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ABSTRACT

This document presents brief reports on the empirical findings which have emerged or are emerging from over a dozen individual investigations in the field of behavioral counseling. Two distinct but related research strands have emerged. Within the first category which concerns the training process, per se, specific topics include an experimental comparison of three methods of teaching decision-making counseling, outcomes of counselor trainees as participants in behavioral group therapy, and "treatment" research. The second category includes such diverse topics as anger induction in assertion training, applied and laboratory investigations of emotive imagery, and investigations in the fields of drug abuse prevention and alcohol rehabilitation. (Author/PC)

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Behavioral Counseling: Training and Treatment
Research at The Pennsylvania State University¹

Chairman: John J. Horan

Participants: John Addis, Stanley Baker, Melanie Branca, Mary D'Amico, Judith D'Angelli, Denis Dorfman, Karen Evans, Patricia Herold, David Holmes, George Hudson, William Jenkins, Frank Layng, Carol Pursel, Neil Robb, Robert Shute, Randy Smyers, Christopher Stone, Warren Wallace, Thomas Westcott, John Williams

Experimental session at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association, Washington,
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¹For extended versions of the studies abstracted herein, write to the senior author of each individual investigation in care of 323 Social Science Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. 16802.

General Summary

The faculty and students of the Department of Counselor Education at The Pennsylvania State University have been conducting a series of studies in the broad field of behavioral counseling. Two distinct but related research strands have emerged. The first concerns the training process per se; that is, how can we impart behavioral counseling skills to counselor trainees more effectively? The second research focus has been on improving the armementarium of treatment strategies available to the practicing behavioral counselor. The purpose of this experimental session will be to provide the audience with empirical findings which have emerged or are emerging from over a dozen individual investigations.

Within the first research category, specific topics include an experimental comparison of 3 methods of teaching decision-making counseling, outcomes of counselor trainees as participants in behavioral group therapy focused on common and individual concerns, "treatment" research (e.g., self monitoring) using counselor trainees as subjects and systematic desensitization as an instructional objective.

The second research category includes a number of diverse topics such as anger induction in assertion training, analogue attempts to harness the negative coverant effect, applied and laboratory investigations of "in vivo" emotive imagery, and exploratory investigations in the fields of drug abuse prevention and alcohol rehabilitation.

Study I

Wallace, W. G.; Horan, J. J.; Baker, S. B.; & Hudson, G. R. Teaching decision-making counseling: An experimental comparison of three methods.

In a replicated study involving 54 randomly assigned counselor trainees, three methods of teaching decision-making counseling were compared (a traditional method, a method incorporating a filmed instructional model, and a method featuring several microcounseling components). In both the original study and in the replication, the latter method was found to be significantly more effective than either of the former methods insofar as student acquisition of decision-making counseling skills was concerned. Incorporation of a filmed instructional model did not significantly improve the traditional method.

Study II

Horan, J. J.; Robb, N. S.; & Hudson, G. R. Behavior therapy for chubby behavior therapists.

Of 50 students enrolled in an introduction to group counseling course, 19 chose to participate in a laboratory experience which would focus on weight loss in addition to other course objectives. After a three-week delayed treatment phase, the students gained an average of .35 pounds. Six weeks of comprehensive behavior programming then produced a statistically significant ($p < .001$) mean loss of 6.45 pounds, which was maintained relatively well after a two-month follow-up. This type of curricular component is seen as an aid to practicum or on-the-job functioning.

Study III

Horan, J. J.; Westcott, T. B.; & Stone, C. I. Recording effects in self-monitoring for relationship improvement.

In a beginning attempt to tease apart the reactive components of self-monitoring, this study contrasted the effects of self-monitoring with and without recording on relationship improvement. The effects of demand and instructions were kept low and constant as 30 beginning counseling students attended to instances of positive and negative other referent statements made to a significant other.

Study IV

Horan, J. J.; Stone, C. I.; & Herold, P. L. Systematic desensitization as an instructional objective.

This paper reports on the development and evaluation of an instructional module for teaching systematic desensitization. As the module makes use of widely available published materials, it requires little classroom time or input from the instructor. Class size is also irrelevant. Furthermore, the module gives the student an evaluated quasi-clinical experience with desensitization.

Physiological and self-report data reflecting changes in client fear levels were gathered in an attempt to determine if the instructional module is effective.

Study V

Holmes, D. P.; Horan, J. J. Anger induction in assertion training.

Forty-five female subjects were assigned randomly to either placebo therapy, standard assertion training, or assertion training incorporating anger induction procedures. The standard method proved superior on a self-report measure, but on four behavioral ratings the anger induction method was most beneficial. Low interrelationships among the measures of assertiveness suggest that the "trait" assertiveness may well be situation specific.

