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A study of the effects of an alternative school program on the disruptive behavior of African American students in grades 6-12

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM ON THE DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN GRADES 6 - 12

Advisor: Dr. Jerome Schiele

Thesis dated March 1996

The literature has examined alternative schools/programs, however insufficient attention has been given to an alternative school/program that has utilized a social skills curriculum and obtained significant effects on disruptive behavior. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of an alternative school program, the DeKalb Life Skills Program, on the disruptive behavior of African American sixth through twelfth grade students.

The teachers of the subjects were pre and posttested on a Student Evaluation Scale that measured students' degree of disruptive behavior. The students were selected based upon referrals from teachers, administrators, and relevant others. A group of 20 students, 15 male, and 5 female, received sessions of Social Skills Training for a 10-day session.

A T-test was employed to investigate the difference in the pre and posttest scores. The pretest scores had a mean of 22.10, and the posttest scores had a mean of 12.15. It was concluded that the alternative program had an effect on the disruptive behavior of the students. Implications for Social Work practice and future research are discussed.
A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM
ON THE DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-12

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
JENNIFER L. TALLEY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The educational system has been "given" the great responsibility of socializing and educating our children. There is a great effort toward successful socialization, and teaching of our children. A child is given the opportunity to pass through the educational system for twelve years, after which society expects for that child to be familiar with the norms, and mores of society, and to able to sufficiently produce in society. Within the school setting, the most frequent interaction is that between, teacher and student. Teacher-student interactions have been seen, increasingly, as a crucial factor in student learning and achievement.¹

In tandem, with this goal of teaching and socialization, there are various problems that arise within the teacher-student relationship. In many cases, student initiated problems the problems have negative results. For the past five years, the No.1 school problem, as reported by the annual Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll on the status of education, has been discipline.² Such behaviors describe by Foster as ribbin', jivin' and playin' the dozens, the games that youngsters play in the classroom, teachers often,


misinterpret as forms of disruptive behavior. The decisions concerning “behavior disorders” are often left in the hands of teachers and administrators, not acknowledged professionals in the psychological fields of child development. They determine both the criteria for disordered behavior and the nature of educational intervention.

African American students are disproportionately grouped with those students labeled “disruptive students.” According to the U.S. Department of Education’s (1990) 12th Annual Report to Congress, African-American male adolescents continue to be referred and placed proportionately more often in special education than any other ethnic or racial group of adolescents. In conjunction with being placed, although African Americans children represent 25% of the national public school population, they comprise 40% of all suspensions and expulsions. Almost half (45%) of all suspensions and expulsions are prompted by school staff perceptions of excessive levels of verbal or physical aggression, most often in the context of peer interaction. Although these repeated suspension may give schools temporary relief, it does not address the cause of

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3 William Wilbanks, “Bridging the Culture Gap in Inner-City Schools: A Summary and Critique of the Approach of Herbert Foster in “Ribbin, Jivin’ and Playin’ the Dozens”, ERIC ED 219 468


5 Ibid., 132.


7 Ibid., 3.
the behavior. Furthermore, it banishes those children who require a strong educational foundation, within a caring academic environment, which benefits the student.

Over the past 20 years, the numbers of alternative school programs for at-risk youths have rapidly increased. These programs are purporting to be the most effective method for educating at-risk youths.8 Alternative schools have been instrumental in relation to providing an alternative educational process for African-American students who have been described as disruptive. Programs for disruptive youth presently comprise about one-third of extant alternative programs in the United States.9

Although there are extensive amounts of literature exploring and investigating the impact that alternative schools have on the behavior, and other attributes in reference to the African American student, insufficient attention has been given to an alternative program, that has a curriculum based in Social Skills Training, with the goal of ameliorating the vast reports of disruptive behavior among African American students in the secondary educational level.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study will examine the disruptive behavior among African American students, and the effects of an alternative school program entitled, DeKalb Life Skills Alternative Program. This investigation of its effectiveness on disruptive behavior will provide


additional data to the existing body of literature of interventions and strategies addressing this dilemma, disruptive behavior among African American students.

If the lacks of attention given to the effect of alternative programs on disruptive behavior is not addresses, the aforementioned statistics will continue to increase, and the whole of society will suffer. Beginning with the educational system, and then spilling over into society. Many times youth that drop out of school, have idle time on their hands, and may tend to get involved in deviant acts. And the major concern would be the generation, or group of children who lack the essential skills to productively contribute to society. A larger group of the unemployed, will also have negative effects on the pool of monies (i.e., social security), that depend upon the monetary contributions of the working class, to provide benefits for the elderly. An unskilled labor force, on the macro level, diminishes the strength of this country being a competitor with the other existing nations.

Data from this study will expand the body of literature on African American students, highlighting some positive alternative learning methods that might be more appropriate for them. In addition, it could provide teachers and relevant others with an alternative method to decrease disruptive behavior among African American students.

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of an alternative school program, The DeKalb Life Skills Program, on the disruptive school behavior of male and female African American students, in grades 6-12.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

When you control a man's thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions.10

The education that a man or woman receives is heavily influenced by the education that he or she receives, formal or informal. The degree to which his or her education is applicable, relevant, and useful, is directly correlated with his or her success.

As mentioned previously, there is a need for change in the present schooling system. There is a plethora of existing problems that range from lack of parental support to uncontrollable children; as identified by teachers and school administrators. The literature supports the presence of the abundance of behavior problems presented by students, and there has been an emphasis on African American students. This review of literature will illustrate the absence of any program that has been designed like the Life Skills Academy with the attempt of ameliorating some of the disruptive behavior exhibited by African American students. The literature is divided into three categories as it pertains to the subject at hand a) Disruptive School Behavior b) Factors Related to Disruptive Behavior and c) Interventions used to Alleviate Disruptive Behavior.

Disruptive School Behavior

Finn, Voelkl, et al., examined the correlation between disruptive and inattentive-withdrawn behavior and achievement. The examination consisted of the relation between teachers' ratings of the classroom behavior of 1,013 fourth graders and student

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achievement. Students were identified whose behavior was frequently inattentive, withdrawn, and others were identified who were disruptive. Inattentive behavior was described as behavior that indicates that the student is not attending to the teacher or focusing on the content of classwork. It is a form of withdrawal from participation that may be characterized by a "loss of contact with what is going on in the class."\textsuperscript{11} Disruptive behavior was defined as any type of classroom disturbance in which some child teases or torments classmates, interferes with others’ work, is drawn into noise making, or necessitates teacher reprimand and control. Disruptive students frequently engage in boisterous or rowdy behavior, are unable to remain seated and attentive for reasonable periods of time, and may "act out" in ways that draw the attention of an entire class away from school work.\textsuperscript{12}

Each student was rated by his or her teacher on the Student Participation Questionnaire, which consists of two scales that reflected positive learning behaviors and two that reflected negative behaviors. The analysis consisted of comparing the distributions of noncompliant behaviors for black and white students and for males and females and then comparing the academic performance of the four behavior groups. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare mean achievement, with the seven test scores as simultaneous dependent

\textsuperscript{11}Jeremy D. Finn, Gina M. Pannozzo, and Kristin E. Voelkl, "Disruptive and Inattentive-Withdrawn Behavior and Achievement among Fourth Graders", \textit{The Elementary School Journal}, 95, :422.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 424.
variables.\textsuperscript{13}

Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced achievement tests indicated that inattentive-withdrawn behavior was associated with depressed academic performance, at least to the extent that disruptive behavior was. Disruptive students tend to draw far more attention from teachers, whereas teachers may overlook inattentive students in spite of the potentially profound effects of nonparticipation in class.

