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COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND ITS EFFECTS ON SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
IN THE THIRD GRADE

by
Robin A. Keller-Vicino

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved

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ABSTRACT

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND ITS EFFECTS ON SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
IN THE THIRD GRADE

2002/03

Dr. Randall Robinson
Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this action research project was to determine whether social interactions would improve when utilizing cooperative learning techniques. The social interactions observed included listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves.

The targeted population for this study was a class of fifteen third grade students. The researcher submitted pre- and post-treatment surveys to the students which measured the students' sense of classroom responsibility and their sense of personal responsibility within the class. The researcher also utilized journals and cooperative behavior checklists in order to compare student surveys with observed behaviors.

The researcher used *t* tests and Levenne's Test for Equality of Variances in order to determine significance of the data gathered. The results of this study indicated that there were no significant difference social interactions of third grade students when using cooperative learning techniques. The students studied did not improve upon their social skills through this research.

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I wish to thank the following people for helping me through this process, without them I would not be where I am today.

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Chapter I

Scope of the Study

Introduction

Previous research has shown that cooperative learning improves the chances for academic success. Cooperative learning is a relatively new and widely accepted method of teaching. The aim of teaching with cooperative work groups is to heighten the scholastic achievement of students by affording them opportunities for discussion, for learning from each other, and for pupil encouragement (Slavin, 1999).

Along with improved academic achievement, cooperative learning methods have also been discovered to improve upon social interactions within the classroom. These include listening skills, conflict resolution, leadership, and communication skills as well as teaching students to build trust within their cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning methods also allow for increased contact between students and permits them the opportunity to work with other students with whom they might not choose to work on their own (Dohrn, 2001).

Social skills are critical to the positive development of any child. These types of interpersonal skills need to be taught in order to ensure the success of the students in school and in their adult lives. A successful adult life is primarily measured by a person's ability to get along with others, work together, and support each other (Dohrn, 2001).

Statement of Problem

The goal of this study was to explore social skill growth through an action research study centered around cooperative learning and its effects on the development of positive interpersonal skills. The main purpose of this study was to answer the questions “Does cooperative learning enhance the use of positive social skills within the classroom?” and “Would these social interactions include listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves?”

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that third grade students would improve their social interactions as a result of cooperative learning. Third grade students who experienced instruction through cooperative learning techniques would have demonstrated appropriate social interactions.

Limitations of the Study

The following were the noted limitations of the study:

One limitation was that the researcher did not have access to a random sample. The data was collected from the students with whom the researcher was assigned. This meant that this study could not be translated for another population.

Another limitation of this study was that there was no control group included in the design of this study. This meant that this study cannot be generalized towards another class or population.

A third limitation was the fact that the researcher was also the classroom teacher. This may have effected the objectivity of the researcher. In terms of how the students were observed by the researcher, bias may have occurred.

Definition of Terms

Three terms must be defined in order to fully understand this study.

Cooperative Learning refers to a type of structured learning method in which students are assigned to small groups and work together in order to master academic material.

Heterogeneous Grouping refers to the mixture of students in any one cooperative learning group. These groups are generally based on mixed academic abilities.

Social Skills should be understood as those skills necessary for a classroom situation which optimize the teacher's time in the class. These skills included cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themself and not calling out, listening skills, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, and leadership.

Chapter II
Review of the Related Literature
Introduction

The research was designed to study the social interactions within a third grade classroom when observed in a cooperative learning group setting. The researcher hypothesized that as a result of cooperative learning techniques, the third graders in the study would have improved their social skills. These skills included listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves.

Cooperative Learning

The challenge for educators is to create the conditions under which students are likely to cross borders that delimit their narrow personal and social worlds and provide opportunities to experience the worlds of those different from them..

