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ABSTRACT

The predictive utility of a proposed need-press competence (NPC) model of satisfaction was compared with that of the traditional need-press fit model. Structured interviews with 30 residents from two nursing homes provided measures of needs, press, competence, and satisfaction. The NPC model was a better predictor of expressed satisfaction than the need-press model, and the potential for need satisfaction was a more important correlate of expressed satisfaction than person-environment fit. Results also indicated that continued efforts to increase the press and competence levels in nursing homes would be helpful, particularly along those dimensions where need press competence analyses suggest that need satisfaction will be most problematic. (Author)

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Implications of a Need-Press-Competence Model
for Institutionalized Elderly

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Abstract

The predictive utility of a proposed need-press competence (NPC) model of satisfaction was compared with that of the traditional need-press fit model. Structured interviews with 30 residents from two nursing homes provided measures of needs, press, competence, and satisfaction. The NPC model was more predictive of expressed satisfaction than the need-press model, and the potential for need satisfaction was a more important correlate of expressed satisfaction than person-environment fit. The NPC model recommends that continual efforts be made to increase the press and competence levels in nursing homes, particularly along those dimensions where idiographic and nomothetic need-press-competence analyses suggest that need satisfaction will be most problematic.

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Introduction

This study was conducted as part of a larger intervention program funded by the Administration on Aging and designed to enhance competence and personal satisfaction among community-dwelling and institutionalized elderly. Thus, a need for the understanding of the theoretical determinants of satisfaction arose. An integrated need-press-competence (NPC) model of satisfaction was proposed and evaluated. As with its antecedents, Lawton and Neuhow's (1973) competence-press and Murray's (1938) traditional need-press formulations, the integrated NPC model is seen as a useful theoretical framework across the life cycle. This paper will discuss its particular implications for the institutionalized elderly on whom it was validated.

Both need-press and competence-press models adopt the notion of person-environment fit as articulated by French, Rodgers, and Cobb (1975). They maintain that individual strain and dissatisfaction reach their highest levels when the discrepancy between relevant person and environmental variables is at a maximum. In contrast, the NPC model maintains that need satisfaction is the most important determinant of expressed satisfaction. Whereas the fit models argue that press and competence levels in excess of need levels constitutes a lack of fit, resulting in both strain and dissatisfaction, the NPC model argues that competence and press in excess of need levels creates abundant potential for need satisfaction, hence higher levels of expressed satisfaction should result. It was further hypothesized that an integrated NPC model would have greater predictive power than a formulation based only on needs and press.

Needs were conceptualized according to an outcome approach, described by Lawler (1973), which defines needs as clusters of functionally related outcomes (Rotter, 1954) one would ideally wish to obtain. Psychological press was conceived, following Schneider (1975), as the individual's global perceptions of the environment abstracted from discrete molecular cues. Competence was defined, following Tyler (1977), Smith (1968), and Ezekiel (1968), as an active planful coping style combined with a sense of self-efficacy. Following Lawton's (1977) guidelines, a battery of widely used satisfaction measures was collected which assessed life, present, and various dimension of satisfaction.

Method

A total of 40 residents, 30 females and 9 males, from two proprietary and one nonprofit, denominational nursing home completed the measures. The average age of the residents was 75. Measures were administered individually in a structured interview format.

Seven dimensions of press were assessed. They were 1) autonomy, 2) activity, 3) support-trust, 4) practical problem orientation, 5) order and organization, 6) resources, and 7) medical orientation. Needs were measured along the same seven dimensions as press. Tyler's (1978) Behavioral Attributes of Psychosocial Competence (BAPC) scale assessed the competent person's active planful coping style. Finally, satisfaction was measured by the Life Satisfaction Index (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961), the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969), and Lawton's (1975) Revised Philadelphia Geriatric Morale Scale. Satisfaction with respect to the specific need-press dimensions investigated was assessed by means of seven four-point rating scales which were summed to create what we termed a dimensional satisfaction score.

