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***Evaluation of the
Conflict Resolution in
U.S. History Project***

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Summary

The Conflict Resolution in U.S. History Project is a collaborative effort between the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis and the New Jersey Center for Civic and Law-Related Education funded by the Ford Foundation by 1994. This program was designed to address the issues of conflict in our culture and the increasing violence in our schools and by juveniles in our society today as well as to enhance the teaching and understanding of history.

This report evaluates the effectiveness of the Conflict Resolution in U.S. History Project focusing on three main goals

1. To integrate conflict resolution skills into the teaching of history in an effort to expand the number of schools teaching conflict resolution skills;
2. To provide students with practical skills for resolving conflicts in their daily lives;
3. To provide analytical tools for understanding conflict in history;

Due to feedback of participating teachers of the benefits the program had on the students in their classes, the effects of the program on students learning of U.S. History was also assessed in the evaluation.

Key findings of this evaluation include:

- More than 90 percent of the teachers reported using ideas from the program in their courses, and three out of ten teachers report using four or more of the conflict resolution and US history lessons a year
- Two-thirds of teachers thought that their teaching had become more effective as a result of their participation in the Conflict Resolution and US history teacher institute
- Nine out of ten teachers indicated that their history course was richer
- More than 80 percent of teachers reported that their students can use conflict resolution skills
- More than 80 percent of teachers indicated that their students gained a richer understanding of history

Evaluation of the Conflict Resolution in U.S. History Project

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The program focuses on several goals. These include:

- To integrate conflict resolution skills into the teaching of history in an effort to expand the number of schools teaching conflict resolution skills;
- To provide students with practical skills for resolving conflicts in their daily lives;
- To provide analytical tools for understanding conflict in history and in society today; and
- Ultimately, to help to reduce youth violence in schools and society.

To do this, teachers attend a teacher institute. On the first day, teachers are introduced to interest-based negotiation, strategies and skills for effective negotiation and an understanding of the process of mediation and the role of the mediator. On following days, participants focus on a particular historical conflict. The history of the conflict is reviewed and then participants engage in a variety of activities that allows them to thoroughly understand the conflict and interests of those involved. Through role playing, institute participants brainstormed and evaluated alternatives in an effort to resolve the conflict. After the activity, group discussions occurred as did the comparison of fact with the simulations. Participants are then able to use these strategies such as these in their classes with their high school students.

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As the project progressed and the project directors received feedback from the participating teachers, it became clear that the materials and teaching strategies were not only valuable in helping students learn conflict resolution skills but also for motivating students to gain a richer understanding of U.S. History. Hence, this too became an additional focus of the evaluation.

Participants and Methods of the Evaluation

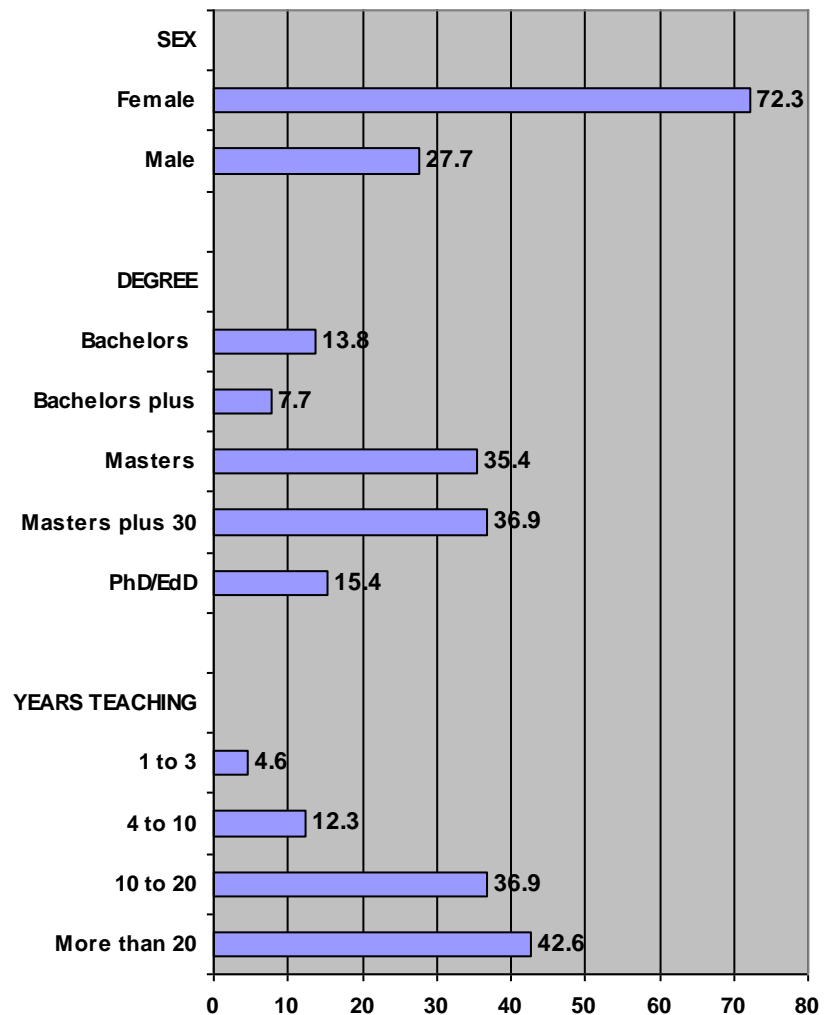
Surveys were mailed to 150 individuals who attended the Teacher Institute of the Conflict Resolution and U.S. History program from 1994 to 2005. Two survey instruments were used. These instruments were virtually identical except one form asked for slightly different demographic information and included an additional evaluation question (i.e. My history course is richer.) Teachers were also asked to submit comments about the Conflict Resolution and U.S History program, materials or teaching strategies.