Disruptive behavior was examined within its relationship to physical proximity between students within the classroom setting. The study cited research studies that suggest a need on the part of human beings to have a place that they can call their own, whether at school or the office. It appears from research that an open design classroom could also cause a rise in individual anxiety, and that specific modifications to the environmental design could reduce anxiety in the classroom. This case study deals with the effects of modification of environment design on student behavior. Behavioral problems demanded immediate implementation of solution to acute problems.\textsuperscript{14} Alteration of the physical arrangement of the classroom was accomplished in order to reduce incidents of disruptive behavior.

There were several results. For the teacher, physical space planned in accordance with available area and proposed usage gives her a sense of control and direction, reducing her stress. She has access to students and can deal effectively with problem behavior.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 426.

For students, the security of a planned, ordered environment allows control over his or her environment, reducing anxiety on the part of the student. Increased teacher availability due to seating arrangement promotes prosocial behavior on the part of the student. Tension, anxiety and stress are reduced as a result of alteration of physical space, promoting more teaching time through reduction of discipline demands.\textsuperscript{15}

Richard Diem gives an alternative measure to addressing this problem of disruptive behavior in our school settings. The community in the form of parents, teachers, and students must work together to achieve the goal of providing an alternative mean of dealing with the problem. The alternate approach lies in teaching student self-discipline and responsibility for their own actions.

This type of disciplinary approach is employed in English schools, in Great Britain. The findings from these schools indicate that, when students from these schools were given the opportunity to help set the rules, run selected segments of the school day, and develop academic standards, intellectual, as well as behavior, success was achieved. Success described as, a lower amount of the problems that we in the states have faced over the years.

Schools, as Deim describes, has been given a large responsibility of socialization of children to the norms of our society. In school, he child is taught about rules, order, and discipline, all of which are exemplified in the practices of standing in line, keeping quiet, and looking straight ahead. Children are given messages about behavior from several sources. Schools have told the child to conform and be passive to survive within them.

\textsuperscript{15}Hood-Smith and Leffingwell, "Physical Space on Disruptive Behavior", 230.
Deviant behavior has been defined, sanctions against the behavior imprinted and, in some cases, punishments delivered. Parental views of behavior, have a direct impact through observation and modeling. Interaction with peers, and the corresponding need for group acceptance, lead to a series of plausible behavioral models. Time spent viewing and reacting to the media, especially television, added to the storehouse of possible reactive influences. The child is left with making decisions about which behavior he or she should adopt.

The occurrence of disruptive behaviors in the school setting has continued, and persist to raise concern among the public, parents, and school officials. The public outcry has increased with the increase in the rates of serious crimes committed by children. In most school settings, conflict stems from violations of school rules. A student violates the rules, teachers observe the violations and report the students, usually to a person with authority to punish the violation.

The school’s reaction to behavior problems has been to avoid the kind of environmental change that the safe-school study implied should be developed to overcome these problems. Many of the proposed alternative measures, such as making schools and class sizes smaller, most districts, due to budgetary considerations, are consolidating and closing schools, in effect making them even larger. Intervention strategies are still based on either office referrals, after-school detentions, short-term suspension, grade retention,


The author suggests that self-imposed discipline is the better alternative, and its legitimacy is reinforced by the corporate world. In corporate America, companies are looking for individuals who are discipline, and those who do not passively follow, without questions.

Obiakor discusses the educational process for African American students with behavior problems. Beginning with the historical impacts that affected the education of African American students, and the recent reform and restructuring movements that have addressed the educational needs of African American learners. And the research, theory and practice are attempting to meet their needs. The term problem behavior was identified as encompassing an unlimited variety of behaviors. Traditionally, students are identified as having behavior disorders by teachers, parents, guardians and service providers when they find behaviors in conflict with their upbringing or personal idiosyncrasies. Simply stated, behaviors are problems to us when we do not like those behaviors or persons. It is no surprise that African American students who exhibit problem behaviors are called “problems,” “troublemakers,” “bad kids,” “violent students,” “deprived students,” and “disordered students.”

The theoretical models that are frequently used in most intervention classrooms dealing with problem behaviors are, the psychodynamic, biophysical, environmental, humanistic, behavioral, and cognitive learning model. The strategy to assist any particular

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18 Ibid., p.143.

African American student depends on the student, the educator, and the time and place. There should be an integration of theories and services that best address the presenting situation. He suggests that as general and special educators come to terms with theory and practice. Their premier priority must be to start looking at African American students from a developmental perspective. It is cost effective to educate African American students and to see them as individuals who have potential to succeed.\(^{20}\)

**Factors Related to Disruptive Behavior**

Schnobrich stated in her literature review that African American children are maladjusted when they encounter the white middle class environment. Because of this maladjustment, they are unable to respond appropriately to demands placed on them in a classroom setting. Furthermore, Schnobrich states that African American children are expected to have prior knowledge of the norms and rules of the classroom setting. However, many African American children learn these norms and rules incidentally. Schnobrich attributes African Americans difficulty to adjust to a white classroom setting with excessive energy, high emotional charge, and a people oriented quality, that she suggests may be due to their African heritage.\(^{21}\)

In her analysis of the problem, she states that there are cultural differences between African American and white children, first being parental support. For example, many of the African American children in this study, come from single parent households. While

\(^{20}\)Ibid.,20.

