

The Impact of the Peaceful People Program on Elementary Students in an Urban School District Using Comparison Groups

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of the *Peaceful People* program on elementary school students from an urban school district. There were 843 students in the experimental group and 224 in the control group. There were significant reductions pre- to post- for the experimental group on the following variables: Risky behavior, arguing, fighting, feelings about hurting oneself, and an increase in one's ability to control one's temper. Between experimental and control groups at post-test (with no significant differences at pre-test) there were significant reductions for the experimental group in arguing, fighting, and self-injurious behavior with increases in ability to control one's temper, being well behaved, being prepared, cooperating, and speaking up for oneself. Gender, racial, and developmental differences are discussed. These compelling findings suggest that the *Peaceful People* program should be included among programs with demonstrated success, and schools attempting to address these behaviors should consider its implementation.

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Introduction

As universal level violence prevention programs grow in popularity at the elementary level, it is imperative that we learn more about those programs that are successful in addressing violent behavior and its associated problems. Funding agencies are demanding that schools choose programs with demonstrated success as we move toward more evidence-based practice.

Agencies such as the Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and Community Violence as well as the Safe and Drug-Free Schools panels have sought to identify programs as having “demonstrated” success or to be “promising.” The latter identified elementary school-based intervention and prevention programs such as *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* as “exemplary.” *Second Step* identified factors (e.g., aggression) that were reduced significantly as a result of participation in the program versus those in a control group (Grossman et. al., 1997). Programs such as “Peacemakers” and “Peers Making Peace” and “Aggression Replacement training” and others were labeled as “promising.” The former identified such programs for elementary programs as “Teaching Students to be Peacemakers,” “Kid Power” and “I Can Problem Solve” as having demonstrated success. There are research articles available from the websites and program directors of these programs. (More information is available from the following websites:

www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert_panel/2001exemplary_sddfs.html

www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert_panel/2001promising_sddfs.html

www.hamfish.org/pub/evpp.html).

Another elementary social skills program designed to develop pro social skills, reduce violence and improve the overall climate of the school is the *Peaceful People* Program. According to the program materials for the program:

Peaceful People, a comprehensive youth development and violence prevention program, is a service of PRL (Peaceful Resolutions for Living, Inc.). Peaceful People uses an integrated character and conflict resolution education curricula and provides a series of activity based classroom lesson plans which empowers facilitators/teachers to make meaningful connections for students between the skills that are needed for character development and the academic foundations in which they learn most effectively.

The Peaceful People program is administered by PRL (Peaceful Resolutions for Living, Inc.) in Central New York. The program was developed with input from schools and grounded in research on best practice. Peaceful People was developed around the five pro social skills (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-Control) identified by AGS (American Guidance Service). Each session integrates development of one or more of those core social skills along with conflict resolution strategies and problem solving skills. The lessons take place in the classroom with the teacher present as the trainer runs the sessions that are often interactive and cooperative where students are able to practice the skills learned. (For a Peaceful People Program Overview see Appendix A).

To determine if the five core social skills (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-Control) and other violence-related factors were improved as a result of implementation of the Peaceful People program, an urban elementary school district in Central New York participated in this study. Utica is a small city in Oneida County; a part of the Mohawk River Valley in Central New York. The city of Utica has been severely burdened by long-term decay of its infrastructure, population decline and loss of its major economic mainstays. Currently the UCSD serves 289 pre-kindergarteners and 9,035 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in 1 high school, 2 middle schools, and 9 elementary schools. They have a 56% white student population and 44% minority population, primarily Black, Asian and Hispanic students. English as second language students comprise 14% of the student population and 15% of the student population are special education students.

According to the 2000 Census data, Utica is *the 2nd most impoverished city* in New York State. The Census data also indicates Utica has a higher than average rate of female-headed households than the balance of Oneida County, 16.5% for Utica as compared to 11.6 % for the county. Additionally, 66.6% of these female-headed households with children under the age of 5 are families that are below the poverty level. City of Utica statistics indicate 59.9% of all Utica households were at low and moderate income levels established by HUD. Statistics further reveal that 14% of the children of Utica reside in distressed neighborhoods. An additional 4% of the children reside in severely distressed neighborhoods. Add to these factors, Utica is home to the *3rd largest refugee relocation center* in the United States. The number of immigrants coming to Utica has tripled since 1994. The most recently arriving immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa add to the district's challenges of educating children from impoverished families.

In a previous evaluation completed in 2001 by Knowledge Systems and Research, Inc. on the *Peaceful People* program, it was found that the program was promising in its impact as stated: "Pre/post Peaceful People program testing suggests the programming is very promising in its impact. This is particularly so for teachers' perceptions of change in students skills and behavior." What was less clear from this study was the impact on the children based on children's self-reports of their own behaviors. In a smaller scale study completed on Peaceful People focusing on student self reports, it was found that students had significant reductions in arguing, nervousness/anxiety, becoming easily upset; with reductions (although not significant) in thoughts of hurting others and fighting (Williams,

2003). In this current study, the *Peaceful People* program was examined to determine the behaviors that were improved significantly as a result of students' participation in the program based on students' self reports as compared to a demographically similar group that did not receive the program (the control group).

Method

Students in 6 elementary schools within the Utica City School District participated in this study. Grades 4-6 were targeted because their literacy levels were thought to be higher, thus making them better able to understand and complete the survey.

There are 5,155 students enrolled in Grades K – 6 in the UCSD elementary schools and an additional 289 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten. Within the 9 elementary schools, 48 % of students are minority and 75.7% receive free or reduced lunch. Across elementary schools the poverty rate of those living below the federal poverty line is between 65-87%.

During 2002-2003, the elementary schools accounted for 637 suspensions or 31.6% of the district's total suspensions. Bullying is also a problem with 1 in 6 students reporting that they constantly feel teased, threatened, or harassed by other youth. While drug use has declined, drug arrests of youth 10 -21 increased by 44% from 1999 – 2003. In 2003, 50% of Oneida County Probation's youth caseload lived in the city of Utica although Utica's population is about 25% of the county.

A modified version of the Student Behavior Checklist (Meier, McDougal, and Bardos, 2002) was administered to elementary students (n=1067) using scripted instructions in six elementary schools in the Utica City School District the week preceding the first day of the Peaceful People program. Of these students, 843 were in the experimental classrooms (those who received the full six week Peaceful People program) and 224 were in the comparison classrooms (which received no program). In the experimental classrooms Peaceful People trainers presented the same 45 minute lessons (6 of 18 available lessons) once per week over the next six weeks. The same survey was administered in the week following the final lesson (after 6 weeks and 6 sessions of the program). At post-test there were 1018 students with 803 in the experimental group and 215 in the control group. The scale was a 3-point scale (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often) and students were asked to rate their perceptions on a variety of behaviors and feelings (For a copy of the modified Student Behavior Checklist see Appendix B).

Demographics

Pre-test/Post-test x Experimental/Control

	Pre-test	Post-test	Total
Experimental	843	803	1646
Control	224	215	439
Total	1067	1018	2085

Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Experimental	777	842	1619
Control	202	230	432
Total	979	1072	2051

Grade

Grade	3	4	5	6	Total
Experimental	9	546	497	574	1626
Control		160	177	97	434
Total	9	706	674	671	2060

Note: Some third graders in special classes participated in the survey

Race/Ethnicity

	Native	Pacific	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Experimental	14	3	873	255	181	46	242
Control	13	3	130	52	56	21	156
Total	27	6	1003	307	237	67	398

Note: Numbers based on self-report

Results

Significant differences pre- to post-test for experimental group

Students in the experimental group were compared before and after the Peaceful People program. There were statistically significant reductions pre- to post- on the following variables:

- Risky behavior
- Arguing
- Fighting
- Feelings about hurting oneself

There was a statistically significant increase in:

- One's ability to control one's temper

Significant differences between experimental and control groups at post-test

Between experimental and control groups at post-test (with no significant differences at pre-test) there were significant differences for the following variables:

- Arguing
- Fighting
- Ability to control one's temper
- Being well behaved
- Thinking of others (empathy)

There were significant differences in the following variables between the experimental and control groups at post-test on the following variables (however the groups were significantly different at pre-test as well):

- Thoughts of hurting oneself
- Being prepared
- Being responsible
- Cooperating
- Speaking up for oneself (assertion)

Experimental group comparing pre- and post-test

Risky Behaviors. At pre-test the experimental group had statistically significantly higher scores (n=837, m=1.45) than at post-test (n=798, m=1.38) ($t=2.14$, $p<.05$).

1=never
2=sometimes
3=often

Crosstab

Count		I engage in dangerous and risky behaviors			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=pre 2=post	1.00	556	182	99	837
	2.00	564	162	72	798
Total		1120	344	171	1635

$p<.05$

At times I argue with others. At pre-test the experimental group had statistically significantly higher scores (n=834, m=2.10) than at post-test (n=799, m=2.04) ($t=2.08$, $p<.05$).

Crosstab

Count		At times I argue with others			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=pre 2=post	1.00	152	443	239	834
	2.00	152	466	181	799
Total		304	909	420	1633

$p<.05$

I can control my temper when I am upset. At pre-test the experimental group had significantly lower scores (n=837, m=2.19) than at post-test (n=797, m=2.28), $t=2.6$, $p<.05$

Crosstab

Count		I can control my temper when I am upset			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=pre 2=post	1.00	172	337	328	837
	2.00	132	310	355	797
Total		304	647	683	1634

$p < .05$

I fight with others physically. At pre-test the experimental group had statistically significantly higher scores ($n=837$, $m=1.41$) than at post-test ($n=795$, $m=1.33$) ($t=2.57$, $p < .05$).

Crosstab

Count		I fight with others physically			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=pre 2=post	1.00	566	198	73	837
	2.00	581	164	50	795
Total		1147	362	123	1632

$p < .05$

I have thoughts of hurting myself. At pre-test the experimental group had statistically significantly higher scores ($n=837$, $m=1.35$) than at post-test ($n=798$, $m=1.27$) ($t=1.89$, $p < .05$).

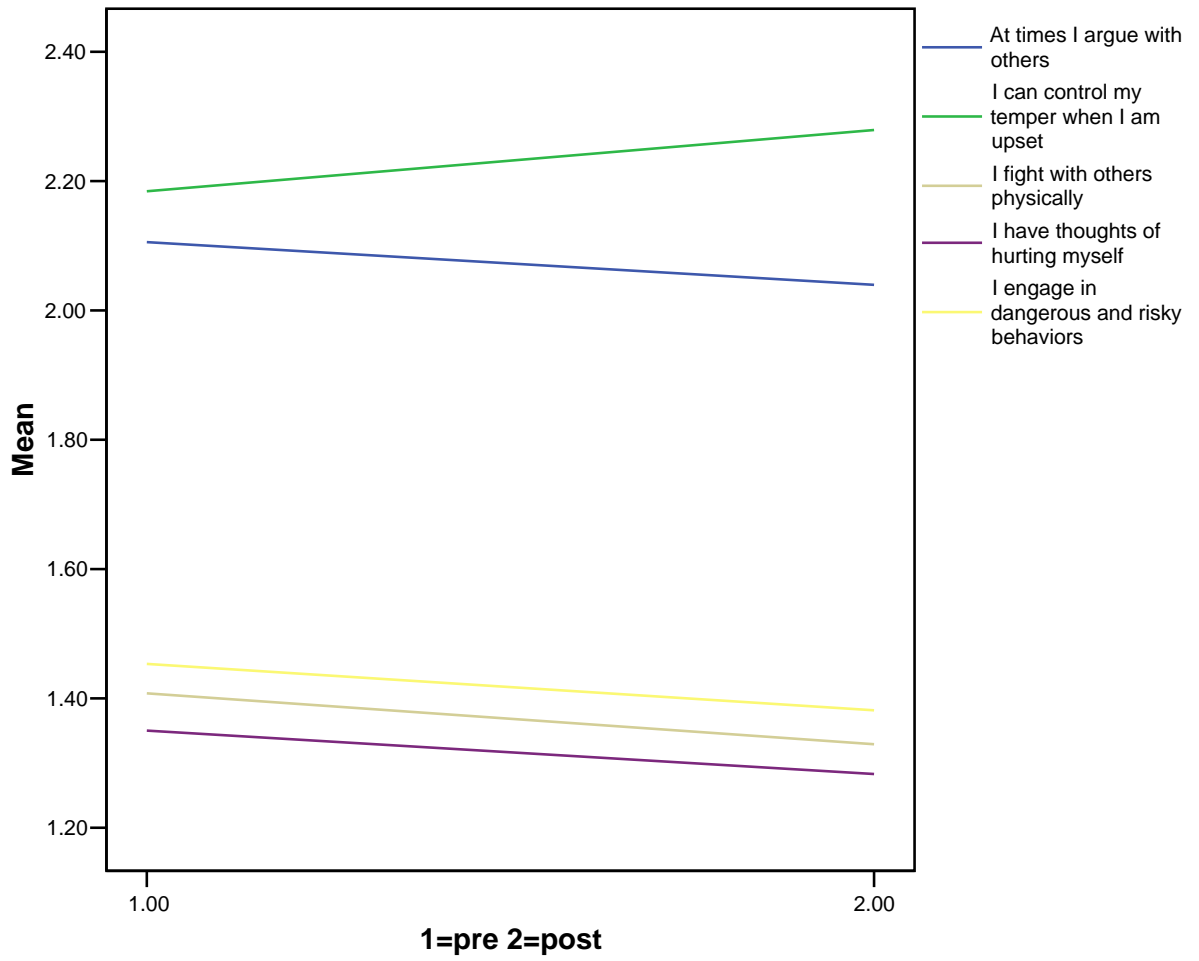
Crosstab

Count		I have thoughts of hurting myself			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=pre 2=post	1.00	632	123	83	838
	2.00	627	105	61	793
Total		1259	228	144	1631

$p < .1$

Group Statistics

	1=pre 2=post	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I have trouble paying attention	1.00	841	1.7253	.63952	.02205
	2.00	798	1.6917	.59290	.02099
At times I act before I think	1.00	836	1.9151	.66833	.02311
	2.00	797	1.8683	.63123	.02236
People think my thoughts are strange and bizarre	1.00	838	1.5489	.69603	.02404
	2.00	797	1.5847	.73116	.02590
I engage in dangerous and risky behaviors	1.00	837	1.4540	.69644	.02407
	2.00	798	1.3835	.64606	.02287
At times I argue with others	1.00	834	2.1043	.67712	.02345
	2.00	799	2.0363	.64496	.02282
I am generally honest and truthful	1.00	842	2.5000	.62688	.02160
	2.00	797	2.5358	.58909	.02087
I can control my temper when I am upset	1.00	837	2.1864	.75054	.02594
	2.00	797	2.2798	.73036	.02587
I can resolve conflicts	1.00	835	2.2898	.69932	.02420
	2.00	791	2.2655	.70104	.02493
I follow directions	1.00	829	2.5428	.58949	.02047
	2.00	788	2.5901	.55062	.01961
I have thoughts of hurting others	1.00	839	1.5352	.71023	.02452
	2.00	796	1.5653	.71604	.02538
I was sent to the office for misbehavior	1.00	835	1.1617	.46350	.01604
	2.00	797	1.1255	.39061	.01384
I fight with others physically	1.00	837	1.4110	.64576	.02232
	2.00	795	1.3321	.58994	.02092
I am generally well behaved	1.00	840	2.4988	.61565	.02124
	2.00	794	2.5227	.61311	.02176
I am sleepy or tired	1.00	842	1.8717	.76030	.02620
	2.00	792	1.9823	.75069	.02667
I am easily embarrassed or ashamed	1.00	835	1.5545	.71156	.02462
	2.00	796	1.5603	.70050	.02483
I feel sad	1.00	840	1.6571	.71695	.02474
	2.00	795	1.6616	.68262	.02421
I feel nervous or anxious	1.00	839	1.8403	1.02043	.03523
	2.00	795	1.7824	.68756	.02439
I have thoughts of hurting myself	1.00	838	1.3449	.65156	.02251
	2.00	793	1.2863	.59884	.02127
I cry easily	1.00	836	1.4330	.68276	.02361
	2.00	791	1.4008	.63839	.02270
I get emotional or become easily upset	1.00	838	1.7936	.75987	.02625
	2.00	799	1.7384	.73434	.02598
I try my best in school	1.00	835	2.7557	.52075	.01802
	2.00	793	2.7566	.50755	.01802
I skip classes	1.00	834	1.1055	.38068	.01318
	2.00	798	1.1015	.37949	.01343
I am responsible	1.00	833	2.5018	.64324	.02229
	2.00	794	2.5605	.59802	.02122
I make friends easily	1.00	841	2.4067	.70788	.02441
	2.00	797	2.3726	.70917	.02512
It is easy for me to talk to others	1.00	832	2.4014	.68499	.02375
	2.00	789	2.4106	.65197	.02321
I go to class prepared	1.00	837	2.6440	.55757	.01927
	2.00	793	2.6293	.55391	.01967
I get good grades in school	1.00	838	2.5871	.56495	.01952
	2.00	796	2.5867	.57080	.02023
I help with household tasks	1.00	841	2.5137	.63630	.02194
	2.00	796	2.4711	.62880	.02229
I cooperate with others	1.00	840	2.5488	.57769	.01993
	2.00	801	2.5431	.56432	.01994
I can speak up for myself	1.00	839	2.5852	.61179	.02112
	2.00	798	2.6241	.57903	.02050



Comparing control group to experimental groups

At post-test the control group was compared to the experimental group on the variables to determine statistical significance between those who were exposed to the Peaceful People program and those who were not. On the following variables there were no statistically significant differences between the groups at pre-test but were at post-test.

1=never

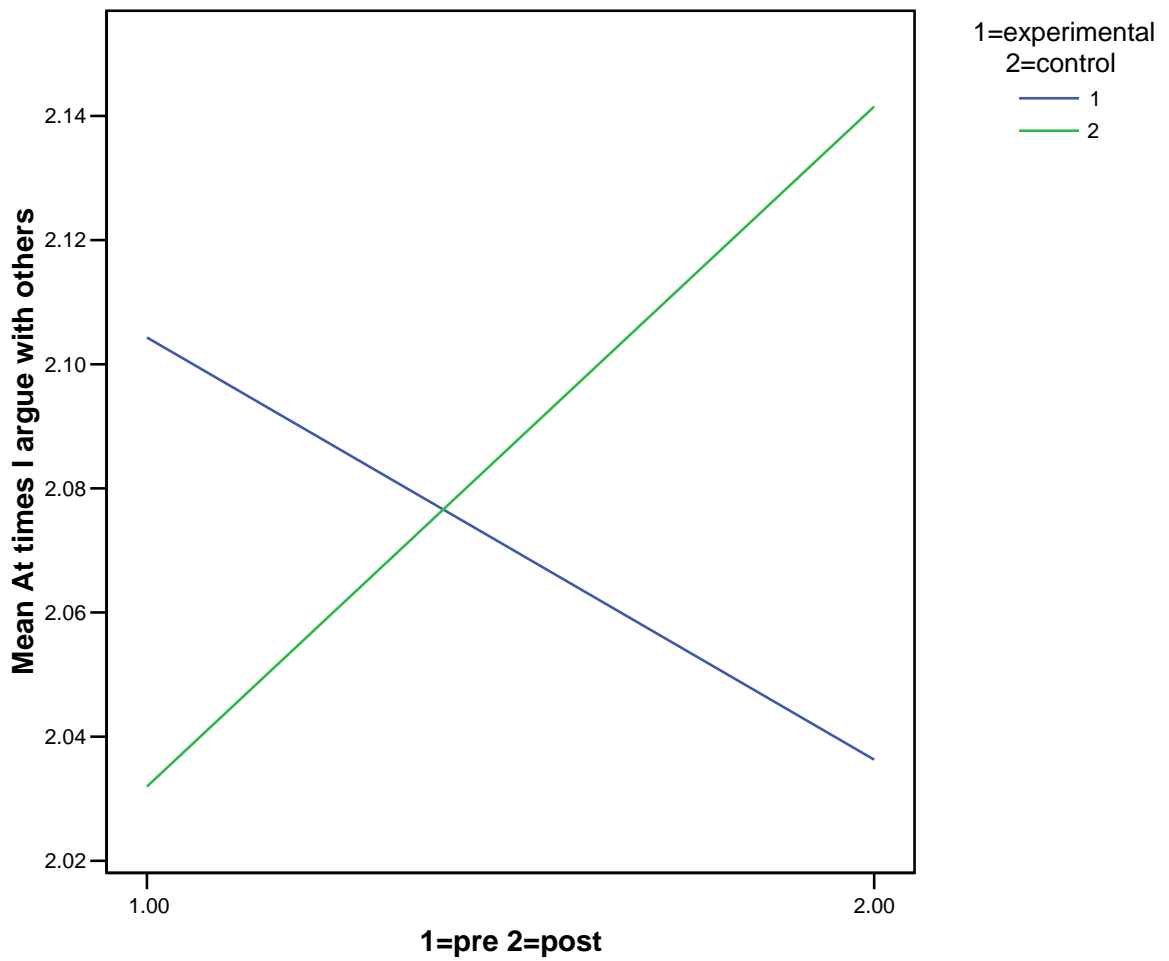
2=sometimes

3=often

Arguing. The experimental group (n=799, m=2.03) had a statistically significantly **lower** mean than the control group (n=212, m=2.14) at post-test.

