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ABSTRACT

The report discusses the use of systems techniques to answer the question of what should be taught in a prepracticum course, Techniques of Counseling. The approach required: (1) definition of counselor problem-solving functions, and (2) construction of a system model of effective counseling in order to identify the skills and information needed to perform those functions. Three primary counselor functions are considered: (1) understanding client problems, (2) doing counseling, and (3) evaluating counseling. Terminal behavioral objectives, pertinent to each of these functions, were developed for the Techniques of Counseling course and were based on the needed skills and information identified through the systems model. Students were observed to effect planned behavioral change after successfully performing the terminal behavioral objectives of the course. (TL)

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A Systems-Derived Performance-Based Counseling Techniques Curriculum

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The currently available evidence on counselor effectiveness suggests that change is needed in counselor preparation programs. Systems techniques have been advanced as a way of specifying and approaching goals with existing resources (Thoresen, 1968; Ryan, 1969). The question of what should be taught in a prepracticum course, Techniques of Counseling, was deemed relevant to counselor effectivness and susceptible of determination through application of systems techniques. The purpose of this paper is to report the results of using systems techniques (a) to derive a model of counselor problem-solving functions, (b) to develop a flowchart model of one of these functions, "Understanding," (c) to build a performance-based curriculum for teaching Counseling Techniques students to "Understand," and (d) to specify those students' terminal "Understanding" behaviors.

Systems techniques involve the identification of the system, the specification of the system's objectives in performance terms and the analysis and synthesis of the system's constituent parts. Silvern (1968) has coined the word anasynthesis to emphasize the iterative nature of the analysis-synthesis process. Anasynthesis creates alternative systems from among which the most promising can be selected and given simulated and real-life tryouts toward development of a system functioning at an acceptable level of performance.

Models and Objectives

Application of the wholeness principle (Ryan, 1969) suggested that the objectives of the Techniques of Counseling course could not be selected without reference to the objectives of the system of which the techniques course is a part. It was determined that the course was a subsystem of a larger system, Counselor Education, which has as one of its functions the training of effective counselors. Maximum wholeness, and hence maximum system efficiency, is most likely when all of the major functions of a total system are identified prior to development of a given subsystem. This top-down approach to systems design was not followed completely in this instance. Objectives for the Techniques of Counseling course were considered in reference to only one Counselor Education function, train effective counselors. Specification of objectives for the Techniques of Counseling course required the prior identification of the functions required of effective counselors.

Model of counselor functions. Specification of objectives for the Techniques course functionally related to objectives of the larger system required identification of the larger system's objectives. A number of authoritative statements about counselor preparation and role were identified. Analysis of various role and function statements lead to the development of a model of counseling which posited Understanding, Doing and Evaluating as central counselor functions. The effectiveness of the counselor is viewed as an outcome of his ability to understand the counselee and his environment, to derive

and apply counseling procedures, and to evaluate his work. These three primary counselor functions and the relationships among them are presented as a flowchart model in Figure 1.

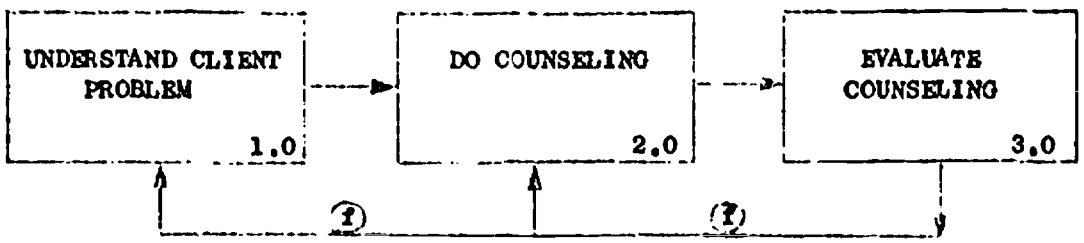

Figure 1. Model of three primary counselor functions.