\(^{21}\)Janice Schnobrich, *Implementation of a Program of Prosocial Behavior in an Inner City Kindergarten Classroom*, (July 85), ERIC, ED 265 973.
white children have both parents in the household, with the father as the head of the household, as opposed to the African American children only having their mother as the sole parent, and head of household. Secondly, Schnobrich implies in her literature review, that there are cultural differences between African American children and their white counterparts. These differences are seen among African American children and their white counterparts. These differences come in the form of a family upbringing (i.e., African American children and their expressive communication between relatives, as opposed to white children their communication between family members). These communication differences then manifest themselves in the classroom behavior of African American children. Thus the researcher implied that the transition from highly expressive environments with non-structured communication to a more structured environment of communication is very difficult for young children. Yet, the researchers suggest various solutions such as modeling/mentoring. For example, McClure, Chinsky, and Lareen used four experimental conditions to train social problems solving skills and overt behavior. Videotape modeling only, videotape plus discussion, videotape plus role-played exercises and no treatment control group. They found that video modeling combined with role playing produced greater overall positive peer interaction skills than the other conditions. Furthermore, these researchers stated that modeling can be an effective force in positive behavior. However, the model must be seen as powerful and exhibit nurturing behaviors of friendliness, support, sympathy, protection and praise.22 Holiday discussed the effects on black children's academic achievement of their behavior and that of their families,

schools, and teachers involves three major thrusts. First, is an analysis of those social
currents of the past three decades that have shaped relationships between black families
and the behaviors they promote in their children, on the one hand, and public schools and
the behaviors they demand of black students, on the other. Secondly, the article reviewed
the research on black children’s behavioral skills and academic achievement, and related
processes of black families and public schools. Finally, the articles discussed the policy
implications stemming from the historical analysis and researched review are explored. It
is argued that preferred policy options related to black children’s achievement are ones
that seek to ensure that (1) black children are valued (2) continuity exists between
children’s home and school experiences; and (3) those experiences are ones in which
children encounter success, unambiguous expectations, and demands for excellence.23
After the segregation laws were abolished, children were bused into strange and foreign
situations. Teachers increasingly were indoctrinated into a pedagogy that emphasized the
cognitive, cultural, and social deficits of black children.24 As a result, schools increasingly
viewed black children’s behavior both as different from that of white children, and at odds
with processes of good teaching and learning. The types of behaviors that are encouraged
in the home setting are frowning upon in the school settings. There is a dissonance
between the two environments. Consequently, black families often must cultivate and
value some modes of thinking, strategies for success, behavioral skills, and expressive

24 Ibid, p.9
style that are not highly valued in the broader society and that is frowned upon at school.²⁵

Silvestri, Dantonio, et al., investigated the effects of a self-development program, and relaxation/imagery training on the self-esteem of intact classes of economically at-risk fourth-grade students. Subjects were given pre- and posttests, the Perceived Competence Scale for Children. Two groups received 32 sessions of treatment by classroom teachers, while a third group served as a no treatment control group. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to investigate the relationship among the six self-esteem variables. In the pretest, scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct all correlated at the .05 level of significance with the variable global self-worth. A significant main effect for group was found at the .05 level on the total posttest scores. It was concluded that global self-worth can be used as an indication of general self-esteem.

In a study, a cross-lagged panel correlation technique was used to examine whether self-esteem had a greater effect on delinquency than delinquency has on self-esteem. Analysis of a nationwide study of tenth-grade boys showed that self-esteem was the more powerful causal factor, even when initial levels of delinquency were held constant. This result was found to be stronger in the lower class than in the upper class.

Dunn and Tucker, proceeded to make a correlation between the impact of family environment and the adaptive or maladaptive behavior of African children. Many black children must adapt to tow different cultures: their school environment, in which they may be minorities. Because adaptive behaviors in one culture may be considered maladaptive

²⁵Ibid., p 19.
in another, adaptive functioning and maladaptive behavior are indeed vital indicators of the life success of Black children.26

In this study, the researchers examined differences caregivers’ perceptions of Black second graders’ and eighth graders’ adaptive functioning and maladaptive behavior associated with overall quality of family support and its components. The participants included the primary caregivers of 107 Black children, including 54 second graders and 53 eighth graders. Adaptive functioning was divided into three components; communication, daily living, and household skills. The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS) instrument was administered to each child’s caregiver to assess each child’s functioning and maladaptive behavior. Three separate scales from the VABS for each of the three components were combined to form a composite score. And the Family Relationship Index was administered to each child’s primary caregiver to measure Quality of Family Support for each child.

A Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was applied to the data. Findings indicated that significant association between Quality of Family Support and adaptive functioning was positive, and QFS was negatively associated with maladaptive behavior. A dimension of QFS, Conflict, was the only significant predictor of maladaptive behavior scores in comparison with the other two, Cohesion, and Expressiveness.

As mentioned in a previous article, the decision to refer to a particular behavior or persistence of a behavior rests solely on the judgement of the teachers’ and/or school staff.

Many times the label of inappropriate behavior is given far more times to the African American student than the Caucasian American students. This is further explored in Emihovich’s article, “The Color of Misbehaving, Two Case Studies of Deviant Boys.” The author conducted case studies on the difference among races of the placement of African American students into a learning disorder, special education class, due to repeat displays of disruptive classroom behavior.

The case studies of the two boys were drawn from a year long ethnographic study of two kindergartens in a magnet school. The two boys, one white, and the other black, were members of the same kindergarten class: a class that had a substitute teacher for the first two months of school until the regular teacher returned from maternity leave.27 Both boys had been referred to counseling services by the substitute teacher for their “extremely disruptive” classroom behavior.

The Caucasian boy was tested by a psychologist, and tested 124 on the IQ test. He was noted as displaying disruptive behavior, yet having a good vocabulary, and a high degree of creativity. Given the same tests, the African American boy revealed the same level of brightness, scoring a 110 on the IQ test, but the psychologist stated he could have scored higher if he paid more attention to the tests. The Caucasian boy had a home environment that was believed to be hostile. His father was believed to be abusive, and the mother neglectful of the boy’s needs. His clothing smelled of urine some days, and other days they were not changed. The African American boy lived with his mother, who

received Aid to Dependent Families with Children benefits, and grandmother, and received frequent visits from his father. The psychologist gave the following recommendations for the Caucasian boy: (1) the parents should seek counseling to resolve family tensions, (2) Ricky should be provided with breakfast by the school so he would not be hungry and irritable, (3) an adult should be assigned to work with him on an individualized basis to provide more emotional support, and (4) a reward schedule should be devised to reinforce his periods of good behavior.28

On the other hand the African American boy’s recommendation from the psychologist differed, they are as follows: (1) he and his mother should continue their outside counseling sessions, (2) he should receive individualized attention from an adult, and (3) further evaluations should be undertaken to monitor his progress.

In conclusion, both boys displayed the same behaviors, yet the effect’s of one boy’s behavior was punitive, he was placed in a special education class, and was not promoted to the next grade. Both teachers made attributions about the child’s behavior that reflected their perception of him as a member of specific classes disadvantaged, broken home, minority-rather than as an individual. And the deviant behavior and control for it are viewed as exclusively the child’s responsibility.

**Interventions Used to Alleviate Disruptive Behavior**

Mary Anderson describes an extensive amount of literature on the over representation of adolescent African-American male learners in classes for students identified as behavior disordered has essentially not addressed the problems caused by

teacher reactions to adolescent conversational language use, the qualitative differences in language choices, or the impact of the conversational choices of the adolescents on their educational treatment. The author suggests that whether an African-American adolescent uses Black English or standard English is not the problem. Behavior Disorder class placement is an alternative educational treatment judged appropriate for students whose social conduct, including dialogue, does not comply with the constraints of the teacher's social context.

