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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests ways in which counselors can take greater control of their accountability plans and make evaluations serve both the counselor and the school more constructively. Recommended competencies for specific types of guidance programs are described in detail. Three types of evaluation data are discussed for use in accountability models, i.e., outcome, opinion, and enumerative data. An accountability model that blends the data together is suggested as an effective strategy for providing a broad range of information about results of individual and program efforts, student attitudes, and cost-effectiveness. Samples of data collection instruments are included in the appendices. (JAC)

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ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS

by

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## Accountability for School Counseling Programs

Evaluation is not a new idea. However, I suspect that most school counseling programs do not have a formal evaluation system established. There are a number of possible reasons for this ranging from personal disinterest in the idea to lack of time for such activities. In my opinion, it is unrealistic for school counselors to think that they need be accountable only to themselves. I also believe that it is unwise for counselors to passively allow others to impose evaluation plans upon them because such plans may be unfair to counselors. For example, such plans may emphasize purely objective outcomes causing counselors to have to do more of everything in order to look good. In addition, non-counselors, when given the responsibility to develop evaluation plans, may not be aware of important things to evaluate.

### Background

School guidance is what one writer has called the "third force." The first and most established force in the schools is the teachers who are primarily responsible for the cognitive domain. The second force, which is also the second most well established, is the administrators whose primary concern is with maintaining an orderly atmosphere for education. Counselors, the third force, are the newest professionals on the scene, and they are not as well established in the schools as are teachers and administrators. Counselors, of course, are primarily concerned with the affective needs of students.

Fueled by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the influx of the post World War II baby boom children upon the overcrowded schools, school counseling flourished in the 1960's. It was a period of rapid growth

and confidence. Perhaps the high water mark was signaled in 1970 when Dugald Arbuckle<sup>1</sup> asked the question: "Does the School Really Need Counselors." He supported this question by citing the following conditions:

1. The wide gap between preparation and practice in school counseling.
2. The questionable uniqueness of the counselors' services.
3. Evidence that there is little or no research data supporting the effectiveness of counseling.
4. Apparent disinterest in professional affiliations or professional organizations demonstrated by a number of counselors.

A review of the professional literature since 1970 will reveal numerous references to justification, survival, and accountability.

As this nation has become increasingly aware of expenditures and desirous for cost-effectiveness during the economic difficulties of the past decade, counselors, as well as others, are being called upon to be accountable. Consequently, we can safely say that counseling too has entered into the age of accountability.

#### Solutions

As was stated earlier, I believe that it is unwise for counselors to passively allow others to impose evaluation plans upon them. Consequently, we need to take control of our own accountability plans as much as possible and make them constructively serve us as well as the institutions for which we work. With the preceding philosophical position in mind, I would like to share some of my ideas with you.

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<sup>1</sup>Dugald S. Arbuckle. "Does the School Really Need Counselors," School Counselor, 1970, 17, 325-330.

### Recommended Competencies

Counselors who desire to competently present evidence of accountability for others and for their own improvement and development should be able to:

1. Conduct useful needs assessments.
2. Translate ideas into measurable goals and objectives.
3. State measurable goals and objectives.
4. Systematically plan and carry out goals and objectives.
5. Collect relevant data.
6. Construct useful data collection instruments (surveys, questionnaires, etc.).
7. Accurately tabulate numerical data.
8. Keep accurate records of desired information.
9. Generate cooperation and motivation among involved guidance staff members.
10. Determine which data are relevant.
11. Understand the meanings associated with acquired accountability data.
12. Clearly share the results of their accountability efforts with others.

I have listed the competencies which are stated above in order to provide food for thought as you read through the following portions of this paper.

### Types of Guidance Programs

Perhaps the most desirous type of guidance program is one which is founded on appropriately stated objectives upon which an evaluation plan can be developed in order to determine whether or not the objectives are being attained. A more common type of guidance program either has no objectives or else the stated objectives are too broad, vague, and general to lend themselves to an evaluation of outcomes.

### Types of Evaluation Data

In my opinion, there are three kinds of useful data for evaluating guidance programs. Each adds a dimension which the others do not provide, and together they provide a comprehensive evaluation system which has the potential for a useful accountability model.