Given a problematic situation, the counselor's first function is to Understand Client Problem (1.0). Understanding represents those activities and events which precede attempts to effect change in the problem situation, that is, to Do Counseling (2.0). Doing counseling is viewed broadly as implementing whatever means have been selected as an acceptable way of attaining the specified observable goals of counseling. Both the Understanding and Doing functions stand in a special relationship to the Evaluate Counseling (3.0) function as indicated by the diagrammed arrows that show feedback (f). In Evaluate Counseling (3.0), the obtained results of counseling are observed and compared with the desired results. The outcome of this comparison constitutes feedback (f) indicating a need for more Understanding (1.0) and Doing (2.0), or for Doing more counseling (2.0), or for no more counseling (Success!). A more detailed description of this model is presented elsewhere (Lauver, 1971).

Design of the counselor function model was influenced by application of the optimization principle (Ryan, 1969). This principle states that the likelihood of a viable system-ecosystem relationship is increased when the system is designed in reference to characteristics of the particular ecosystem which will accomodate it. System/environment congruence is assumed to increase the likelihood of system effectiveness. Several local characteristics, therefore, were identified as pertinent to the development of the counseling model reported here. Enrollees in this Techniques course are typically in the first semester of a one year program meeting certification requirements as school counselors. Second semester Practicum completes the formal counseling training for most enrollees. The designers could exert little effective control over the Practicum course. Given these constraints, optimization was deemed more probable, if the model of counselor functions (a) was relatively simple, (b) stressed performance terminology, and (c) stressed outcome criteria.

System simplicity was sought through synthesizing a limited number of major functions. The three-function counselor model permitted enrollees to experience and perform all major counselor functions through several complete cycles. The assumption was made that student acquisition of a total, but simple, system would facilitate their appropriate response to novel situations encountered later. It was further assumed that identifying counselor Understanding as a major function and attributing failure to reach counseling objectives to faulty counselor performance of the Understanding function increase the likelihood of continued learning by an enrollee after certification as a counselor.

The emphasis on performance terminology also contributed simplicity through by-passing the need for agreement upon and learning of a special vocabulary associated with human behavior. The stress on outcome as criterion was deemed especially important for an enrollee group whose greatest growth and development as counselors would be self-directed after completion of the program.

Model of "Understanding" function. The Understanding-Doing-Evaluating model of counselor functioning was further developed and analyzed as a source of objectives for the beginning Techniques course. The initial counselor function, Understand Client Problem, was selected for further analysis toward identification of counselor skills and knowledge relevant to Understanding.

The total system of counselor Understanding, or information-seeking and information-ordering, can be viewed as consisting of various functions and bits of knowledge related in some way. Among the published systems of Understanding behavior is that developed by Kanfer and Saslow (1965, 1969) as an alternative to diagnostic classification. They made available an outline which suggested the elements of interview information needed for functional analysis of a problem situation but which did not specify the relationships among elements and sequencing of elements needed to build models of client behavior. Study of the outline suggested that a number of types of information must be sought in some sequence and that various operations must be performed upon and with this information which have a bearing upon subsequent information-seeking behavior on the part of the counselor.

Because of its comprehensive nature and the specificity of the

items, the Kanfer and Saslow outline was used as the basis of the model of the counselor understanding functions. Analysis and synthesis of the outline were undertaken in order to determine the required functions and patterns of relationships among functions most likely to meet the objectives of the information-seeking and ordering process. Results of the analysis are presented in the flowchart models in Figures 2 and 3.