(Slavin, 1999, p.648)

Cooperative learning is an area that has been thoroughly researched in the last twenty years, and it has been shown to be an effective instructional strategy. The term cooperative learning pertains to a set of educational strategies that involves students working collaboratively in groups with little teacher supervision. There are, however, many different varieties of cooperative learning strategies being used and some of those are shown to be more effective than others on student performance. (Slavin, 1990).
Cooperative learning tries to reduce competition in a classroom by rewarding the students

based on the performance of their team. Effective cooperative learning groups ensure that the success of the individual leads to the success of the group. The teacher's main goal in a cooperative learning environment is to act as a guide, not as an authority. The teacher will delegate responsibility for group management to the students. The teacher will also mediate disagreements or problems, but only in extreme situations. It is the student's responsibility to resolve conflicts within their group. It is also the group's responsibility to delegate tasks in order to successfully complete the given project. Cooperative learning is structured so that each member of the team will make contributions to the final work product. Each student is held responsible in one way or another for the completed work project (Slavin, 1999).

Research has shown that teachers and students alike feel that there are academic and social benefits to working in groups. Therefore, many classrooms have adopted this type of strategy in some degree. Students have been found to spend more time on-task and were more likely to participate with cooperative learning than with whole class instruction. Cooperative learning groups have also been found to increase the speed and accuracy of the completion of an assignment versus individualized instruction. This became an advantage to the students when the material became more difficult (McManus, 1996).

The educational objective for cooperative learning is to heighten the scholastic achievement of students by affording them opportunities for discussion, in order to achieve a common goal. Students are put into groups and then given a task. They must

work together to create a solution or to generate a final product. This is not as simple as it may sound. The students must delegate task responsibilities, as well as resolve conflicts within their group on the way to a completed project. For the success of the product, it is necessary for each student to make a contribution. One student cannot be expected to take on the bulk of the work while the others sit back and observe. A successful cooperative learning group includes all members, with each member sharing in the workload. Other goals of cooperative learning include assuming leadership responsibilities, encouragement of positive group interactions, increasing academic achievement, and development of self esteem. These goals can be seen as by-products of a successful cooperative learning group environment. (McManus, 1996).

The simple placement of children in groups is not enough to constitute cooperative learning environment. Specific properties of cooperative learning must be considered. One characteristic shown to be effective, is ensuring that the groups are heterogeneous in nature. This means that cooperative learning groups should combine males and females as well as children with various socioeconomic backgrounds, diverse academic skill levels and different ethnicities. Homogeneous grouping is not considered to be the most effective strategy because the goal of cooperative learning for educators is the success of the entire class, not just one or two higher academic ability groups. (Slavin, 1990).

This allows for students of different backgrounds to learn from each other. An example of this is students with lower abilities will benefit from the children in their

group that possess higher academic abilities, because in a cooperative group they have the opportunity to observe the learning strategies of high ability students (McManus, 1996). Grouping males and females with different backgrounds also brings together students with different ideas and allows these children to share their feelings about certain issues in a controlled environment. This is another reason for the successful completion of projects done in cooperative learning groups (Slavin, 1990).

Another trait of successful cooperative learning is the reward structure. This is important because without an effective reward structure the students may not contribute equally to the project. There are three common reward structures in cooperative learning. The first is called "individualistic" (Slavin, 1990). This means there is an individual reward for individual achievement. Each student is graded on his or her contribution to the completed work project. Individual accountability ensures that all students participate in the required project. If there is no such accountability, then often it is the strongest of the group who master the material while the weaker students do not progress.

The second type of reward structure is called "cooperative" (Slavin, 1990). This means that the group is rewarded for the group's achievement. This is an important consideration when assessing the effectiveness of a particular cooperative learning group. If the students are aware of the fact that they will be rewarded as a group they are more likely to work together in order to achieve that goal.

The third, most common, and possibly most effective, reward structure is considered an "interdependent" reward structure. An interdependent reward structure is a

group reward for individual achievement. The use of an interdependent reward structure maintains that the success of the group as a whole is dependent upon each member of the group. This means that each member of the group must contribute to the final product in order to receive a reward for the group as a whole. This reward structure is an incentive for all members of the group to learn the material (McManus, 1996).