Outcome data. Outcome measures provide a means of evaluating programs with clearly stated objectives. An example follows:

Objective: Help students to learn how to make decisions wisely.

Related Activity: Initiated a group counseling program which included vocational simulation and outside exploratory assignments.

Outcomes: Nineteen students mastered an applied eight-step vocational decision-making process, ending with a written tentative action plan; each verbalized how the process could apply to a new decision; six verbalized the process but did not apply it to their own vocational decision.<sup>2</sup>

Readers can see that the stated outcomes report how well the goal was met through the particular activity that was employed. Clearly, outcome data take the form of reporting what happened as a result of activities which were established to carry out objectives. In an objectives-based program, the developmental sequence will be to establish objectives, determine activities, and collect outcome data. In a program without objectives, outcome data are inappropriate unless somehow one is able to develop objectives for well established activities and then collect the necessary data. In this instance, the developmental sequence is to determine useful activities, develop appropriate measurable objectives, and collect outcome data. Many existing guidance programs may have to do this in order to be

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<sup>2</sup>John D. Krumboltz, "An Accountability Model for Counselors, "Personnel and Guidance Journal, 52 (June, 1974), 639-646.

able to have outcome data as part of their accountability program. More about this later.

Opinion data. Opinion surveys and questionnaires provide a means for acquiring information about the subjective attitudes of various guidance consumers, e.g., students, parents, teachers, graduates, administrators. Opinion data are usually acquired via some form of questionnaire or survey which presents questions or statements that can be answered with ratings, words, or statements. Several examples follow:

Directions: Circle the response that best describes the services provided by your counselor.

My counselor tries to be helpful. . . . .	Yes	No
	or	
	Seldom	Always
My counselor tries to be helpful	1 2 3 4 5	6 7

In a program with objectives, outcome data can be supplemented by opinion data because, while it is useful to know how whether objectives are being met, it is also important to know about the attitudes of participants. It is possible, for instance, to successfully achieve goals while concurrently dissatisfying one's consumers.

Where programs do not have objectives, opinion data are one of the legitimate forms of evaluation because stated objectives are not absolutely necessary for the development of questions focusing upon consumer opinions. In creating opinion surveys, it is very important to develop survey items which ask the right questions in the right way. If not, evaluators run the risk of collecting inappropriate data, neglecting to collect important information, confusing respondents, or failing to assess opinions on all of the important components of their program. It would appear that careful planning should accompany the development of any opinion surveys which are to be used to evaluate guidance programs.

Enumerative Data. This approach takes the form of tallying how many times, or during what duration, some event or behavior took place. This information, in turn, may be compared with the amount of time available and/or cost per units. These kinds of data are the easiest to collect and also are the kind most frequently collected. Examples of the numerous counseling behaviors that can be enumerated or tabulated are: number of counseling sessions, types of counseling sessions, number of parent contacts, length of interviews, time spent per function, total time spent in providing services, cost in dollars per total services and/or specific services, services requested, services performed versus services requested, and time spent on non-guidance services. A couple of examples follow:

The survey form used in the recent PDOE study of activities of Pennsylvania school counselors is an example of enumerative data collection. See Appendix A. The form allows counselors to check cells indicating whom they were serving, how much time was spent, what concerns were involved, and what methods were used. In another survey which was conducted by the Erie, Pennsylvania school district, color coded cards were used. An example is found in Appendix B. An interesting combination of enumerative and outcome data is found in the ideas of John D. Krumboltz who was cited earlier. See Appendix C.

As was the case with opinion data, enumerative data can also supplement outcome data because, as seen in the Krumboltz example, cost-effectiveness is an important supplement to information about achievement of objectives. Where programs do not have useful objectives, enumerative data, like opinion data, are also one of the legitimate forms of evaluation because objectives are not absolutely necessary to determine enumerative data.



The warning about overemphasis upon objective information to the point of undue emphasis upon quantitative data and measurement of effectiveness according to the most of or least of something, e.g., most clients seen or least amount of money spent per student, is particularly important when dealing with enumerative data. Counselors need to be aware of the potential for damage involved with undue emphasis upon the quantification involved in enumerating things. This is why enumerative data alone are not as useful as they are when combined with other types of data.