Results

A moderate degree of intercorrelation was found among all the satisfaction measures (see Table 1). Thus, they were converted to standard scores and averaged to create one measure of satisfaction. Scores on need, press, and competence were also converted into standard scores.

For each dimension, scores for fit and need satisfaction potential (NSP) were calculated from the need, press, and competence scores in accord with both the need-press and need-press-competence models. Thus, for the need-press model, fit scores were calculated by taking the absolute difference between need and press, while NSP scores reflected the extent to which press exceeded need level. Under the NPC model, fit scores reflected the absolute difference between need, press, and competence, while NSP reflected the extent to which averaged values of competence and press exceeded need levels. Averaging scores across the 7 dimensions created combined indices of fit and NSP, one each for the need press and need-press-competence models. These 2 fit and 2 NSP scores were then correlated with satisfaction (see Table 2).

The only significant correlation found was that for need satisfaction potential computed in accord with the need-press-competence model ($r(27) = .42, p .05$). According to the Hotelling-Williams (1959) test. Significant differences between correlations ($z = 2.29, p < .01; z = 1.62, p < .05$) were obtained, indicating that the potential for need satisfaction predicted expressed satisfaction better than P-E fit. In sum, the results indicated support for the two major hypotheses; that is, the potential for need satisfaction is more highly related to expressed satisfaction than fit, and an integrated NPC model is more predictive than a model based only on needs and press.

Discussion

The NPC model provides a general framework for predicting satisfaction. The essence of the model is that the simultaneous interplay of need, press, and competence levels determines the potential for need satisfaction which in turn predicts the extent of expressed satisfaction. For example, given low press levels, low levels of competence may be sufficient to satisfy low need levels, while high press may counterbalance low competence in satisfying needs of moderate magnitude. While it is hoped that the model is applicable across the life cycle, further testing on more diversified populations would be desirable to support its generalizability.

The need-press-competence model has particular implications for work with institutionalized populations. In institutional settings environmental press levels are frequently, and often legitimately, seen as the responsibility of professional staff. These levels should be sufficient to facilitate satisfaction of important needs. Further, environmental press levels on key dimensions, such as autonomy, activity, and practical problem orientation, can effect the development and maintenance of individual competence. It is recommended that nursing home staff perform both idiographic and nomothetic need-press-competence analyses. These analyses can suggest treatment plans for the individual resident, as well as systematic changes to be made in the home.

In such analyses, determination of need and press levels is the first order of business. The measures used in this study, or real-ideal descriptions of the environment, or straightforward ratings and rankings all provide methods for obtaining this data. Important information become available

immediately. For example, in the homes studies the trust-support dimension was the highest rated need, but had the lowest environmental press. Further, the home having the highest press levels ($F(6, 70) = 5.95, p < .001$) had the most satisfied residents ($F(6, 70) = 3.82, p < .002$). This suggests that nursing homes should attempt to increase press levels, particularly those for support and trust. Sociometric ratings of social connectedness might provide a useful dependant measure for intervention programs designed to effect changes in trust and support levels.

Lastly, and most important, the model suggests that continual efforts be made to increase individual competence. In the homes studied, autonomy was the lowest rated need. This is a critical cause for concern as autonomy is an important component of competence. Indeed, the need for autonomy correlated significantly ($r(27) = .35, p < .05$) with competence scores. Nursing homes should provide the support appropriate for their residents, but should avoid encouraging dependancy. Active resident governments and training in general problem solving strategies provide mechanisms through which residents efforts in their own behalf can be encouraged.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore the basic simplicity of the model, as this simplicity lends greatly to its utility. The model recommends that we be attentive to three major factors, what the person needs, what he or she can do for themselves to satisfy that need, and the extent to which the home environment supports the residents efforts in their own behalf. When the simultaneous consideration of these three variables suggests an imbalance, a target for change is identified.