In total, 43% of those who were sent questionnaires responded. In other words, 65 individuals responded to the mailed questionnaire (Forty-six to the original form and 19 to the other form). These individuals were asked several demographic questions to obtain information about the school in which they teach and their teaching experience. Most of the individuals who completed the survey were female (72.3%) although approximately a quarter were male (27.7%). Ten teachers responded to the request for comments about the program.

Many have strong educational backgrounds. About one third (35.4%) report having a master's degree, while another one-third (36.6%) report having a master's degree plus 30 additional credits, and 15.4% report having either a PhD or an EdD. The remainder of individuals report having a bachelor's degree, either a Bachelors of Arts or Science (13.8%) or a bachelor's degree plus 30 additional credits (7.7%).

Most respondents report having been teaching for a number of years. About two-fifths (42.6%) of those surveyed have been teaching for more than 20 years. Another 36.9% report that they have been teaching for more than 10 years but less than 20 years. The remainder report

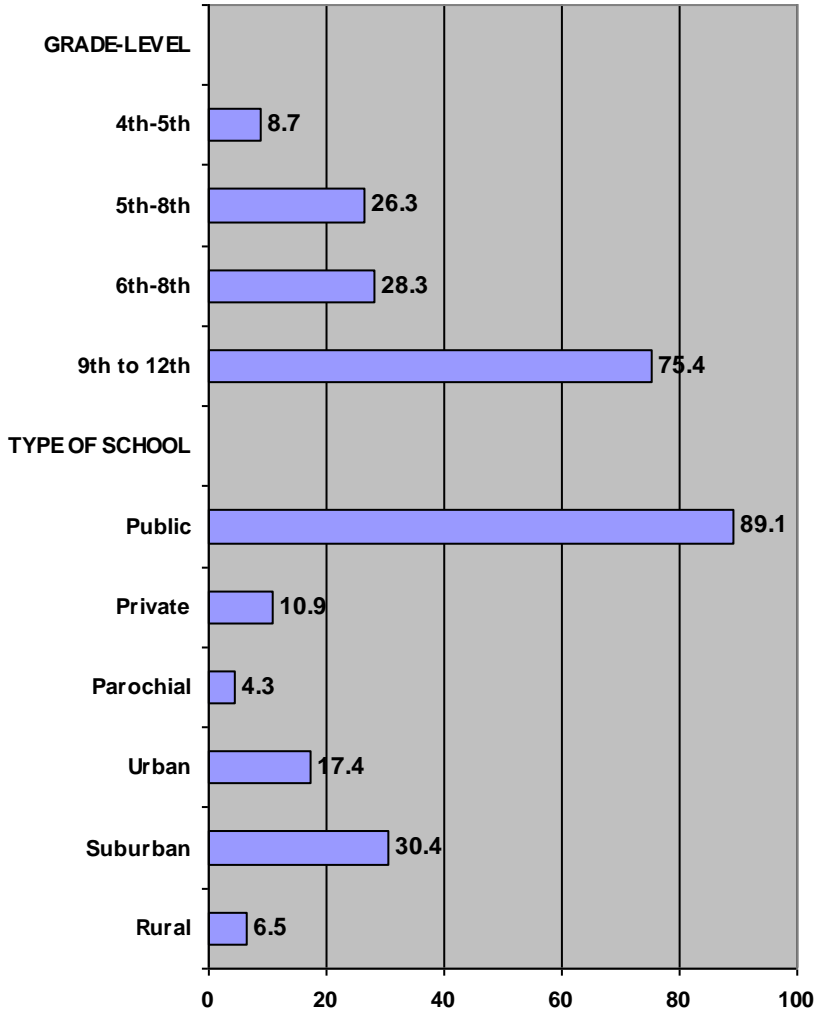
Figure 1. Demographic Information*
(Expressed as Percent of Respondents)



* Because respondents were asked to check all that apply, totals may not sum to 100%.

having taught between four and ten years (12.3%) or between one to three years (4.6%).

