. Volunteer mediators were trained in non-adversarial dispute resolution skills and they helped citizens resolve conflicts without using the courts. The volunteers and professionals quickly came to understand the importance of teaching youngsters conflict resolution skills and soon community mediation programs began cooperating with local elementary and secondary schools to initiate student conflict resolution programs.
G. HISTORY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOLS
(continued)

The experience of supporters of conflict resolution in schools is that anger and conflict can be accepted as part of life and treated as an opportunity for institutional and personal growth.

In the summer of 1981, educators and community mediators from diverse backgrounds met to consider ways of working together to advance conflict resolution programs in schools. Participants, seeing the need to establish a support network and a materials clearinghouse for this expanding movement, formed NAMF, the National Association for Mediation in Education.

NAMF members are pioneers in an exciting new field. They are working to improve school climate by increasing the conflict resolution skills among members of the school community. NAMF members have helped to add mediation as an alternative to the traditional discipline procedures of suspension, detention and expulsion. The experience of supporters of conflict resolution in schools is that anger and conflict can be accepted as part of life and treated as an opportunity for institutional and personal growth.

NAMF members are working with students of all ages to build programs where students can deal constructively with anger, appreciate diversity and respect differences, become more skilled in communicating feelings, gain insight into the role of violence and abuse in their lives, gain control over their personal response to conflict, identify common ground, think analytically, improve their ability to generate options and alternatives, and see win-win solutions to complicated problems.

NAMF members are integrating conflict resolution programs into the fabric of school communities around the world: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan and Europe. So what do some of these programs look like? Some are primarily curricular efforts, text aimed at educating an entire school population. Others are programmatic including classroom activities, the training of all school community members (staff, students, bus drivers, parents) and the development of school-based mediation programs.

Examples of the most common conflict resolution models within a school:

The In-Class Model consists of programs that provide a combination of discussion, experiential activities and pencil and paper tasks. These are designed to provide students, within a self-contained classroom, with an understanding of the concepts underlying the theories of conflict resolution, communication and problem solving skills, an understanding of mediation, and in some instances, peace and non-violence education. Often, teachers are provided with training so that they can model problem-solving behavior as a classroom management technique, and develop a strong foundation for introducing the curriculum. There are texts and workbooks available at all grade levels to implement this type of program.

Law-Related Education provides another model and can be implemented in singular classes or as an all school program. It is based upon the goal of educating students about differing models of dispute resolution within our judicial system. Students are taught the concepts of fairness and due process to enable them to participate in making and enforcing rules and to understand the uses of conflict resolution in the rule-governed settings of both school and the larger community. This model may or may not incorporate actual mediation services.

The School-Based Mediation Model is a program in which selected students and some teachers and administrators are given in-depth training in conflict resolution skills designed for application outside the classroom. It is usually developed as an ongoing mediation program, designed to respond to conflicts which occur throughout the entire school. A school that implements this model may also be utilizing the In-Class Model as well as extending the training to include all school employees and parents so that a common language and approach to conflict is shared.

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Peer Mediation Program Referral

Your Name

Your relation to people involved

People involved in conflict:

Agreed to mediate

Haven't asked  Yes  No

What was the conflict about?
H-2. PROGRAM GUIDE

Peer Mediation Program

As soon as you go on duty, decide who will do which parts, how you will decide which disputant goes first, and who will record.

A. INTRODUCTION

NAMES!

Introduce yourselves. Ask disputants to spell FIRST and LAST names so recorder can write them on THE REPORT FORM.

NEUTRAL!

Explain you are NEUTRAL [won't take sides] and that you will not tell them how to solve their problem, but that THEY must think of ways to solve it.

CONFIDENTIAL!

Explain that everything said is CONFIDENTIAL [not repeated, kept secret] except for information about drugs, alcohol or weapons on school property and abuse or suicide.

RULES!

Explain that there are 4 rules that they will need to agree to:
>agree to try to solve the problem by coming up with solutions
>no name calling, put downs or physical fighting
>no interrupting
>agree to be as honest as they can

Ask each disputant if they agree to the rules.

STOP IF YOU NEED TO!

Explain that they can stop this mediation at any time.
B. WHAT HAPPENED [listening, restating, asking questions]

WHO GOES FIRST AND WHY!
Mediator tells who will go first and why.

TELLING WHAT HAPPENED!
Ask each person what happened. Restate facts AND FEELINGS.
"So, what you're saying is..."
"So, you felt..."
"Let me see if I understand what you just said..."

NEEDS!
Ask each disputant, "What do you need to happen to solve this problem?"
C. CONFLICT STATEMENT [restating and writing down]

DISPUTANTS RESTATE

Ask each person to repeat what the other person said happened.

MEDIATORS SUMMARIZE

Summarize whole problem, including KEY facts and feelings that have been said by both.

RECODER WRITES

Recorder writes it on the report form under CONFLICT, then reads it back to disputants and asks them if it is correct. Make sure they agree that it is what they said.

D. BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS [No agreements yet! We're just talking!]

COULD! COULD! COULD! YOU! (NOT THE OTHER DISPUTANT)

Ask each disputant, "What COULD you do to solve this?"
"What else?"