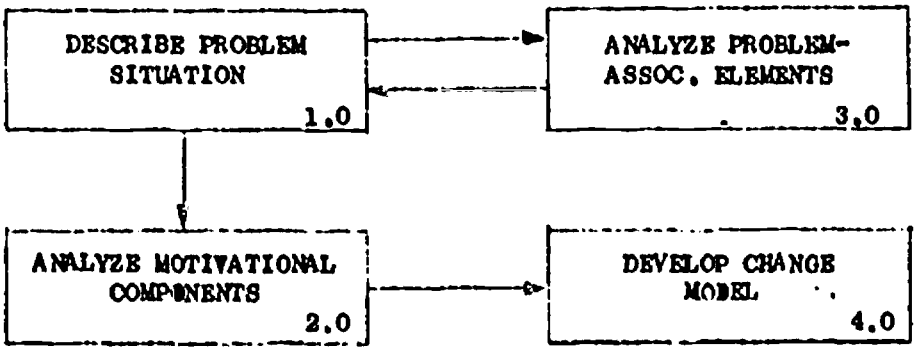

Figure 2. A model of counselor Understanding

Analysis of the Kanfer and Saslow outline identified four main functions: Describe Problem Situation (1.0), Analyze Motivational Components (2.0), Analyze Problem-Associated Elements (3.0), and Develop Change Model (4.0). As is indicated in Figure 2, the change model (4.0) is developed from an analysis of the motivational components (2.0) of the problem situation initially described (1.0). The likelihood that problem-associated elements must be analyzed (3.0) before the motivational analysis (2.0) can be adequately undertaken is also indicated.

The level of analysis represented in the model in Figure 2 was insufficient to permit identification of the particular counselor skills required to perform these Understanding functions. The content of the Kanfer and Saslow outline (1965, 1969) materially aided development of the Understanding model in greater detail. This expanded model is presented in flowchart form in Figure 3.