The author explored how the dramaturgical perspective of selected Theatre Rehearsal Technique activities can be used as learning experiences in communication with the African-American student population. Try activities used to prepare actors for the stage can be used to help adolescents identified as behavior disordered be aware of their experiences with languages. The improvisational activities show students ways to organize and control their conversational behavior. Such skills can empower African-American adolescents labeled behavior disordered to change the consequences of their academic experience.

In a study by McCurdy, Cjucevich, et al., twelve boys, aged 12 to 16 years, were identified as constituting the most serious behavior problems in a class. These students were described by the teacher as fighting with other students, picked fights in and out of


the classroom; vehemently cursed with vulgarity; threw chalk, erasers, desks, and refused to comply with rules. The boys received human-relations training. They learned facilitative communication, and improved in their human-relation skills after the training. The human-relations group experience seemed to affect classroom behavior positively, as evidenced by a decrease in behavior problems.

Larson utilized cognitive-behavioral principles and techniques in an anger-aggression management curriculum. It was evaluated for its effects on a classroom of urban, at risk middle school students. The 10-curriculum was taught over a 5-week period to a racially integrated classroom of 22 males and females. Heavy use of video symbolic modeling was integrated with techniques of self-instruction, problem solving and self-monitoring. A 2 x 3 repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect for treatment phase and group.

Hudley conducted a study of highly aggressive African American boys, seeking to understand the effect of an attribution retraining program designed to reduce aggressive males’ tendency to attribute hostile intentions to peers following ambiguous, negative interactions. One hundred and one African American aggressive and non-aggressive elementary school boys in Los Angeles were randomly assigned to an attributional intervention, an attention training program, or a non-treatment control group. Subjects’

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reactions to hypothetical peer provocation, teacher ratings of aggressive behavior, and referrals for formal disciplinary action were evaluated for both statistical and clinical significance. The effects of attribution retraining on aggressive participants’ judgments and behavior toward a peer in a laboratory task were also evaluated. Compared to their counterparts in the attention training and control groups, aggressive subjects targeted for the attributional intervention showed a significant reduction in the bias to presume hostile intent on the part of peers in both hypothetical and laboratory simulations of ambiguous provocation. Intervention participants were rated as less reactively aggressive by their teachers following treatment and were less likely to be sent for disciplinary action.

Proctor and Morgan, used an ABAB experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of a response cot raffle procedure on the appropriate classroom behavior of junior high students with mild to moderate behavior problems. The response cost raffle procedure was a replication of previous investigation reported by Witt and Elliott (1982). The participants were three eighth graders and one ninth grader. They were (a) receiving services on a part-time basis in a resource room; (b) classified for special education services under the classification of learning disabled or behaviorally disordered; (c) enrolled in seventh, eighth, or ninth grade; (d) exhibiting disruptive or inappropriate classroom behavior in the resource room; and (e) identified by the resource teacher as one of the more disruptive students in the particular class to be studied. The study consisted of four phases (a) baseline, (b) response cost raffle intervention, (c) withdrawal, and (d) reintroduction of the response cost raffle intervention phase. The procedure had strong positive effects on the behavior of two of the participants, with suggested, although less
conclusive, effects on the other two. The results indicated that the response cost raffle can be an effective and practical classroom management procedure for increasing appropriate and decreasing disruptive and inappropriate classroom behavior with this age group.\textsuperscript{33}

Suggestions for improving its implementation, particular behaviors that appear to be affected by the procedure, as well as its limitations are discussed. One such limitation is that the response cost raffle procedure has been demonstrated to be effective only in decreasing mild to moderately disruptive behaviors (i.e., out of the seat, talking out, noncompliance, off-task, noise).

Smith, Richard, et. al, studied the effectiveness of self-management procedures in reducing the disruptive and off-task behaviors of students in a special education resource classroom. Off-task behavior was defined as not looking at the task or activity that has been assigned for a period longer than 5 seconds and/or working on something other than the assigned work. Disruptive behavior was defined as: talking without permission, out-of-seat without permission, throwing objects, and/or interrupting the teacher during a class discussion without first raising a hand.\textsuperscript{34}

Four junior high-aged students, ranging in age from 13-15 participated in this study. Three of the four were classified as behaviorally disordered and one as learning disabled. The results demonstrated a decrease in levels of off-task behavior following


implementation of the self-evaluation procedures. Rates of off-task and disruptive behavior did not decrease in the regular class following the implementation of the matching procedure in that setting. The study indicated that self-evaluation paired with a teacher matching procedure is an effective strategy that reduced disruptive and other off-task behavior among the population tested. Also another important finding is that, the self-evaluation procedures can be effectively implemented without first bringing students’ behavior under the external control of another behavior management program such as a token economy.

The following study by Long and Sherer, investigated the influence of social skills training on cognitive and behavioral characteristics of juvenile offenders. Structured social skills training, an unstructured discussion group, and a control group were compared. Subjects consisted of 30 adolescent male offenders who had been previously arrested for a variety of offenses. The design was a 3x2 factorial design with a repeated measure. Between subjects factors were type of social skills training and number of offenses. Cognitive variables measured were a locus of control and self-concept. There was a behavioral measure of social skills. The social skills training instructed the participants with ten specific social skills, (i.e., active listening, expressing feelings, understanding feelings of others, negotiating, self-control, avoiding trouble with others, avoiding fights, dealing with accusations, dealing with group pressure, and setting goals). Results revealed a significant main effect for treatment groups on the locus of control measure with structured social skills training and discussion groups indicating greater internality than the control group. Low-frequency offenders exhibited better social skills
than high-frequency offenders.

In the article “Group Training for Social Skills, A Program for Court-Adjudicated, Probationary Youths,” the training of social skills is discussed. A group training program for teaching social skills was conducted with 13 courts adjudicated youths on probation with a juvenile court. The program taught eight skills—giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, accepting negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, problem-solving, negotiation, following instructions, and conversation. The youths were divided into three groups, two of which had a home note procedure that required the youths to practice the skill at home during the week. The skills were trained in a multiple-baseline design across skills using skill explanation and rationales, modeling, and a behavioral rehearsal with feedback. Behavioral role-play results showed substantial skill increases for the youths in all the groups with the youths in the two home note groups showing more rapid increases in skill levels. Follow-up testing eight months later showed good retention of the majority of the skills. Self-report questionnaires showed that the majority of the youths viewed themselves a more competent following the training.