Figure 2. Teaching Information*
(Expressed as Percent of Respondents)



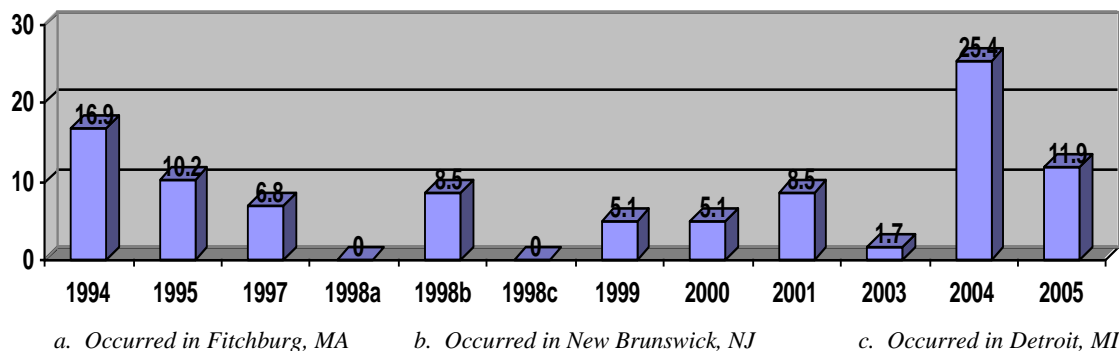
* Because respondents were asked to check all that apply, totals may not sum to 100%.

The majority of respondents teach in public schools (89.1%) with 10.9% teaching in private schools (either religious or secular). Some respondents were asked about additional types of schools (n=46). Of those asked, nearly one-third (30.4%) report teaching in a suburban area while 17.4% report teaching in an urban area. Less than ten percent report teaching in a parochial (4.3%) or rural (6.5%) area.

In addition to being asked the type of school, respondents were also asked to report what grade level they teach. (It should be noted that respondents were instructed to check all applicable responses.) The majority of respondents reported teaching ninth through twelfth grade (75.4%). Slightly more than a quarter report teaching either sixth through eighth grade (28.3%) or fifth through eighth grade (26.3%). Less than one-in-ten teach fourth and fifth grade (8.7%).

The Teacher Institute has been offered 11 times since the summer of 1994 in a variety of cities including New Brunswick, NJ; Fitchburg, MA; Detroit, MI; Philadelphia, PA; Knoxville, TN; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA and New York City, NY. Two respondents were unsure as to when they attended, and three respondents indicated that they attended more than once. Another respondent did not answer this question. Of the remaining 59 respondents remaining, one-quarter (25.1%) attended the institute in Los Angeles in the summer of 2004. Another 16.9% attended the summer of 1994 institute in New Brunswick. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Percent of Respondents that Attended Each Institute



Progress towards goals

The conflict Resolution in U.S. History Project touts several multifaceted goals. Some of these goals include:

1. To integrate conflict resolution skills into the teaching of history in an effort to expand the number of schools teaching conflict resolution skills;;
2. To provide students with practical skills for resolving conflicts in their daily lives;
3. To provide analytical tools for understanding conflict in history;

Integrate Conflict Resolution Skills into the Teaching of History

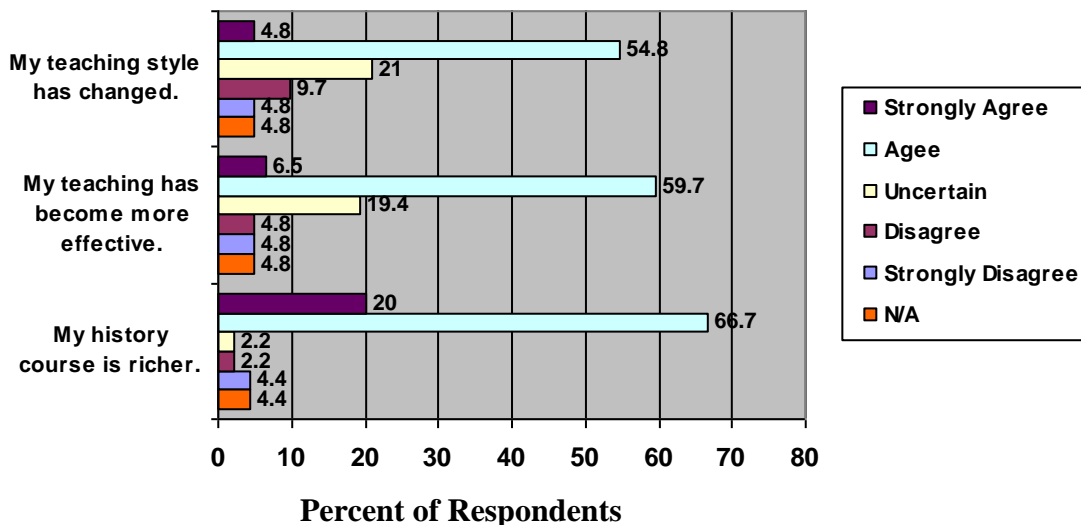
The first goal of the program is to integrate conflict resolution skills into the teaching of history in an effort to expand the number of schools teaching these skills. With respect to this goal, several survey questions were asked about teachers' use of skills that they learned in the summer institute and their integration of these skills into their current teaching. For the most part, teachers who attended the program indicate that they are still using the program. About three-quarters (76.9%) of teachers who were surveyed report that they continue to use and/or design lessons for US History classes that integrate conflict resolution skills. Those teachers who are not currently using teacher institute lessons in their U.S. History classes were asked to explain why they were not using lessons. Those who are not currently using teacher institute lessons reported that they were not using them because they no longer teach U.S. History.