Crosstab

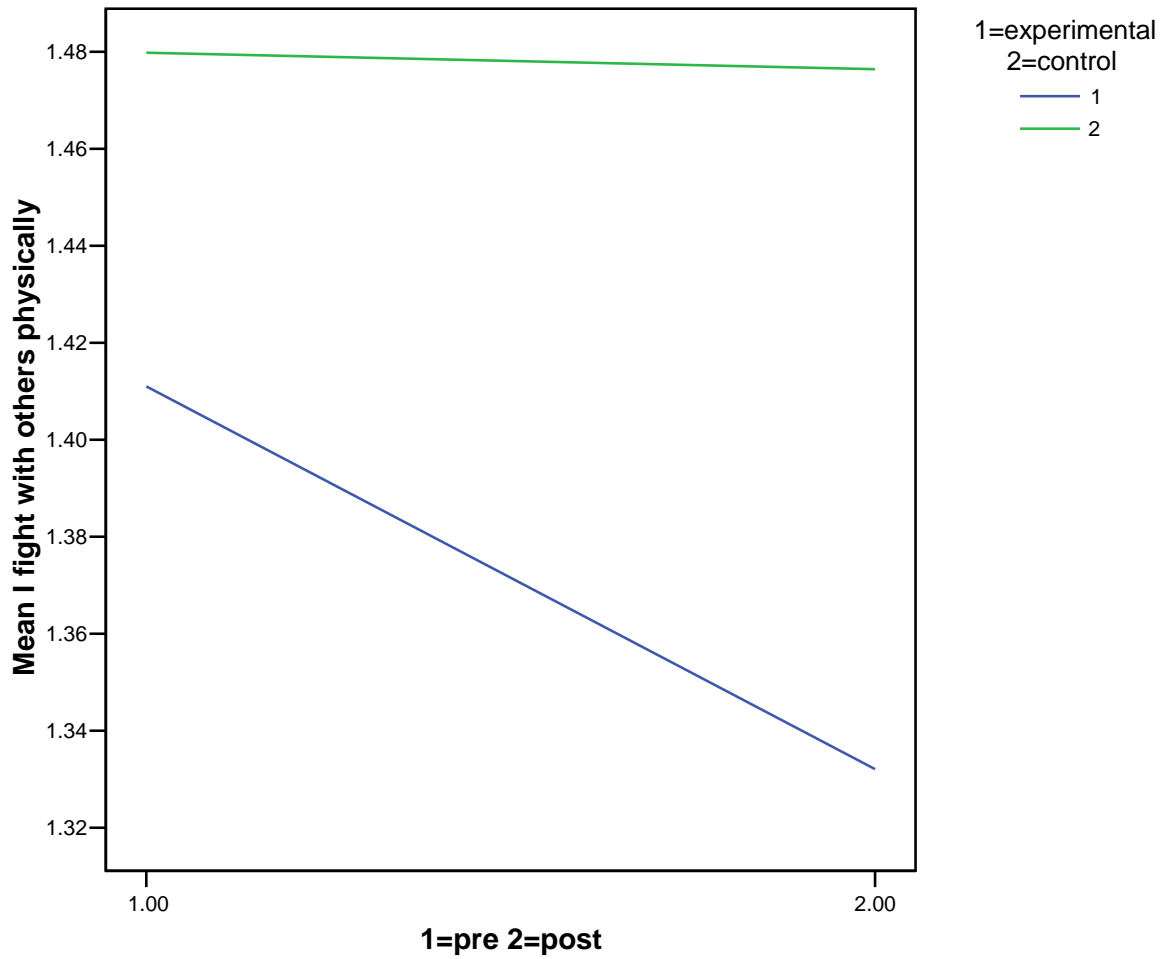
Count		At times I argue with others			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	152	466	181	799
2=control	2	36	110	66	212
Total		188	576	247	1011



Fighting. The experimental group (n=795, m=1.33) had a statistically significantly **lower** mean than the control group (n=212, m=1.48) at post-test.

Crosstab

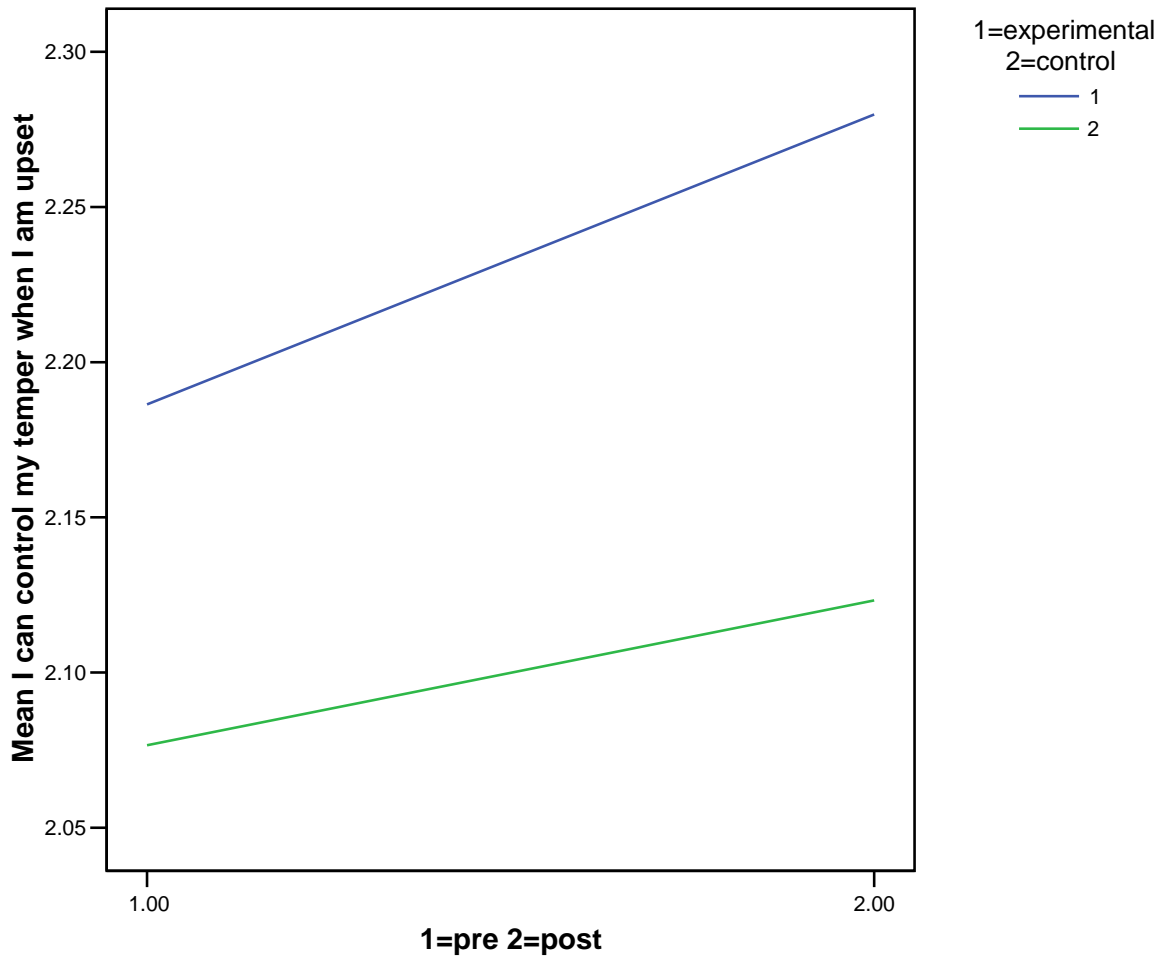
Count		I fight with others physically			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	581	164	50	795
2=control	2	132	59	21	212
Total		713	223	71	1007



Ability to control one's temper. The experimental group (n=797, m=2.28) had a statistically significantly **higher** mean than the control group (n=211, m=2.17) at post-test.

Crosstab

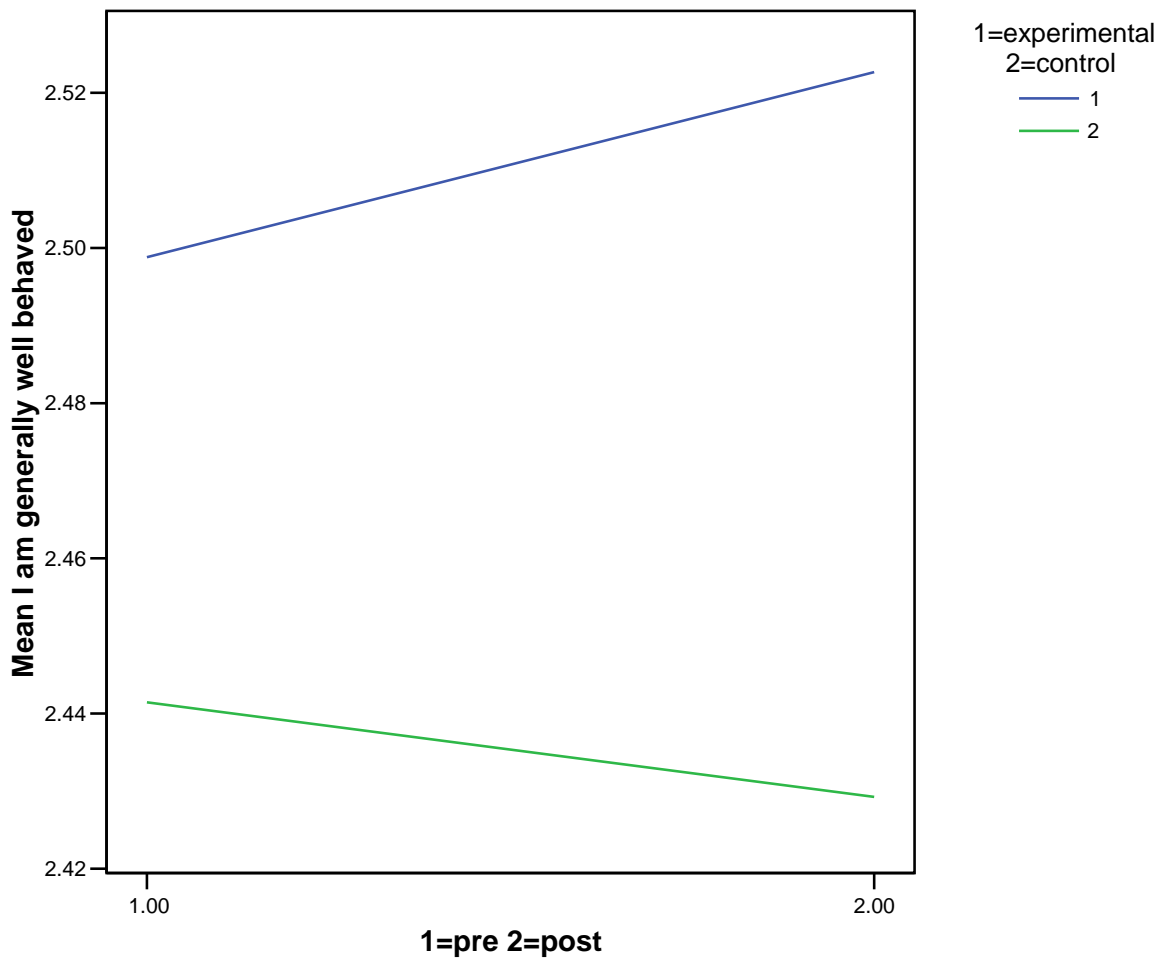
Count		I can control my temper when I am upset			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	132	310	355	797
2=control	2	50	85	76	211
Total		182	395	431	1008



Being well behaved. The experimental group (n=794, m=2.52) had a statistically significantly **higher** mean than the control group (n=212, m=2.43) at post-test.

Crosstab

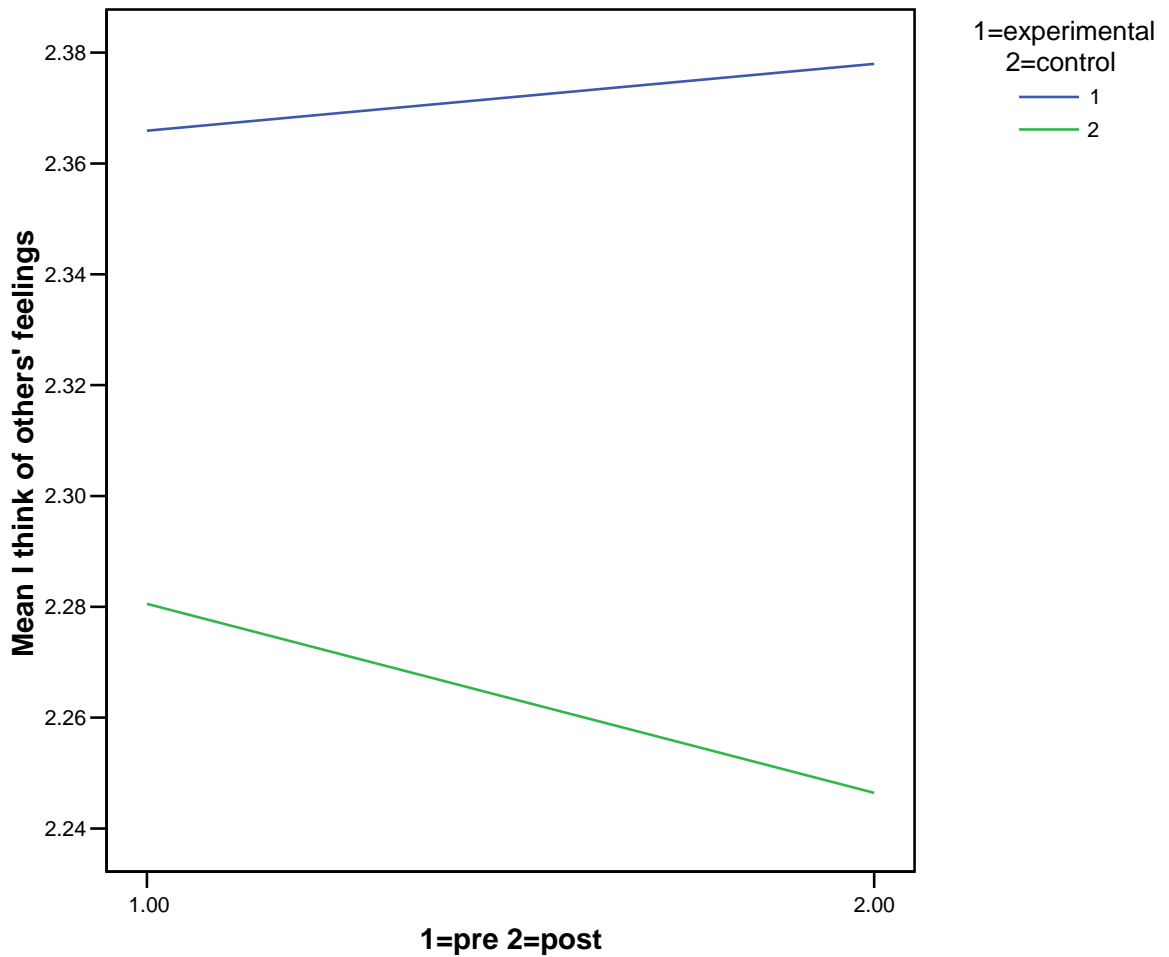
Count		I am generally well behaved			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	50	279	465	794
2=control	2	18	85	109	212
Total		68	364	574	1006



Thinking of others' feelings. The experimental group (n=803, m=2.37) had a statistically significantly **higher** mean than the control group (n=215, m=2.25) at post-test.

Crosstab

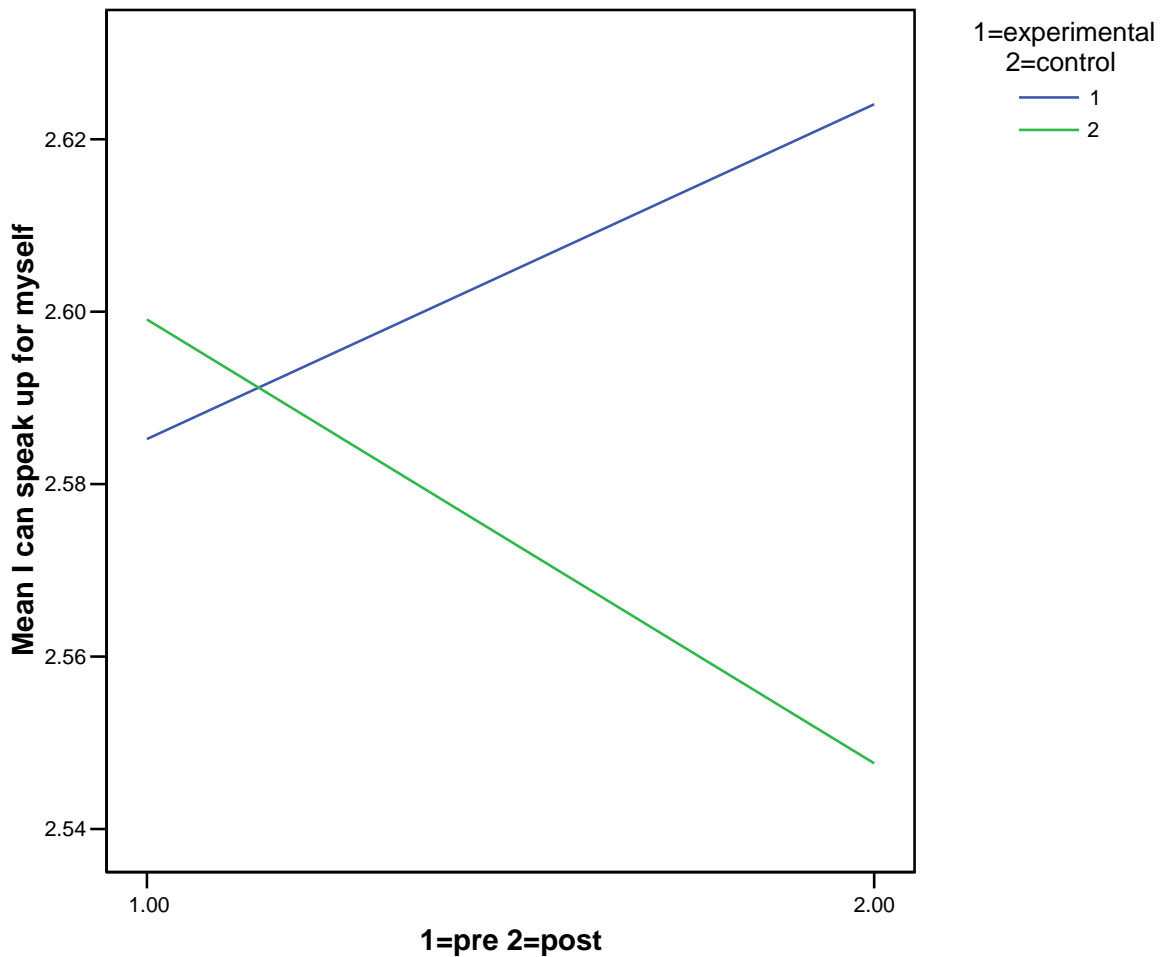
Count		I think of others' feelings			Total	
		1	2	3		
1=experimental	1	4	77	343	379	803
2=control	2	4	27	105	79	215
Total		8	104	448	458	1018

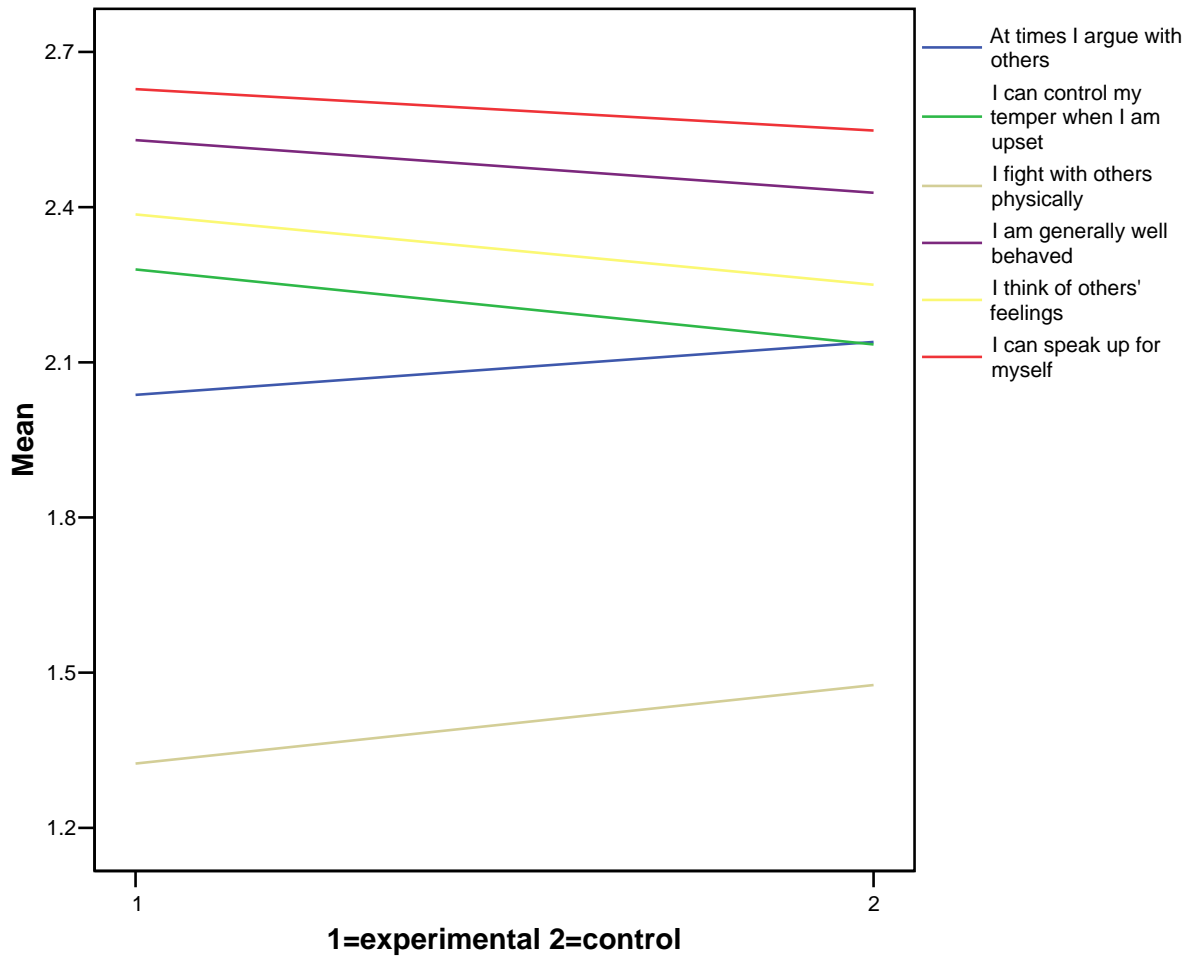


Speaking up for oneself. At pre-test there were no significant differences between experimental and control groups on this variable. However at post-test there were significant differences in favor of the experimental group. The post-test mean for the control group (n=210) was 2.55 and the experimental group (n=798) was 2.62, $t=1.67$, $p<.1$

Crosstab

Count		I can speak up for myself			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	40	220	538	798
2=control	2	17	61	132	210
Total		57	281	670	1008



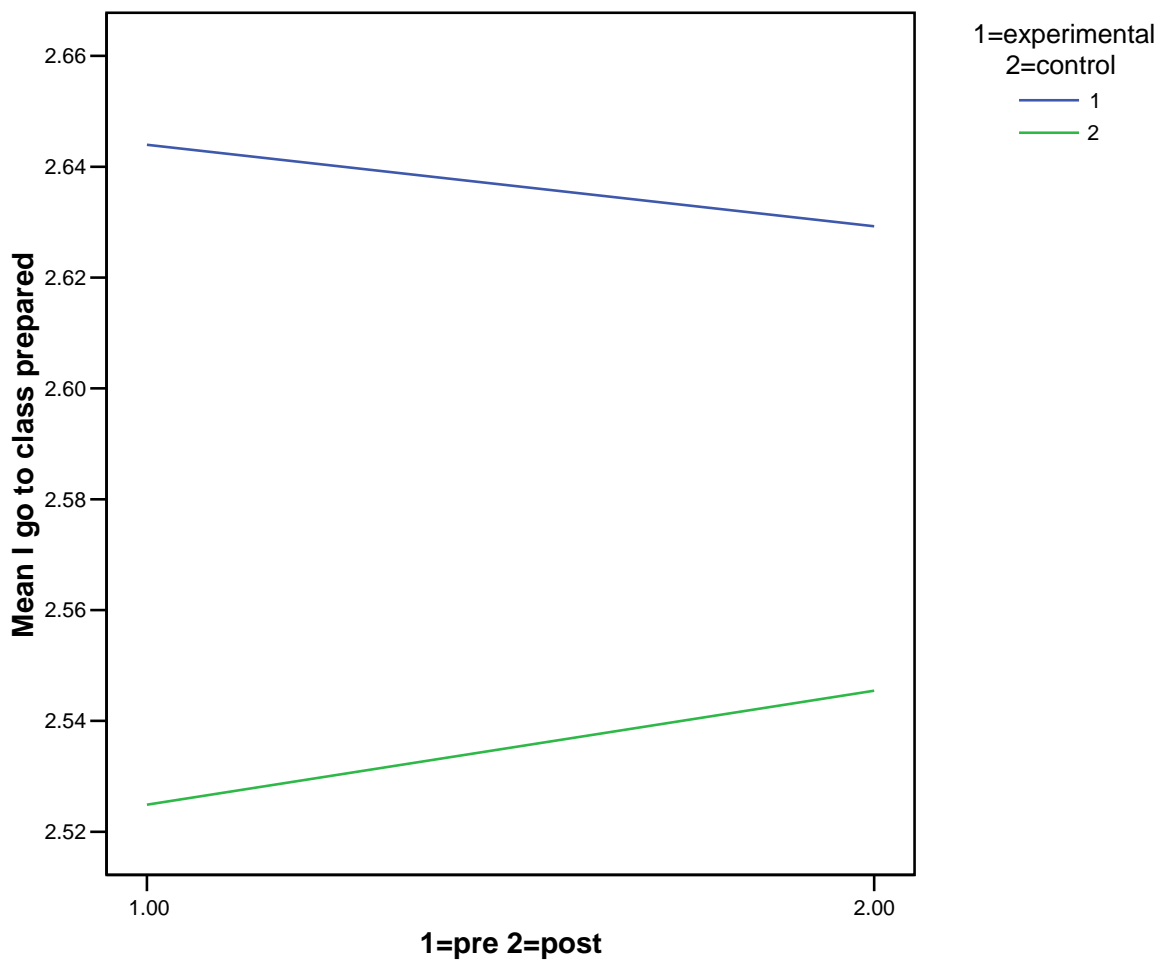


The following variables were statistically significant at pre-test and post-test when the experimental group was compared to the control. However, in all cases, the experimental group improved on all the following variables, and in some cases the control group improved also.