Cunliffe, in “Arresting Youth Crime: A Review of Social Skills Training with Young Offenders” discussed the literature about social skills training, and its impact on delinquent populations, with specific consideration of six questions. When discussing applicability of social skills training it is necessary to define “appropriate social behavior,” which is frequently used synonymously with “social skills,” and social skills are “the ability to interact with others in such a way as to produce positive effects for the interaction and
to be mutually beneficial to all parties involved in the interaction.\textsuperscript{35}

Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of social skills training with Grade 10 and 11 students. These students exhibited higher levels of general social competence than did a control group. Research by I.G. Sarason, taught and modeled social skills to delinquents in a state youth detention center. He found that these youth showed more positive change in behavior and attitudes than did a control group. Kennedy in his research, found that delinquents are deficient in problem solving and that this deficiency may increase the likelihood that they will seek inappropriate and illegal solutions. It was determined that some young offenders are deficient in problem solving, and that social skills training has proven to be effective in improving that ability.\textsuperscript{36} And lastly, Slaby and Guerra, in “Cognitive Mediators of Aggression in Adolescent Offenders” found that aggressive adolescents were more likely than nonaggressive adolescents to hold beliefs which support aggressive responses to social conflict. They also found that the young offenders experienced an increase in social problem-solving ability, a reduction in endorsement of beliefs supporting aggression, and a decrease in aggressive behavior.

Forman, Linney, and Brodino studied the effects of coping skills training on adolescents at risk for substance use. Two hundred seventy-nine high risk secondary school students completed one of the following treatment conditions (a) Coping Skills, (b) Coping Skills School Plus Parent Intervention, (c) Comparison Control. Students in the


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.894.
training sessions learned coping skills in four major areas: behavioral, self-management, emotional self-management, decision-making, and interpersonal communication. Students in the coping skills conditions improved on a measure of coping skills acquisition, whereas those in the control group did not.\textsuperscript{37} All students improved on a variety of personality and school behavior variables. There were some modest increases in self-report of substance use, however, they were smaller than would be expected in a high-risk population over the study period.

The assertiveness program developed by Wise, Bundy, Bundy, and Wise focused on the unique problems and peer interactions of young adolescents, was expanded to a 12-week program and presented to a group of 28 sixth graders. Cognitive acquisition and retention of the symbolic information were measured with a pretest, posttest, and follow-up administration of the multiple-choice tests that were designed and used in the prior study. Assertive behavior was measured with a pretest and posttest role play situation. Although trained adolescents performed at a high level on the test of symbolic knowledge, it was not significantly different from the control group.

Guevremont and Foster investigate the effects of a social problem-solving training on the disruptive and aggressive behavior of boys. Five boy ages 11 and 12 were referred to the study by the local public school system’s Department of Special Education because of aggressive and disruptive school behavior. Changes in classroom behavior were evaluated using multiple-baseline designs within and across subjects. Although each child

showed some degree of change in classroom behavior, the changes were more than naught were associated with generalization programming (log), than with the training.

Yet another study investigating some portion of disruptive behavior, and skills training is conducted by Sakofs, Mitchell, Schurman, an Donna. Wilderness Alternative for Youth, conducted the Pacific Crest Outward bound School, is a treatment program for adjudicated youth that integrates wilderness or adventure therapy with a community-based component. Participants were 115 boys and girls, aged 13-18, recommended by court Counselors and screened for appropriateness by Outward Bound. Subjects were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group participated in a 3-week program involving adventure activities and community service activities.

Despite a lack of "institutional legitimacy," alternative schools can serve as models for any school that seeks innovative change. Alternative schools have been around since the 1960's, and still exist today, addressing the problems of those children that have been displaced or recommended to seek alternative educational means.

A science-based program for African American males evidenced a difference in climate between sixth and seventh graders. The program focused on academics, school climate, self-esteem and efficacy, and used adults as mentors and school-based advocates, and college and high school students as teaching assistants. The Agriculture-Science Project was conducted by the Center for Educating African American Males (CEAAM) as a result of a 50,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Advocacy

and Enterprise.\textsuperscript{39} One component of the project was a four-week summer phase which included half-day sessions consisting of 90 minute science classes, 60 minute Kung Fu classes, hands on experiments, demonstrations, computer experiences, guest speakers, and a variety of field trips. Many of the learning experiences for the students took on tone of Afrocentricity.

An empirical study conducted on the summer phase was limited to the 43 boys out of 55 registrants who participated in the entire program of activities, including the pre and posttests. There was a significant difference between the climate of the summer program and the school climate. Several test items revealed that participants were more eager to go to classes, more engaged in topics studied in class, liked the classes more, and felt that the summer program environment was friendlier than that of the regular school.

Franklin presented a review of alternative school programs for at-risk youths for the use of expanding the social work literature. There has been an abundance of alternative schools since the 1960's.\textsuperscript{40} The options for alternative school programs are varied. Reilly and Reilly identified three types of alternative schools: (1) nonpublic (for example, parochial, the military); (2) upper-socioeconomic preparatory schools for wealthy and college-bound students and (3) compensatory schools that serve students who do not function well in traditional schools (for example, behavior-disordered students,


potential dropouts). Many of the existing alternative schools fall into the third category and have been directed toward those students with attendance or discipline problems who are potential or actual dropouts. The alternative schools' aim is to provide education for at-risk youths, but also they attempt to increase the youths' social functioning and behavior. Nine effective characteristics of alternative schools have been identified; small size, supportive environment, individual programming, many choices, autonomy and democratic structure, broad participation of family and community, well-defined standards and rules, targeted services, and accountability and constant evaluation.

Robert F. Arnowe and Toby Strout discuss alternative schools for disruptive youth. The article analyzes the uses and misuses of alternative education programs for disruptive youth. The potential of such programs for assisting students who are unsuccessful in existing school programs, and we point out the limitations and dangers of alternatives. Alternatives most frequently serve two types of students those who are intellectually gifted or artistically talented, and those whose school experiences are characterized by failure. Alternative schools typically have student-adult ratios of approximately 15 to 1 and sometimes lower.

One negative aspect of alternative schools is in relation to their tendencies to label and stigmatize youths, to track and segregate a disproportionate number of minority students with whom teachers in conventional programs do not wish to work or are unable to work,

41 Franklin,"Alternative School Programs",239.

and to prepare these youths for the lower rungs of economic and social hierarchies in our society.  

In "A meta-analytic assessment of delinquency-related outcomes of alternative education programs" the authors discussed some numerous amounts of alternative programs. In the article, a meta-analysis to assess the findings of alternative education programs in an effort to provide a more comprehensive summary of the literature than that found in prior reviews. The review consisted of a vote counting method, and the calculation of effect sizes to determine the overall effect of the program as well as the programs' ability to change delinquent behavior, school performance, school attitude, and self-esteem. The sample consisted of the abstracts of the 241 citations was reviewed, and studies with a program that did not fit the general definition of an alternative school and/or that were not empirical evaluations were omitted.