[Remember: goal is for them to come up with as MANY ways as possible. If they get stuck, ask, "What would you tell someone else who had this problem to do?"]
E. RESOLUTIONS [Are they FAIR, SPECIFIC, BALANCED?]

WILL! WILL! WILL!

Ask EACH person, "What WILL you do now to solve this?"

Restate. Record under RESOLUTION.

FUTURE! FUTURE! FUTURE!

Ask EACH person, "What could you do differently in the future if the same problem arises?" Restate.
F. WRAP UP

SPREAD THE GOOD WORD!

To prevent rumors, ask each person to tell their friends that their conflict has been resolved.

SIGNATURES!

Have each person sign it with FIRST and LAST NAMES.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulate them on working hard to solve the problem. Shake hands with them and invite them to shake hands with each other.

AFTER THEY LEAVE, CONGRATULATE YOURSELVES ON YOUR HARD WORK!
H-3. MEDIATION REPORT
Peer Mediation Program
Report

on duty: Disputants:
1. __________________________ 1. __________________________
2. __________________________ 2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Date/s __________________________

Place of conflict: __classroom ____hall ____cafeteria
____bathroom ____playground ____other _______

Type of conflict: __arguing/fighting ____teasing ____friendship
____rumor ____namecalling ____property
____threats ____broken promise ____other _______

CONFLICT: What happened? **Summarize** who said and did what. [Read this back to the disputants and make sure they agree to the facts.]

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

RESOLUTION: After thinking up several possible solutions, disputants pick the ones they will do.

________________________ agrees to _________________________

________________________ agrees to _________________________

________________________ agrees to _________________________

________________________ agrees to _________________________

________________________ and __________________ agree to _________________________

Problem Solver's Signature __________________________

Problem Solver's Signature __________________________
Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child chose to resolve a problem in school by using peer mediation. The peer mediation program began on February 1, 1993. When students are involved in a non-violent conflict, they are given the choice to resolve it by working with peer mediators, students who are trained to help them use talking and listening to work out solutions. I am attaching a copy of "Ten Reasons for Instituting a School-Based Mediation Program" that explains more about mediation programs.

Mediation is a process that helps students to solve their own problems. It is voluntary and confidential. The enclosed agreement tells what the conflict was about and the resolution that the disputants have reached.

If you have any questions or concerns, I hope you will call me [ ] or Mr. [ ], Assistant Principal [ext. [ ]].

Yours truly,

Judith Ferrara
Peer Mediation Program Coordinator

Mr.
Assistant Principal
H-5. FOLLOW-UP FORM

PEER MEDIATION FOLLOW UP FORM

CASE NUMBER

Your name

Name of problem solver

DATE TODAY

1. Was a written agreement reached in mediation?
   a. yes
   b. no IF NO, SKIP TO #4

2. If yes, how is the agreement holding up?
   _____ Everybody is keeping all terms of the agreement.
   _____ Everybody is keeping at least some terms of the agreement.
   _____ I am the only one doing what I said I would do.
   _____ The other person is doing what he or she said, but I am not.
   _____ No one is keeping any part of the agreement.

   What parts, if any, are not being kept?

3. Is the agreement working for you?
   _____ yes
   _____ no
   _____ somewhat

4. Was the mediation conducted fairly?
   _____ yes
   _____ no, because
   _____ somewhat because

5. Do you feel that the original problem was settled?
   _____ yes, because
   _____ no, because
   _____ partially, because

6. Were you satisfied with your mediators?
   _____ yes, because
   _____ no, because
   _____ somewhat, because

7. Was the agreement fair?
   _____ yes, because
   _____ no, because

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6. Do you feel that your mediators took sides?
   _____ yes, both did
   _____ yes, one did
   _____ no, neither did

9. Would you recommend mediation to a friend who was having problems?
   _____ yes, definitely
   _____ yes, but only if ____________________________
   _____ no

10. Do you think mediation made a difference in the way you and the other person get along? Are you getting along:
    _____ better
    _____ about the same
    _____ worse

11. Did you feel that the mediators took you seriously?
    _____ yes, both did
    _____ yes, one did
    _____ no, neither did

12. All in all, how successful do you think your mediation was?
    _____ successful
    _____ partially successful
    _____ not successful

13. What did you like about mediation?
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

14. What did you not like about mediation?
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

15. Do you have any suggestions for making mediation more helpful?
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

Thank you for helping us with this follow up. We will be contacting you again to see how things are going.
CONGRATULATIONS!

has worked hard
to successfully
solve a conflict
by using
peer mediation.

Date:______

Judith Fomes, Coordinator
Peer Mediation Program
I-1. CLASSROOM SURVEY #1

NAME ______________________ DATE __________________

Some things I know about peer mediation:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

A peer mediator is:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________


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Dear student,

I am interested in finding out what you think so far about our Peer Mediation Program. Please work with me now to finish the sentences below. I ask that you do not sign your name and be as honest as you can with your answers. Thank you.

Ms. Ferraro
Ms. Ferrara, Coordinator

1. I think peer mediation is

2. I think peer mediators are

3. I would use peer mediation to work out a conflict if

4. I would not use peer mediation to work out a conflict if