The final element of a successful cooperative learning experience is the “task structure” (McManus, 1996). There are two basic types of task structure to be used in cooperative learning; group study or specialized individual tasks. A group study task structure allows all team members to work together in order to master the material, solve problems or develop a product. This type of task structure is an opportunity to practice conflict resolution. It also requires the students to delegate responsibility throughout the group in order to complete an assignment. A specialized individual task structure presents students with the responsibility of learning material independently and sharing the information with the rest of the group. This type of task structure allows each student to individually utilize his or her strengths in order to research a particular topic. That student is then able to come together with the group and teach the others in the group the information learned. This type of task structure uses the strengths of each group member in order to complete a given assignment.

When implementing cooperative learning into a classroom one must also consider the configuration of the groups to be used. Three of the most commonly used formations are Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), Team-Games-Tournaments (TGT)

and Team- Assisted-Individualization (TAI). These are very similar in nature. In all three formats the students are placed into teams and given material to master. But when using an STAD format an individual quiz is given at the end of each lesson while TGT uses academic competitions. TAI differs in that it is used mainly for mathematics, whereas, the other types can be used across subjects (Slavin, 1999).

The main components of STAD are individual accountability, team rewards, and equal opportunities for success. With this method the students are divided into heterogeneous groups. After each group has learned the assigned material, each member is quizzed individually. Each group is rewarded based on the individual improvements over his or her past record. A class newsletter is then used to report team scores, in order to further enhance group responsibility (Slavin, 1999).

Teams-Games Tournaments (TGT) contains the same components of Student Teams-Achievement Division, but the main difference is that TGT replaces individual quizzes and the improvement score system with academic game tournaments. Students from each team compete with the students from other teams of the same level to attempt to contribute to their team scores (Slavin, 1999).

The final most commonly used group configuration, Team- Assisted Individualization (TAI), combines the use of STAD and TGT with individual instruction in mathematics. Students work in small groups of four to five on mathematical materials at their own individual levels and rates. The students are responsible for the management and checking of the materials, while helping each other with problems or questions that

may arise. This allows the teacher more time for small group instruction. The teams are rewarded certificates based on a preset number of units mastered by all team members each week. This has been found to be an effective way of ensuring group responsibility for the completed assignment (Slavin, 1999).

Years of research have shown that cooperative learning is extremely effective in improving academic achievement in students (Slavin, 1990, 1999; McManus, 1996). Cooperative learning has been found to be efficient because the students are given an opportunity to discuss the issue at hand and learn from each other. This not only entails the academic material, but also includes study suggestions and interpersonal skills as well. It has also been found to increase on-task behavior and increase a student's motivation to master the material (Slavin, 1990).

Robert E. Slavin (1999) reports that "cooperative learning promotes some of the most important goals in American education: increasing the academic achievement of all students while simultaneously improving intergroup relations..." Cooperative learning has been found to have advantages over other types of learning. Students have a chance to learn about working with others and to learn about the necessary steps taken to complete a project with others. These students are not only gaining academic knowledge and skills, but they are also establishing a group culture. Pupils learn that some goals in life can be achieved by working with each other rather than in a highly competitive situation. They get the need to realize that sometimes cooperation is more effective than competition. Some students find that they learn best while working in a cooperative learning group

rather than alone, and therefore may find school more enjoyable. These students get the support they need from the other students, rather than the perception that they are all alone in their endeavor. Students must also begin to learn at an early age that humans are dependent upon each other. No one can lead a successful life completely alone. Through cooperative learning, they can learn the skills necessary to survive (Ediger, 2001).

Social Skills

Indeed, the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not IQ, not school grades, and not classroom behavior, but rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are able to sustain close relationships with other children, and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously at risk.

(McClellan, 1993, p.1)

Social skills are essential to the positive development of any child. These skills can be defined as: “socially acceptable learned behaviors that allow a person to interact with others in a way that elicits positive responses and helps avoid negative responses (Dohrn, 2001p.27).” Social skills are deemed important because a successful adult life is primarily measured by a person’s ability to get along with others, work together, and support each other. Most adults are not looked kindly upon if they are monetarily successful and not socially successful as well. (Dohrn, 2001).

Consider the fact that many discussions about a child’s social skills are about negative behavior. People tend to focus on the negative behaviors, rather than the positive ones. It would be much more beneficial to a class to be able to praise good behavior than to punish bad behavior. Teachers could spend more time actually teaching a class rather

than disciplining an inappropriate student (Burke, 1995).