The results suggest that alternative education programs can have a small positive effect on school performance, school attitude, and self-esteem, regardless of research design. The highest pre-post and comparison group effect size was attitude toward school. This finding is consistent with prior research on alternative schools, which suggested that most students enjoy going to an alternative education program. Based on the findings, alternative schools promote positive school attitudes, their effect on school performance and self-esteem are not large enough to influence delinquent behavior. That is, even though the students enjoyed going to the alternative school and appear to have performed well, these gains did not overcome other influences that may have had a greater effect on

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43 Arnove and Strout, "Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth", 454.
subsequent delinquency (e.g., family and peers).

Raywid gives an over view of alternative schools in his article. The type of alternative schools as well as the advantages and disadvantages of attending an alternative school were discussed. There are many reforms taking place within these schools. Many of the reforms currently pursued in traditional schools-downsizing the high school, pursing a focus or them, student and teacher choice, making the school a community, empowering staff, active learner engagement, authentic assessment- are the practices that alternative schools pioneered. Alternative schools have been characterized by being designed for those student which the regular school is not equipped to manage, and educate, and they are all too often described as “disadvantaged”, “marginal”, or “at-risk”. The other is the prevalence of creativity and innovations that are linked to the success stories like East Harlem’s Central Park East Secondary School. There are several types of alternative schools. Type I, Popular Innovations which seek to make school challenging and fulfilling for all involved. Type II, Last Chance Programs, alternatives to which students are sentenced. And the last type is Type III, Remedial Focus, which are for students who are presumed to need rehabilitation-academic, social/emotional, or both.

Type II programs yielded few benefits from those sentenced to them, and student behavior usually improves in environments like that of Type III. And Type I, are less costly than Type III because they operate with similar teacher-student ratio as do the


ALPHA has been in operation since 1972. It is an alternative school program. The ALPA program consists of a daily two-hour seminar with about 25 students per group. ALPHA's three teachers function as group leaders and counselors, while a supportive high school principal acts as an administrator and liaison with other high school principals. ALPHA has a great track record, vandalism and violence are virtually obsolete, grades have improved. Students and teachers enjoy being in ALPHA, and they like and support one another. The program has three times more applicants than can be enrolled, and once enrolled students do not want to leave.

In subsequent article, an author interviewed seven students of an alternative school. Questions were asked about what they preferred most about their schooling. Their findings indicated that many of the girls like the alternative schools better. They enjoyed being surrounded by other pregnant females, which allowed similar experiences to be shared, as well as, the availability of day care facilities. In summation, this alternative school for pregnant teens can be seen as a departure from bureaucratic rules and procedures found in regular schools.

Cox, Davidson, and Bynum discuss alternative educational programs. Although the alternative education movement continues to grow, uncertainty is present across the literature regarding the effectiveness of these programs. Prior review have found that alternative schools improve school performance, attitudes toward school, school

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attendance, and self-esteem, while decreasing delinquency. However, these reviews have been unable to determine the magnitude of these effects or examine potential correlates of success. The present study used meta-analysis to quantitatively summarize prior empirical research on alternative schools. The meta-analysis findings show that alternative education programs have a small overall effect on school performance, attitudes toward school, and self-esteem but no effect on delinquency. Furthermore, alternative education programs that target a specific population of at-risk delinquents or low school achievers produce larger effects than programs with open admissions.

James Comer describes a school intervention program designed by the Yale Child Study Center Team that championed the efforts of the schools to actively recruit and secure parent participation. The model evolved in two schools, in New Haven, Connecticut. One school had 300 pupils from grades K-4, and the other had 350 pupils from grades K-5. The pupils were 99 percent black, and all almost poor. The conceptual framework suggested that a child develops a strong emotional bond to competent caretakers (usually parents) that enables them to help the child develop. Many kinds of development, in social, psychological, emotional, moral, linguistic and cognitive areas, are critical to future academic learning. The attitudes, values and behavior of the family and its social network strongly affect such development. Those children whose development


complements the mainstream values encountered at school will be prepared to achieve at the level of his or her ability. A child from a poor family, in contrast is likely to enter school without adequate preparation. They may not have encountered such social skills as negotiating and compromise. Expectations at home may be radically different from those at school. Such a lack of development or development that is at odds with the mainstream occurs disproportionately often among children from the minority groups that have had the most traumatic experiences in this society: Native Americans, Hispanics, and even more vivid with Blacks. The analysis of the two New Haven schools suggested that the key to academic achievement is to promote psychological development in students, which encourages bonding to the school. Doing so requires fostering positive interaction between parents and school staff, a task for which most staff people are not trained. With the employment of governance teams consisting of a dozen people led by the principal and made up of elected parents and teacher, a mental health specialist and a member of the nonprofessional support staff, the parent program, which involved parents on the governance team, participating in activities supporting school program and attending school event, and the mental health team, which consisted of the school’s psychologist, social worker or special education teacher, precipitated the success of the two schools. The intervention program produced significant academic gains.

49 Comer, “Educating Poor Minority Children”, 45.

50 Ibid., p46
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The rationale for the implementation of the DeKalb Life Skills Academy, which is assumed to reduce disruptive behavior among African American teenagers, is rooted in the classical theories of Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton. Merton, expanding on the concept of anomie (i.e. normlessness) developed by Durkheim, theorized that anomie could be the normal state of affairs for persons in certain segments of society, when cultural goals and financial success, are emphasized and legitimate opportunities to achieve these goals are blocked (e.g. among the lower class). Further, Merton theorized that this state of affairs leads to behavior that is defined as deviant by dominate cultural standards.

The key characteristics of the deviant behavior perspective based on Merton’s concepts are as follows. Social problems reflect violations of normative expectations. Behavior or situations that depart from norms are deviant. The cause of deviant behavior lies in appropriate socialization - e.g., when the learning of deviant ways is not outweighed by the learning of nondeviant ways. This socialization is viewed as taking place within the context of primary group relations. Restricted opportunities for learning so-called conventional ways, increased opportunities for learning deviant ways, restricted opportunities for achieving legitimate goals, a feeling of stress, and access of a deviant mode of relief, are all important background conditions for the evolution of deviant patterns of behavior.

The deviant behavior perspective postulates a variety of consequences. Many
kinds of deviant behavior are costly to society. One outcome, for example is the firm establishment of illegitimate social worlds. In addition, however, some observable deviant behavior is useful, if only because it establishes negative role models showing what kinds of behavior will be punished.

The principal solution for deviant behavior is resocialization, and the best way to resocialize is to increase meaningful primary group contact with legitimate patterns of behavior and reduce meaningful primary group behavior with illegitimate patterns of behavior. At the same time, the opportunity structure must be opened in order to alleviate the strains that motivate people to behave in unacceptable ways. As legitimate opportunities increase, socially problematic behavior should decrease.

In summary, the main postulate of this perspective is that deviant behavior is socially learned within the context of primary groups. Its cause, broadly speaking, is inappropriate socialization. Its conditions are blocked opportunities, stress, access to a deviant modes of relief, and deviant role models. Its solutions lie in redistributed access to life chances, increased primary relations with legitimate role models, and reduction (if not complete elimination) of opportunities for contact with deviant role models.