#### Combining Different Kinds of Evaluation Data Into An Effective Accountability Plan

In my opinion, the ideal data collecting plan for a counseling program's accountability model is one which combines outcome, opinion, and enumerative data. When blended together, they provide a broad range of complimentary information about results of individual and program efforts, attitudes of consumers, and cost-effectiveness of one's activities.

If a guidance program is already founded upon well developed objectives, there will be little or no problem acquiring outcome data. However, where such objectives do not exist, two alternative suggestions are offered:

1. As was suggested earlier, one can start with accepted program activities and move backward to stating related objectives. For example: In a hypothetical program, all counselors made an effort to get well acquainted with their advisees during their first year in school because they think its a good idea. However, they never stopped to think about the intended outcomes. After giving this some thought, it was decided that one purpose or objective was to increase the number of independent self-referrals to the counselors by students at a later date. The get-acquainted interviews were viewed as a means of increasing the number of independent self-referrals. This, of course, is a measurable objective.

2. Start all over, so to speak, by conducting a needs assessment and using the results as a foundation for setting program goals and objectives. Of course, many existing program activities will probably be supported by the newly established objectives. I think the best way to conduct needs assessments is to assess the needs of the counseling staff, the students, the administration and staff, and the public (taxpayers) and to diplomatically derive some compromise objectives for the guidance program. Initially, this will involve quite a bit of work. However, after having established sound objectives, counselors may find that their future accountability activities are much easier and that their consumers have greater respect for their work knowing what the counselors' intentions are.

There are ways through which outcome data can be acquired systematically, with efficiency and ease, and in a manner which provides information that is also useful for purposes other than accountability demands. One approach is the method demonstrated in the Krumboltz plan. Another method which ties in with tracking the progress of counseling cases, is the single case study in that it provides graphic evidence of individual progress on mutually determined counseling objectives. Appendix D provides examples of type A and AB designs, which are easy to record with graph paper and, not only serve as evidence for accountability purposes, but also as evidence of client progress in counseling.

Of course, the Krumboltz plan also provides a procedure for collecting enumerative data in that the amount of counselor time spent per activity is recorded and translated into cost per hour. Another interesting plan for collecting enumerative data is the one used in the Erie public schools several years ago. This plan offers a streamlined procedure for collecting enumerative data. The Erie staff developed several different color coded

cards about the same size as those used in data processing. Each card contains a title which is keyed to its color, e.g., Individual Student Counseling (red), Individual Student Information/Service (blue), and Individual Adult Conference In-School (green). Each card also contains categories of time usage ranging from 10 to 90 or more minutes and subfunctions under each main heading such as: attendance, behavior, and career counseling. Counselors can store stacks of color-coded cards in their desk drawers and complete any one of them after an interview or activity by merely pulling one out and circling three appropriate numbers. The amount of counselor time devoted to this behavior is minimal. Of course, the staff of a school using this system is capable of determining how often they wish to collect enumerative data. Copies of the cards are found in Appendix B.

Another version of this approach is the score-sheet approach on the PDOE survey form found in Appendix A. This format follows the same principle. However, instead of using color-coded cards, a tally sheet is employed.

To acquire opinion data, guidance staffs will have to systematically develop valid surveys for each of their important constituencies. At first, this will be a major task. On the other hand, once good surveys have been developed, they need only be modified as time passes. An example of a survey for administrator opinions about their counselors is found in appendix E.

Some system for periodically surveying samples of specified constituents is recommended so as not to saturate them with surveys. Also, the amount of counselor time and drudgery associated with this task can be minimized significantly by using computer capabilities for tallying and analyzing the surveys.

Conclusion

Up to this point, I have advocated counselor readiness for and acceptance of demands for accountability. Indeed, I have even suggested an approach which I deem to be both comprehensive and easy to employ.

In closing, I wish to comment about the attitudes which are associated with accountability. Whatever system is used needs to allow for failure.

Thus, experimentation is encouraged. Emphasis should be placed upon successes, and information about failures should be used as a base for renewed planning for individual and programmatic improvement. Under these circumstances the professional staff is less likely to fear and resist efforts to establish an accountability plan.