Of the teachers that report using or designing lessons, 87.5% continue to use lessons presented at the teacher institute and 92.5% continue to integrate some ideas from the summer institute into the courses they teach. Most teachers report that they are using two (36.5%) or three (26.9%) lessons a year. Very few use one lesson (5.8%) while three out of ten teachers report using four or more lessons. These lessons are used predominantly in US History classes (84.6%) followed by World History classes (32.3%) and electives (29.2%) such as Law, Government and Social Sciences.

Not only do most teachers continue to use lessons presented at the teacher institute, a large percentage of teachers' reported that their teaching style has changed as a result of participating in the teacher institute. Specifically, nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their teaching style has changed (59.6%). Another 21% were uncertain if their teaching style had changed while few reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (14.5%).

It seems that the change in teaching that has occurred as a result of the program is for the better. Teachers were asked to report about the effectiveness of their teaching style as a result of participating in the program. Two-thirds indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their teaching style had become more effective. One-fifth was uncertain that the program caused this change in their teaching style, while less than one-in-ten reported that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Nearly nine out of ten who responded indicated that their history course is richer with 20% strongly agreeing with this statement and another 66.7% agreeing with the statement. Few respondents felt uncertain (2.2%), disagreed (2.2%) or strongly disagreed (4.4%) that their history course is richer. (Teacher's responses to items about their teaching appear in Figure 4.) One teacher provided insight into how this may occur when she wrote, "using the conflict resolution techniques enable the instructor to devote more time to being a facilitator as students have a more hands-on experience. These techniques help and encourage students to be more involved in their learning."

Figure 4. Responses to Items Regarding Teaching



Provide Students with Practical Skills for Resolving Conflicts

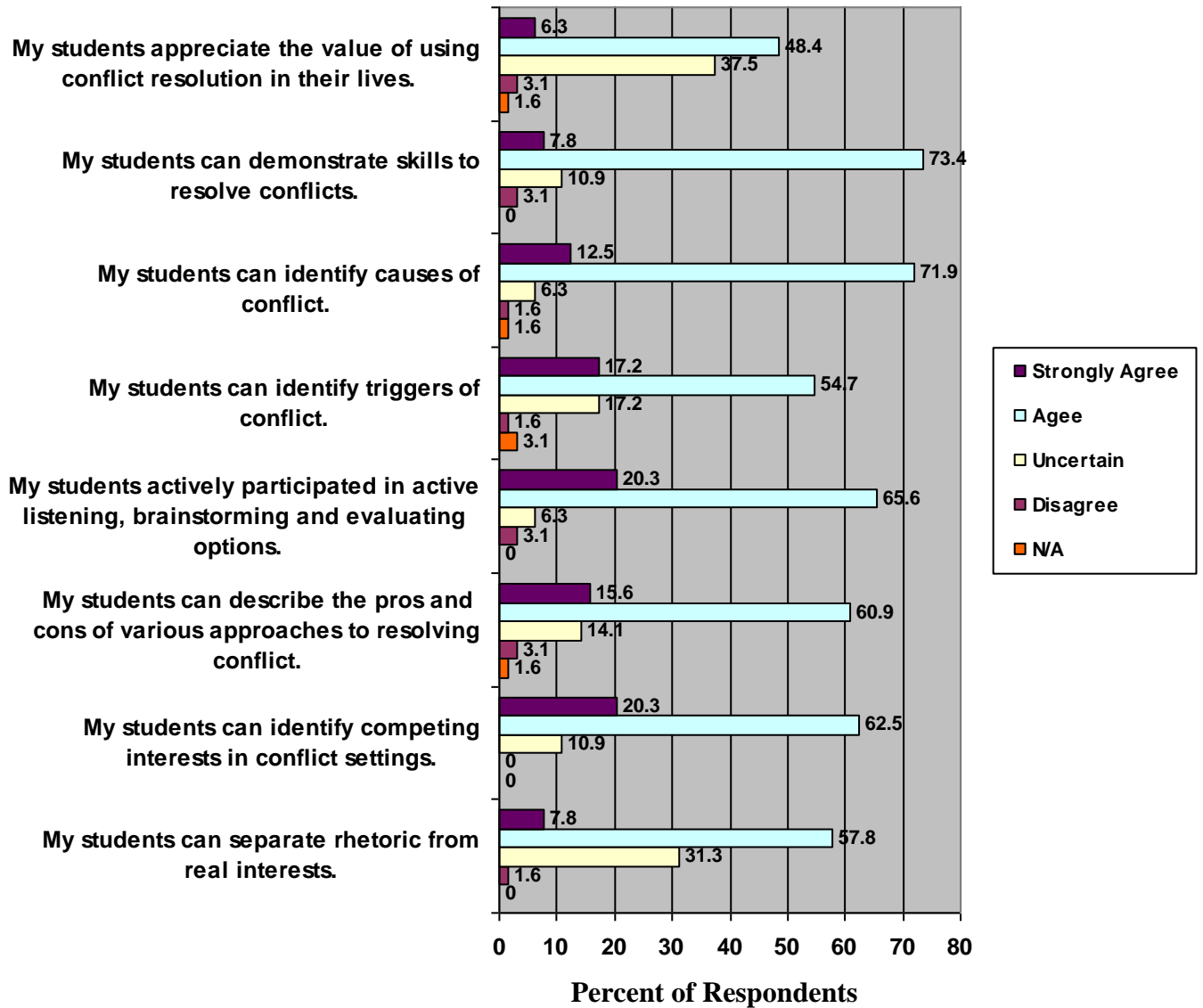
A second goal of the program is to provide students with practical skills for resolving conflicts in their daily lives. Teachers report that their students appreciate the value of using conflict resolution in their lives. About half of teachers report that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their *students appreciate the value of using conflict resolution in their lives*. Another 37.5% were uncertain that their students appreciated the value of conflict resolution. Very few disagreed (3.1%) or strongly disagreed (3.1%) with this notion.