Table 1

Intercorrelation Matrix of Six Satisfaction Measures

	PCCAgit	PCCAge	PGCLone	Bradburn	Dimensional
LS ^a	.12	.58**	.58**	.39**	.62**
PCCAgit	—	.19	.41	.10	-.07
PCCAge		—	.39	.18	.41**
PGCLone			—	.22	.42**
Bradburn				—	.47**
Dimensional					—

Note. Life Satisfaction (LS); Philadelphia Geriatric Center Agitation (PCCAgit), Attitude Toward One's Own Aging (PCCAge), Loneliness/Dissatisfaction (PGCLone); Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn). Dimensional is the sum of satisfaction ratings for the specific dimensions.

^adf = 28

*p .05

**p .001

Table 2

Correlations between both Need Satisfaction Potential
and Fit and Satisfaction in the Need-Press only
and Need-Press-Competence Conditions

	Conditions	
	Need-Press only	Need-Press-Competence
Need Satisfaction Potential	.33	.42*
Fit	-.31	-.03

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B IDENTIFICATION AND DIAGNOSIS OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT

The major approaches to identification and diagnosis of underachievement is through observation, i.e., observation by teachers, or self-observation and test assessment.

I Identification and Diagnosis through Observation and Self Observation

Class and Salame (1975) studied 32 overachieving and 33 underachieving Secondary School students, equated for I.Q. range. Self evaluation scores were then correlated with the subject school achievement. Underachievers were self critical, inconsistent in their answers, and had difficulty in accurate self evaluation, indicating a low interiorization of high standards of performance in the tasks required. It also showed the relative lack of motivation observed in underachievers.

White and Simmons (1974) studied 1st grade readiness and how teachers could predict this through observing students' maturity. The teacher's perception of academic maturity as measured by a behavioural maturity scale, was a significant predictor of eventual achievement.

Stott, Sharp and Williams (1976) examined whether a general motivation towards effectiveness or competence could be observed in the free activity of pre-school children. The D. H. Stott and J. D. Sharp (1975) Effectiveness Motivation Scale was used by teachers in choosing descriptions of behaviour in eleven areas of activity which did not primarily gratify an organic or social need. Scores for 126, 4 year old pre-schoolers, in all eleven areas correlated positively with the scores for the remaining ten areas, giving mean correlations of .61 for males and .67 for females and .64 for both sexes together. These results were held to confirm the existence of a general factor of effectiveness motivation in the free activity of children of this age.

Stevenson, Et.al (1976) assessed ^{the} relation of teachers' ratings of young children's abilities in classroom skills and personal social characteristics to achievement (Wide Range Achievement Test) in school. Teachers' ratings of 217 children were obtained in the Autumn and Spring of kindergarten and again in 2nd and 3rd grades. By the end of the 3rd grade, 146 children remained in the sample. A total of 63 teachers participated. Predictive validity of the ratings was high for both concurrent and subsequent achievement by the children. The sum of four ratings (effective learning, retaining information, vocabulary, and following instructions) predicted achievement nearly as well as the entire battery of the ratings. Average ratings were consistently higher for girls than for boys. Ratings made by mothers were less predictable of scholastic success than ratings made by teachers.

Measuring Diagnosis and Identification of Underachievement Through Tests

While the identification of underachievement is possible through observation and through the intuitive approach and of course, the tremendous experience of many teachers, diagnosis of the problem, must often be left to testing. Testing is therefore concentrated on assessing the reasons for underachievement, for the purpose of seeking remedial action. Senf and Comrey (1975) describe "SCREEN" (The Senf/Comrey Ratings of Extra Educational Need) an assessment procedure designed to: (a) identify children with a high risk for encountering academic and adjustment problems in school, (b) provide teachers with a broader basis for making educational decisions about each pupil, and (c) provide information which would both currently predict school problems and provide a focus for diagnostic follow-up. The inventory consists of four 15-minute child test modules and a teacher rating of pupil behaviour scale. Each module contains five sub-tests; a self-concept and school adjustment index, visual skills, auditory skills, figure-copying, and basic knowledge.