Finally, there should accrue to counselors some sort of satisfaction from having evaluated themselves and their activities. One possible source of satisfaction is knowing that they have successfully conducted the tasks involved and learned the necessary skills in the process. Another source of satisfaction is the realization that the acquired information can be used for program and personal improvement. This allows them to use the acquired information constructively.

In my opinion, an important source of satisfaction would be to know that extrinsic rewards are being given to those who perform above and beyond the call of duty according to the data acquired in any accountability plan. This would serve notice that accountability is not merely an idea which is employed to make individuals defend their existence but is also a means of rewarding the faithful.

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Many of the ideas I expressed herein are based upon reading and using materials published by Merville C. Shaw of California State College at Chico.

## Appendix A

The sample which will be used to explain the structure of the cross-tabulation tables is Table 21, page 23. This table shows the joint frequency distributions of the PEOPLE and TIME variables for the elementary level. The response categories for the PEOPLE variable are listed vertically while those for the TIME variable are listed horizontally. Each cell in the table contains three numbers. The top, non-decimal, number is the actual number of counseling contacts which were jointly described by the two response choices intersecting at that point in the table. The other two numbers are percentages which show the ratio of that top number to the row total and column total respectively.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand the structure of the crosstabulation tables is to view each row and column as a separate table describing the subtotal shown in the margins. An examination of the column headed by "0-5" minutes will illustrate this. The margin total at the bottom of this column is 3,741. These contacts represent 15.5 percent of the total of 24,136 counseling contacts reported. The separate cells in this "0-5 minutes" column show how these 3,741 contacts were described in reference to the PEOPLE variable. For instance, 1,512 (40.4 percent) of them involved "Teachers," 498 (13.3 percent) were with "Individual" students and 23 (0.6 percent) were with students in a "Small Group."

An examination of the row started by "Teachers" shows a marginal subtotal of 5,435 contacts. These, as shown, are 22.5 percent of the total of 24,136 contacts reported for this level. The separate cells in this row show how these 5,435 contacts with "Teachers" were described in terms of the response choices of the TIME variable. As can be seen, 1,512 (27.8 percent) were "0-5 minutes" 2,338 (43.0 percent) were "6-15 minutes" and 56 (1.0 percent) were "61 + minutes."



## Appendix B

Color-Coded Data Collection Cards  
 from Erie, Pennsylvania Survey

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COUNSELING 1

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

0	Less than 10 min.	5	50-59 min.
1	10-19 min.	6	60-69 min.
2	20-29 min.	7	70-79 min.
3	30-39 min.	8	80-89 min.
4	40-49 min.	9	90 or more

01 Attendance  
 02 Behavior  
 03 Career Counseling  
 04 Career Decision-Making  
 05 College Counseling  
 06 Drop-Out  
 07 Drug Counseling  
 08 Employment Counseling  
 09 Finances  
 10 Home Problems  
 11 Personal Social Adjustment  
 12 School Program Choice  
 13 Sex  
 14 Subject Change  
 15 Teacher-Student Problem  
 16 Value Counseling  
 17 Other

0 Problem Identified  
 1 Solution Implemented  
 2 Problem Solved

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT  
 INFORMATION/SERVICE 2

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

0	Less than 10 min.	5	50-59 min.
1	10-19 min.	6	60-69 min.
2	20-29 min.	7	70-79 min.
3	30-39 min.	8	80-89 min.
4	40-49 min.	9	90 or more

01 Attendance  
 02 College Guidance  
 03 Discipline  
 04 Employment, Full Time  
 05 Employment, Part Time  
 06 Enrolling  
 07 Financial Aid, College  
 08 Financial Aid, Current  
 09 Free Lunch  
 10 Military Information  
 11 Occupational Information  
 12 Program Change  
 13 Program Information  
 14 Sick Calls  
 15 Summer School  
 16 Test Information  
 17 Test Interpretation  
 18 Transportation  
 19 Withdrawing  
 20 Work Permit  
 21 Other