Being prepared. The experimental group (n=793, m=2.63) had a statistically significantly higher mean than the control group (n=209, m=2.55) at post-test.

Crosstab

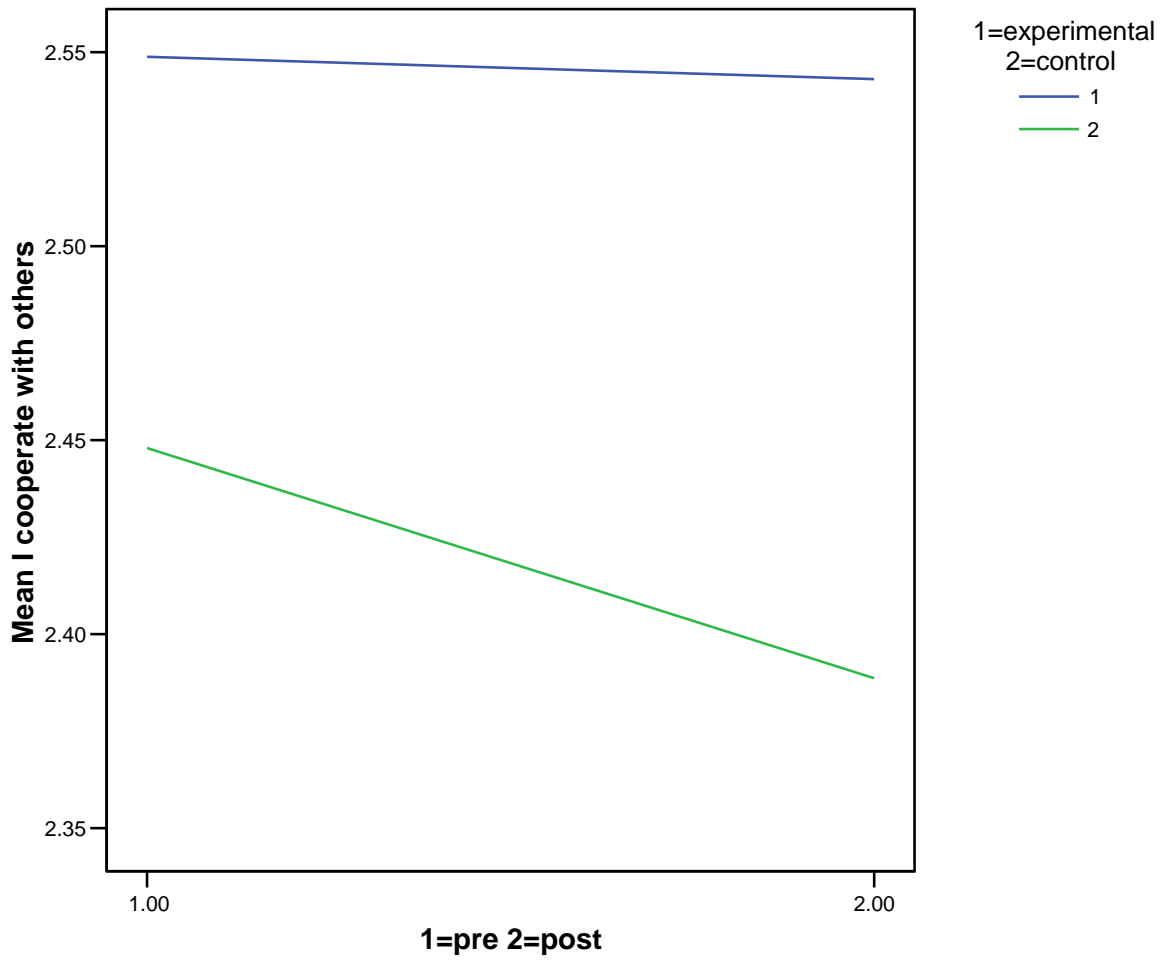
Count		I go to class prepared			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	29	236	528	793
2=control	2	11	73	125	209
Total		40	309	653	1002



Cooperating. The experimental group (n=801, m=2.54) had a statistically significantly higher mean than the control group (n=211, m=2.39) at post-test.

Crosstab

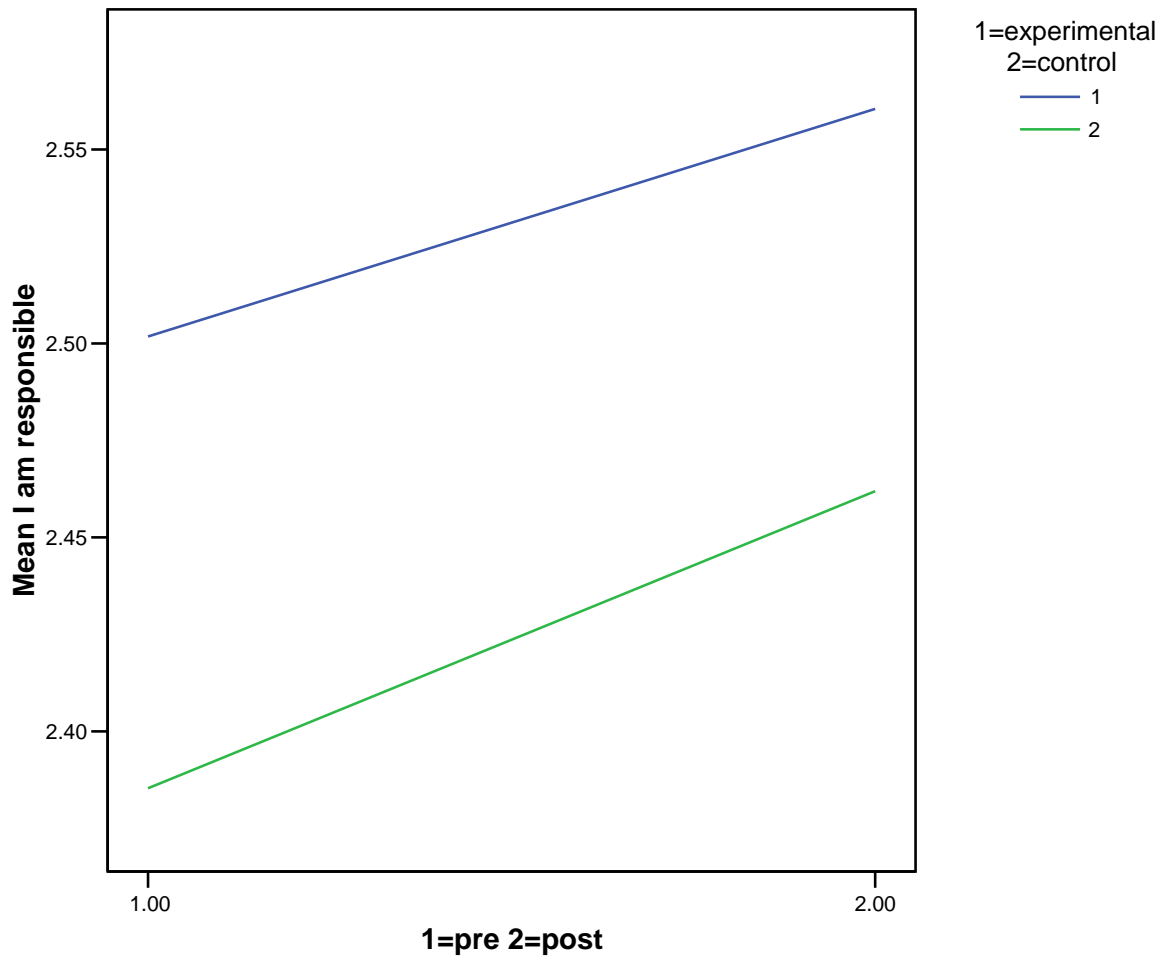
Count		I cooperate with others			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	28	310	463	801
2=control	2	10	109	92	211
Total		38	419	555	1012



Being responsible. The experimental group (n=794, m=2.56) had a statistically significantly higher mean than the control group (n=210, m=2.46) at post-test.

Crosstab

Count		I am responsible			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
1=experimental	1	44	261	489	794
2=control	2	16	81	113	210
Total		60	342	602	1004



Group Statistics

	1=experimental 2=control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I have trouble paying attention	1	798	1.6917	.59290	.02099
	2	213	1.7371	.63423	.04346
At times I act before I think	1	797	1.8683	.63123	.02236
	2	214	1.8925	.66618	.04554
People think my thoughts are strange and bizarre	1	797	1.5847	.73116	.02590
	2	212	1.5000	.70543	.04845
I engage in dangerous and risky behaviors	1	798	1.3835	.64606	.02287
	2	212	1.4434	.69637	.04783
At times I argue with others	1	799	2.0363	.64496	.02282
	2	212	2.1415	.68066	.04675
I am generally honest and truthful	1	797	2.5358	.58909	.02087
	2	212	2.4623	.62605	.04300
I can control my temper when I am upset	1	797	2.2798	.73036	.02587
	2	211	2.1232	.76469	.05264
I can resolve conflicts	1	791	2.2655	.70104	.02493
	2	212	2.1934	.71897	.04938
I follow directions	1	788	2.5901	.55062	.01961
	2	211	2.5735	.59206	.04076
I have thoughts of hurting others	1	796	1.5653	.71604	.02538
	2	211	1.5592	.69696	.04798
I was sent to the office for misbehavior	1	797	1.1255	.39061	.01384
	2	210	1.1571	.46820	.03231
I fight with others physically	1	795	1.3321	.58994	.02092
	2	212	1.4764	.67058	.04606
I am generally well behaved	1	794	2.5227	.61311	.02176
	2	212	2.4292	.64558	.04434
I am sleepy or tired	1	792	1.9823	.75069	.02667
	2	211	1.8673	.76309	.05253
I am easily embarrassed or ashamed	1	796	1.5603	.70050	.02483
	2	212	1.5613	.71611	.04918
I feel sad	1	795	1.6616	.68262	.02421
	2	212	1.5755	.71475	.04909
I feel nervous or anxious	1	795	1.7824	.68756	.02439
	2	208	1.7644	.68615	.04758
I have thoughts of hurting myself	1	793	1.2863	.59884	.02127
	2	211	1.3791	.67495	.04647
I cry easily	1	791	1.4008	.63839	.02270
	2	210	1.3714	.65996	.04554
I get emotional or become easily upset	1	799	1.7384	.73434	.02598
	2	212	1.8160	.75359	.05176
I try my best in school	1	793	2.7566	.50755	.01802
	2	211	2.7536	.53088	.03655
I skip classes	1	798	1.1015	.37949	.01343
	2	213	1.1221	.40531	.02777
I am responsible	1	794	2.5605	.59802	.02122
	2	210	2.4619	.63470	.04380
I make friends easily	1	797	2.3726	.70917	.02512
	2	213	2.3709	.69939	.04792
It is easy for me to talk to others	1	789	2.4106	.65197	.02321
	2	213	2.3615	.63381	.04343
I go to class prepared	1	793	2.6293	.55391	.01967
	2	209	2.5455	.59573	.04121
I get good grades in school	1	796	2.5867	.57080	.02023
	2	210	2.5524	.54432	.03756
I help with household tasks	1	796	2.4711	.62880	.02229
	2	210	2.4619	.59582	.04112
I cooperate with others	1	801	2.5431	.56432	.01994
	2	211	2.3886	.57790	.03978
I can speak up for myself	1	798	2.6241	.57903	.02050
	2	210	2.5476	.64156	.04427

By Gender Comparisons

When comparing groups by gender the following observations were made.

Girls:

For girls in the experimental group there were significantly better scores on the following variables when compared post-test to the control group:

Controlling temper: Experimental (n=408) m=2.33, Control (n=115) m=2.08, t=3.45, p<.05

Physical fighting: Experimental (n=408), m=1.22, Control (n=115), m=1.34, t=2.28, p<.05

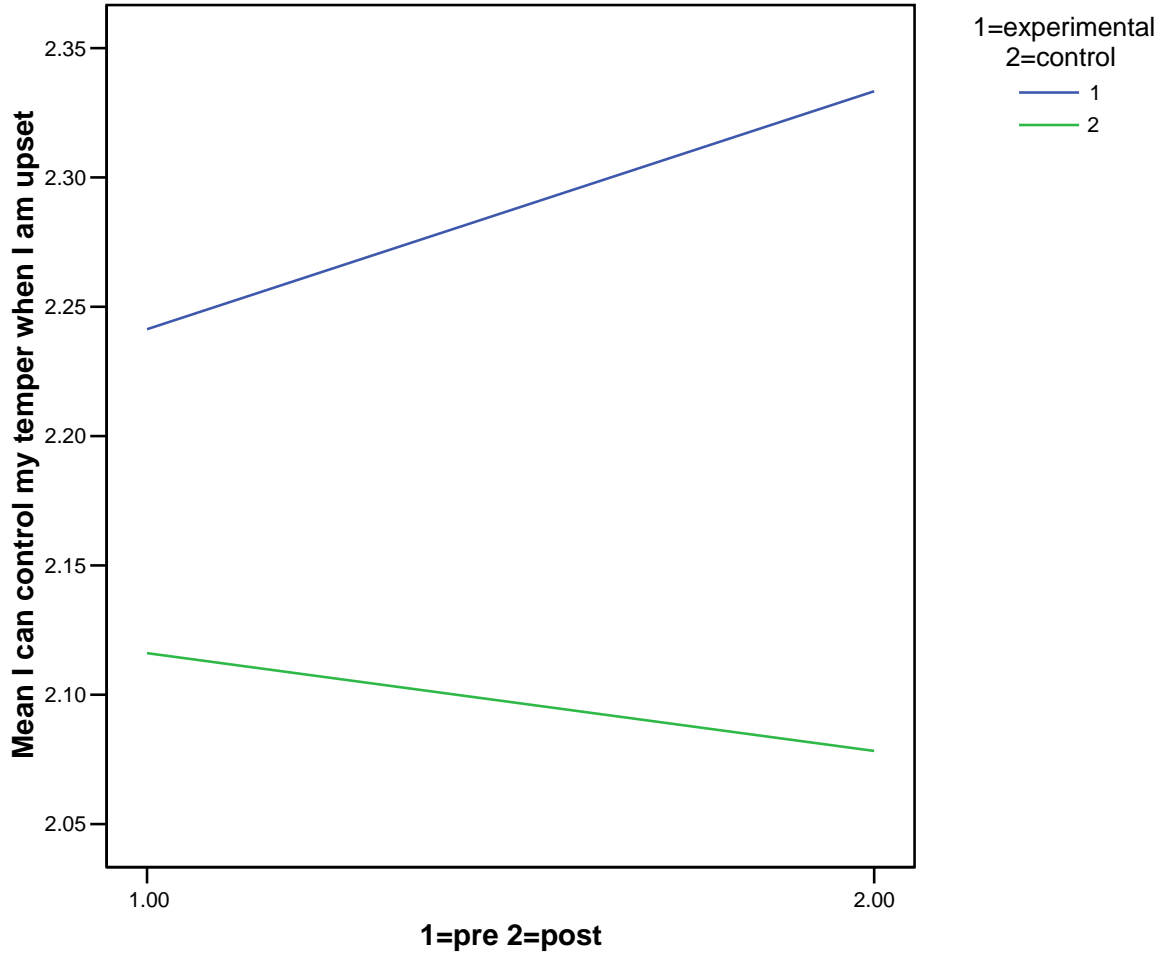
Cooperating: Experimental (n=409), m=2.59, Control (n=114), m=2.49, t=2.70, p<.05

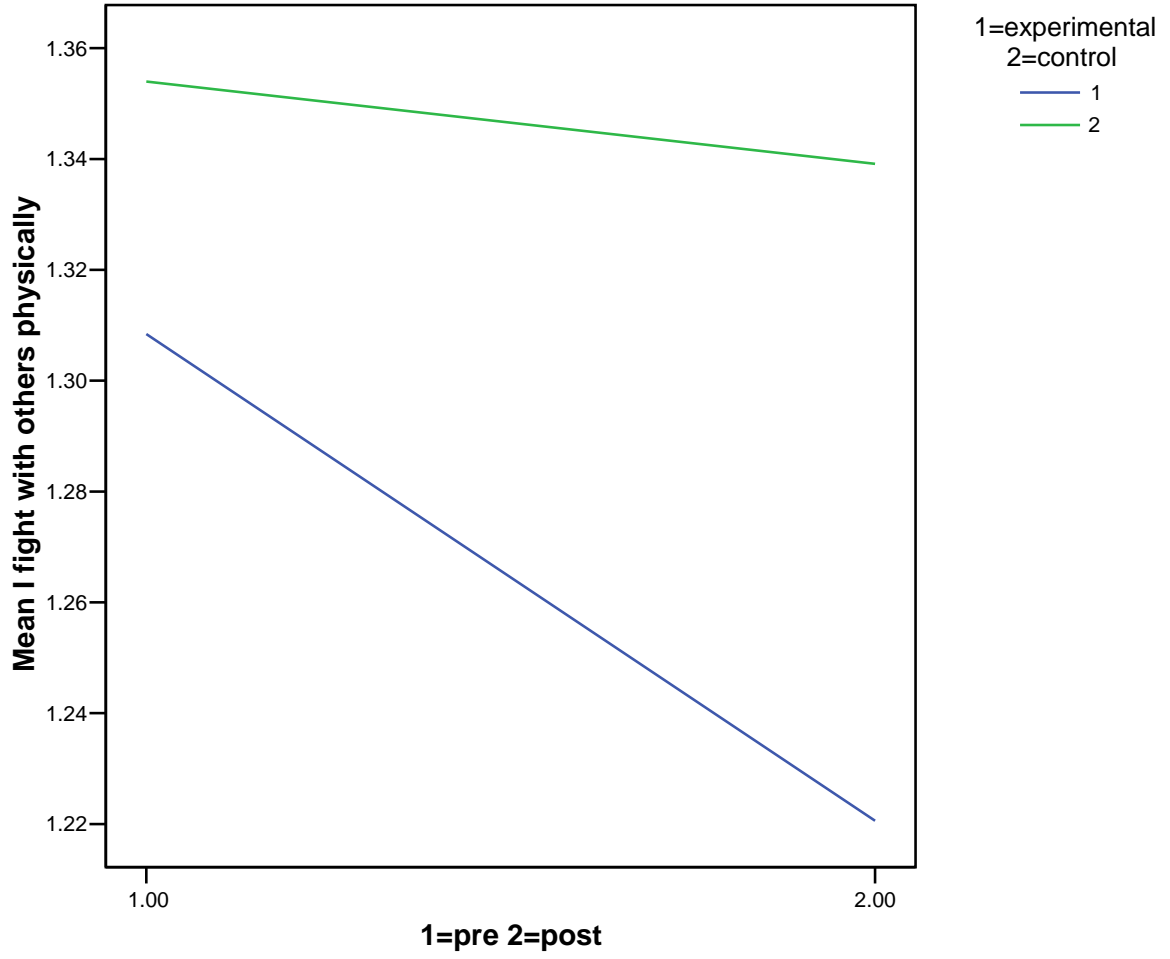
Speaking up for oneself: Experimental (n=408), m=2.60, Control (n=113), m=2.45, t=2.40, p<.05

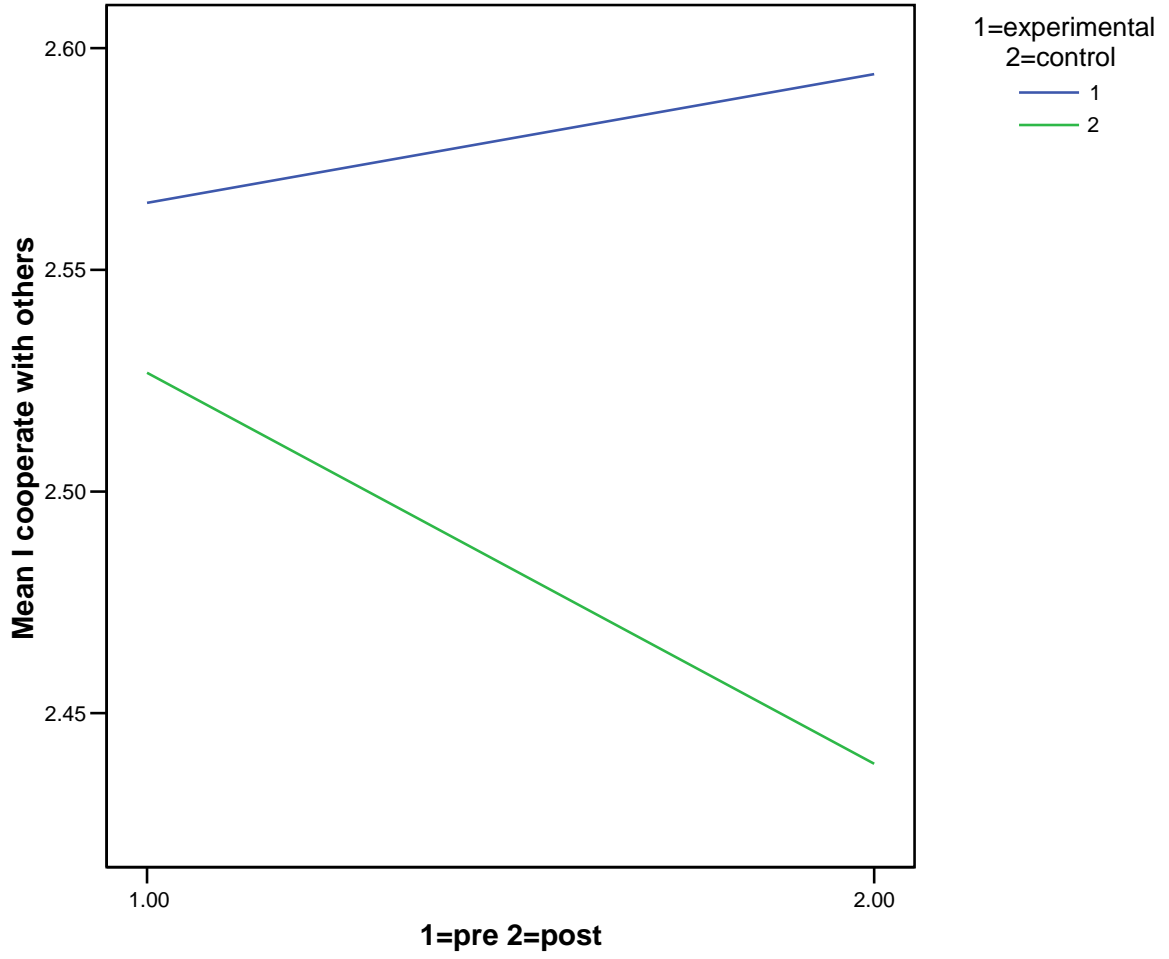
Thinking of others: Experimental (n=408), m=2.48, Control (n=115), m=2.34, t=2.29, p<.05