Also, teachers feel strongly that their students have skills to help them resolve conflicts. Approximately four-fifths of teachers (81.2%) reported that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement *my students can demonstrate skills to resolve conflicts*. Another 10.9% felt uncertain about the statement while fewer disagreed (3.1%) or strongly disagreed (4.7%) that their students could demonstrate skills to resolve conflicts.

Resolving conflicts involves a variety of skills from identifying certain factors regarding conflict, and participating in activities such as active listening, brainstorming, and evaluating options. One teacher stated that because of the program, students “develop useful skills that they can use in their everyday dealings with others.” This general sentiment applied to other teachers who were surveyed. Teachers were asked how much they agree with statements regarding their students’ acquisition of these skills. That is, 84.4 teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their students could identify causes of conflict, 80.9% of teachers felt similarly about their students’ abilities to identify sources of conflict and 71.9% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their students could identify triggers of conflict.

Also, teachers were confident that their students could engage in conflict resolution activities such as active listening, brainstorming, and evaluating options. Nearly nine out of ten teachers (85.9%) strongly agreed or agreed that their students could do this while another 76.5% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their students can describe pros and cons of various approaches to resolving conflicts. When questioned about their students’ ability to identify competing interests in conflict settings, 82.8% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their students could do this. About two-thirds (65.6) reported that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their students can separate rhetoric from real interests. (More details regarding teachers’ responses to these items can be found in Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Responses to Items Regarding Students' Abilities and Skills



Provide Analytical Tools for Understanding Conflict in History

The final goal of the program is to provide analytical tools for understanding conflict in history. A first step in getting students to understand conflicts in history is to provide engaging, informative materials to be used while teaching. Teachers report that the Conflict Resolution in history program does just that. One teacher commented simply that “the materials are excellent,” while another described them as “superb.”