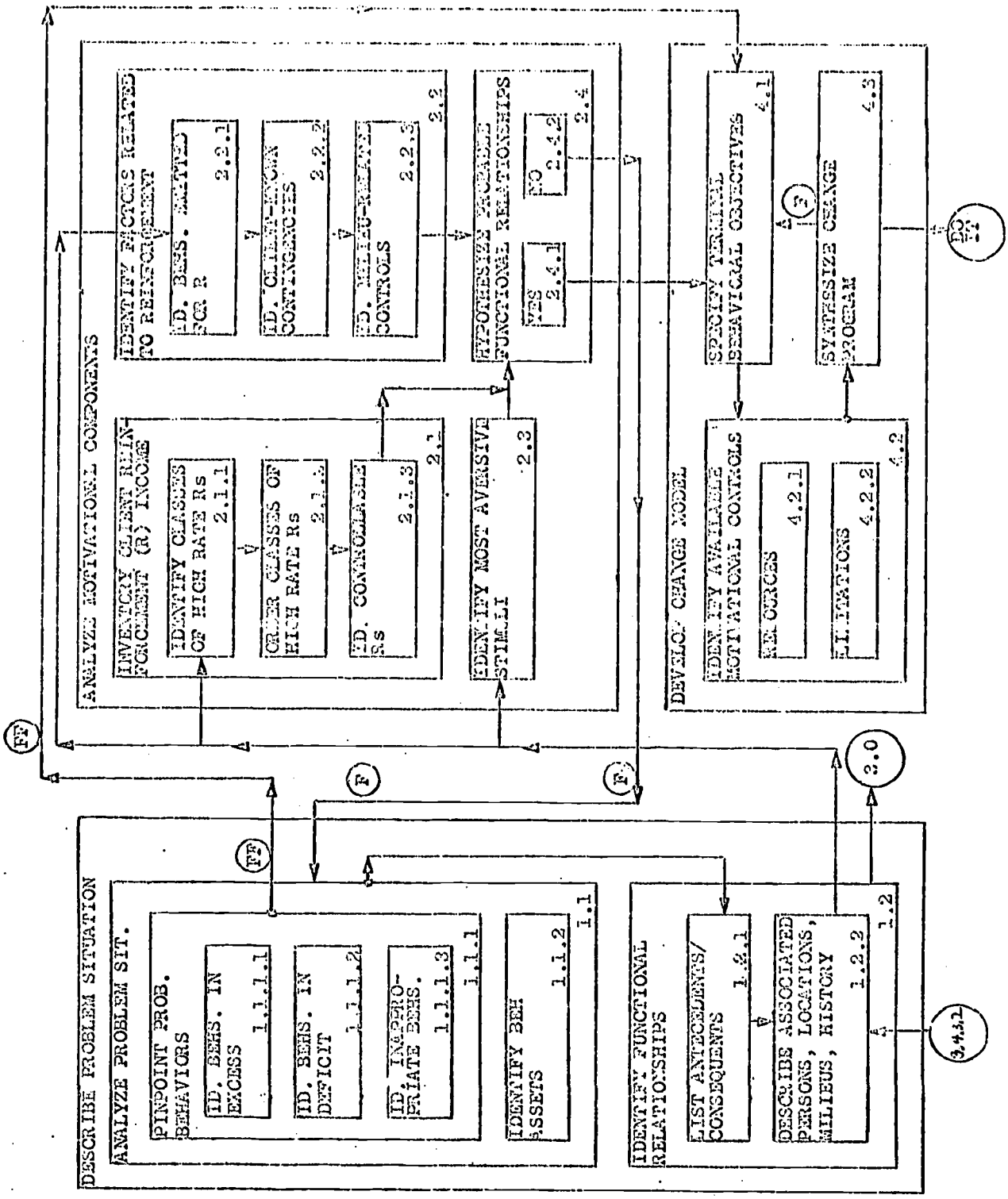

Figure 3. A model of counselor Understanding (Detail)