Newcomer (1975) reviewed the use of the Illinois test of psycholinguistic abilities test (ITPA). It was found, that for the most part, its sub-tests do not correlate significantly with academic achievement and none of the visual auditory sub-tests have any practical predictive or diagnostic value for educational use. At best, only grammatical closure, auditory association, and sound blending have some practical utility; of these only grammatical closure is consistently related to academic indices; even with this sub-test, however, the relationship is considerably reduced when intelligence is held constant, and the effects of other important variables, such as social class, are still largely undetermined.

The two peices of research that follow, are contradictory. One favours the use of the Wechsler Intelligence Test for Children, while the other sees some of the flaws associated with it, especially with minorities. Goldman and Hartig (1976) tested the validity of the WISC for predicting several criterial teachers' ratings for primary grade children; 320 Black, 430 Anglo-American and 201 Mexican-American. Validities for the combined group, were good, but validities for the separate groups, differed markedly. Validities were good for the Anglo-Americans, but near zero for Blacks and Mexican-Americans. These results suggest that the WISC may be of little value in the assessment of the educability of minority children. The implication for educational placement and the heredity/environment controversy are discussed.

An article which contradicts this peice of research is that of Hartlage, Lucas and Godwin (1976). These researchers tested (100) 66 Black, 56 Male culturally disadvantaged 10-year old children on culture-fair (Raven's Progressive Matrices) and culturally biased (WISC) Intelligence Tests and examined the

correlations between these scores and academic achievement (wide range achievement test). WISC full-scale and verbal I.Q.'s both correlated better with academic achievement than RAVEN'S Progressive Matrices. Even with culturally disadvantaged children, it appears that the culture-fair test is not a better predictor of school success than a more culturally biased measure, perhaps because the criterion variable of school success is of itself heavily culturally biased.

Stevenson (1976) points to the advantage of using cognitive tests, rather than teachers' rating to both identify and predict children who are likely to underachieve. Stevenson, Et.al (1976) assessed the effectiveness of a battery of commonly used cognitives and psychometric tasks in predicting achievement in Reading and Arithmetic, in grades 1-3. Tasks were administered to 255 children (mean age, 5.4 years) prior to kindergarten. Teachers' ratings were obtained in kindergarten. Combinations of four tasks yielded optimal predictions of achievement. More effective predictions could be made from pre-kindergarten tasks than from teachers' rating. After Grade 1, the most effective prediction was derived from scores on prior tests of achievement. Relations among various tests of achievement, both within and across years and the relation of achievement scores to age, I.Q. and parental education were determined. Predictive tasks and teachers' ratings were used to select children who later had difficulty in school.

Another interesting approach to predicting achievement is via perceptual tests. Chissom, Thomas and Collins (1974) administered to 39 kindergarten children, four perceptual motor tests and two academic measures in order to assess the relationship among the perceptual motor tests and between the perceptual motor and academic tests. The Shape O ball test and the Frostig Developmental Test of visual perception were highly correlated and were good predictors of the academic measures. The Dynamic Balance task (Stabilometer) correlated moderately with the Shape O ball Test, the Frostig and the academic criteria. The Oseretsky Test of Motor Proficiency did not correlate significantly with any of the other measures. Stepwise multiple correlation indicated that combining the perceptual/motor tests slightly increased their ability to predict each of the academic criteria.

A final approach to diagnosing or predicting achievement is through tests of vigilance as practiced by Kirchner and Knopf (1974). They studied 32 male and 32 female middle to upper-middle class, White second graders and these were divided into high and low achievers (according to extreme scores on the Stanford Achievement Test) and were given a visual vigilance task. The vigilance task consisted of a 30-minute cinema of a stationary jet-plane. Subjects responded to a change in a star on the plane's fuselage, which occurred a total of 24 times at predetermined intervals of 30, 60, 90 and 120 seconds. High achievers made significantly more ^{correct} detections and significantly fewer false responses.