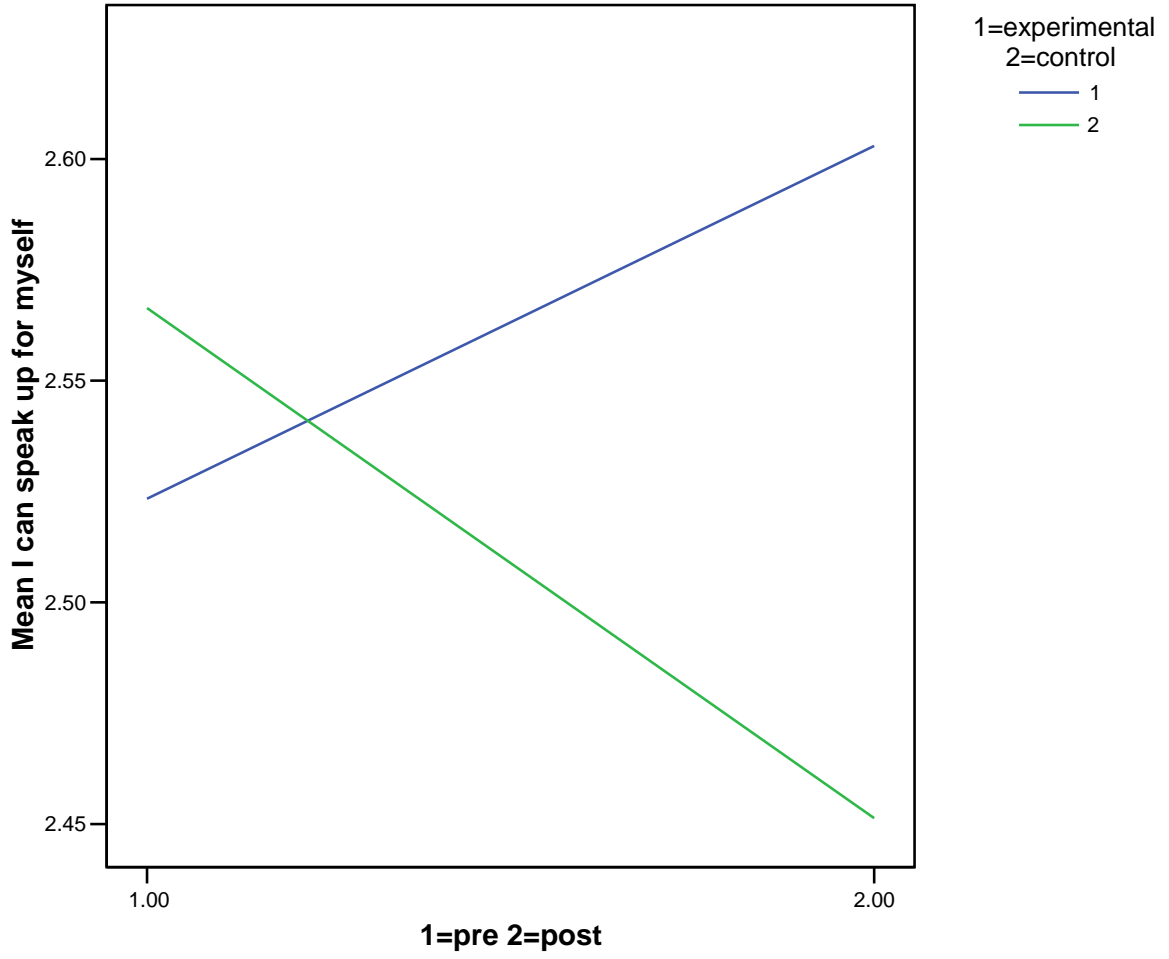
**Qualities:* Experimental (n=399), m=14.99, Control (n=112), m=14.12, t=3.59, p<.05

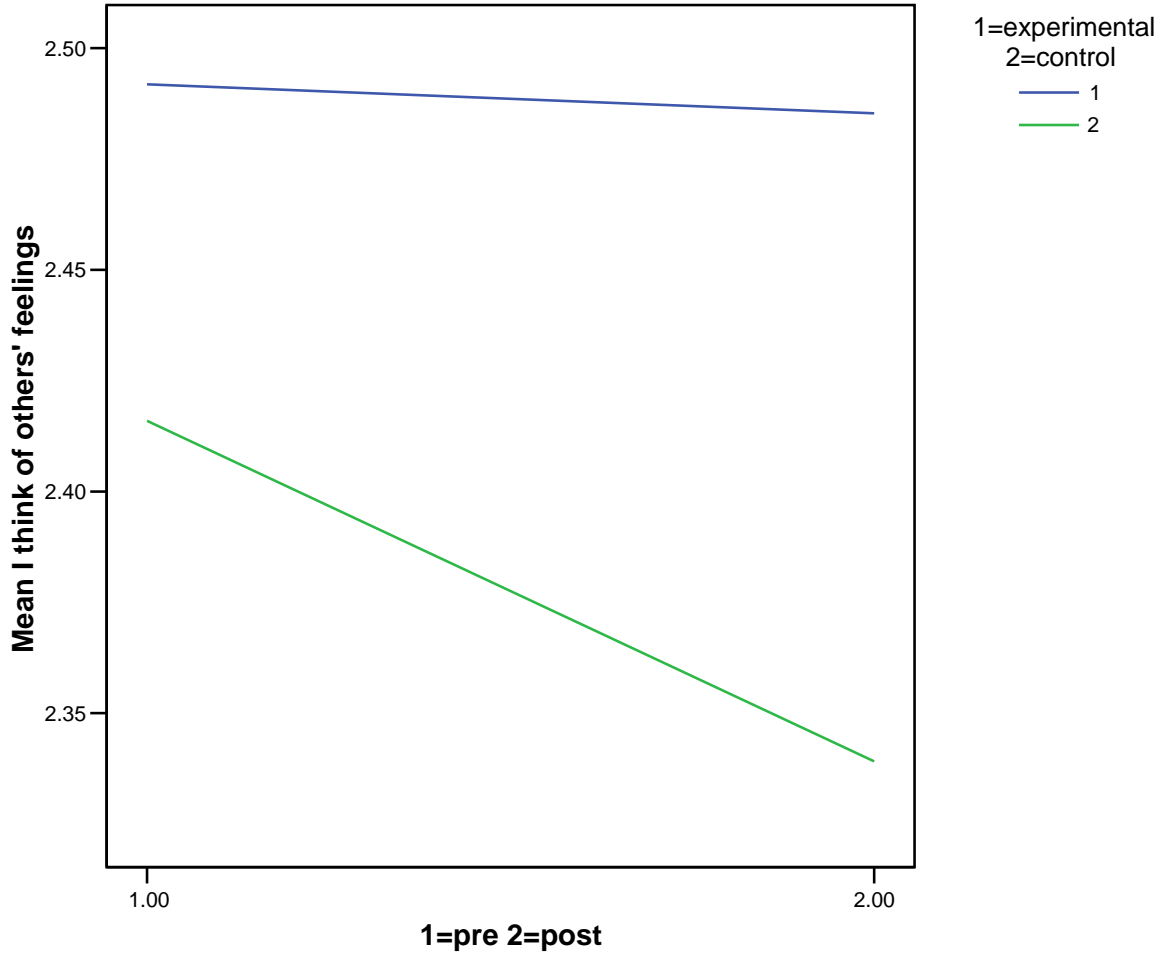
*"Qualities" is an aggregated variable that includes the qualities the program seeks to improve such as self control, speaking up for one's self, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility.

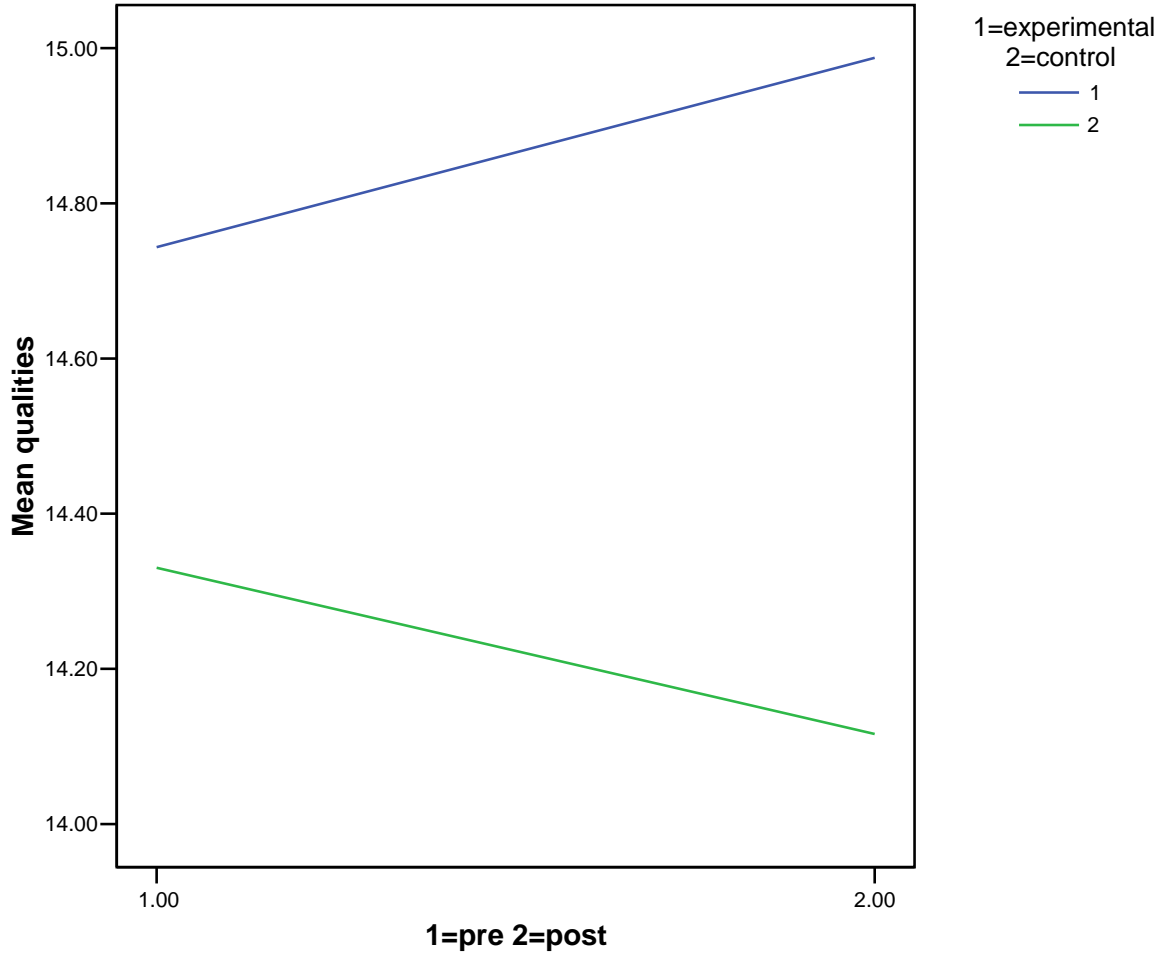












Boys:

For boys in the experimental group there were significantly better scores on the following variables when compared post-test to the control group:

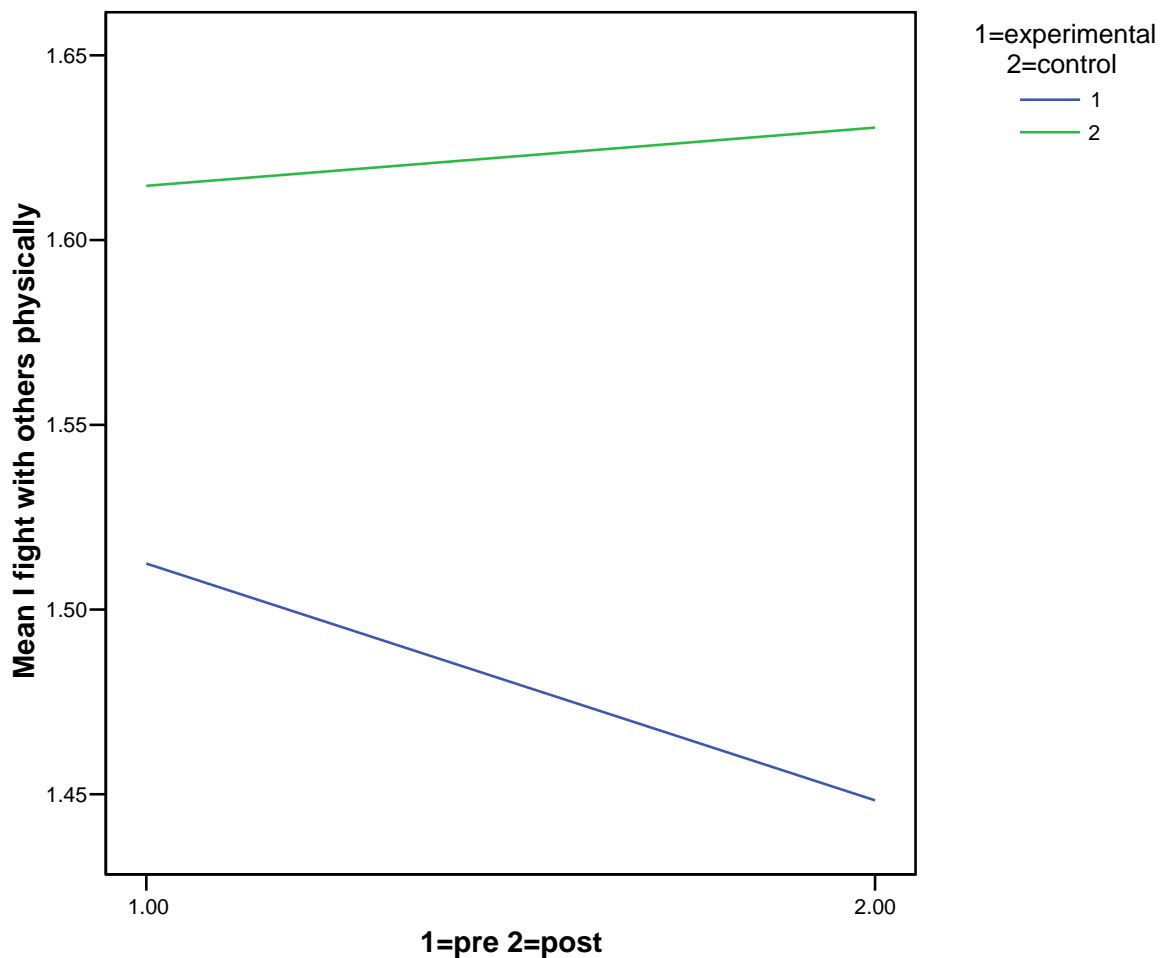
Physical fighting: Experimental (n=368), m=1.43 Control (n=92), m=1.63, t=2.28 p<.05

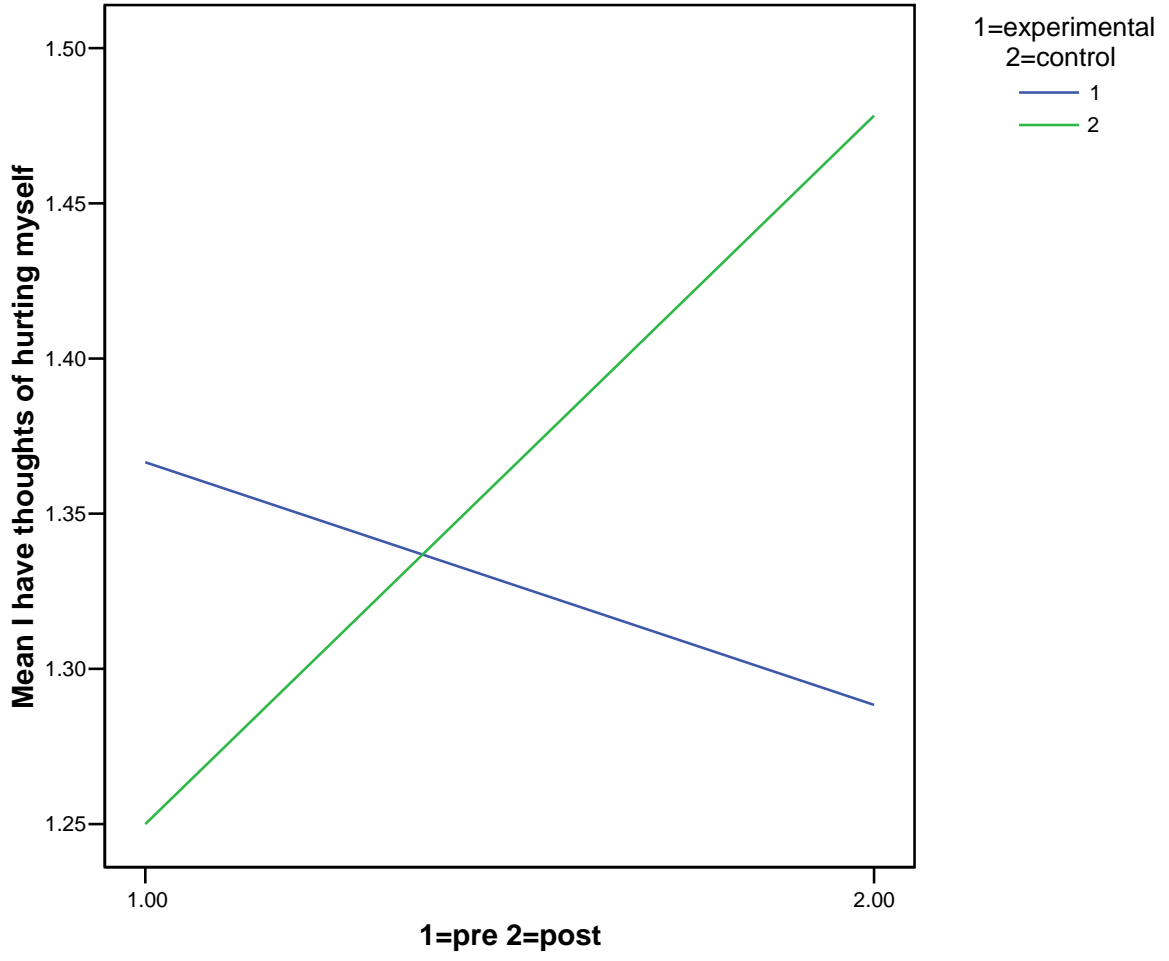
Thoughts of hurting oneself: Experimental (n=371), m=1.29, Control (n=92), m=1.48, t=2.60, p<.05

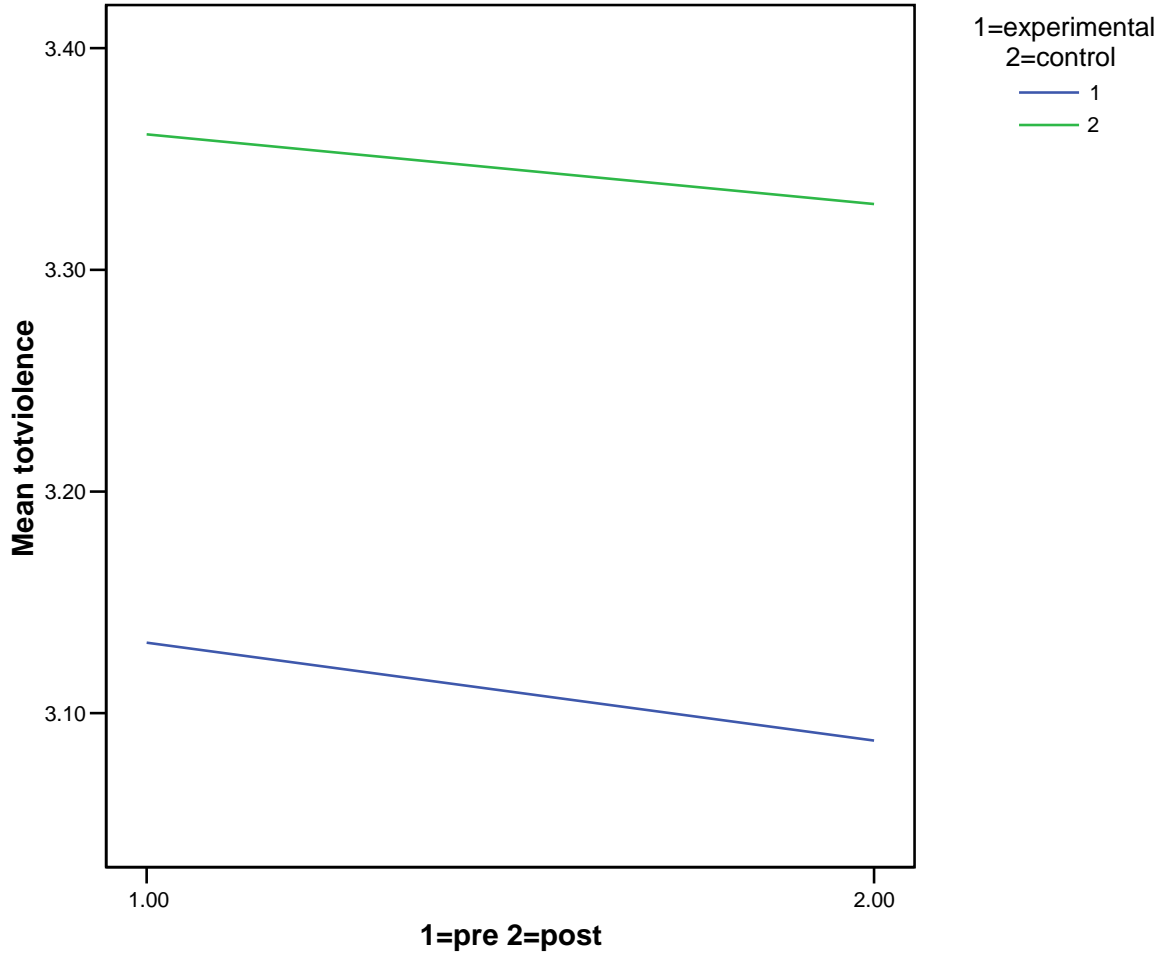
**Total Violence*: Experimental (n=365), m=3.09, Control (n=91), m=3.33, t=1.71, p<.1

*Total violence is an aggregated variable that combines the violent behaviors such as fighting and having thoughts of hurting others.