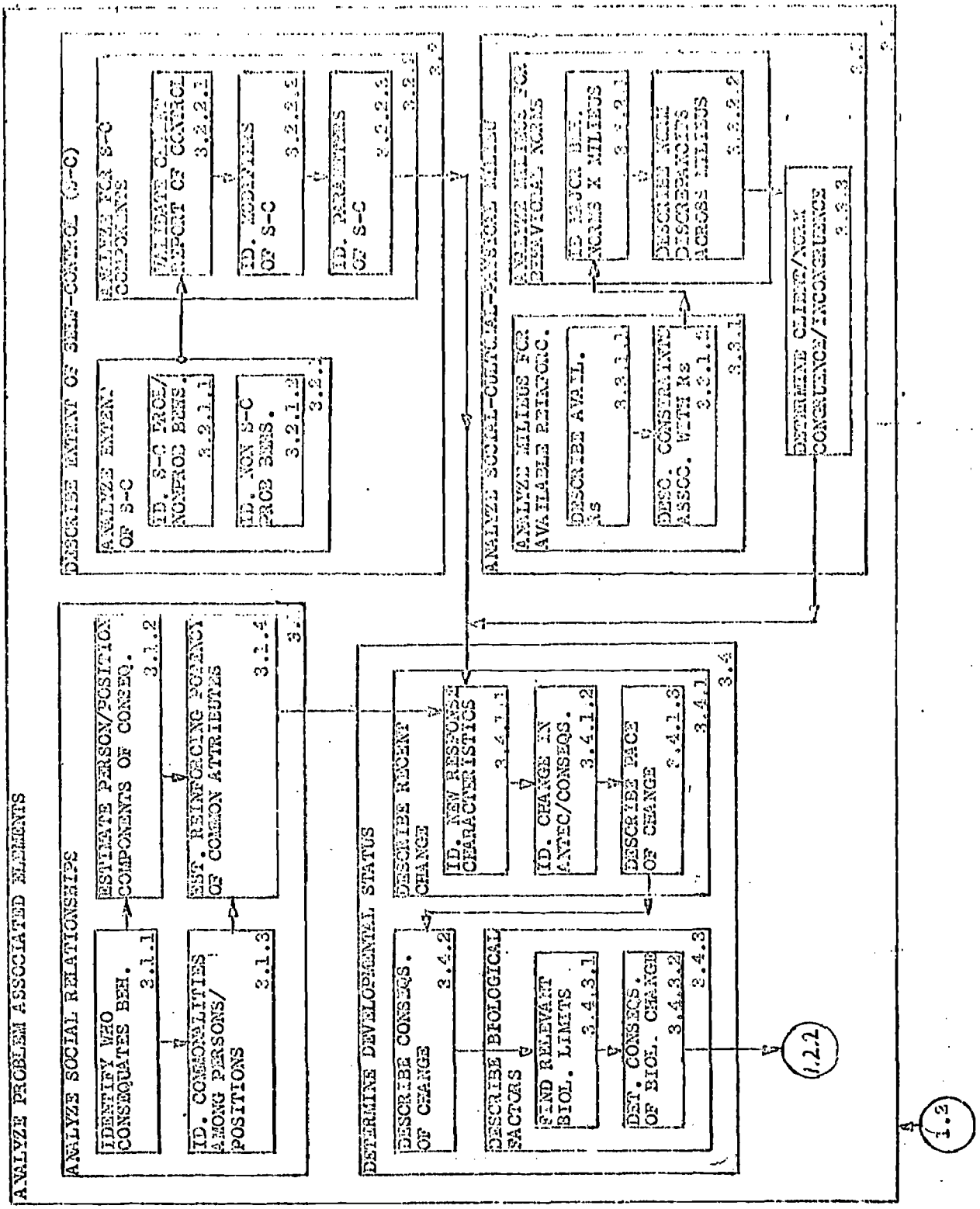

Figure 3. A model of counselor Understanding (Detail). (cont.)

Build Performance-based curriculum. The level of analysis represented in Figure 3 defines the Understanding function sufficiently to allow identification of the skills and information required to perform this function. Verbal walk-throughs of the model were undertaken by the designer and by advanced doctoral students to identify the performances requisite to each function. For example, Pinpointing Problematic Behaviors (1.1.1) requires that the problem be defined so that reliable identification and quantification of problematic behaviors are possible. The required counselor performances include:

a. Eliciting client talk about concerns through

   -attending responses
   -following responses
   -open-end responses
   -pinpointing responses
   -purpose-of-counseling responses.

b. Employing performance terminology.

c. Quantifying behaviors

   -definition
   -observation
   -recording
   -reporting.

d. Validating problematic status

   -client concurrence of problematic status.

Simulated application of the model through verbal walk-through resulted in identification of additional skills and information required to perform each of the functions in the Understanding model. The resulting pool of required counselor performances constituted the raw material from which instructional objectives for the Understanding portion of the Counseling Techniques course were fashioned.

Specify terminal Understanding behaviors. A series of terminal "Understanding" behavioral objectives were developed. (The descriptor terminal is used here in the sense that the specified objective is anticipated at the terminus of an instructional unit or sequence.) These objectives, as given in the current course overview, are stated below. This set is part of a fourth revision of terminal objectives. Revisions were made as a result of student experience. Earlier walk-throughs of instructional objective sequences had not identified accurately what students would know at any entry level, what sequences of objectives would be most efficient, and what instructional procedures would be effective.

1. Elicit client talk about concerns:
    a. Demonstrate attending behaviors in an interview
    b. Investigate effects of own behaviors upon others
2. Describe problematic situations
    a. Pinpoint and baseline relevant behaviors
    b. Identify functionally related elements of problematic situations
    c. Construct tentative model of problematic situation
3. Devise plan for desirable change
    a. Describe problematic situation
    b. Create and describe an efficient high probability change program

Each instructional unit included a more detailed statement of the objective. For example, the detailed statement for objective 1b is, "Investigate effects of specified attending behaviors upon some speci-

fied behaviors of others. Report results of several trials upon PIRS's. Include reports on the effects of using following responses and on the effects of using open-end responses."

A range of instructional activities was associated with each terminal objective. Typically all students were exposed to some instructional modes. Additional instructional alternatives were available on an optional basis. The various information inputs for each objective were followed by a requirement to demonstrate learning through performances of the sort indicated for objective 1b above.