Research has also shown that a child who does not possess minimal interpersonal skills by the age of six could be at risk throughout life. One of the best ways to judge how a child will act as an adult is through his or her ability to get along with other students. The students who are aggressive or have difficulty getting along with other children are thought to be those most at risk (McClellan, 1993).

McClellan and Katz (1993) have developed a checklist for teachers to use in order to measure a student's social behaviors. The checklist reads as follows:

“The child usually:

1. Approaches others positively
2. Expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions
3. Asserts own rights and needs appropriately
4. Is not easily intimidated by bullies
5. Expresses frustrations and anger effectively and without harming others or property
6. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
7. Enters ongoing discussion on the subject; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities
8. Takes turns fairly easily
9. Shows interest in others; exchanges information from others

appropriately

10. Negotiates and compromises with others appropriately

11. Does not draw inappropriate attention to self

12. Accepts and enjoys peers and adults of ethnic groups other than his or her own

13. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work

14. Interacts non-verbally with other children with smiles, waves, nods, etc.”

Social skills are essential to a child’s future, but they are not inherent. People do not innately know how to interact properly with others. These kinds of skills need to be taught and students need to be motivated in their use. A teacher cannot assume that students have the necessary social skills for successful participation in school (Lyman, 1993). In order for students to work together toward a common goal they must learn to trust one another, resolve conflicts constructively and to communicate effectively. This does not happen instantly. It is a teacher’s responsibility to demonstrate the need for these kinds of interpersonal skills. It is also the teacher’s responsibility to allow these skills to be rehearsed before expecting these kinds of behaviors (Johnson, 1990).

Cooperative Learning and its Effects on Social Skills

When students engage in a cooperative social context that entails mutual goals for all participants, creates positive interdependence among the participants, and provides structures opportunities for positive social interactions, they are likely to apply learned social skills across diverse individuals, activities, or situations.

(Rutherford, 1998, p.357)

Cooperative learning is very social in nature. This is why using cooperative learning groups in order to teach positive interpersonal skills is so effective (Slavin, 1990). Cooperative learning has also been known to encourage productive student interactions and behaviors. Students in cooperative groups must be able to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts constructively in order to get the work done (Slavin, 1990).

Recently, there have been studies done that demonstrate the effectiveness of cooperative learning on social skills. Over and over it has been proven that cooperative learning groups promote positive interpersonal skills in the classroom (Dohrn, 2001; Slavin 1990, 1999; Carter, 2001). These studies have shown that the use of these kinds of groups enables students to get the direction they need in order to obtain positive social skills in class and in the future. These skills include listening skills, conflict resolution, leadership and communication skills as well as teaching students to build trust within their cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning methods also allow for increased contact between students and permit them the opportunity to work with other students with whom they might not choose to work on their own (Dohrn, 2001).

Therefore, the goals of cooperative learning should not only be academic goals, but they should include social goals as well. Through cooperative work groups children should not only be working together in order to master a task, but also to be working together in order to teach each other appropriate behaviors. Students with more confidence can be encouraging to those who are most likely to sit quietly, and the quieter

students can model appropriate listening behaviors (Dohrn, 2001).

Social skills are critical to the positive development of any child. These types of interpersonal skills need to be taught in order to ensure the success of the students in school and in their adult lives. A successful adult life is primarily measured by a person's ability to get along with others, work together, and support each other (Dohrn, 2001).

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

This study was designed to research the effects of cooperative learning groups on social interactions within a third grade class. The researcher hypothesized that as a result of cooperative learning techniques, the third grade students in the study would have improved their social skills. These skills included listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves.

The literature review addressed the meaning of cooperative learning. The studies described in the literature review concluded that cooperative learning is an effective tool in the classroom, for both the students and the teachers. Cooperative learning is also thought to be an effective method to improve upon classroom behaviors and social interactions.

Sample / Subjects

The sample for this study was a class of third grade students from a suburban town in southern New Jersey. The students in this class attended one of three community elementary schools which were within walking distance from their homes.