Study VI

Horan, J. J.; Smyers, R. D.; Dorfman, D. L.; & Jenkins, W. W. Two analogue attempts to harness the negative coverant effect.

The operant of looking at a reflected object in a mirror is analogous to the coverant of imagining the object in one's mind. If negative coverants are really incompatible with target responses, then obese subjects should eat considerably less when exposed to a mirror image of their bodies, as this latter event has been shown to be lowly probable. Two attempts to manipulate the eating response of obese subjects in nonlaboratory settings are described. Findings of pronounced treatment avoidance behavior are discussed in conjunction with recent applied coverant control research.

Study VII

Westcott, T. B.; Horan, J. J. The effects of anger and relaxation forms of in vivo emotive imagery on pain tolerance.

To examine the effects of "in vivo" emotive imagery on pain tolerance 80 students were stratified on sex, and assigned randomly to no-treatment control, neutral imagery, anger emotive imagery, or relaxation emotive imagery conditions during which they were asked to immerse their hands in ice water (0° C) for as long as possible. A sex by treatment analysis of variance followed by Tukey post hoc comparisons showed that for female students anger "in vivo" emotive imagery was significantly more effective than no-treatment control procedures. No significant differences were noted in the male sample.

Study VIII

Horan, J. J.; Layng, F. C.; & Pursell, C. H. A preliminary study of the effects of in vivo emotive imagery on dental discomfort.

To examine the effects of "in vivo" emotive imagery on dental discomfort (as measured by heart rate and self-report) 27 female subjects undergoing tooth prophylaxis were exposed to three tape-recorded treatment conditions (relaxation imagery, neutral imagery, and blank tape) in counterbalanced order. Promising findings of a pilot study were not confirmed on heart rate; however, on self-report significant differences appeared between the experimental and each of the control conditions.

Study IX

Shute, R. E. The impact of peer pressure on the verbally expressed drug attitudes of male college students.

Peer pressure was shown to have a powerful influence on the verbally expressed drug attitudes of the undergraduate male sample. Subjects exposed to a group which consistently espoused either conservative (Anti-drug) or liberal (Pro-drug) attitudes toward the personal use of drugs were highly likely to conform to the groups attitudinal norms. Effects of natural peer groups are discussed along with recommendations for primary prevention programming and further research.

Study X

Horan, J. J.; D'Amico, M. M.; & Williams, J. M. Assertiveness and patterns of drug use: A pilot study.

The phenomenon of peer pressure and drug use suggests that assertive training holds promise as a drug abuse prevention study. This ex post facto study investigated the relationship between assertiveness and patterns of drug use. It was found that exploratory use of marijuana and hashish was the norm among this sample of college students. Furthermore, current users and those who had never used such drugs were considerably less assertive than those who had experimented with these drugs but no longer did so.

Study XI

Williams, J. M. Assertive training as a drug abuse prevention strategy.

In order to investigate the assumption that assertion training might hold promise as a drug abuse prevention strategy, 54 ninth or tenth grade students will be assigned randomly to one of three treatment conditions: a no-treatment control, a placebo discussion control, and the assertion training program. Students receiving assertion training (directed toward the development of a response repertoire to contend with peer-pressure situations preceding drug use) will be expected to engage in less drug use than either of the control conditions.

Study XII

Horan, J. J. & Williams, J. M. The tentative drug use scale: A quick and relatively problem-free outcome measure for drug abuse prevention projects.

Difficulties involved with the evaluation of drug abuse prevention programs are numerous. The tentative Drug Use Scale (TDUS) was designed in response to a number of specific problems associated with obtaining behavioral data. Advantages of this scale over others are discussed. Reliability and validity information are provided.

Study XIII

Branca, M. C.; D'Angelli, J. F.; & Evans, K. L. Decisions are possible: A skills training program and drug abuse prevention strategy for children.

An introductory primary prevention program to educate children in decision-making skills was designed and piloted in the context of drug education. The emphases were placed on defining and practicing each component skill in the process. Results of the initial study indicate that fifth and sixth graders learned particular components of the process and suggest that decision-making skills are teachable objectives. Program design, specific results, and implications for program modification are discussed.

Study XIV

Addis, J. W. The role of tachistoscopic remediation therapy in the restoration of visual perceptual and memory functioning among recovering alcoholics.

Medical studies have shown that alcohol has a devastating effect on the human organism, particularly the nervous system. Tachistoscopic remediation therapy has been used effectively in the treatment of similar disorders among children. In this study 40 inpatient alcoholics were randomly assigned to experimental and placebo control conditions, and the effects of the tachistoscopic treatment on memory and visual perception were examined.