The Understand-Do-Evaluate counselor model suggests, however, that the most relevant criterion for determining adequacy of counselor "Understanding" is the consequence of attempting change based upon this Understanding. Students, therefore, were required not only to demonstrate acquisition of component skills and knowledge but also to apply these Understanding behaviors toward effecting specified change in a problematic situation. Figure 4 is a summary of change produced through student performance of Understanding operations for a selected range of objectives. (The student report from which case 6 in Figure 4 was abstracted is appended to this paper.) In each case, student achievement of the specified objective was taken as evidence that the student had performed the Understand function adequately.

	Complaint	Objective
1.	"leaving kitchen dirty, i.e., leaving out one or more pieces of silverware, glasses, dishes, etc. without washing it."	Reduce frequency of leaving kitchen dirty by 100%.
2.	Distracting "hair-twiddling" of friend (S) while in conversation with other (E).	Reduce S hair-twiddling during conversation by 25%.
3.	"Want to make more feeling responses in interviews but I don't know how."	Increase frequency of feeling responses in interviews.
4.	"I'm too sarcastic."	Reduce frequency of sarcastic statements.
5.	Repeated negative self-references during interview."	Reduce frequency of negative statements and increase frequency of positive statements.
6.	Sally scores low on self-quizzes on SRA Reading kit program.	Increase self-quiz scores to 20 (100%) each day for a five day week.

Figure 4. Selected student change program summaries

Procedure	Outcome
1. (Cont'd) Self-administered contingency contract; "I, _____, will not leave kitchen until I have put away every...after I have eaten."	Base rate of 6.5/day dropped to 0/day for 6 days reported.
2. (Cont'd) E attention withdrawn (looked elsewhere, yawned) when S twiddled.	Proportion of time twiddling observed dropped from 65% for 5 observation periods to 40% for 5 observation periods.
3. (Cont'd) Student reviewed tapes with person; Student said Good, Well done, That's fine, etc. when person used feeling descriptors in interviews.	For 20" tape segments: Base rate of 3/tape for 4 tapes changed to 9.6/tape for 8 tapes.
4. (Cont'd) Contingency contract: Wear surgical mask for 3 minutes after any sarcastic statement I emit between 5:00 p.m. and midnight.	Base rate of 5.2/day for 7 days changed to 0.4/day for 14 days. (Two other girls on same floor adopted program to their own objectives.)
5. (Cont'd) Negative statements were ignored; "Positive statements were attended to with; smiles, reflection of feeling, and/or supportive statements....."	Base rate (10 minutes) neg. = .9/min; pos. = .1/min Change (15 minutes) neg. = .5/min; pos. = .5/min
6. (Cont'd) Sequential contingency contracts: Graded performances on quizzes by Sally earn desired activities with student.	Baserate 12, 10, 11, 7 , 8 Phase II (Min. 15) 20, 20, 18, 16, 17 Phase III (Min. 20) 20, 20, 20, 20, 20 Phase IV (No contract) 20, 19, 20, 20, 20

Figure 4. Selected student change program summaries (cont'd.)

Summary

An attempt has been made to report the results of using systems techniques to answer the question of what should be taught in a pre-practicum course, Techniques of Counseling. This approach required definition of counselor problem-solving functions and construction of a system model of effective counseling in order to identify the skills and information needed to perform these counselor functions. Terminal behavioral objectives for the Techniques of Counseling course were developed from the pool of counselor skills and information identified through the system model. Students were observed to effect planned behavioral change after successfully performing the terminal behavioral objectives of the Techniques of Counseling course.

One as yet unresolved area of difficulty may be apparent from the summaries of acceptable student performances in Figure 4. This area may be best described as "quality" of student response to the complaint. Two factors seem to be involved, efficiency and client satisfaction. Quality may be represented by client-counselor agreement upon the most satisfying objective among all possible objectives and upon the most efficient procedures of all possible procedures. A reliable means of estimating quality has yet to be determined.