Appendix B

INDIVIDUAL ADULT CONFERENCE  
IN-SCHOOL

3

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |                   |   |            |
|---|-------------------|---|------------|
| 0 | Less than 10 min. | 5 | 50-59 min. |
| 1 | 10-19 min.        | 6 | 60-69 min. |
| 2 | 20-29 min.        | 7 | 70-79 min. |
| 3 | 30-39 min.        | 8 | 80-89 min. |
| 4 | 40-49 min.        | 9 | 90 or more |

- 01 Administrator, Central Office
- 02 Administrator, Own School
- 03 Administrator, Other School
- 04 Business Representative
- 05 College Representative
- 06 Community Representative
- 07 Counselor Own School
- 08 Counselor Other School
- 09 Parent
- 10 Professional Non-School
- 11 Psychologist, School
- 12 Referral Agency
- 13 Social Worker
- 14 Teacher
- 15 Visiting Teacher
- 16 Other

ADULT GROUP AND  
OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITY

4

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |                   |   |            |
|---|-------------------|---|------------|
| 0 | Less than 10 min. | 5 | 50-59 min. |
| 1 | 10-19 min.        | 6 | 60-69 min. |
| 2 | 20-29 min.        | 7 | 70-79 min. |
| 3 | 30-39 min.        | 8 | 80-89 min. |
| 4 | 40-49 min.        | 9 | 90 or more |

- 01 Case Conference
- 02 Meetings
- 03 Other Adult Groups
- 04 Case Conference
- 05 Classes Attended
- 06 Meetings
- 07 Other Adult Groups
- 08 Clerical Routine
- 09 Correspondence
- 10 Information, Looking Up
- 11 Recommendations, College
- 12 Recommendations, Job
- 13 Phone Calls
- 14 Transcripts
- 15 Other

\_\_\_\_\_ Units Counted

\_\_\_\_\_ Units Estimated



## Appendix B

## SOLITARY IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITY

5

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |                   |   |            |
|---|-------------------|---|------------|
| 0 | Less than 10 min. | 5 | 50-59 min. |
| 1 | 10-19 min.        | 6 | 60-69 min. |
| 2 | 20-29 min.        | 7 | 70-79 min. |
| 3 | 30-39 min.        | 8 | 80-89 min. |
| 4 | 40-49 min.        | 9 | 90 or more |

- 01 Bulletins, Writing
- 02 Correspondence, Miscellaneous
- 03 Forms, Various
- 04 Information, Looking Up
- 05 Listing
- 06 Mail Handling
- 07 Program Changes
- 08 Recommendations, College
- 09 Recommendations, Job
- 10 Summonses
- 11 Phone Calls, Parents
- 12 Phone Calls, School Personal
- 13 Transcripts
- 14 Trays, Checking
- 15 Other

\_\_\_\_\_ Units Counted

\_\_\_\_\_ Units Estimated

## STUDENT GROUP ACTIVITY

6

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSELOR \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |                   |   |            |
|---|-------------------|---|------------|
| 0 | Less than 10 min. | 5 | 50-59 min. |
| 1 | 10-19 min.        | 6 | 60-69 min. |
| 2 | 20-29 min.        | 7 | 70-79 min. |
| 3 | 30-39 min.        | 8 | 80-89 min. |
| 4 | 40-49 min.        | 9 | 90 or more |

- 01 Class Visitation
- 02 Classroom Coverage
- 03 Group Counseling
- 04 Enrolling
- 05 Excuse From School
- 06 Free Lunch
- 07 Information, College
- 08 Information, General
- 09 Information, Occupational
- 10 Material Distribution
- 11 Information, Test
- 12 Monitoring Activities
- 13 Orientation
- 14 Program Choice
- 15 Tardiness
- 16 Testing
- 17 Test Interpretation
- 18 Transportation
- 19 Other

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of Students Served

Appendix C

EXCERPT FROM KRUMBOLTZ'S "ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL FOR COUNSELORS"

ENUMERATIVE AND OUTCOME DATA

General Goal - Decision Making: Help students learn how to make decisions wisely.