The subjects for this study were a class of fifteen, eight and nine-year-old students. This class contained six females and nine males. Three of these children received basic skills instruction in mathematics and literacy. These students remained with the class for the majority of the school day. The class consisted of five African

American students, one Hispanic student, one Chinese student, and eight Caucasian students. The academic abilities in the classroom ranged from classified resource room candidates to students in the gifted and talented program.

Nine of the students were excused from class every other week, during mathematics, to attend activities with the gifted and talented program instructor. The remaining three average ability students stayed in the classroom for small group instruction.

Experimental Design

This was an action research project that measured the effectiveness of cooperative learning on social interactions within the classroom. Action research is a systematic inquiry conducted by researchers with the intention of gathering information about how schools operate and how their students learn. This research enabled the researcher to gain insights on effecting positive changes within the school environment.

This study was conducted in order to determine whether cooperative learning was an effective tool for promoting positive social interactions within a classroom. The researcher was interested in whether cooperative learning was effective in encouraging positive interpersonal skills such as listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves.

Procedure

For this study the researcher gave the subjects a pre-treatment survey, which consisted of two student surveys (see appendix A). One survey evaluated the students' sense of personal responsibility and the other evaluated the students' sense of classroom responsibility.

Then the researcher put the students into heterogeneous cooperative learning groups. The researcher introduced a treatment which included verbal prompts relating to manners, courtesy, encouragement, and cooperative group skills. Finally, the researcher administered both student surveys again as a post-treatment survey. The researcher developed journal entry prompts and observational checklists in order to remain focused (See appendix B and C). Throughout the life of the study the researcher also evaluated information from these personal journal entries and observational checklists. The researcher gleaned the majority of the data for this study from the pre- and post-treatment surveys. As a result, the findings of this study were qualitative in nature.

The researcher did not have access to a random sample. The data was collected from the students with whom the researcher was assigned. In order to maintain the validity of this study, the researcher varied the timing of these verbal prompts and observations in order to observe the students at different times of the day. This allowed the researcher to observe the students in the morning as well as in the afternoon, therefore, determining whether timing was an issue when dealing with positive interpersonal skills.

The timing and step by step process for this study were as follows:

Weeks 1 and 2 - The researcher administered the pre-treatment survey to the students and developed a baseline of activity through observation checklists and journal entries. The researcher was trying to determine the levels of positive social interactions that were already established in the classroom.

Weeks 3 and 4 - The researcher began the introduction of the treatment starting with prompting, reviewing, and practicing positive listening skills. The researcher used verbal prompts to maintain the level of positive listening skills (see appendix D).

Weeks 5 and 6 - The researcher continued the treatment by prompting, reviewing, and practicing keeping hands and feet to oneself. The researcher used verbal prompts in order to remind the students that contact between the students was inappropriate in the classroom (see appendix E).

Weeks 7 and 8 - Treatment continued through prompting, reviewing, and practicing manners and courtesy. The researchers used verbal prompts to ensure that the students were treating the teacher and each other with respect (see appendix F).

Weeks 9 and 10 - This time period included prompting, reviewing, and practicing the values of encouragement for one another. The researcher used this time period to explain to the students the value of being supportive to each other (see appendix G).

Weeks 11 and 12 - This last part of the treatment included prompting, review, and practice of positive cooperative group skills. The researcher used verbal prompts in order to impart the benefits of cooperating within work groups (see appendix H).

Week 13 - During this last week of the study the researcher administered the post-treatment survey and compiled the data from the previous weeks of study.

Description of Instruments

The instruments used to measure the social skills developed or maintained through cooperative learning groups were pre-treatment and post-treatment surveys created by the researcher. These surveys used a Likert Scale to determine personal responsibility and classroom responsibility of social interactions within the class. The surveys measured items such as listening skills, responsibility, cooperation in the classroom, and sharing ideas in class. This information was also gathered using researcher checklists of observations and journal entries, which were used as tools for student survey comparisons. The observational checklist were also based on a Likert

scale and they measured researcher observations of items such as peaceful group dynamics, encouraging participation, good listening skills and keeping hands and feet to oneself.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Findings

Introduction

This study was designed to research the effects of cooperative learning groups on social interactions within a third grade class. The researcher hypothesized that as a result of cooperative learning techniques, the third graders in the study would have improved their social skills. These skills included listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves.