The main treatment approaches to underachievement may be divided into the following major categories and the research which follows exemplifies this approach:

- (1) Developing interest in motivation and simultaneously eliminating or decreasing negative and disruptive demeanour.
- (2) Using drugs.
- (3) Teachers' attitudes leading to remedies.
- (4) Behavioural approaches including teacher discipline, developing greater concentration, behaviour modification, etc..
- (5) Utilising parent power to help children.
- (6) Feeding back information to the underachiever, of achievements.
- (7) Specific teachers' methods for developing higher achievement.

I

Developing Interest and Motivation and Negating Negative or Disruptive Behaviour

Harter, (1975) tested the relative strength of mastery motivation and need for approval in 40, 4 year old and 40, 10 year old upper-middle class children. Mastery motivation was to find as the desire to solve problems for the sake of discovering the solution, and need for approval was inferred from responsiveness to social reinforcement. Mastery motivation was the major determinant for older subjects, particularly males. Need for approval was important for females, but not for males. Contrary to prediction, approval was not the major determinant for younger subjects. They exhibited a form of mastery motivation which involved the repeated production of interesting stimulus events, rather than a concern for correctness.

Another study which sought to show how reinforcing academic achievement simultaneously lead to an improvement of the disruptive behaviour. Libb, Sachs and Boyd, (1973) monitored both academic and disruptive behaviour in a classroom for children with behavioural problems under two different token reinforcement procedures. Subjects were 6, 9-13 year old boys. Behavioural control was demonstrated when subjects were reinforced VI schedules for "in-seat" behaviour and also when they were reinforced for correct performance on daily tests. Academic performance was enhanced in the latter, but not the former condition, suggesting that control of classroom behavioural problems may be more efficiently achieved by reinforcing academic behaviour incompatible with disruptive behaviour.

Ryals, (1975) concentrated on developing higher achievement motivation in low-achieving 10th grade boys. 24 teachers participated in a 4-5 day achievement motivation training course and then trained 136, 8th and 10th graders during four weekends during the Autumn school term. Student training was conducted in two settings. Half of the students were trained in a local camp, and the remaining students were trained in their local school. Evaluation of the trained students' grades in Mathematics, English and Social Studies over the school year, showed that trained students performed significantly better in Mathematics than a randomly selected control group of students. Evaluation of pre and post training standardised test (Stanford Achievement Test) scores in Science and Social Studies showed that the trained students performed significantly higher on the Science tests than did control students.

Dirmeen, (1975) worked with 21 High School students selected as reluctant learners in a two-week programme to relate assets and deficits to work, establish relationships to educational needs, and make subjects more aware of their interests and abilities. During the treatment, average self-concept scores moved in a positive direction on all seven factors in the Miskimins Self/Goal Other Discrepancy Scale, but the change was statistically significant on only two factors. 73 percent of the subjects had improved, and on a follow-up, four months later, 66 percent were found still improved.

II

Drug Therapy - The Treatment of Underachievement

Early experimentation with drugs gave some positive indications of the value of drugs in dealing with underachieving children. More recent research has shown drugs to have no affect on learning or dealing with the problems of underachieving children. Rie,^{Rie,} Stewart and Ambuel, (1976) studied the effects of methylphenidate (Ritalin) on scholastic achievement of 14 male and 4 female 6-10 year old academically deficient children to validate findings of an earlier study by the present author (1976) which found no drug effect on scholastic achievement. Measures included the WISC, Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, TAT, and Bender/Gestalt Test. Results in keeping with the previous research indicate that while Ritalin affects behaviour, it does not enhance learning, and may in fact mask academic problems. The authors urge that the drug be used sparingly and critically, and only in conjunction with other modes of intervention.