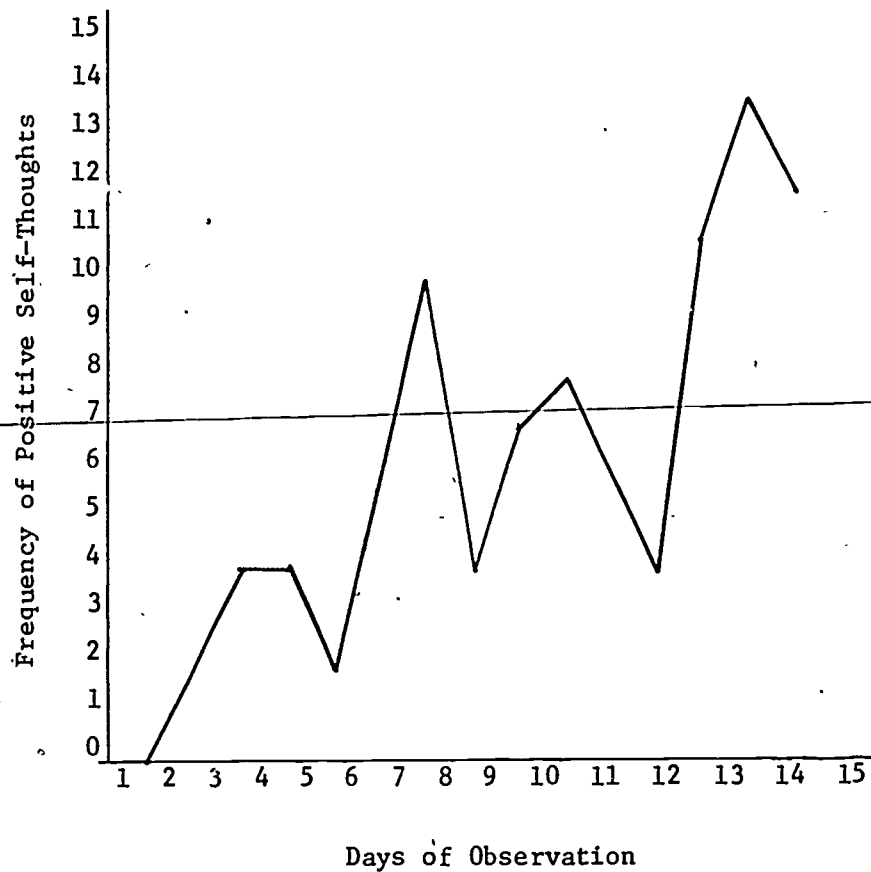
Problem Identification	Method	Outcome	Activity	Hours	Dollars
178 seniors volunteered for vocational decision-making program 25 were chosen	Group counseling; vocational simulation; outside exploratory assignments	19 mastered and applied 8-step vocational decision-making process, ending with written, tentative action plan, each verbalized how process could apply to new decisions; 6 verbalized process but did not apply it to own vocational decision.	Questionnaire administration/analysis	4	56
			Preparation for learning activities.	20	280
			Group meetings	10	140
			Job experience kits (reusable)	0	173
			Follow-up evaluation	25	350
					999
389 students complained that their initial schedule was unsatisfactory because of "Friends in another section," "personality conflicts with teacher," "just heard of new requirement," "bored," etc.	Individual conferences; complete administrative procedures.	378 schedule changes; effect on decision-making ability unknown.	Conferences with parents	19	266
			Conferences with students	121	1,694
			Write revised schedule for computer.	68	952
			Troubleshoot and blow offsteam when computer sends faulty information.	76	1,064
					3,976