The literature review addressed the meaning of cooperative learning. The studies described in the literature review concluded that cooperative learning is an effective tool in the classroom, for both the students and the teachers. Cooperative learning is also thought to be an effective method to improve upon classroom behaviors and social interactions.

For this study the researcher gave the subjects a pre-treatment survey and a post-treatment survey, which consisted of two student surveys. One survey evaluated the students' sense of personal responsibility and the other evaluated the students' sense of classroom responsibility. Then the researcher put the students into heterogeneous cooperative learning groups. The researcher introduced a treatment which included verbal prompts relating to manners, courtesy, encouragement, and cooperative group skills.

Results

The results for this study were drawn from two separate *t* tests. One *t* test determined the mean score for the pre- and post-treatment survey which evaluated the students' sense of personal responsibility in the classroom. The other *t* test determined the mean score for the pre- and post-treatment survey which evaluated the students' sense of their classmates responsibility within the classroom.

Table 1 represents both the pre- and post-treatment survey which evaluated the students' sense of personal responsibility in the classroom. This table shows the results of a *t* test with the mean score, standard deviation, and standard error mean. The mean score was developed on a scale of one to five with one representing an answer of "All of the time" and five representing an answer of "Never". It was determined through these *t* tests that the results were not statistically significant.

When comparing the researcher journals and checklists with the data from the surveys, the researcher determined that the information from the journal and checklists coincide with the data from the surveys. This further proves that the change in scores between the pre-treatment surveys and post treatment surveys are not deemed significant.

There is not sufficient evidence to prove the hypothesis, given that the data does not indicate a significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment survey mean scores. There was no significant difference in improvement of third grade students' social interactions as a result of cooperative learning techniques.

The mean score for question one was 1.73 in the pre-test and 1.53 in the post-test with a standard deviation of 1.03 and .64 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was lower, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question two was 1.47 in the pre-test and 1.40 in the post-test with a standard deviation of .64 and .51 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was lower, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question three was 2.40 in the pre-test and 1.93 in the post-test with a standard deviation of .99 and .80 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was lower, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question four was 1.67 in the pre-test and 1.73 in the post-test with a standard deviation of .82 and 1.10 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was higher, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question five was 1.53 in the pre-test and 1.67 in the post-test with a standard deviation of .74 and .72 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was higher, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

table 1

Personal Responsibility Pre- and Post-Treatment Survey Mean Results

	Type of Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
I listen to others when they are speaking.	Pre Test	15	1.73	1.03	.27
	Post test	15	1.53	.64	.17
I am nice to other people.	Pre Test	15	1.47	.64	.17
	Post test	15	1.40	.51	.13
I feel like I am able to share my ideas in class.	Pre Test	15	2.40	.99	.25
	Post test	15	1.93	.80	.21
I am in charge of my own actions.	Pre Test	15	1.67	.82	.21
	Post test	15	1.73	1.10	.28
I keep my hands and my feet to myself.	Pre Test	15	1.53	.74	.19
	Post test	15	1.67	.72	.19

Table 2 represents both the pre- and post-survey which evaluated the students' sense of their classmates responsibility within the classroom. This table shows the results of a *t* test with the mean score, standard deviation, and standard error mean. The mean score was developed on a scale of one to five with one representing an answer of "All of the time", and five representing an answer of "Never". It was determined through these *t* tests that the results were not statistically significant.

The mean score for question one was 2.73 in the pre-test and 2.80 in the post-test with a standard deviation of 1.22 and 1.26 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was higher, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question two was 2.80 in the pre-test and 2.00 in the post-test with a standard deviation of 1.37 and .65 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was lower, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question three was 2.00 in the pre-test and 2.07 in the post-test with a standard deviation of 1.00 and .80 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was higher, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question four was 2.33 in the pre-test and 2.53 in the post-test with a standard deviation of .90 and .64 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was higher, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

The mean score for question five was 2.27 in the pre-test and 2.00 in the post-test with a standard deviation of .46 and .93 respectively. The score for this question in the post-test was lower, but not enough to be considered a significant change.