A further study by the same authors, (Rie, Rie, Stewart and Ambuel, 1976) compares the reactions of 28, 6-9 year old underachieving children to active drug and placebo treatments. Mean drug dosage was 21.07mg./day. In a double-lined, counter-balanced design, each treatment condition was maintained for

twelve weeks. Using multiple medical and psychological measures (e.g., TAT., WISC., and Bender/Gestalt), as well as a full-length standardised achievement test (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) and behaviour ratings, the typical suppressive behavioural affects were observed. No substantial drug effects on achievement were found, and pre-treatment evaluation failed to support the common assumption of concomitance among hyper-activity, minimal brain dysfunction and learning disorder. Reduced responsivity on active drug treatment was observed clinically. It is urged that effects of methylphenidate hydrochloride (Ritalin) on specific functions be considered rather than global effects without specification and it is concluded that Ritalin should not be used to treat "learning disorders".

III

Training Teachers' attitudes in order to Improve Achievement

Only one study will be cited to illustrate this particular approach to dealing with children who are underachieving. Johnson, Johnson, Johnson and Anderson (1976) compared the effects of structuring classroom learning co-operatively and individually on student ability to take the effective perspective of others altruism attitudes towards classroom life and achievement. 30 White working-class 5th graders matched on previous achievement in language arts were assigned to co-operative and individualised conditions for learning language arts for 45-60 minutes per day for seventeen days. Results indicate that co-operative, compared to individualised, learning resulted in great ability to take the affective perspective of others, more altruism, more positive attitudes towards classroom life and higher achievement.

IV

Behavioural Approaches including Behaviour Modification in the Treatment of Underachievement

There have been numerous studies in the use of behaviour modification and applied methods for dealing with children who are underachieving. Glavin (1974) attempted to determine whether the academic and behavioural gains made by 208, 2nd-6th grade graders, after one or two years of part-time placement in a behaviourally oriented resource room would be maintained following a full-time attendance in a regular class for two or three years. Subjects had participated in an earlier study. The results indicate no significant difference between experimental control groups after return to ^{full} regular classes for a two to three year interval.

A more optimistic result was that of Walker and Hops (1976). They compare the effects of three intervention procedures increasing academic achievement and levels of appropriate behaviour for children with relatively low rates of appropriate behaviour. Three groups of 16 subjects were selected in pairs from regular primary grade classrooms and one child from each group was randomly assigned to the experimental group. Experimental subjects received treatment in an experimental class setting, while control subjects remained in the regular classrooms. Group 1 subjects were reinforced for behaviour facilitative of academic performance, Group 2 for correct academic performance, and Group 3 for both. No significant treatment differences were found. However, there was a significant experimental/control group difference, favouring experimentals for Reading achievement, Mathematics achievement and level of appropriate behaviour.

An even more sophisticated approach using token reinforcement with retarded was practiced by Ayllon, Garber and Pisor (1976). A common assumption in special education is that temporal limits for a task should be expanded so that ample time is provided for completing the work. The present study describes the opposite strategy of restricting temporal limits to augment academic performance. Three educable retarded 10-12 year olds (I.Q., 71-79) received token reinforcement contingent on the number of correct Maths. problems answered during daily sessions. A reversal/^{design} was used to assess the effects of an abrupt reduction in time limits, (20/5/20 minutes) and a graduated sequence of reduction (20-15-10-5-20 minutes). The graduated sequence resulted in rate increases of correct responding, ranging from 125 per cent to 266 per cent and these gains endured when temporal limits were again expanded. In contrast, the abrupt shift produced interfering emotional behaviours and rate decreases in academic performance of 25 per cent to 80 per cent. Findings indicate that systematically restricting temporal limits for an academic task, can further enhance the performance of slow learners already maintained by a token system.

Finally, the work of Giles (1977), a Professor of Education at Child Study, carrying out research in Britain, of West Indian parents and English teachers, found that West Indian parents in Britain were much less tolerant of bad behaviour than English parents. With few exceptions, West Indian parents wanted more discipline in schools, but English teachers were often afraid to reprimand West Indian children for fear of being called "racists". Raymond claims that in British Schools there is no deterrent for West Indian children who are then confused by English teachers who said "No, don't do that." while at the same time smiling. The researcher recommended special training courses for teachers in multi-racial schools.