Taken from June 1974 issue of the Personnel and Guidance Journal

## Appendix D

## SINGLE CASE STUDY

Daily Frequency of Self-Monitored  
Positive Self-Thoughts



TYPE A DESIGN

OUTCOME DATA

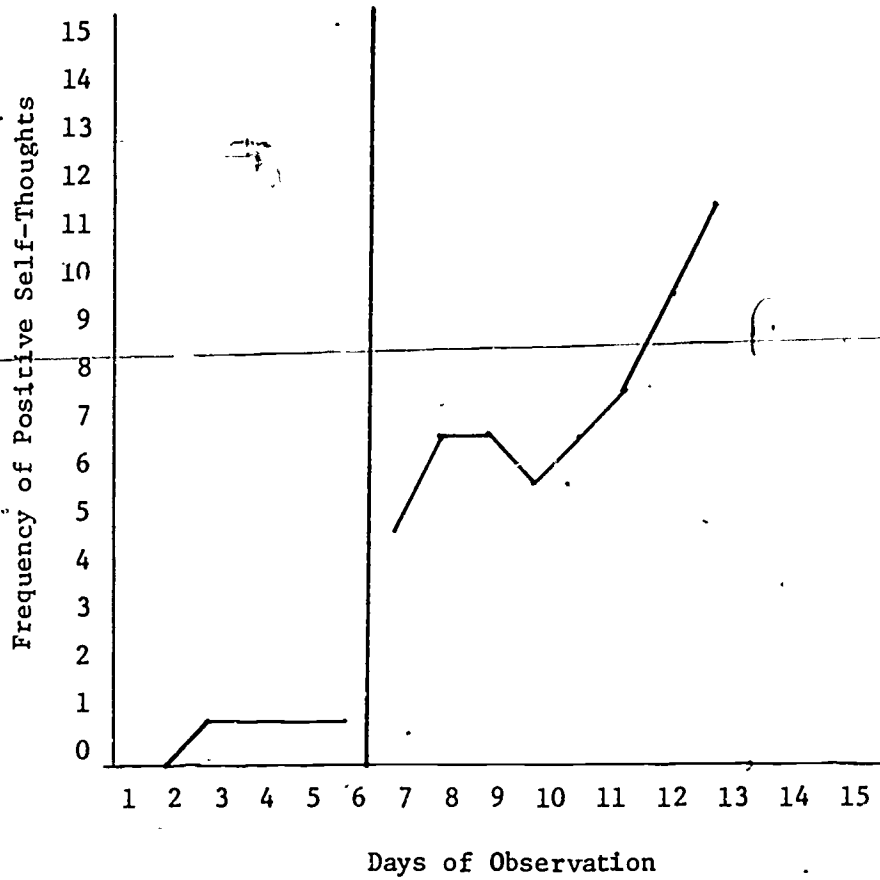
Taken from: Carl E. Thoresen, "The Intensive Design: An Intimate Approach to Counseling Research." A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April, 1972.

Appendix D

SINGLE CASE STUDY

Daily Frequency of Self-Monitored

Positive Self-Thoughts



TYPE AB DESIGN

OUTCOME DATA

Appendix E  
Counselor Effectiveness Questionnaire

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. In so doing, use the following format. Rate the counselor by circling the appropriate (in your opinion) level of competence using the six part scale on the right. If you wish to make any comments, use the space on the left-hand side of the page.

Comments	Please respond in terms of each item beginning with the Counselor's:	Low	Average	High	No opportunity to Observe		
	1. awareness of the role and function of guidance in the larger society	1	2	3	4	5	No
	2. level of self-awareness	1	2	3	4	5	No
	3. awareness of the purpose for guidance in the schools	1	2	3	4	5	No
	4. apparent level of understanding of, and knowledge about, adolescence	1	2	3	4	5	No
	5. level of competency in establishing facilitative interpersonal relations with adults (e.g., faculty, administrators, parents)	1	2	3	4	5	No
	6. ability to work cooperatively with other pupil-personnel specialists (e.g., school psychologists, social workers, health personnel, counselors at other educational levels)	1	2	3	4	5	No
	7. level of competency in establishing facilitative interpersonal relations with adolescents	1	2	3	4	5	No
	8. ability to conduct in-house research and evaluation	1	2	3	4	5	No
	9. ability to report clearly research and evaluation he or she has conducted						
	10. level of performance in conducting that part of the standardized testing program which is within his responsibility	1	2	3	4	5	No
	11. level of skill in conducting test interpretations	1	2	3	4	5	No
	12. ability to assemble, organize and disseminate counseling information effectively	1	2	3	4	5	No
	13. ability to interpret information about pupils to parents	1	2	3	4	5	No
	14. level of effectiveness in assisting student to select post secondary educational opportunities:	1	2	3	4	5	No
	Colleges _____						
	Trade Schools _____						