table 2

Classroom Responsibility Pre- and Post-Treatment Survey Mean Results

	Type of Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Do you think your classmates talk too much during class?	Pre Test	15	2.73	1.22	.32
	Post test	15	2.80	1.26	.33
How often do your classmates practice good listening skills in class?	Pre Test	15	2.80	1.37	.34
	Post test	15	2.00	.65	.17
Do you think your classmates feel like they are able to share their ideas with the class?	Pre Test	15	2.00	1.00	.26
	Post test	15	2.07	.80	.21
How often do your classmates keep their hands and feet to themselves?	Pre Test	15	2.33	.90	.23
	Post test	15	2.53	.64	.17
Do you feel your classmates take charge of their own actions?	Pre Test	15	2.27	.46	.12
	Post test	15	2.00	.93	.24

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study was designed to research the effects of cooperative learning groups on social interactions within a third grade class. The researcher hypothesized that as a result of cooperative learning techniques, the third grade students in the study would have improved their social skills. These skills included listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves.

The literature review addressed the meaning of cooperative learning. The studies described in the literature review concluded that cooperative learning is an effective tool in the classroom, for both the students and the teachers. Cooperative learning is also thought to be an effective method to improve upon classroom behaviors and social interactions.

For this study the researcher gave the subjects a pre-treatment survey and a post-treatment survey, which consisted of two student surveys. One survey evaluated the students' sense of personal responsibility and the other evaluated the students' sense of classroom responsibility. Then the researcher put the students into heterogeneous cooperative learning groups. The researcher introduced a treatment which included verbal prompts relating to manners, courtesy, encouragement, and

cooperative group skills.

Summary of the Problem

The goal of this study was to explore social skill growth through an action research study centered around cooperative learning and its effects on the development of positive interpersonal skills. The main purpose of this study was to answer the questions “Does cooperative learning enhance the use of positive social skills within the classroom?” and “Would these social interactions include listening and speaking, courtesy, peaceful conflict resolution, leadership, and cooperative behaviors such as keeping ones hands to themselves?”

Summary of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that third grade students would improve their social interactions as a result of cooperative learning. Third grade students who experienced instruction through cooperative learning techniques would have demonstrated appropriate social interactions.

Summary of the Procedure

For this study the researcher gave the subjects a pre-treatment survey, which consisted of two student surveys. One survey evaluated the students’ sense of personal responsibility and the other evaluated the students’ sense of classroom responsibility.

Then the researcher put the students into heterogeneous cooperative learning groups. The researcher introduced a treatment which included verbal prompts relating to manners, courtesy, encouragement, and cooperative group skills. Finally, the

researcher administered both student surveys again as a post-treatment survey. The researcher developed journal entry prompts and observational checklists in order to remain focused.

Throughout the life of the study the researcher also evaluated information from these personal journal entries and observational checklists. The researcher gleaned the majority of the data for this study from the pre- and post-treatment surveys. As a result, the findings of this study were qualitative in nature.

Summary of the Findings

The data does not indicate a significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment survey mean scores, and there is not sufficient evidence to prove the hypothesis. There was no significant difference in improvement of third grade students' social interactions as a result of cooperative learning.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that there were no significant difference social interactions of third grade students when using cooperative learning techniques. The students studied did not improve upon their social skills through this research. Given that a relatively small sample was used for this research, the data that was collected is not generalizable toward another sample. This study did not support similar studies that prove that cooperative learning has an impact on the social skills of students in a classroom.

Recommendations for Further Study

Cooperative learning has been found to be an effective method for teaching

many grade levels and subject areas. Further research on this subject might warrant the researcher to have some sort of formal training in cooperative learning before embarking on this type of study. There are many nuances in true cooperative learning methods and it would have been helpful to learn about them prior to this study.

Another aspect of this study to be considered is the age of the sample. Third grade students may have been too young to evaluate their own actions with any accuracy. These types of surveys may be more useful and accurate with a group of older students.

This study may have been more effective if conducted over a longer period of time. There was not truly enough time given to the researcher to study the long term effects of cooperative learning on the social skills of students.