Note: There were no significant differences at pre-test on the above variables.



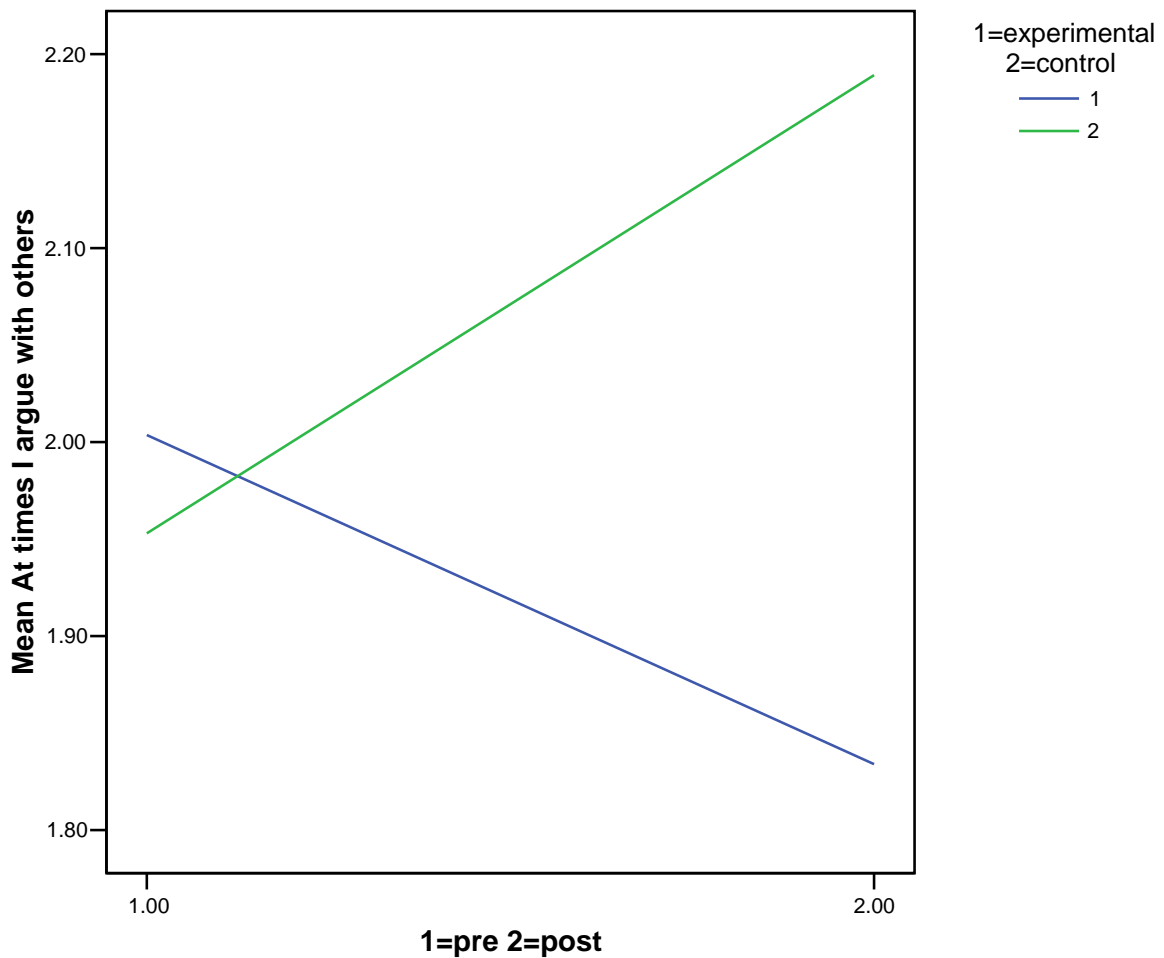


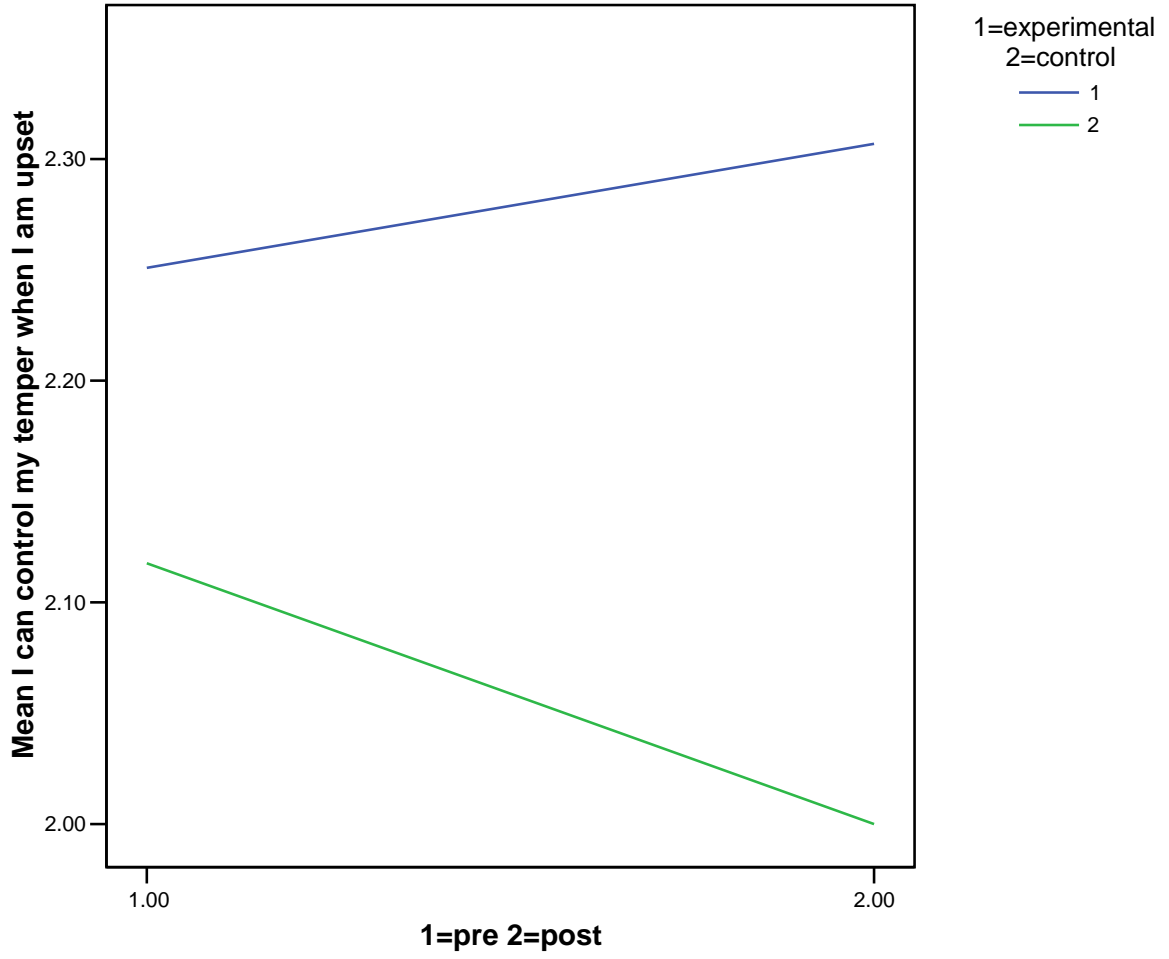


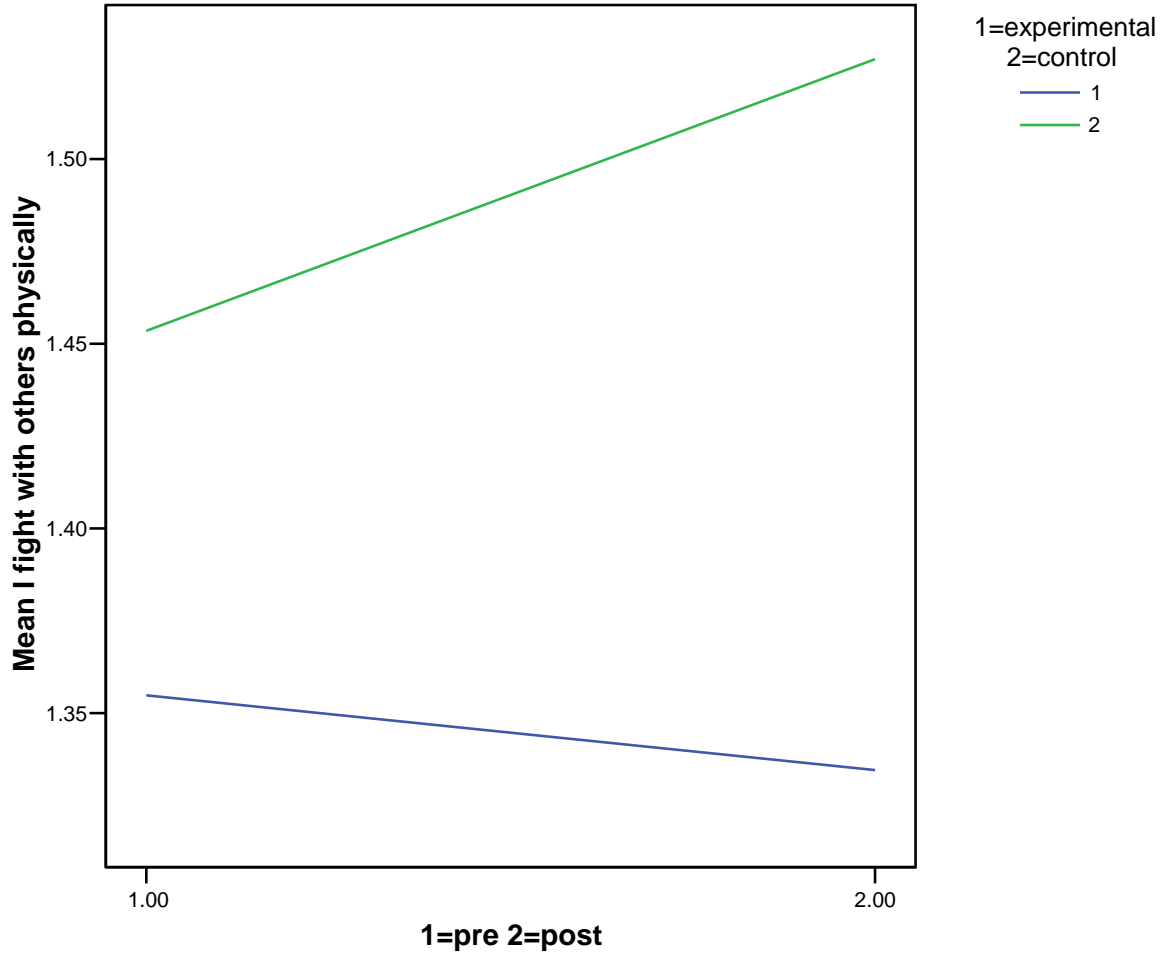
*By Grade Comparisons***Grade 4:**

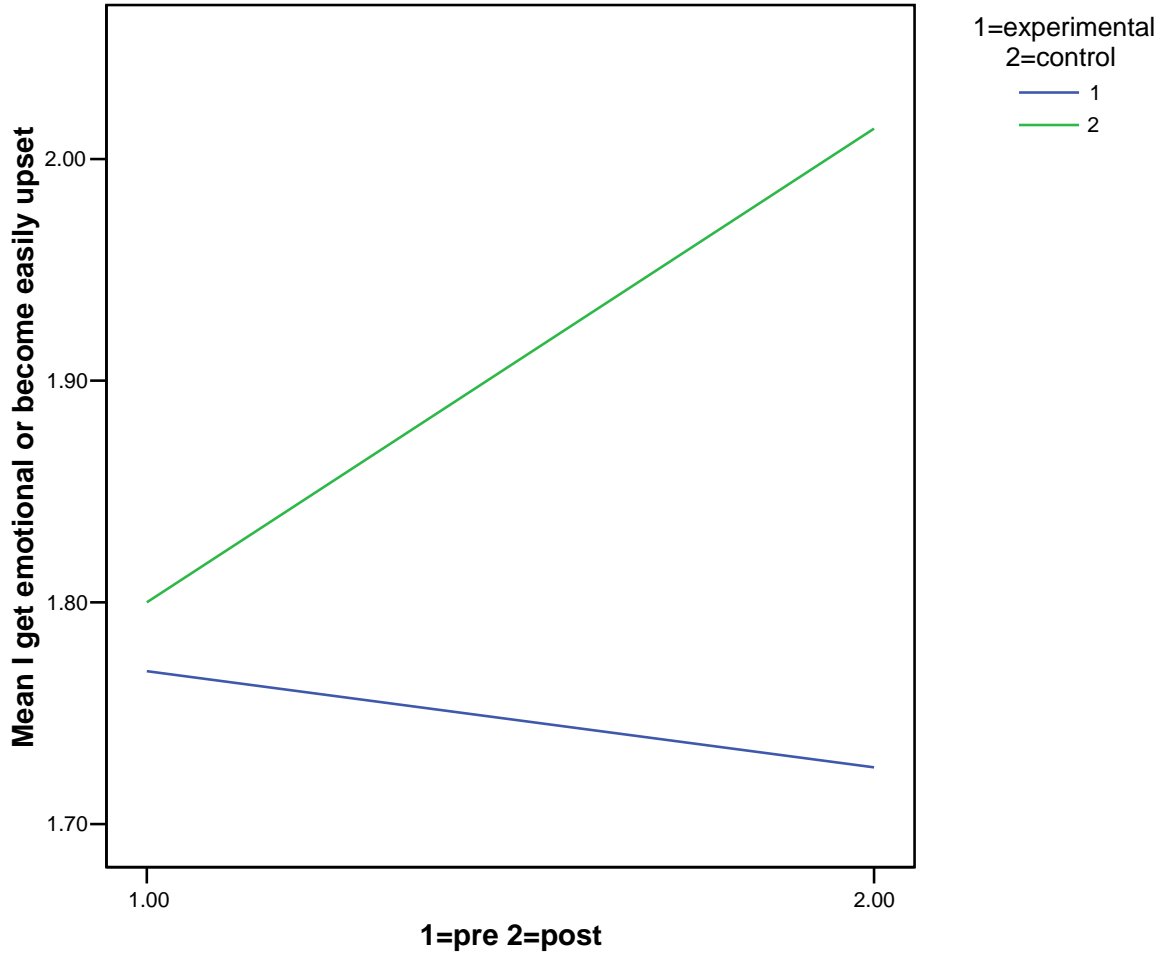
There were significant differences at post-test (with no significant differences at pre-test) between the experimental (n=265) and control (n=74) groups for the following variables in the fourth grade:

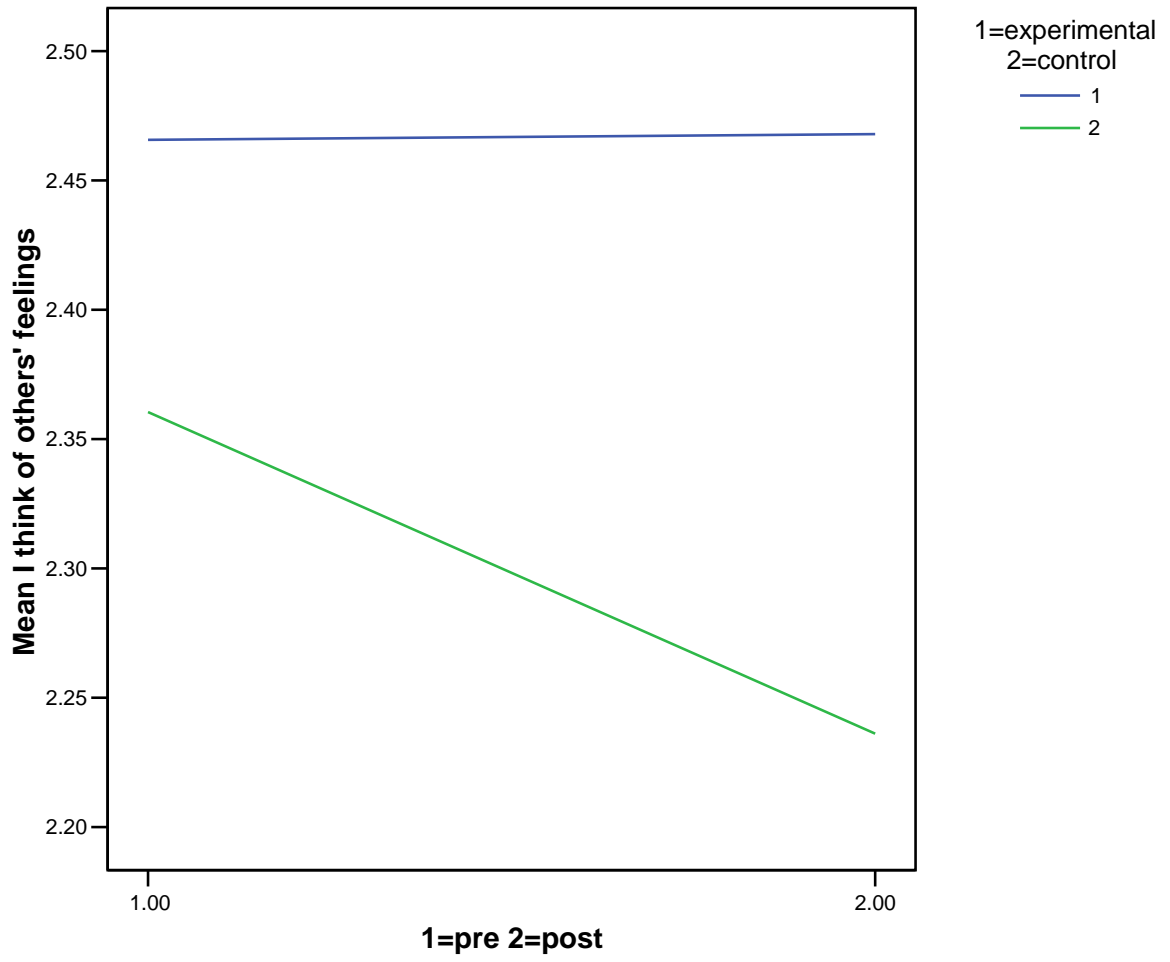
	<u>Control Mean</u>	<u>Experimental Mean</u>	<u>t-value</u>
Arguing	2.19	1.83	3.97
Controlling one's temper	2.31	2.00	3.05
Fighting	1.53	1.33	2.40
Becoming emotional	2.01	1.73	2.86
Thinking of others	2.24	2.47	2.57