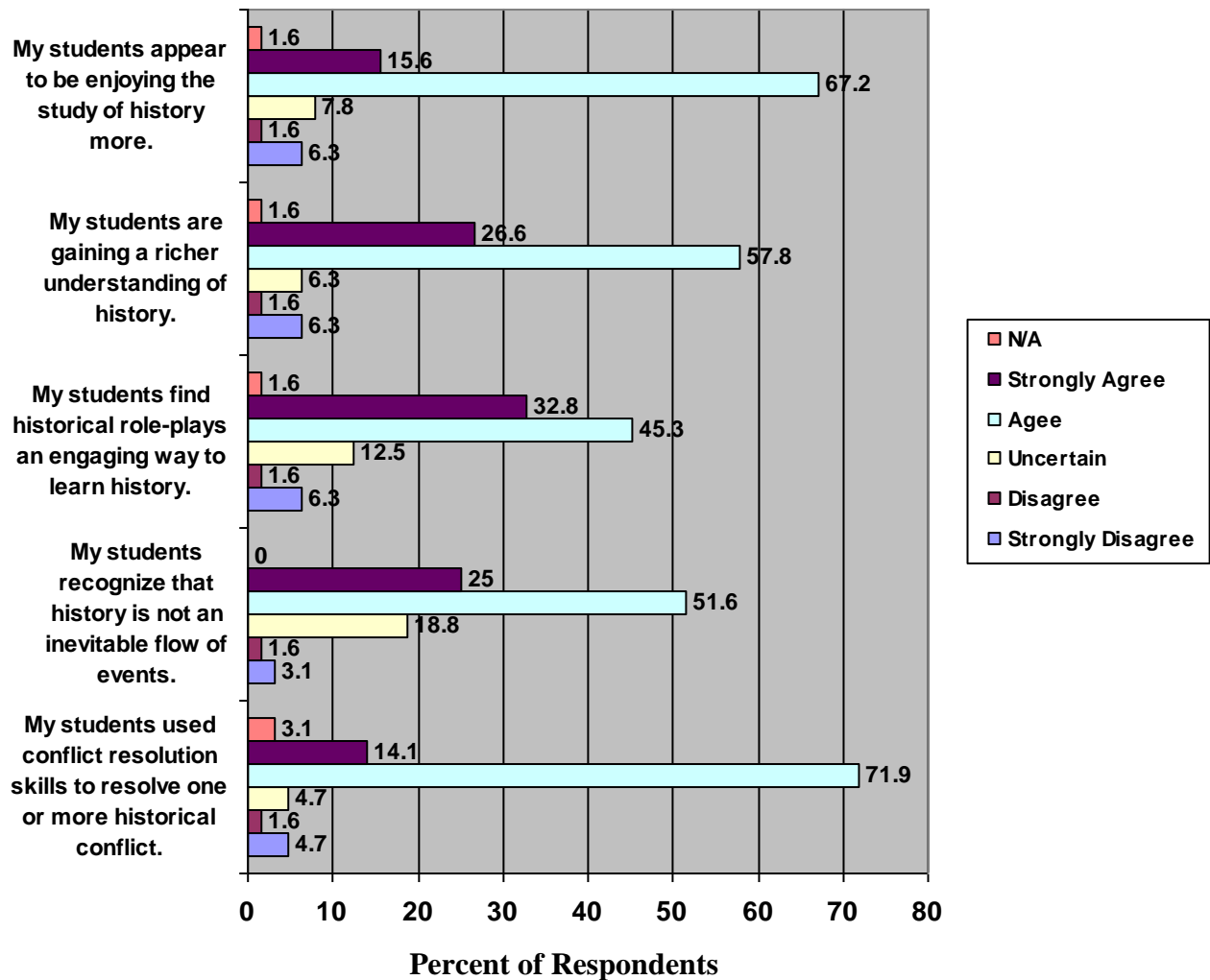
However, materials are not the only necessity demonstrating that students understand conflict in history. Tied with providing quality materials is getting students to appreciate the study of history. In fact, according to teachers' comments, the materials prove key in doing this. "These are rich materials that engage students in history in a profoundly meaningful way." Another teacher explained how this happens, "The materials make history come alive for the students." Yet another teacher expanded on this idea when he wrote, "The C.R.U.S.H. materials...are a wonderful supplement to any United States History Program as it challenges students to think critically, gives in-depth resources, has students use primary source documents, and most importantly have fun while learning." Another teacher added "students come to understand their part in events and their power to shape historical outcomes."

These ideas are reinforced in teachers' responses to survey items. Teachers report that as a result of the Conflict Resolution in U.S. History program, their students appear to be enjoying the study of history more and that they are gaining a richer understanding of history. More than eight out of ten have strongly agreed or agreed with these statements. That is, 82.8% of teachers agreed that their students are enjoying the study of history and 84.4% agreed that their students are gaining a richer understanding of history. Less than ten percent (7.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements while 1.6% felt uncertain. A vast majority of teachers strongly agree (25%) or agree (51.6%) that their students recognize that history is not an inevitable flow of events. About two-fifths were uncertain (18.8%) while 1.6% disagreed and 3.1% strongly disagreed.

One key to this richer understanding appears to be in role playing. One teacher explained that with the program, "students are able to role play after studying the events and major players in history." Another teacher continued writing that "the historical backgrounds gave them [students] a basis of what we were studying while the role playing activities gave them [students] someone they could make a connection with." In fact, a vast majority of teachers surveyed agree. Over three-quarters reported that their students find historical role-plays an engaging way to learn history (78.1%) while 12.5% were uncertain and far less disagreed (1.6%) or strongly disagreed (6.3%).

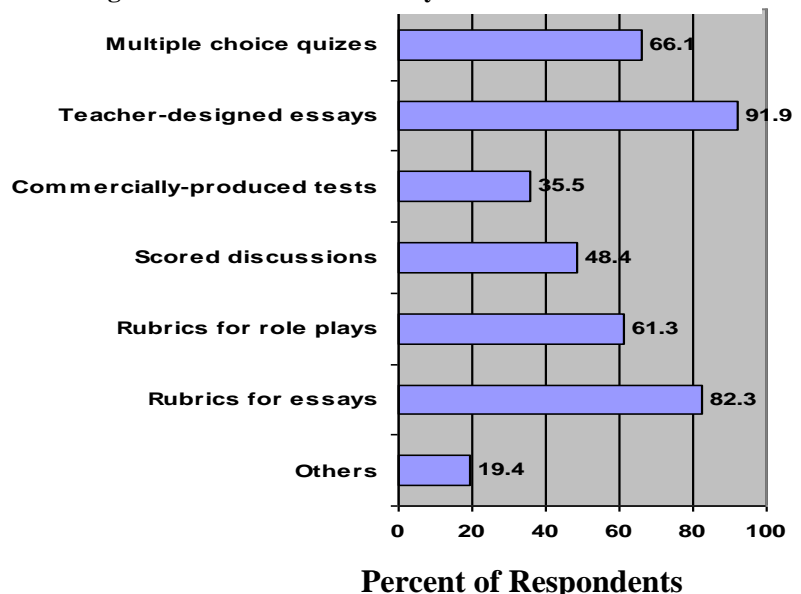
Not only are students gaining a richer understanding of the material, but teachers' report that their students are using what they have learned. Teachers report that their students used conflict resolution skills to resolve one or more historical conflicts with 14.1% strongly agreeing and 71.9% agreeing with this idea. Only one-tenth are uncertain (4.7%), disagree (1.6%) or strongly disagree (4.7%) that their students do this.