A final illustration of behaviour changes and its effect on achievement is that of Haubrich and Shores (1976). They investigated the relationship between attending behaviour, controlled by using study cubicles and academic performance, controlled by contingent reinforcement procedures, in 5 emotionally

disturbed children of upper elementary school age in a residential treatment centre. Results suggest that both cubicle and reinforcement conditions controlled attending behaviour. The reinforcement condition produced higher rates of attending and also increased academic performance, which the cubicle condition did not.

V

Using Parent Power to Combat Underachievement

Parent power has recently come into the fore-front and this previously unused source of help was studied by numerous investigators, but it is the behaviour modification group that has recently stressed this approach. Anderson and Evans (1976) examined variations in family socialisation practices among Anglo and Mexican-Americans and the effect of these practices on achievement values, self-concept and educational achievement. Data were collected from 69 Mexican and 33 Anglo-American Junior High School students and their families.

Mexican-American subjects apparently experienced much less independence training and were granted little autonomy in decision-making; they had little confidence in their ability to succeed at school and were somewhat fatalistic about their future, despite the high level of achievement training to which they were exposed in the home. Results suggest that direct attempts to encourage greater academic effort on the part of the students may have actually inhibited academic performance. In contrast, parental independence training resulted in significant gains in achievement among both groups by increasing the student's confidence, ⁱⁿ coping with his or her ^{physical and} social environment. Such training may be critical among Mexican-American students if they are to perform well in classrooms which require that they work largely on their own initiative.

VI

Immediate Feed-back and its Effect on Achievement

It would seem commonsense that feed-back of information, and especially success attained by underachieving children, is vital in perpetuating success in school. And yet, this particular approach is rarely studied. One of the few investigators of this, Gagne, (1974) found that the effect of immediate feed-back improved the level of aspiration through statements made on learning tasks of socially maladjusted young people.

VII

The Importance of Challenging the Ability of Children who are Underachieving

This was studied by Nygard (1975). He reconsidered the achievement/moderation theory which assumed that moderate stimulation releases positive affects and low or high stimulation, negative affects. The most stimulating situation appears to be when the probability of success is .50; the least stimulating, when it is near 1 or 0. The motive to achieve success and avoid failure are moderators of the stimulation provided by a given situation. The motive to achieve success and individuals dominated by this, should experience positive affect where the probability of success is .50. It should therefore engage in such situations.

VIII

The Counselling Approach to Underachievement

Richards, Perri and Gortney (1976) in many counselling study follow-up data, indicate that clients have abandoned treatment procedures and their initial progress has deteriorated. The present experiment explored two procedures for enhancing treatment maintenance: fading counselor contact and increasing information feed-back. 95 volunteer college students concerned about academic underachievement, participated. A biblio counseling system was employed, involving four behavioural self-control groups, a study skills advice group and a no-treatment control group. The design also included a no-contact control group of 21 non volunteers. Grade and questionnaire results showed faded contact was superior to steady contact for enhancing treatment maintenance. Increasing information feed-back about treatment effectiveness, did not affect maintenance. Self control and study skills advice group were superior to control groups. Results suggest that counsellors should consider fading their contact with clients.

IX

Using Perceptual Training to Improve Achievement

The question of perceptual training in helping children who are under-achieving and suffering additionally from minimal brain damage, or other sensory defects, has been given a great deal of exploration in recent years, but the result is still somewhat inconclusive. One piece of research by Johnson and Valentino (1975) indicates there is some indication of improvement through perceptual training with 4th grade school performers, as illustrated by a case study of a 9½-year old girl who suffered from visual learning problems.

There are a great number of other studies involving perceptual training approaches, but not many dealing with underachievement in the academic sense generally.

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