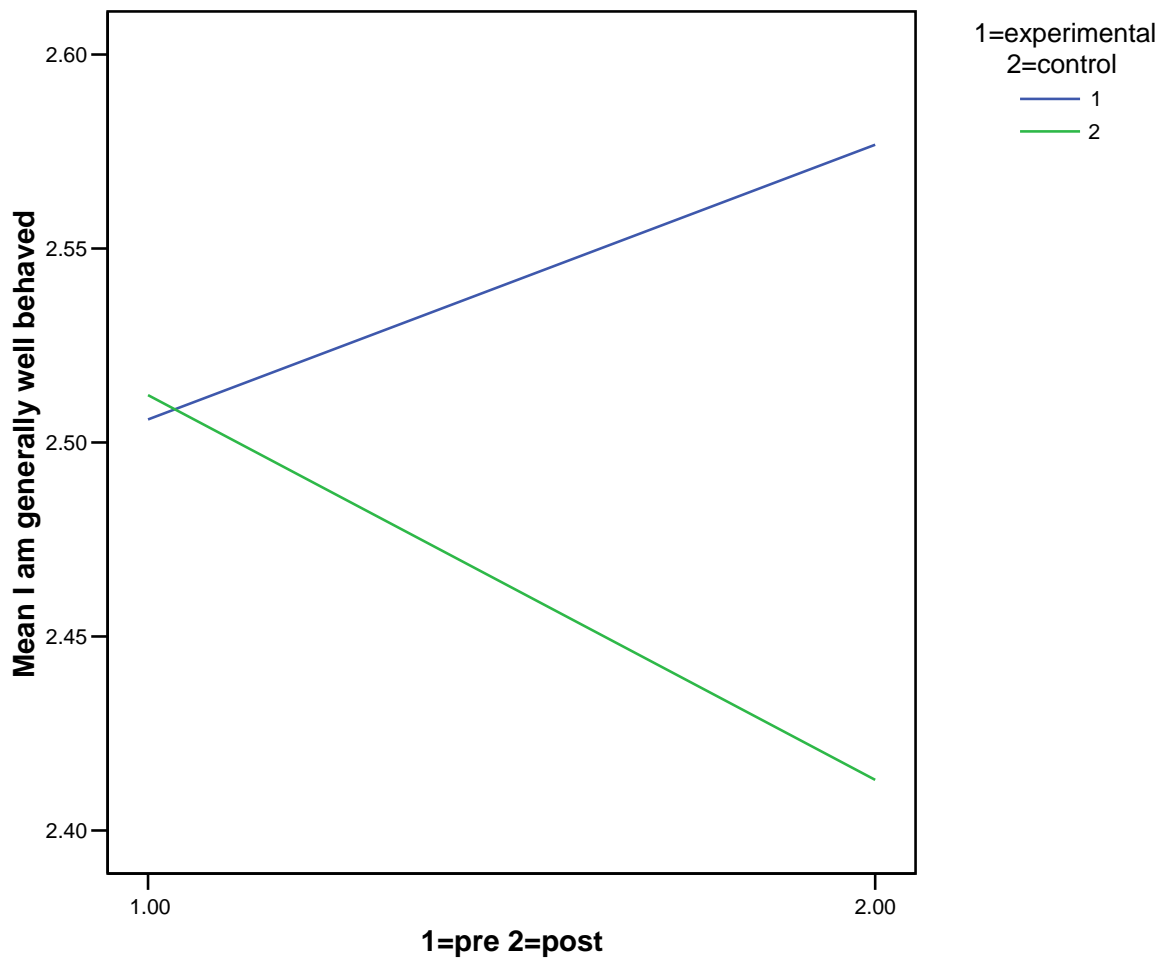


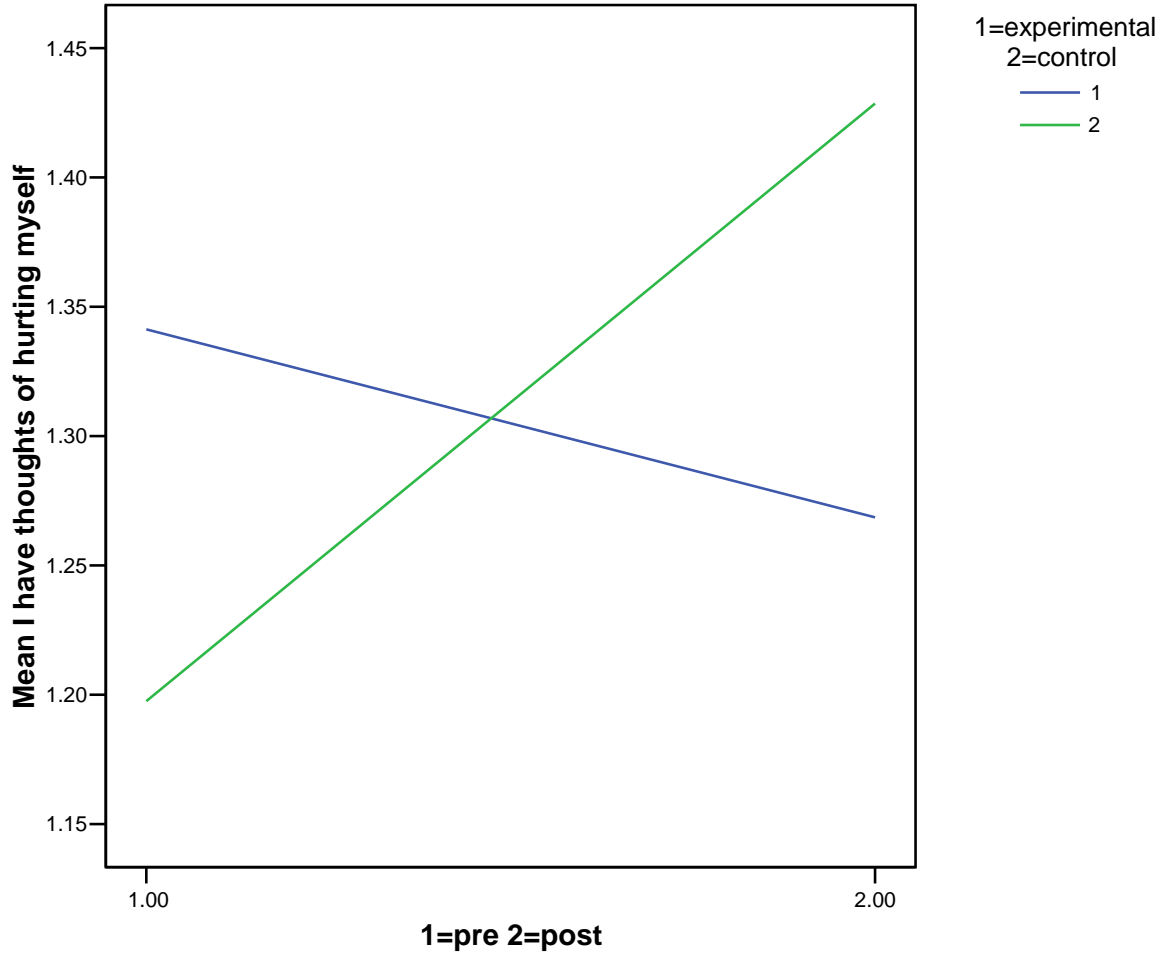


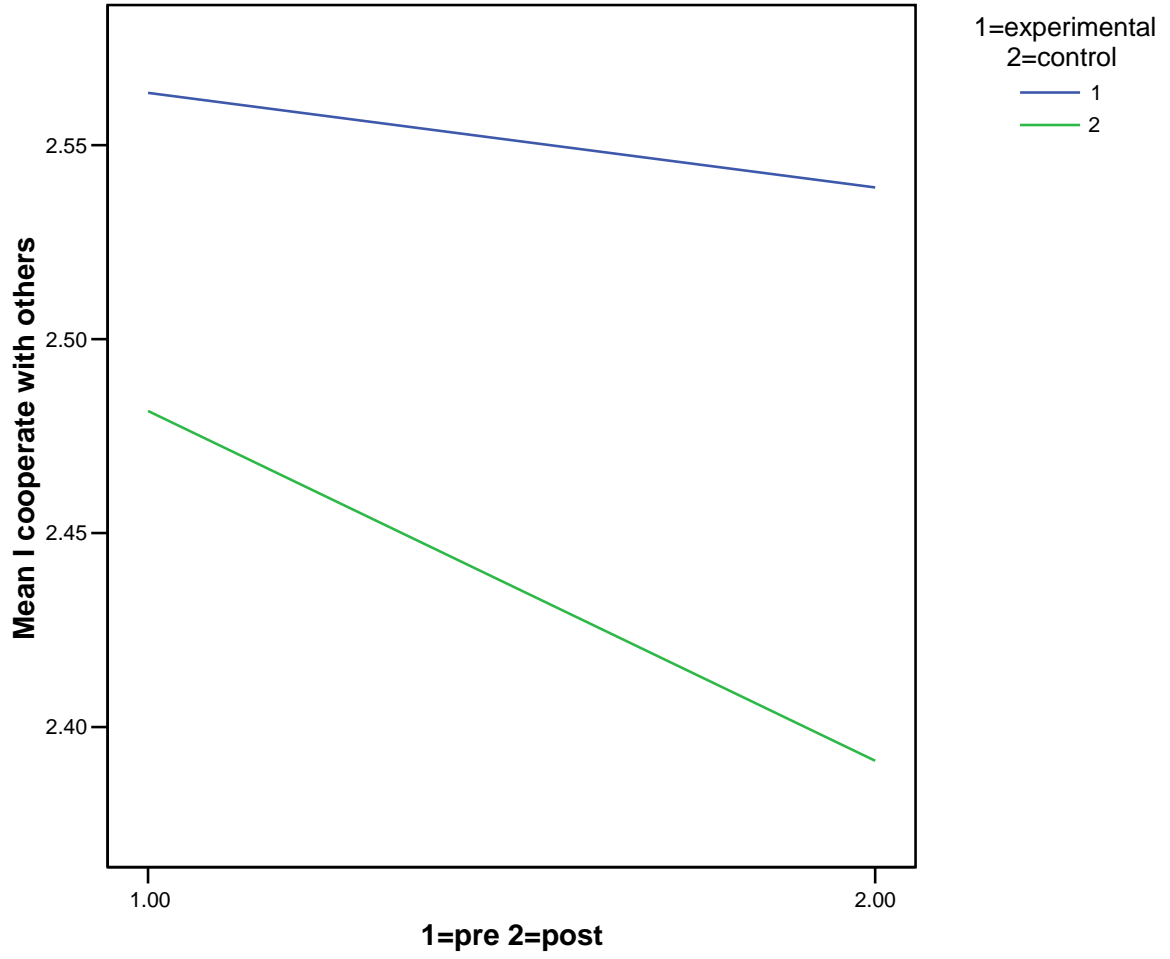
Grade 5:

There were significant differences at post-test (with no significant differences at pre-test) between the experimental (n=242) and control (n=92) groups for the following variables in the fifth grade:

	<u>Control Mean</u>	<u>Experimental Mean</u>	<u>t-value</u>
Well behaved	2.41	2.58	2.20
Thoughts of hurting one's self	1.43	1.27	2.10
Cooperating	2.39	2.54	2.14







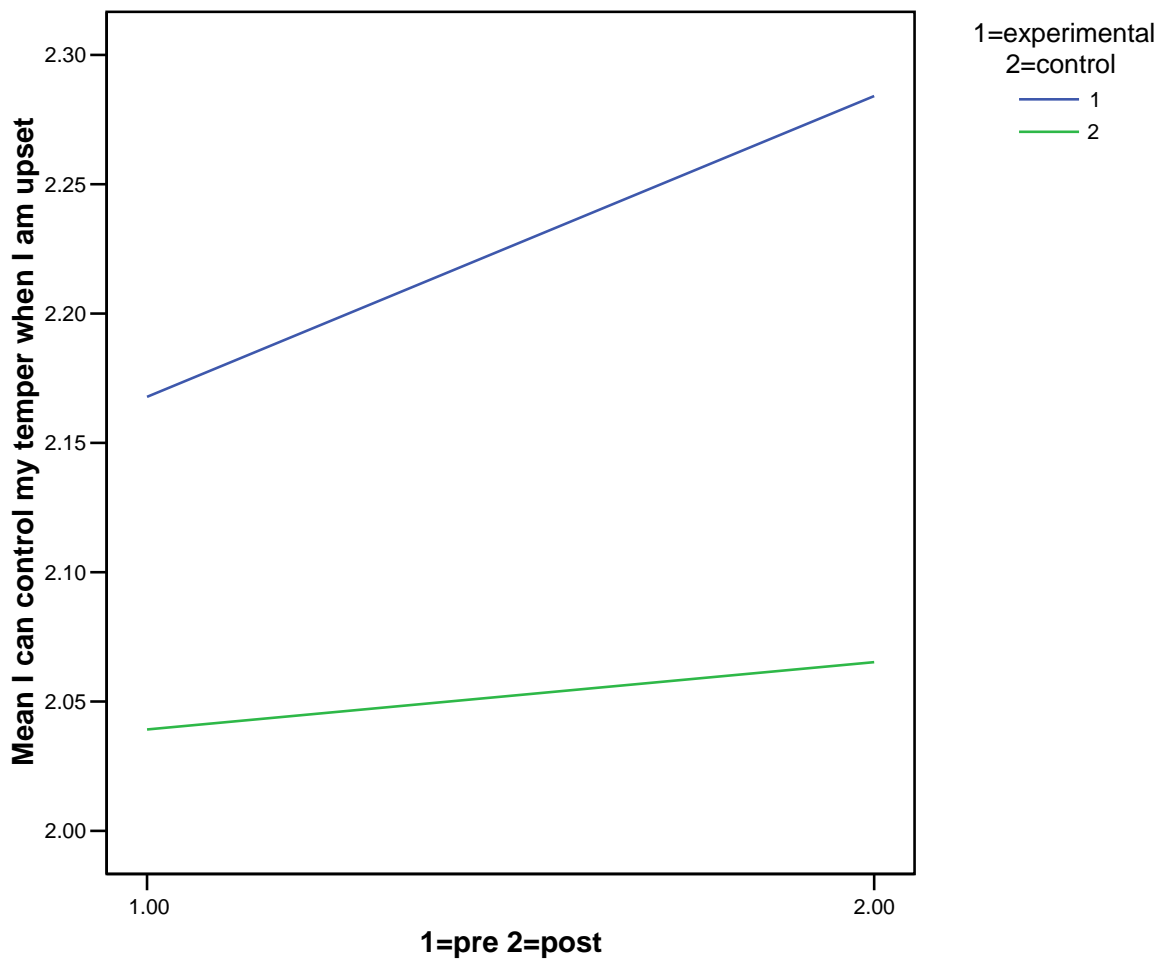
Grade 6:

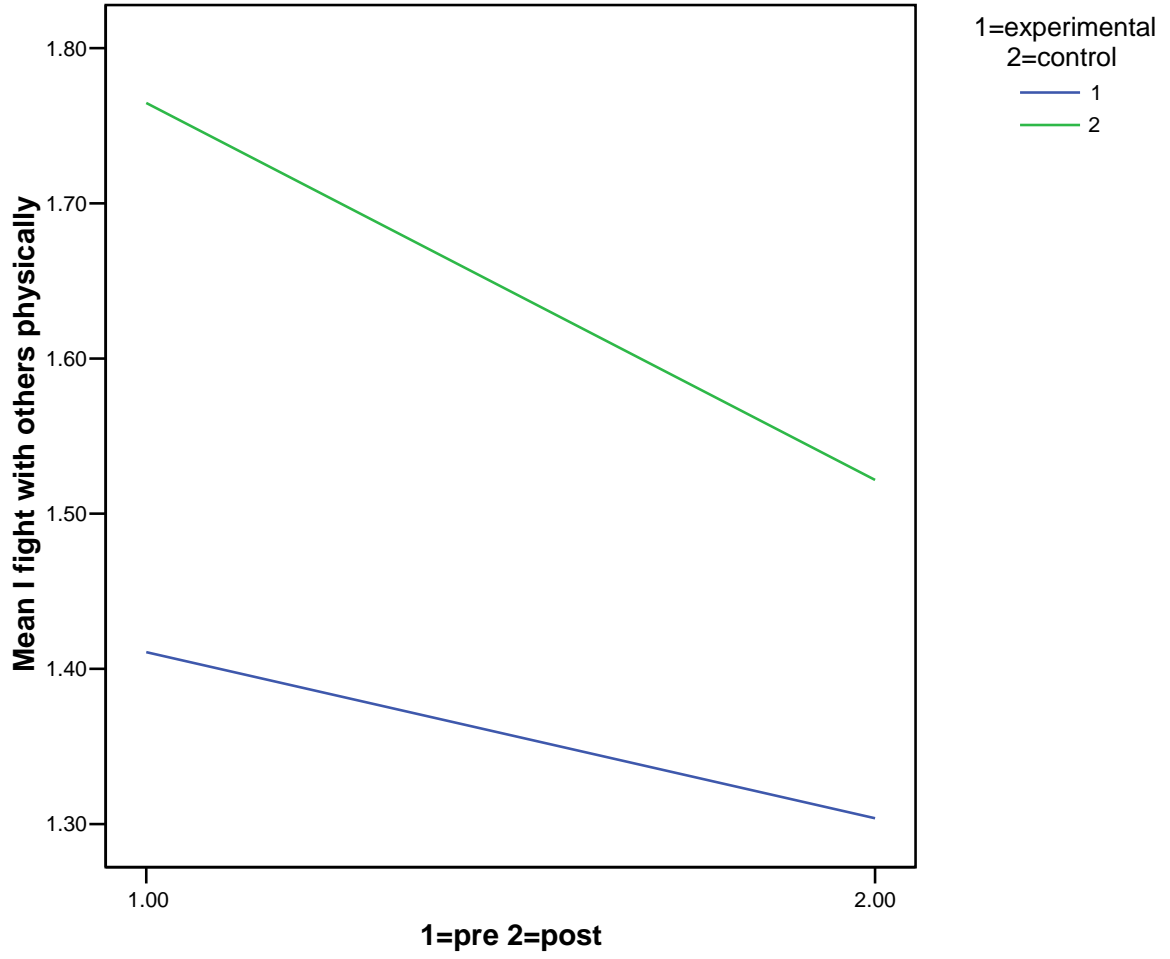
There were significant differences at post-test (with no significant differences at pre-test) between the experimental (n=271) and control (n=56) groups for the following variables in the sixth grade:

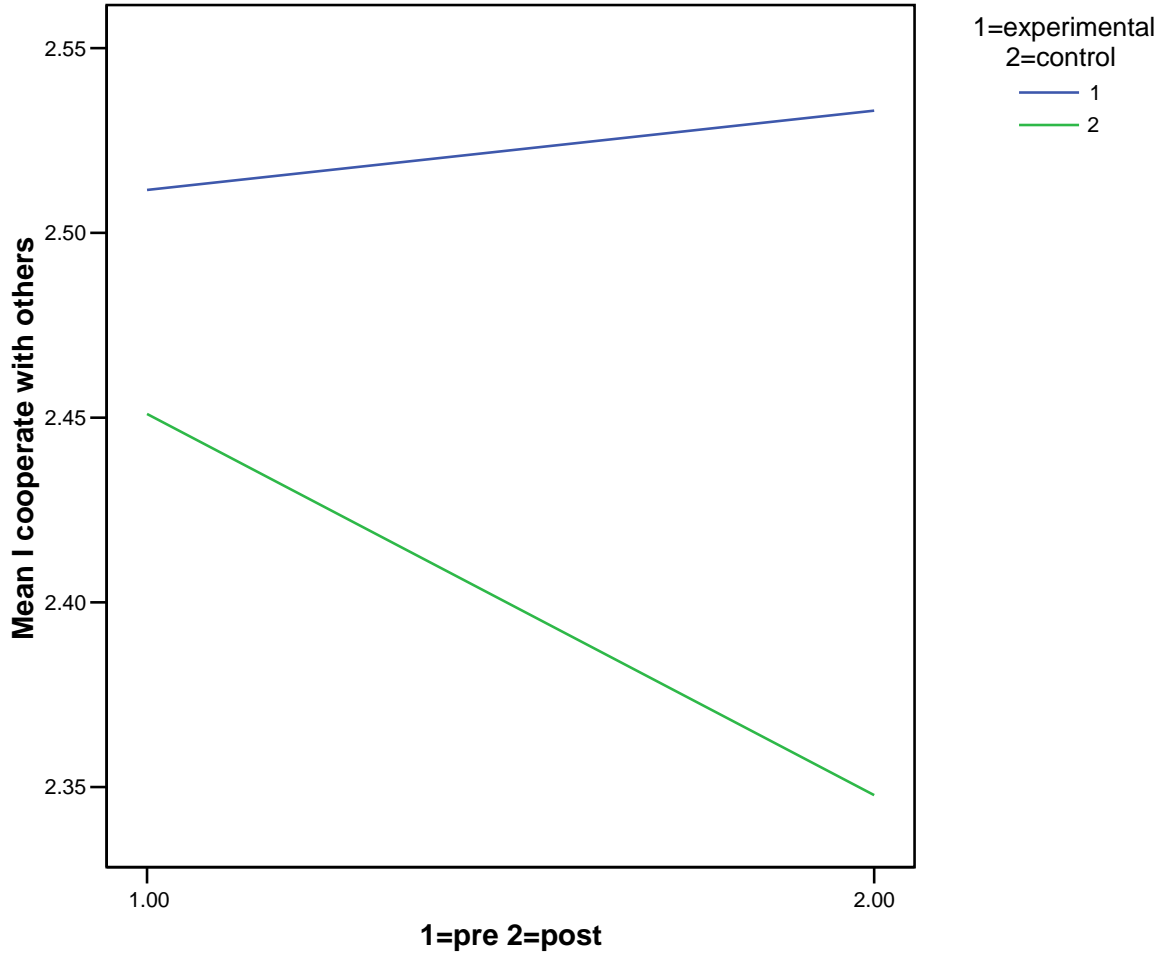
	Control Mean	Experimental Mean	t-value
Controlling one's temper	2.07	2.28	1.96
Fighting	1.52	1.30	2.39
Cooperating	2.35	2.53	2.11
Thinking of others	2.09	2.31	2.77

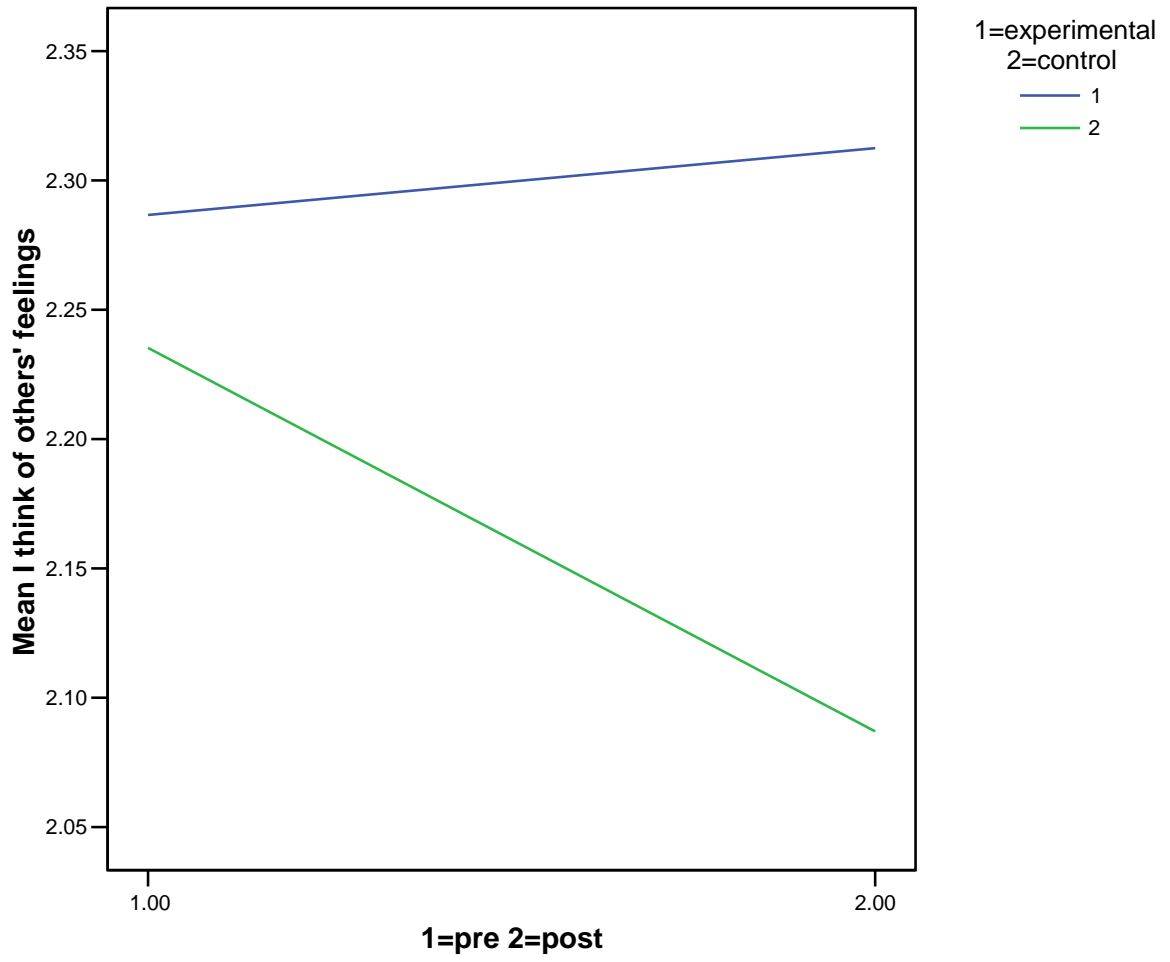
All means are on a 3-point scale 1=never 2=sometimes 3=often

All significant at $p < .05$









Racial Comparisons

The sample sizes were too small to adequately examine differences for Native American and Pacific Islanders. However, the groups self-identified as “White” or “Black” or “Hispanic” were analyzed to determine any comparisons by race.