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Attachment (5 pages)

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND REPORT SHEET

Name Lynn W. Date submitted 3 August 1970

Program Manager Lynn W. Subject E., age 9

Site home

A. Specific Behaviors Monitored

1. frequency of correct answers on self-quiz in
2. SRA lab program
3. _____

Observation Procedure:

Phase I - observe, obtain baseline

Phase II - change program I, observe

Phase III - change program II, observe

Phase IV - return to baseline, observe

Date started 6 July 1970

B. Behavior change goals

Client will receive scores of 20 on Self-quiz each day for a five day week

C. Change program Date started 13 July 1970

Brief description

(See attached contingency contracts)

Consequence to be contingent upon behavior

Change program I: On achieving 15 or more correct on the self-quiz, client will have a choice of doing one of four things with Lynn for ½ hour.

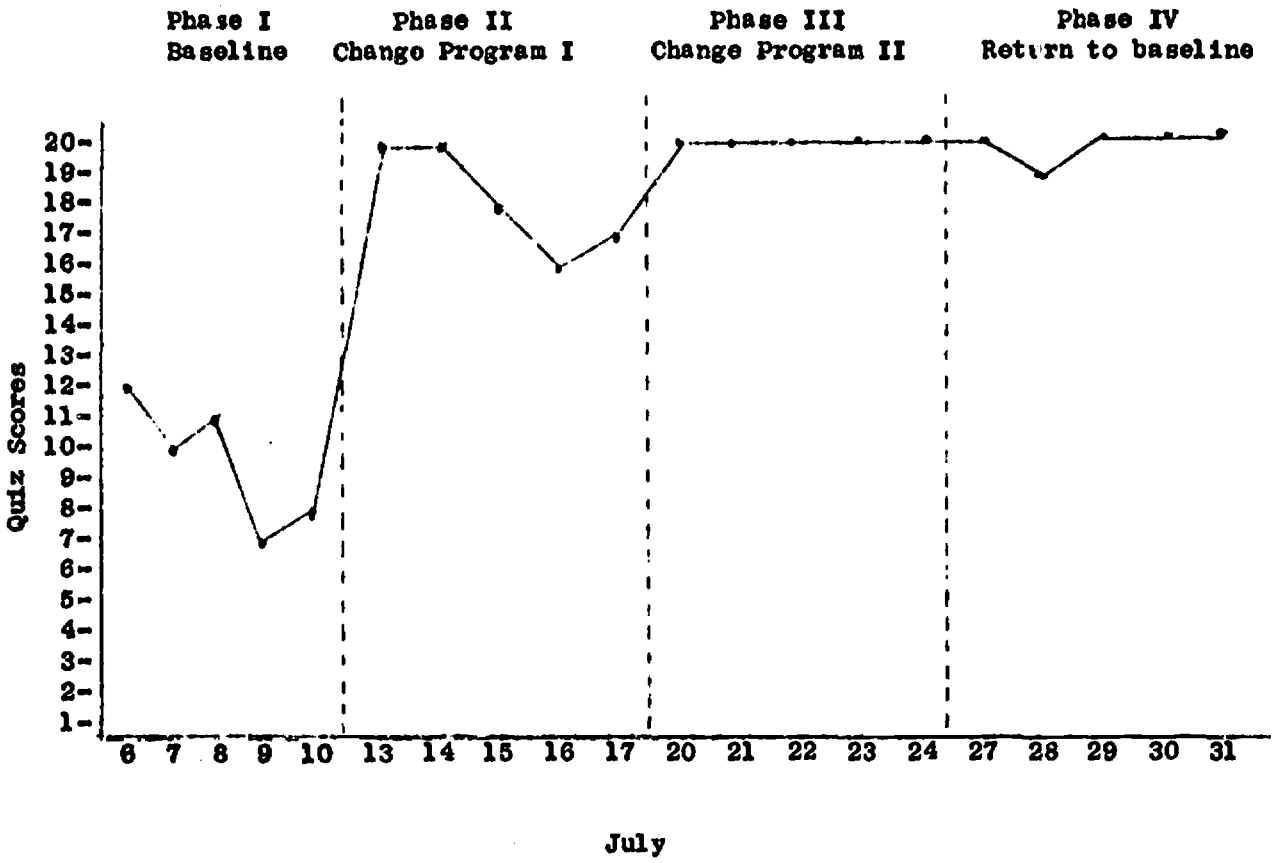
Change program II: On achieving 20 correct on the self-quiz, client will have a choice of doing one of four things with Lynn for ½ hour.