The DeKalb Life Skills Program will perform the duties of the opportunity structure, teaching students about the effects of their behavior. The disruptive behavior, which has been learned via many channels, and modeled through the participating students in the program, deviates from the acceptable and promulgated school behavior. The Program will attempt to resocialize students within the 10 day session, so that their deviant disruptive behavior can be reduced, thus helping them to better adapt to the
typical classroom setting. Through the components of the Social Skills Training, Decision Making/Problem Solving, Self-Image, and Communication Skills, students will be given alternative means, and effective ways to address and respond to the school issues and dilemmas that they will encounter.

Within the intense 10 day program, positive alternatives and behavioral strategies will be reinforced, and the foundation of resocialization will begin, which will ultimately change the disruptive behavior, and lower the incidences of African American student’s displacement. The Life Skills Academy will provide students with intensive instructional experiences necessary to improve social competence with regard to interactions with peers and authority figures.
RESEARCH QUESTION & HYPOTHESIS

Based on the review of literature, theoretical framework and the general purposes of this study, listed below is the research question and hypothesis:

Q1. Will the intervention, the DeKalb Life Skills Academy, have a positive effect on the disruptive behavior of male and female African American students, in grades 6-12, in the DeKalb Public School System?

H1. There will be a significant difference in the disruptive behavior of the students prior to the intervention, DeKalb Life Skills Academy, and after the intervention.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design and Sample

This study used a one group/pretest/posttest design to examine the effects of the DeKalb Life Skills Program, an alternative program, upon disruptive behavior among African American students in secondary schools. The population consisted of 20 male and female students who are presently enrolled in the DeKalb Public School system. Ninety-five percent of the sample were males and five percent were females. They range in grades six to twelfth. Referrals were used to select the sample. They came from either counselor, teacher, student, parent and/or guardian. The majority of the students were referred from their home schools, (i.e. their counselor), and were admitted based upon their individual school folders, containing the statement of the problem, the students’ transcript, any psychological testing, and all other pertinent and relevant information. If the student was classified as special education, he or she was not admitted based upon the premise that the program was not equipped to handle the diverse and sometimes complex needs of these types of students. The remaining students who were referred by other persons, were advise to come in, and go through the intake interview process, where as much school history and all other relevant information was collected.

The Student Evaluation Scale was given to teachers to evaluate students’ behavior. The same group of teachers were given the same scale, once before the onset of the intervention, and the other, after the students returned from the Program, to document if
there was any change in their behavior. Each teacher was responsible for evaluating the same students at the pre and posttest phase.

Measurements

The operational definition of disruptive behavior, the dependent variable of this study, was the degree to which a student was in violation of the attendance ordinances of their home school (i.e. tardiness, unexcused absences, and cutting class), displayed violent or aggression behavior (i.e. fighting, verbal threatening, and destruction to self and others), and was noncompliant with classroom rules (i.e. not following instructions, cursing, and talking out of turn).

The scale used to tap the disruptive behavior was constructed by the researcher. It consisted of fourteen (14) questions, having the teachers rank the frequency of the disruptive behavior, ranging from 0-5. The questions pertained to the occurrence of attendance and behavior that the student has displayed. Based upon the operationally defined, disruptive behavior, the scale tapped every aspect of disruptive behavior.

The intervention was attendance to the DeKalb Life Skills Academy. The students were divided into groups no larger than 10 persons, and were paired with a counselor who lead the hands-on instruction of three clinically and experientially based modules, that constitute the Social Skills Training, Self-Awareness, Decision Making, Problem Solving, and Interpersonal Communication. Each counselor instructed key values and sub-components from one of the modules. The students were on a rotation schedule, where each group would move every hour and forty-five minutes to another counselor and module. The students were given enough time to return to their home schools and
retrieve their assignments.

In conjunction with the classroom instruction, the students spend one day out on the “Outdoor Classroom”, which is an ropes course. It consisted of high and low element rope activities that necessitated group participation. One such activity was the wall, where the students were given no aids (i.e. rope, ladder, or chair), and were instructed to have the entire group climb the wall. The essential component to the “Outdoor Classroom”, is team work. In such an environment the students were given the opportunity and were encouraged to integrate the skills and alternative behavioral styles while trying to successfully complete each task on the ropes course.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

In this research study, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the effect of the intervention upon the disruptive behavior. A T-test of group differences, with an alpha level of .05, was used to determine whether to reject or accept the study hypothesis, which stated that the alternative program, The Dekalb Life Skills Program, would have an effect on the disruptive behavior of African American students.

Table one presents the descriptive statistics that were used to calculate the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of the disruptive behaviors before and after the application of the intervention. The sample was composed of male and female African American students. For presentation purposes, the researcher collapsed the scores from the scale on the disruptive behavior into pretest and posttest scores. The higher the score, the more disruptive the behavior. The scores were collapsed into categories; 0-15, represents a low level of disruptive behavior, 16-30, represents a medium level of disruptive behavior, and 31-45, represents a high level of disruptive behavior.

The pretest scores had a mean score of 22.10 and a standard deviation of 13.01. On average, the students displayed a moderate amount of disruptive behavior. Eight students (40%), had scores ranging between 0 and 15, which indicates low disruptive behavior in the classroom of the students that attended the program. Six students (30%) had scores ranging between 16 and 30, which indicates moderate level of disruptive behavior. And six students (30%) had scores ranging between 31 and 45, which indicates
high outbursts of disruptive behavior.

The posttest scores had a mean of 12.15 and a standard deviation of 9.94. On average, the students, after the intervention, had a lower incidence of disruptive behavior. Fourteen students (70%), had scores ranging between 0 and 15, which indicates a low amount of disruptive behavior on part the students. Four students (20%), had scores ranging between 16 and 30, which indicates a moderate amount of disruptive behavior. And two students (10%), had scores ranging between 31 and 45, which indicates a high level of disruptive behavior.

Table 1.
Frequency Distribution of Disruptive Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pretest: mean=22.10  standard deviation= 13.01
Posttest: mean=12.15 standard deviation=9.94

Table 2 shows the results of a T-test analysis of difference between the pretest and
postest scores on disruptive behavior. The results revealed that pretest scores had a significantly higher mean than posttest scores. This difference in the means between pre and posttest scores on disruptive behavior was statistically significant at the .01, which indicates that the intervention, (i.e. DeKalb Life Skills Academy), had a significant effect on reducing disruptive behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that the DeKalb Life Skills Academy would have a significant effect on reducing disruptive behavior is accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>$t=2.72$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>$df=38$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.
Difference between Pretest & Posttest Scores on Disruptive Behavior
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This study examined the impact of the DeKalb Life Skills Academy on the disruptive behavior of African American students in grades 6-12. The mission statement of the DeKalb Life Skills Academy and this study are interrelated; both seeking alternative learning skills breaking the institutional norms that restrict and limit the learning opportunities of students that have been identified as displaying disruptive behavior. It was hypothesized that the alternative program, the DeKalb Life Skills Program, would reduce disruptive behavior. The hypothesis was accepted, the intervention appeared to reduce the disruptive behavior of the population.