White

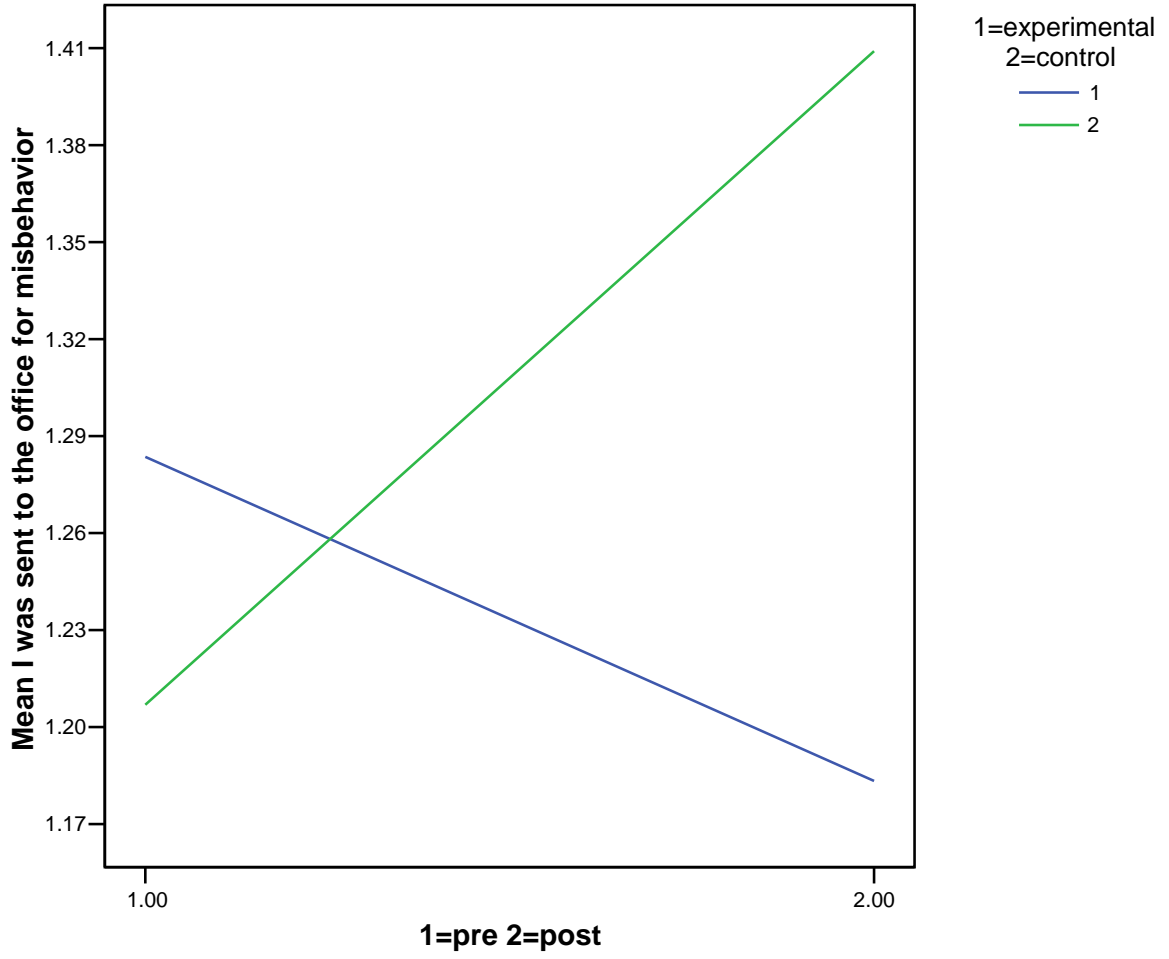
At pre-test for White students there were significant differences between control and experimental groups on the following variables: strange and bizarre behaviors, arguing, following directions, speaking up for oneself. At post-test there were no significant differences for this group of students.

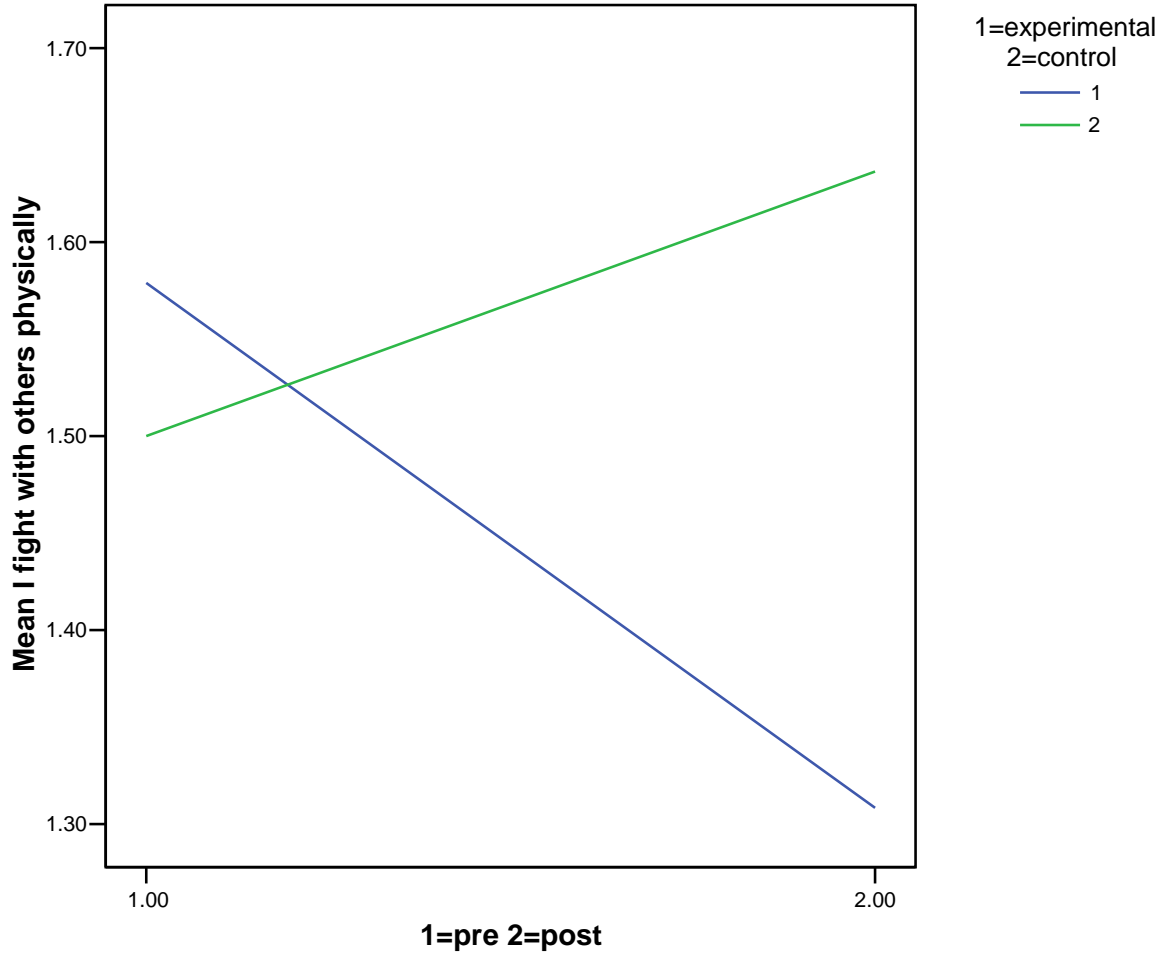
African American

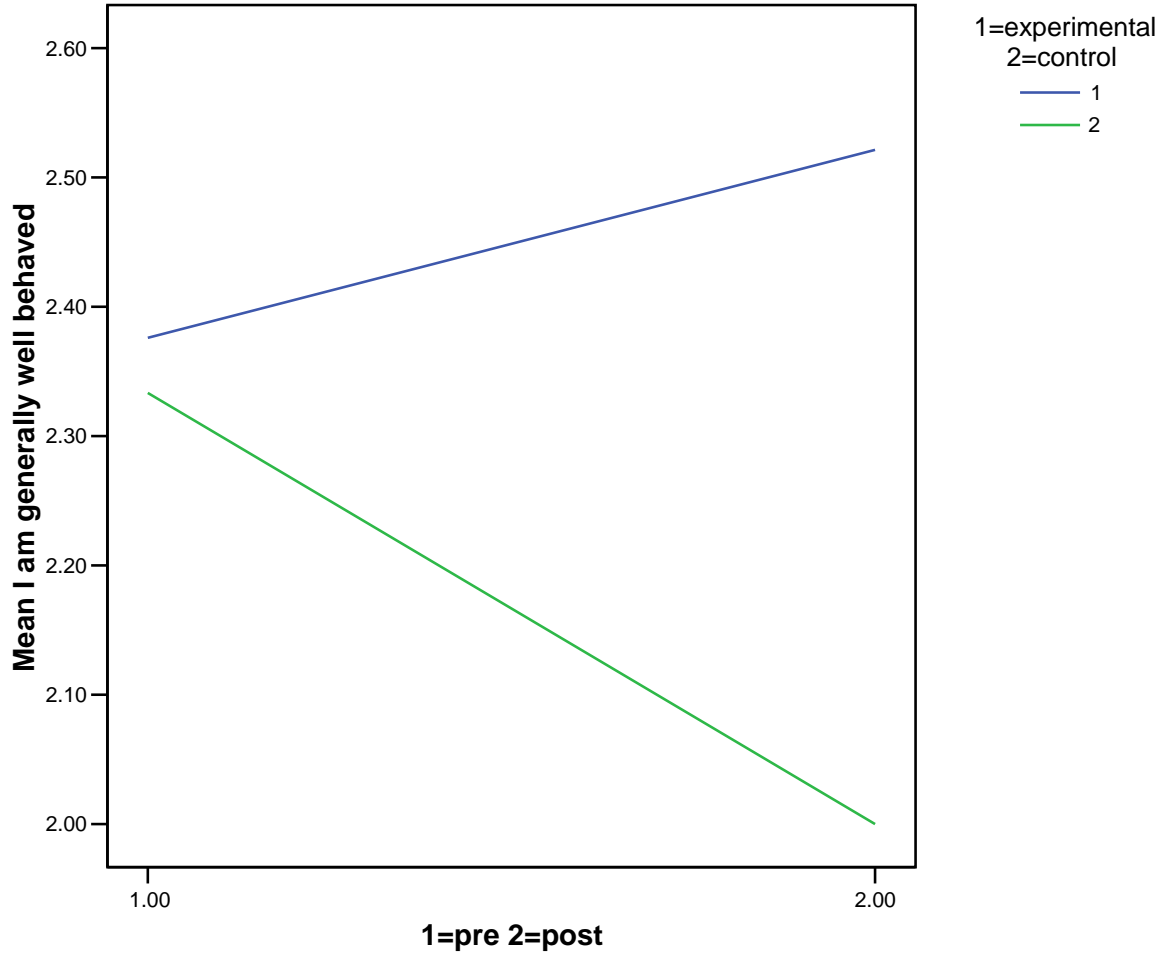
At pre-test and at post-test there were significant differences in favor of the experimental group for the following variables: controlling one’s temper, cooperating, and thinking of others’ feelings.

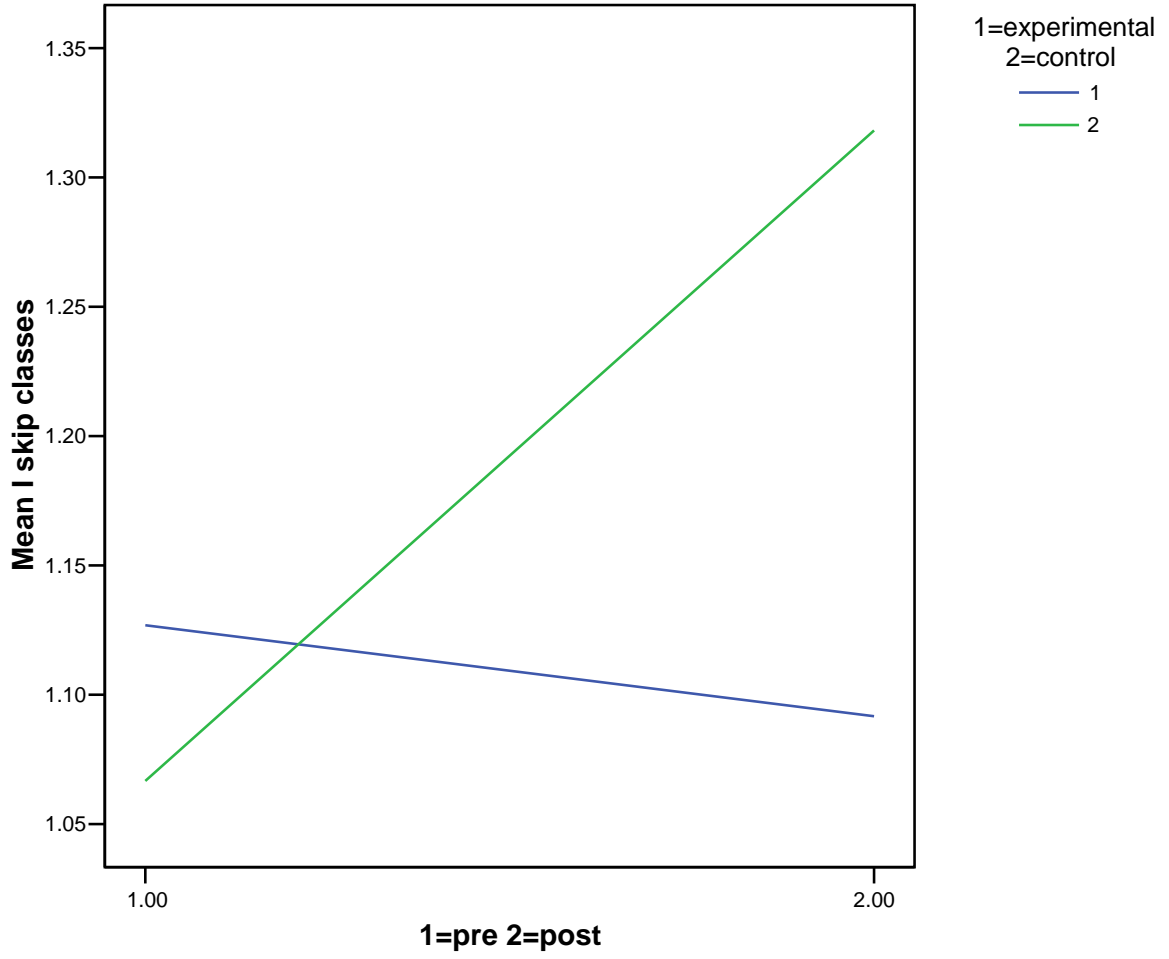
The following variables were not significantly different for the groups at pre-test, but were at post-test, in favor of the experimental group (n=120, control group n=22):

	<u>Comparison mean</u>	<u>Exp mean</u>	<u>t-value</u>
Being sent to the office for misbehavior	1.41	1.18	2.00
Fighting	1.64	1.31	2.26
Well behaved	2.00	2.52	3.60
Skipping classes	1.32	1.09	2.32







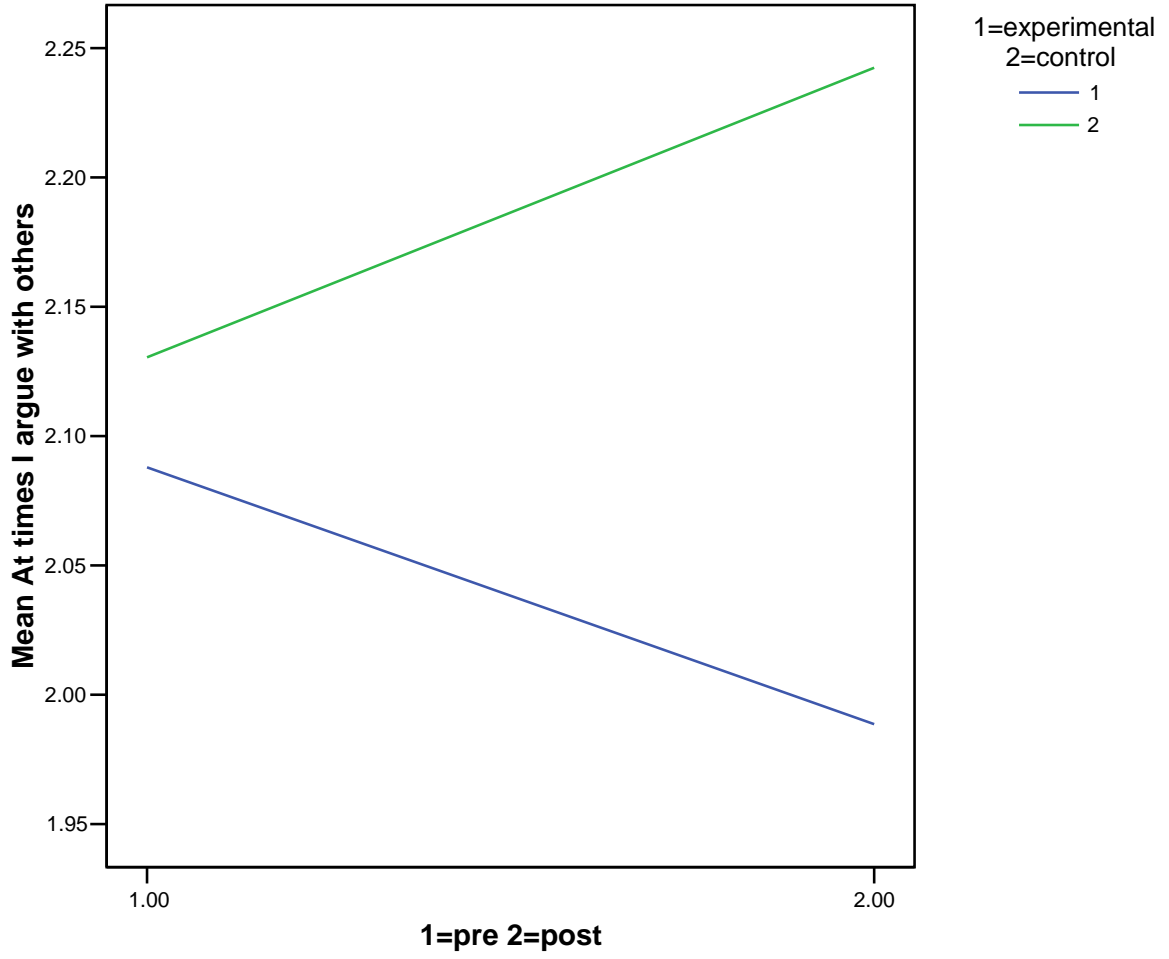


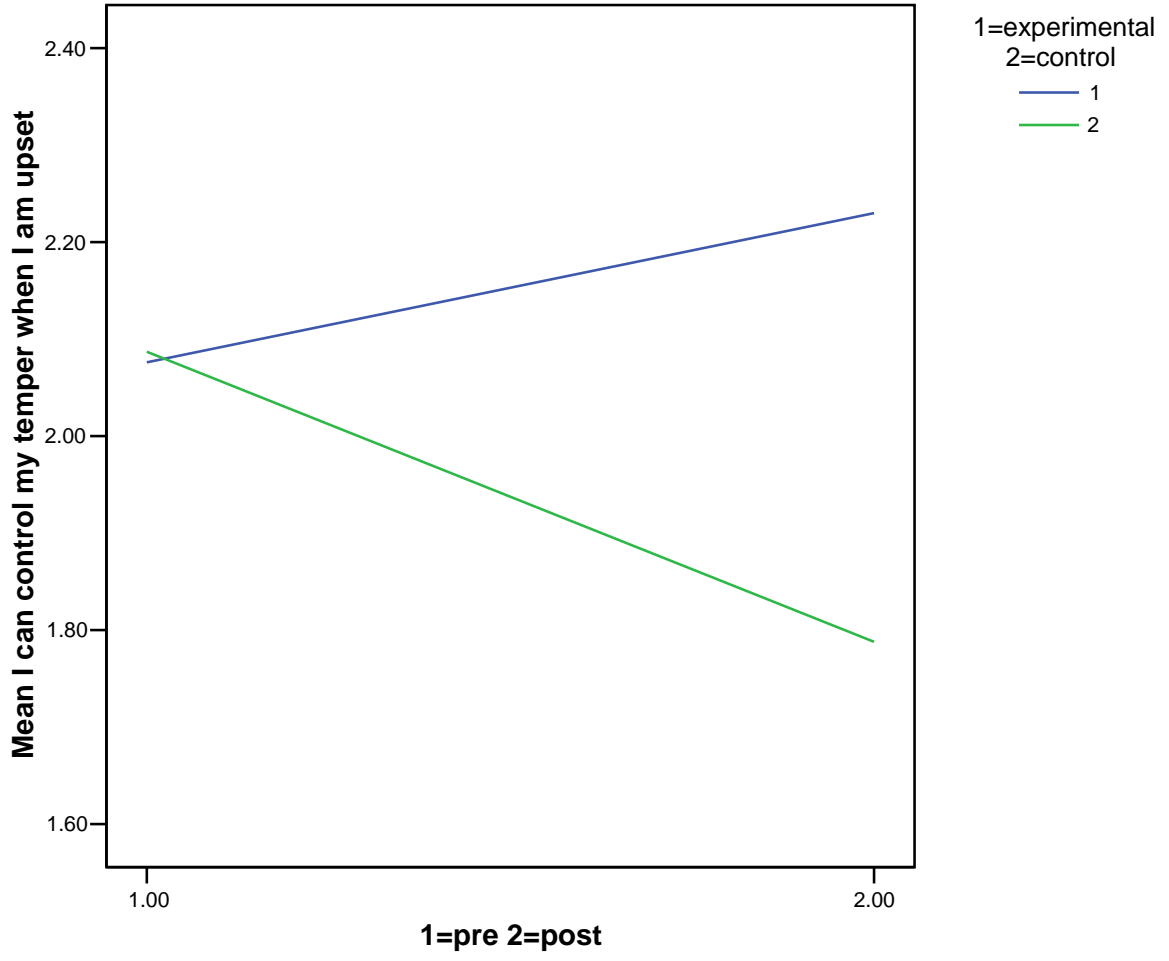
Hispanic

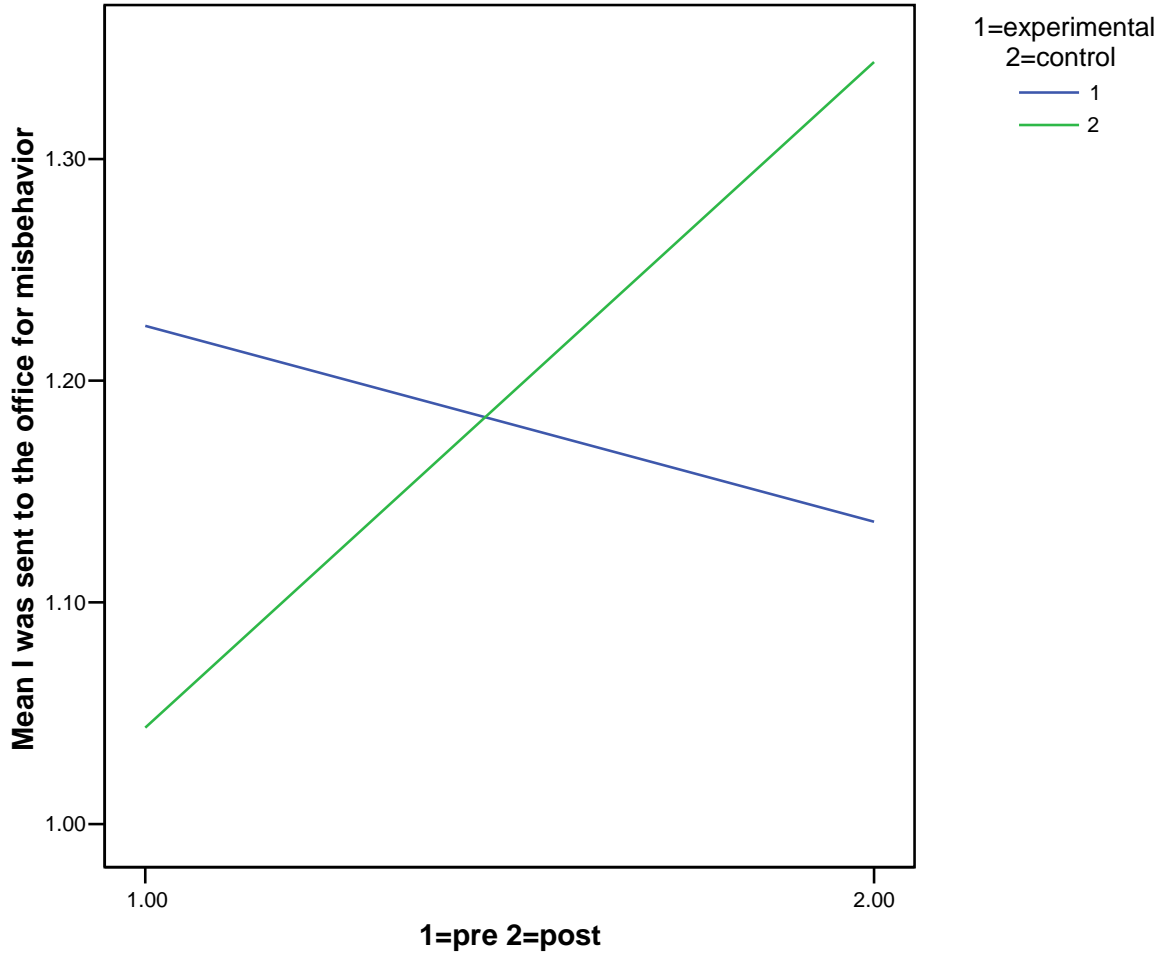
At pre-test there were differences between the control and experimental groups on the following variables: crying, skipping classes, being prepared for class, and paying attention. At post-test there were differences in favor of the experimental group (n=88, control n=33).