Figure 6. Responses to Items Regarding Students and History



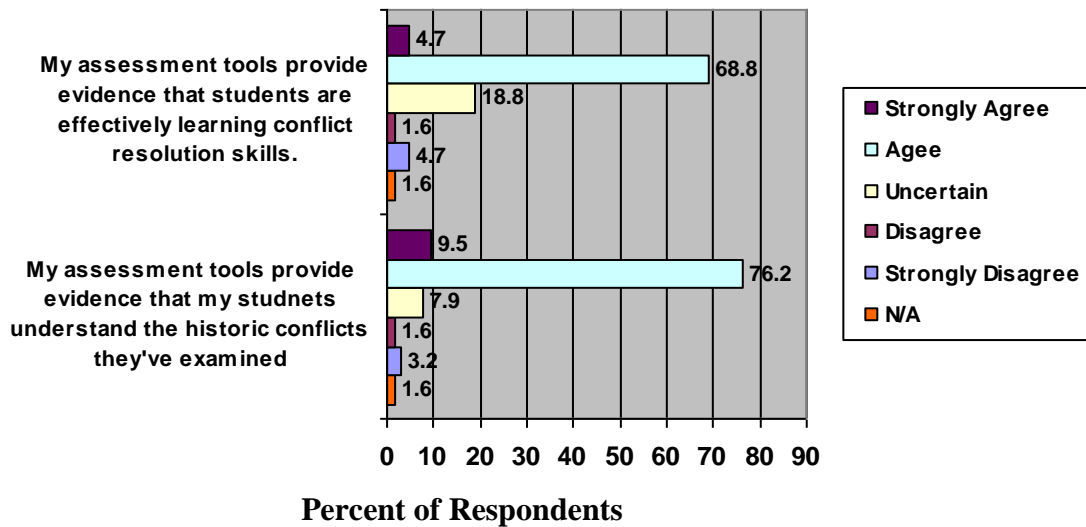
According to teachers' reports, evidence that students are understanding conflict in history is reflected in assessments such as multiple choice quizzes, essay question, commercially produced tests, scored discussions, and rubrics for assignments. (The percent of teachers that report using each type of assessment appears in Figure 7.)

Figure 7. Assessments Used by Teachers



Teachers were asked if assessment tools demonstrated that their students were learning. Specifically, when asked if assessment tools provide evidence that their students are effectively learning conflict resolution skills, about three-quarters either strongly agreed (4.7%) or agreed (68.8%). The remaining fourth of respondents either felt uncertain (18.8%), disagreed (1.6%) or strongly disagreed (4.7%). When asked if assessment tools provide evidence that students understand historic conflicts that they have examined, 85.7% strongly agreed or agreed. Few felt uncertain (7.9%), disagreed (1.6%) or strongly disagreed (3.2%). (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8. Responses to Items Regarding Assessments



Conclusion

Results of the evaluation of the Conflict Resolution in U.S. History program reveal that the program is effective in achieving its goals. The program is providing teachers with a stimulating and effective way to teach history. The program is still being used in some form or another in schools where teachers have attended teacher institute training sessions in some cases even more than a decade after the training. Of the individuals surveyed, only those who are not currently teaching U.S. History no longer use the program. In many cases, teachers report that the program has affected their teaching in a positive way making it more effective and thus making their courses richer. Teachers report that because of the program, their students appear to enjoy the study of history, recognize that history is not an inevitable flow of events, and are gaining a richer understanding of history. In addition, teachers agree that students have used conflict resolution skills to resolve historical conflict.

Not only is the program being used as an effective way to teach history, but it also provides students with practical skills for resolving conflicts. Teachers agree that their students appreciate the value of using conflict resolution in their lives and possess skills

such as separating rhetoric from real interests, identify causes and triggers of conflicts and can demonstrate skills to resolve conflicts.

In short, the Conflict Resolution in U.S. History program is not only affecting teachers' skills in a positive way, but also influencing students' learning of history and their conflict resolution skills.