Changed to: Date changed _____

Program manager will use positive verbal reinforcement in both change programs after the client achieves the desired score.

D. Attach accurately labeled record of observations

E. Notes, comments, points for discussion.



Observations in July
4:00 - 4:45 p.m.

Behavior goal for Phase II: score of 15 or better each day

Behavior goal for Phase III: score of 20 each day

Problem: Sally had serious problems in reading in fourth grade. Because her school has no summer program, and it was felt she needed remedial help, she was given an SRA reading kit to use during summer vacation. Each day, Monday through Friday, she is to do the reading, exercises, and then take the self-quiz, hopefully receiving a score of 20 (100%). This requires approximately forty-five minutes of time. Lately, Sally had seemingly lost interest in the work and scored low on the self quizzes.

Behavioral objective: Sally will receive scores of 20 each day on the self-quiz for a five day week.

Phase I (Obtain baseline): Sally came to my apartment each afternoon from 4:00 to 4:45 for a five day period and followed the study plan while I did housework. I noted her scores on the self-quiz each day; they are listed below.

Date	Score achieved
6 July 1970	12
7 July 1970	10
8 July 1970	11
9 July 1970	7
10 July 1970	8

Phase II (Change program 1): On July 10 I presented the first contract to Sally. She signed it, and I proceeded with the observation procedures as well as fulfilling the contract (See attached copy). Date for this period is below:

Date	Score achieved
13 July 1970	20
14 July 1970	20
15 July 1970	18
16 July 1970	16
17 July 1970	17

After each score of 15 or better, I used different phrases to positively verbally reinforce Sally.

Phase III (Change program II): On July 17 a second contract was approved by Sally and it went into effect the next week with the following results:

Date	Score achieved
20 July 1970	20
21 July 1970	20
22 July 1970	20
23 July 1970	20
24 July 1970	20

Again, each time Sally received a score of 20, I used positive verbal reinforcement.

Phase IV (Return to baseline): On July 24, I explained to Sally there would be no contract for the following week because I wanted to see how well she could do without the reward. Results are shown in the chart below and in the attached graph.

Date	Score achieved
27 July 1970	20
28 July 1970	19
29 July 1970	20
30 July 1970	20
31 July 1970	20

Reinforcement was used in the same manner as Phase III.

Additional observations:

1. I was somewhat surprised at the success of this program and carryover into Phase IV. Because Sally lives in my apartment building and we have always been friends, there may have been other factors involved which I didn't take into account.
2. Reading and understanding the contract provided additional helpful practice for Sally.

(Phase II)

A Contract Between Sally & Lynn

I, _____, will score 15 or better on the self-quiz each day from July 6 to July 10. Then I will have a choice of doing one of these things with Lynn for ½ hour:

1. going fishing in the boat in the lake
2. playing rummy or checkers
3. cooking in her kitchen
4. going to Compton's for an ice cream cone.

I, _____, agree to spend ½ hour with Sally doing one of the things she chooses each day (July 6 to July 10) after scoring 15 or better on the self-quiz.

(Phase III)

A Contract Between Sally & Lynn

I, _____, will score 20 on the self-quiz each day from July 13 to July 17. Then I will have a choice of doing one of these things for ½ hour:

1. going fishing in the boat in the lake
2. playing rummy or checkers
3. cooking in her kitchen
4. going to Compton's for an ice cream cone.

I, _____, agree to spend ½ hour with Sally doing one of the things she chooses (July 13 to July 17) after scoring 20 on the self-quiz.