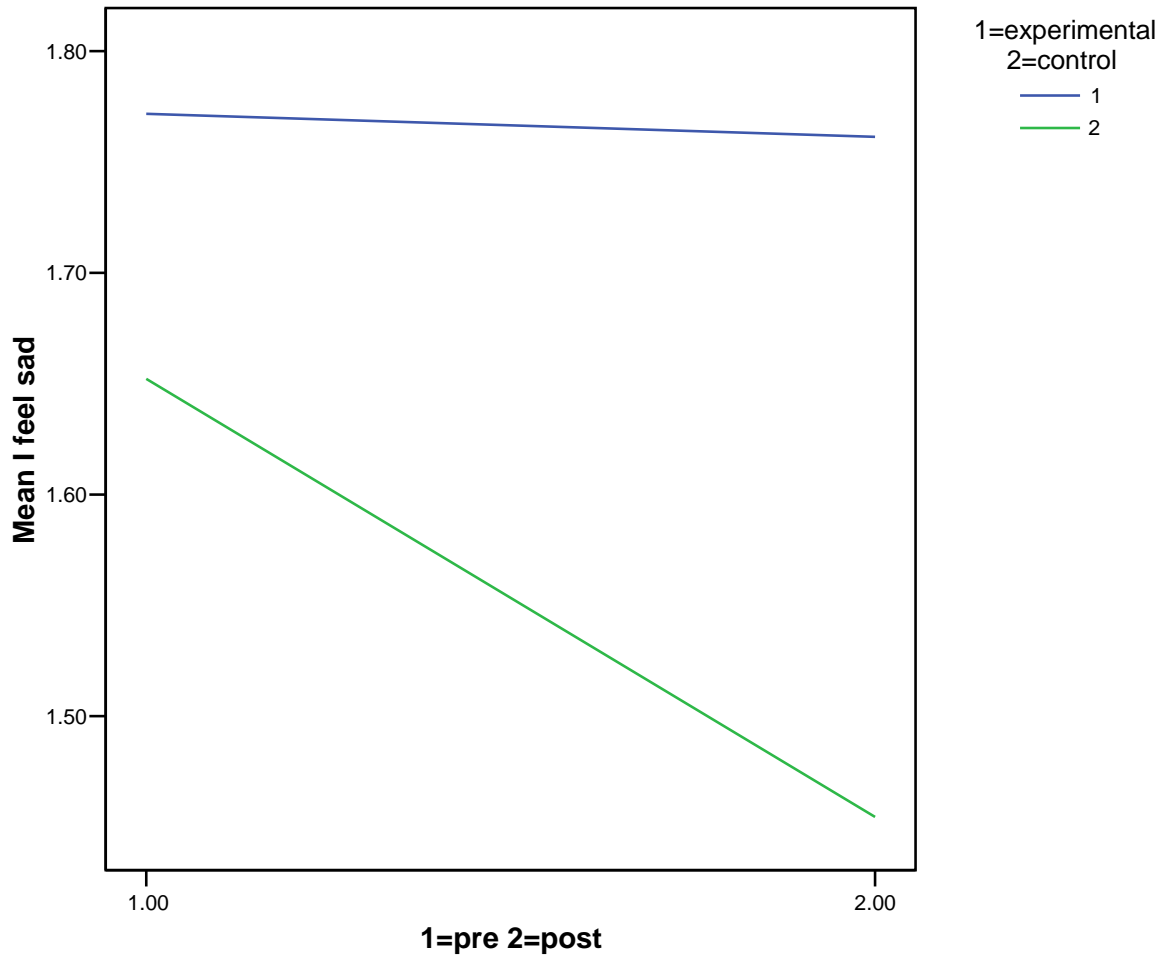
	<u>Comparison mean</u>	<u>Exp mean</u>	<u>t-value</u>
Argue	2.24	1.99	1.94
Control temper	1.79	2.23	2.71
Sent to the office for misbehavior	1.34	1.14	2.01
*Sad	1.45	1.76	2.27
Emotional	2.18	1.77	2.57
Responsible	2.37	2.60	1.93

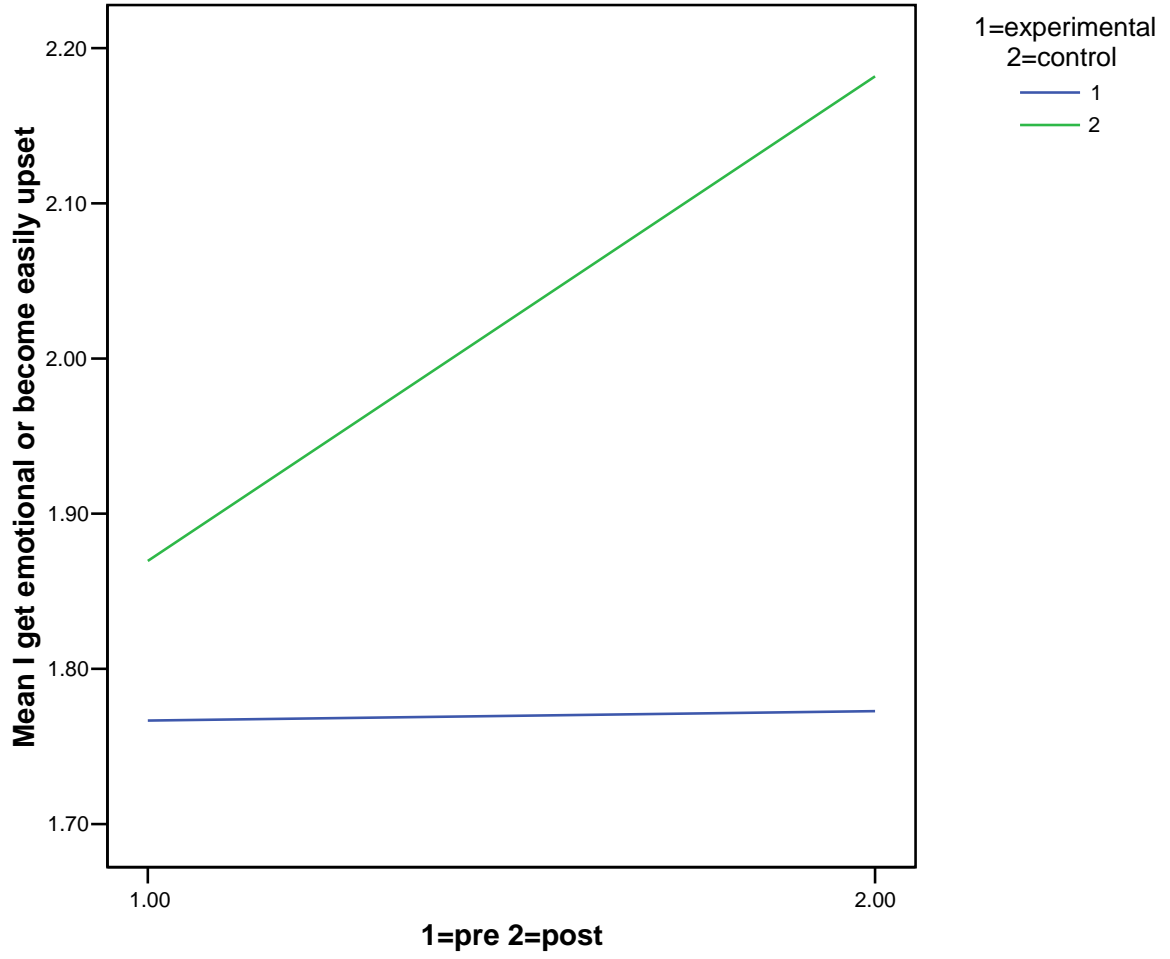
*Comparison mean is lower

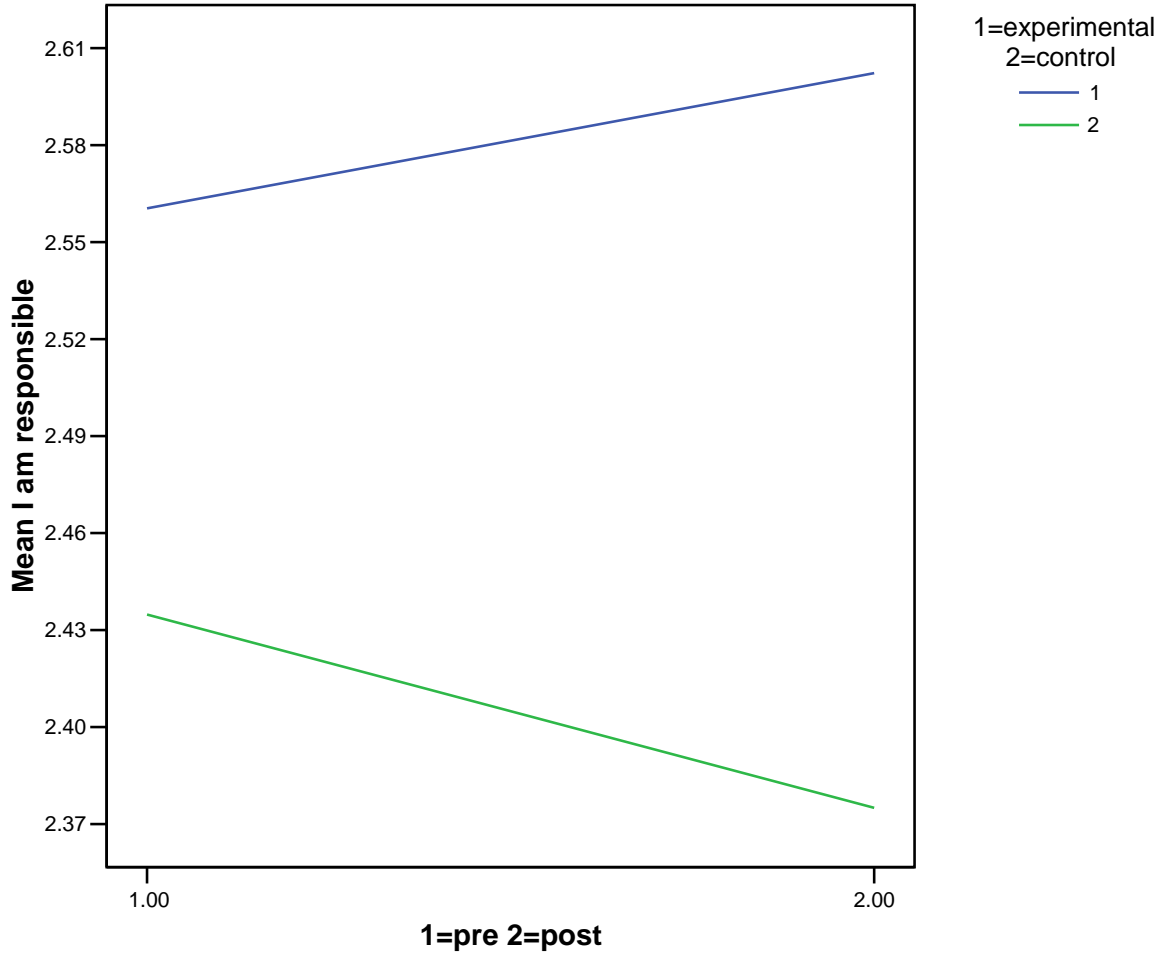












Asian students had no significant differences (but was a very small group). The “other” group was not included because it was unclear the racial/ethnic identify of these students.

Discussion/Implications

The Peaceful People program clearly has a positive impact on elementary school children. This positive impact is demonstrated above by comparing those students who had the 6-week program to those who did not through the use of pre- and post-testing. Consistently factors such as fighting, controlling one's temper, and arguing were significantly improved for the experimental groups. Also other behaviors such as cooperating with others, thinking of others' feelings (empathy), and speaking up for one's self (assertion) were also improved for the Peaceful People students.

There were some significant findings depending on grade/developmental level as well. Some behaviors were the same as for the overall group (fighting, controlling one's temper, arguing less, thinking of others, etc.). However, some factors such as becoming emotional were observed with the younger (4th graders). Interestingly the factor of having thoughts of hurting one's self were observed among the fifth grade students significantly less in the experimental than control group.

The Peaceful People program had a clear impact on the core social skills (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-Control) with varying strength for different groups. *Cooperation* was seen as having an impact on the experimental group as a whole as well as for girls, as well as fifth and sixth graders. *Assertion* (I can speak up for myself) was seen as having an impact for the overall experimental group as well and the subgroup of girls in that group. *Responsibility* was seen as having an impact for the experimental group as well as for the Hispanic subgroup of students. *Empathy* (I think of others' feelings) was apparent among the overall experimental group as well as the subgroups of girls, African Americans, and fourth and sixth graders. *Self-control* (as evidenced through one's ability to control one's temper) was evident as significantly better for the overall experimental group as well as the subgroups of African American and Hispanic students as well as fourth and sixth graders and girls.

There did not seem to be as strong an impact on the area of conflict resolution strategies and problem-solving skills as hoped. Perhaps this was a result of the six specific Peaceful People sessions (of 18 total) presented in the program. Further research is needed to determine the impact of specific sessions or combinations of sessions. However, there were clear improvements for those students exposed to the program in the areas of fighting and arguing that were areas of violence that sometimes ensues as a result of problematic conflict and lack of good problem-solving skills. In fact, one might argue that the behavior of fighting and arguing are what educators hope to address and that teaching conflict resolution and problem-solving skills are a means to that end.

What was particularly interesting was that in addition to these areas that were the foci of the program, one additional benefit was that of having thoughts of hurting one's self. These thoughts were dramatically reduced for the experimental group when compared to the control. These differences were more obvious for the subgroup of boys than girls.

The analysis by race showed that students of color are being sent to the office for misbehavior at high rates. Those students in the experimental schools showed a reduction

in office referrals and there was a significant difference between the experimental and control schools on this factor for students of color only.

The Peaceful People program has demonstrated its effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives of improving cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. It has also had an impact in reducing violent behaviors such as fighting and arguing. In addition there are clear emotional benefits such as reductions for students who have thoughts of hurting themselves. Elementary schools seeking to address problem behavior or even simply prevent problems down the road should seriously consider this program with demonstrated success.

Appendix A: Peaceful People Program Overview

Peaceful People, a comprehensive youth development and violence prevention program, is a service of PRL (Peaceful Resolutions for Living, Inc.). Peaceful People uses an integrated character and conflict resolution education curricula and provides a series of activity based classroom lesson plans which empowers facilitators/teachers to make meaningful connections for students between the skills that are needed for character development and the academic foundations in which they learn most effectively. In turn, students who participate in the Peaceful People program benefit in two essential ways; they become socially competent and contributing members of society while they increase their interest and achievement in academics.

A key component of the Peaceful People curriculum is that for every concept that is presented to the students, there is a concrete skill connected which the students use as a guide to practicing pro-social behaviors, which in turn allows them to internalize the character traits that each concept is striving for. For example, at the very onset of the program students are taught the concept of being peaceful. While exploring the meaning and significance of peace students are taught the skill of being a STAR in order to exhibit peaceful behaviors. STAR: **S**top, **T**hink, **A**ct with **R**espect is a basic skill which even a pre-school student can understand and put into practice, yet is a very significant skill which stresses the need to show self-control (by stopping and thinking before we act), emphasizing the importance of our behaviors (caring about peace is not enough, we need to demonstrate peaceful behavior if we want to truly be peaceful), and finally concluding that when we act respectful of others we are acting peacefully.

PRL believes that providing concrete skills in character and conflict resolution education is essential for any program to be effective. Conflict resolution and character being necessary and significant areas of education, should be formatted and organized as the other content areas of education in which students are taught a combination of content with skills to master the concepts being presented in the content. In fact, because character education is so abstract, it becomes even more essential to make the concrete connections through specific skills to empower the students to actually put the desired behaviors into action.

Another underlying philosophy of the Peaceful People program is that students learn in a variety of ways. Peaceful People compliments the theory of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences by providing learning opportunities for all types of learners so that every student can successfully understand and use the knowledge and skills being presented to them. This is demonstrated through the following components of the Peaceful People program:

- **Visual Demonstrations:** For every concept being presented there is an accompanied visual demonstration in which the facilitator/teacher can demonstrate the meaning and importance of the concept being addressed.

These demonstrations allow visual learners to immediately see and understand the inherent value of the lesson being presented.

- **Songs and Chants:** For students who learn best through rhythm and music there are songs and/or chants that accompany the program that reinforce the skills that students need to use in order to practice the desired behaviors in focus. By providing musical experiences students are more likely to remember the skills they need at all times, so that when they need to put them into practice in their own lives they can easily remember them and implement them.
- **Literature:** For every session there is a variety of literature that facilitators can choose from to strengthen the connection between the concept being presented and the meaning it has to real life situations. These selections of quality literature help verbal learners to maximize their learning potential. The literature is also a springboard for facilitators to use as a connection to the academic concepts students are learning at the time, strengthening both students' social and academic skills.
- **Word Walls:** For every session key vocabulary is identified, along with activities such as crossword puzzles and word games, in which teachers can use for word walls in the classroom. When students are given constant reminders of the concepts and skills being presented to them through the key vocabulary they are most likely to use these words in their own spoken and written vocabulary, hence internalizing the value of these words and related concepts and skills.
- **Activities:** For every session there are many activities that the students can engage in cooperatively that focus on the ways the related concepts and skills relate to the students' own lives, making meaningful connections for all students, especially those that learn best through bodily/kinesthetic and/or interpersonal learning experiences. Along with each activity is an essential "Debrief" section, which empowers the facilitator to follow-up on the activity with meaningful discussions with students on the value the concepts and skills have in their own lives.
- **Journal Writing:** For every session there are accompanying journal reflections for students to use so that they can build the concepts and skills being presented into their personal experiences over an extended period of time. This is especially helpful to students who learn best intrapersonally and/or verbally. This is also significant because it is a continuous reinforcement of the concepts and skills, which maximizes the students' likelihood of remembering, valuing, and using the related behaviors.
- **Academic Thematic Units:** For teachers participating in Peaceful People there are thematic units available focusing on topics such as the environment, families, communities, and author studies which give lesson plans for all of the major content areas. The focus of each unit is the integration of the academic content areas with the character education concepts and skills being taught in the Peaceful People program so to strengthen both the students' academic and social competencies in meaningful ways.

In addition to the various components outlined above, the overall scope and sequence of the Peaceful People program is designed in a logical and sequential pattern which is constantly reinforced throughout the presentation of the content, which allows students, especially mathematical/logical learners, to understand the interconnectedness of the specific pieces of the program to one another, as well as to their own lives. In addition, for every session there is a section on “Background Knowledge” for the facilitator to get a comprehensive overview of the significance of each session so that they are best able to make the necessary connections for their students. There is also a “Supporting Concepts” sections which gives an outline of the concepts and skills that the session is building on from previous sessions, to again empower even the least experienced facilitator to provide the necessary building blocks for the students to ensure their understanding of the session and the ways in which the session relates to prior concepts and skills learned.

As a result of the multi-faceted components of the Peaceful People program, as well as the related academic thematic units that are available to the teachers who use the program, the Peaceful People is a model for those who are interested in incorporating the Dimensions of Learning into their classroom approach to teaching. The very basis of the program supports and provides strategies for creating a safe and nurturing classroom climate for learners. In additions, the combination of concepts and skills as a part of every session provides students with both declarative and procedural information to get the most out of every lesson. To provide meaningful applications and opportunities for students to extend and refine their knowledge the literature, activities, journals, word walls, and academic thematic units give all types of learners multiple and continuous ways to use and refine their understanding of the concepts. The combination of all of the above naturally promotes productive habits of mind for the students both socially and academically, which as stated previously, is the underlying philosophy, objective, and uniqueness of Peaceful People.

Appendix B: Student Behavior Checklist (modified version)

Date: _____ School: _____ Gender _____
 Race: _____ Date: _____ Grade _____ Age _____ Service/Provider: _____

Please rate how often each of the following behaviors below occurred with **you during the past week**. Place a mark or fill in the appropriate box next to each sentence. Your name will not be used so this will be anonymous. Nobody will know your answers except you.

		Never	Sometimes	Often
1	I have trouble paying attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	At times I act before I think.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	People think my thoughts are strange.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I do dangerous things.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	At times I argue with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I am generally honest & truthful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	I can control my temper when I am upset.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I can resolve conflicts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	I follow directions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	I have thoughts of hurting others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	I was sent to the office for misbehavior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	I fight with others physically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	I am generally well behaved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	I feel sleepy or tired.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	I get easily embarrassed or feel ashamed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	I feel sad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	I feel nervous or anxious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	I have thoughts of hurting myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	I cry easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	I get emotional or become easily upset.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	I try my best in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	I skip classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	I am responsible (people can count on me).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	I make friends easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	It is easy for me to talk to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	I go to class prepared.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	I get good grades at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	I help with household tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30.	I think of others' feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.	I cooperate with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32.	I can speak up for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

References

- Grossman, D., et al. (1997). The Effectiveness of a Violence Prevention Curriculum Among Children in Elementary School. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 277, 1605–1611.
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