Appendix: Survey Results

A. Demographic Information (Please check all applicable responses):

Number of Years Teaching	Percent (n=65)
1-3	4.6
4-10	12.3
10-20	36.9
more than 20	46.2

Degree/Credits	Percent (n=65)
BA/BS	13.8
BA/BS +30	7.7
MA	35.4
MA +30	36.9
PhD/EdD	15.4

Gender	Percent (n=65)
male	27.7
female	72.3

Grade-Level Taught	Percent (n=65)
4-5	8.7
5-8	26.3
6-8	28.3
9-12	75.4

Type of School	Percent (n=64)
Public	89.1
Private (religious / secular)	10.9
Parochial	4.3
Urban	17.4
Suburban	30.4
Rural	6.5

Class where Conflict Resolution in History lesson used	Percent (n=64)
United States/American History	85.9
World/Global History	32.8
Elective Course	29.7

Type of Class Involved	Percent (n=64)
Regular classes	75.0
Mainstreamed	15.6
Inclusive classes	20.3
Ability grouped	25.0
Advanced Placement class	29.7

B. Program Information:

When did you participate in the Conflict Resolution in History project?

	Percent (n=64)
Summer 1994	16.9
Summer 1995	10.2
Summer 1997	6.8
Summer 1998—Fitchburg	0
Summer 1998—New Brunswick	8.5
September 1998—Detroit	0
1999	5.1
2000	5.1
Tennessee, 2001	8.5
Chicago, 2003	1.7
Los Angeles, 2004	25.4
New York City, 2005	11.9

9. Are you still using/designing lessons for US History classes that integrate Conflict Resolution skills?

	Percent (n=63)
Yes	79.4
No	20.6

If you answered “yes” to question #9, please answer questions # 10-12:

10. I continue to use lessons presented at the summer institute:

	Percent (n=48)
Yes	87.5
No	12.5

11. I continue to design one or more lesson(s) each year:

	Percent (n=53)
Yes	92.5
No	7.5

12. Please circle the number of lessons used each year:

Number of Lessons	Percent (n=52)
1	5.8
2	36.5
3	26.9
4	15.4
5	11.5
6 or more	3.8

In assessing students I use (please check all forms used):	Percent (n=62)
Quizzes	66.1
Teacher made tests	91.6
Commercially produced tests	35.5
Scored discussions	48.4
Rubrics for assessing role plays	61.3
Rubrics for assessing essay / writing assignments	82.3
Others	19.4

C. Program Evaluation. Please evaluate each of the following statements by circling the choice that best reflects your opinion, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), as follows:

As a result of my Conflict Resolution in History training:

Item	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NA
13. My teaching style has changed.	62	2.69	1.18	4.8	54.8	21.0	9.7	4.8	4.8
14. My teaching has become more effective.	62	2.56	1.17	6.5	59.7	19.4	4.8	4.8	4.8
15. My history course is richer	45	2.18	1.19	20.0	66.7	2.2	2.2	4.4	4.4
16. My students can identify competing interests in conflict settings.	64	2.09	.94	20.3	62.5	10.9	0	6.3	0
17. My students can separate rhetoric from real interests.	64	2.31	.71	7.8	57.8	31.3	1.6	1.6	0
18. My students can identify causes of conflict.	64	2.22	1.02	12.5	71.9	6.3	1.6	6.3	1.6
19. My students can identify sources of conflict.	63	2.27	1.02	11.1	69.8	9.5	1.6	6.3	1.6
20. My students can identify triggers of conflict.	64	2.34	1.17	17.2	54.7	17.2	1.6	6.3	3.1
21. My students can describe the pros and cons of various approaches to resolving conflict.	64	2.25	1.02	15.6	60.9	14.1	3.1	4.7	1.6
22. My students can demonstrate skills to resolve conflicts.	64	2.23	.831	7.8	73.4	10.9	3.1	4.7	0
23. My students actively participated in active listening, brainstorming and evaluating options	64	2.06	.91	20.3	65.6	6.3	3.1	4.7	0
24. My students appreciate the value of using conflict resolution in their lives.	64	2.53	.91	6.3	48.4	37.5	3.1	3.1	1.6
25. My students used conflict resolution skills to resolve one or more historical conflict.	64	2.20	1.07	14.1	71.9	4.7	1.6	4.7	3.1
26. My students recognize that history is not an inevitable flow of events.	64	2.06	.89	25.0	51.6	18.8	1.6	3.1	0
27. My students find historical role-plays an engaging way to learn history.	64	2.08	1.16	32.8	45.3	12.5	1.6	6.3	1.6
28. My students are gaining a richer understanding of history.	64	2.08	1.10	26.6	57.8	6.3	1.6	6.3	1.6
29. My students appear to be enjoying the study of history more.	64	2.20	1.04	15.6	67.2	7.8	1.6	6.3	1.6
30. My assessment tools provide evidence that students are effectively learning conflict resolution skills.	64	2.38	.92	4.7	68.8	18.8	1.6	4.7	1.6
31. My assessment tools provide evidence that my students understand the historic conflicts they've examined.	63	2.17	.87	9.5	76.2	7.9	1.6	3.2	1.6

Note—Question 15 did not appear on both surveys.