The final recommendation for further research of this topic is to utilize a group of students who are not accustomed to cooperative learning methods. The students who were used in this study had previous experience with cooperative learning techniques, and were already well-versed in them. The researcher believes it might be more beneficial to use a sample that has no prior experience with cooperative learning in order to determine the true effects of this method on the students.

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Appendix A

PRE-AND POST-TREATMENT SURVEYS

Student Survey I
(personal responsibility)
Pre- and Post- Observation

Directions: Please read the statements and circle the one you think describes you the best.

1. I listen to others when they are speaking.

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

2. I am nice to other people.

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

3. I feel like I am able to share my ideas in class.

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

4. I am in charge of my own actions.

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

5. I keep my hands and my feet to myself.

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

Student Survey II

Pre- and Post- Observation

Directions: Please read the questions and circle the one you think answers the question best.

1. Do you think your classmates talk too much during class?

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

2. How often do your classmates practice good listening skills in class?

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

3. Do you think your classmates feel like they are able to share their ideas with the class?

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

4. How often do your classmates keep their hands and feet to themselves?

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

5. Do you feel your classmates take charge of their own actions?

All of the time Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

Appendix B
RESEARCHER JOURNAL ENTRIES

Teacher Observations

DATE: _____

Not listening to speaker	Lack of cooperation
Not keeping hands and feet to self	Not respectful of others
Interrupting others	Not courteous to others

Teacher Journal

DATE: _____

Prompts

Interruptions	
Inappropriate Contact	
Inattentiveness	
Lack of Confidence	

Appendix C

COOPERATIVE GROUP SKILLS CHECKLIST

Cooperative Group Skills Checklist

	0	1	2	3
Moves quietly into groups				
Stays with group				
Uses quiet voices				
Encourages other to participate				
Keeps hands and feet to self				
Uses good listening skills				
Respectful to other ideas				
Joins in group				
Displays leadership				
Peaceful group dynamic				
Willingness to compromise				
0= not at all 1=a little bit 2=pretty much 3=very much				

Appendix D

VERBAL PROMPTS FOR POSITIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Verbal Prompts for Positive Listening Skills

1. Keep your eyes on the speaker.
2. Face your body in the direction of the speaker.
3. Do not interrupt the speaker.
4. Wait until the speaker has finished before asking questions.
5. Do not chat with your neighbor while the speaker is talking.
6. Keep your hands and feet still while someone is speaking.

Appendix E

VERBAL PROMPTS FOR KEEPING HANDS AND FEET TO ONESELF

Verbal Prompts for Keeping Hands and Feet to Oneself

1. Do not touch your neighbor.
2. Make sure there is enough space between yourself and the person sitting next to you.
3. Keep your belongings in front of you or do not spread your belongings out all over the table.
4. Do not swing your feet, you may inadvertently kick someone.
5. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

Appendix F

VERBAL PROMPTS FOR MANNERS AND COURTESY

Verbal Prompts for Manners and Courtesy

1. Say "Please" and "Thank you" when asking for items or supplies.
2. Say "Excuse me" when you need to get by, or you bump into someone.
3. Clean up your area as a group - do not leave the area until everything is put away.
4. Help your classmates whenever possible.
5. Pass out supplies to the entire table, don't just grab one for yourself.

Appendix G

VERBAL PROMPTS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Verbal Prompts for Encouragement

1. Make sure your comments about a teammate remain positive.
2. Be respectful of other ideas. If you disagree with an idea, present your argument in a positive manner. Do not yell at, or belittle, the person you disagree with.
3. Being supportive to your teammates will make this experience beneficial to everyone involved.
4. Cooperate with the people in your group. You must work together in order to complete this project.
5. Make sure that all members of your team have presented their ideas as to what the completed project should look like.

Appendix H

VERBAL PROMPTS FOR POSITIVE COOPERATIVE GROUP SKILLS

Verbal Prompts for Positive Cooperative Group Skills

1. Be willing to compromise.
2. Use good listening skills.
3. Stay with your group while working on projects.
4. Join in your group, don't let the other members do all of the work.
5. Encourage the members in your group to participate. The product will be better if everyone gets a chance to contribute their ideas.

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