Much of the literature describes and documents the historical presence and current status of alternative schools in the country. There is a difference between the school and the program. In the alternative school, the student is enrolled in classes that are credited to the student’s record. In the program the student is usually enrolled for shorter periods of time, and the presenting problem is addressed. Thus, the intervention possibly impacted the students because 1) the students were placed into small groups ranging from six to seven 2) within the small group settings, the students received a higher amount of individualized attention than in their school setting, 3) the intervention was a ten day intensive session, and the skills were reinforced daily in every group, and 4) the skills were taught using life situations, and with most of the attention directed at situation within the school setting.
This finding was consistent with most other researchers. According to Gold and Mann, the alternative school environment appears to have a positive effect on students' behavioral functioning. Alternative schools/programs have been accredited for their small size, and teacher-student ratio and its impact upon its’ success. The smallness of alternative schools appears to be an important factor contributing to a reduction in vandalism, violence, and school disruption.

The small class and teacher-student ratio, along with some other characteristics that were found in the Social Skills Training curriculum lead to the success of the program. One of the components of the training was problem solving. From studies reviewed in research by Cunliffe, it was determined that some young offenders were deficient in problem solving, and that social skills training had proven to be effective in improving their ability. Another component of the training was to improve self-image. Massimo and Shore found that delinquents enrolled in effective alternative education programs may improve first in self-image, next in control of aggression, and finally in attitudes towards authority.

The results from this study should be integrated in school social work practice with students. A vast amount of the referrals that school social workers receive are for

52 Arnove and Strout, “Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth”,455.
53 Cunliffe, “Social Skills Training with Young Offenders”,894.
54 Arnove and Strout, “Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth”,461.
incidences of disruptive behavior. Strategies for addressing disruptive behavior and the student are few. This type of program could be used as a solution. An alternative program that has a positive impact on reducing disruptive behavior could provide support to the school environment, and supply students with viable alternatives for conflicting situations with their peers, teachers, and administrators. Once the skills are acquired, and their application learned, the student, and one day adult, will become a viable contributor to society. With this information, the social worker could begin to educate the schools systems about the programs, and begin instituting a similar in-house program. Student groups are one of the therapeutic groups that could be organized, and they would mediate and provide support for the student. The social worker could also utilize social skills training with individualized children, and perhaps entire families.

Future research should also be conducted to address the misrepresentation of African American students in alternative schools/programs. There has been research that describe a negative aspect of alternative schools/programs, the disproportionate amount of minority students that are placed in them. Strout argued that minority students are often over represented in these programs, as they have a higher percentage of suspensions and exclusions form school due to the discriminatory practices of many school districts. The program used in this study was entirely composed of African American students', however, the results show that with the use of Social Skills Training, the incidents of disruptive behavior decreased. Future research could improve upon the programs by

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55 Robert F. Arnove and Toby Strout, “Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth”:467
studying this over representation of African American students and address the possible prejudice conceptions and paradigms that may contribute to this unequal representative. The teacher, as indicated in the literature, is the person who ordinarily makes the referral for disruptive behavior. If more in-house sessions, and seminars could address the issue of prejudice, bias, and the weight that one’s opinion, and self have upon one’s decisions, it may begin to address and change the disproportionate amounts of African American students in alternative schools/programs.

This study demonstrated that alternative schools/programs can produce positive effects, an alternative to existing programs that provide punitive measures for dealing with the student, and never addressing, or teaching other options with dealing with disruptive behavior. The social skills training curriculum provides the student with just this alternative. The child is not rebuked, but taught and encouraged to seek other means to dealing with their daily school situations.

Since the results showed a decrease in disruptive behavior, possible future research could begin to study the effects of a cognitive-behavioral program or class within the school setting, to take the place of in-house, and home suspensions. This would provide the student with a task during this period of time, and provide less time for engaging in other acts that may be nonproductive in nature.

Future research could also build upon this study. A limitation of this study is it’s use of a small sample size. The program could have produced a decrease in behavior under their existing conditions, but when it is duplicated the results may differ. The extent to which the findings of this study can be generalized beyond these study conditions, is
negatively impacted because of the small population size. Also to enhance the internal validity of future studies, experimental designs that have experimental and control groups should be used.
APPENDIX 1.
DEKALB LIFE SKILLS ACADEMY
RESEARCH EVALUATION SURVEY

Please fill out using a scale ranging from 0-5.

Attendance
1. How often, within the past week, has this student been tardy to your class. 

2. How often, within the past week, has this student had unexcused absences. 

3. How often, within the past week, has this student had excused absences. 

4. How often, within the past week, has this student cut class. 

5. How often, within the past week, has this student been absent from your class due to suspension. 

Behavior
1. How often, within the past week, has this student refused to remain seated during classroom instruction. 

2. How often, within the past week, has this student been in a physical altercation with other students. 

3. How often, within the past week, has this student been in a physical altercation with you, the teacher. 

4. How often, within the past week, has this student verbally threaten/teased other students. 

5. How often, within the past week, has this student used obscene behavior or swears in class. 

6. How often, within the past week, has this student talked back to you, inappropriately. 

7. How often, within the past week, has this student displayed a temper tantrum. 

8. How often, within the past week, has this student been destructive to own and/or others property. 

9. How often, within the past week, has this student refused to follow directions, (i.e. wil not do as told.)
TO: Dr. Ganga Persaud  
FROM: Dr. Gwendolyn Osby, Director  
        DeKalb Life Skills Academy  
        Dr. Deborah Sanders, Coordinator  
        DeKalb Life Skills Academy  
DATE: February 14, 1996  
RE: Student Intern Evaluation Study  

I am requesting permission to have an evaluation study done of the DeKalb Life Skills Academy Alternative Program by a Social Work intern, Jennifer Talley, from Clark Atlanta University.

Jennifer is working on her thesis, entitled "The Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Identified Students with Behavior and Attendance Problems in Grades 6 - 12". Pre and Post tests will be administered in the schools, to determine if the two week intensive Life Skills training has been effective in changing the students' behavior.

THE SCHOOL CANNOT LIVE APART FROM THE COMMUNITY


Schnobrich, Janice, Implementation of a Program of Prosocial Behavior in an Inner City Kindergarten Classroom, (July 1985), ERIC, ED 265 973.


Thompson, Kathryn L. And Kaarree A. Bundy, “Social Skills Training for Young Adolescents Symbolic and Behavioral Components” Adolescence, 30,(Fall 1995):723-734.

