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ABSTRACT

An innovation in the teaching of undergraduate psychology courses is the implementation of a field experience that gives students the opportunity to apply newly learned skills and knowledge in a community setting. Changes in undergraduates' attitudes toward various delinquency interventions were examined as a result of participation in a psychology field experience aimed at diverting delinquent youth from the juvenile justice system. Training for the field experience consisted of formal course enrollment in which the techniques of behavioral contracting and child advocacy were taught. The field experience consisted of undergraduates working 6 to 8 hours a week for 18 weeks with a delinquent youth. Participating undergraduates (N=16) completed the Delinquency Orientation Scale (DOS) before and after their field experience. A nonparticipant control group (N=36) also completed the DOS at similar times. The DOS was used to measure undergraduates' attitudes towards four types of social intervention applicable to delinquent youth: a punitive orientation, an individual treatment orientation, general social reform, and radical non-interventions. Results indicated that field experience participants' endorsements of individual treatment orientations significantly decreased more than nonparticipating students over time. The findings suggest that an extensive field experience can be an effective teaching strategy. (Author/NRB)

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Impact on Attitudes Toward Social Interventions
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Psychology as Field Experience:

Impact on Attitudes Towards Social Interventions

The recent thrust towards innovations in the teaching of undergraduate psychology courses is most likely the result of two factors: ever-increasing enrollments in psychology (Maier, 1971) and strong pressure for psychology course experience to become more directly linked to "real world" experience (Baskin, 1967). One way of responding to both of these concerns is to implement a field experience for psychology students which gives them a chance to apply newly learned skills and knowledge in a community setting, and thus allows for a more intense and active experience than would be provided by a classroom lecture format. In addition, this field experience may utilize resources readily available in the community and contribute needed manpower to those community systems. For these reasons, the field experience format is gaining wide acceptance as an alternative teaching strategy in psychology departments (Kulik, 1973).

One of the more obvious ways of implementing a field experience would be to utilize undergraduates as nonprofessionals in human service settings (Klein & Zax, 1965). Previous research has shown that nonprofessionals are at least as effective as professionals with certain populations (Durlak, 1979) and that the nonprofessional helper is often affected positively by the experience (Rappaport, 1977). The present research examined effects of a field experience on undergraduate students who participated in a program aimed at diverting delinquent youth from the juvenile justice system (Davidson, 1976; Seidman, Rappaport, Davidson, & Linney, in press). Involvement in this program consisted of a three-term course commitment, during which undergraduates received an intensive eight-week training program which prepared them for individual contact (8-10 hours/week) with a delinquent youth over an 18-week period.

The potential effectiveness of the diversion program, with regard to reducing delinquency, is based on diversion from the legal system combined with

a treatment program emphasizing behavioral techniques and an environmental resources approach. These approaches have proven to be more effective techniques when working with delinquent populations than traditional methods arising from the medical model (Tharp & Wetzel, 1969), individual psychotherapeutic perspectives (Levitt, 1971) or a punitive orientation. Therefore, participating undergraduates were trained in the specific techniques of behavioral contracting and child advocacy.

The present study examined the effects of a field experience on undergraduate attitudes towards various types of intervention with delinquent youth. It was predicted that undergraduates participating in the field experience would show decreases over time in their endorsement of punishment and individualized psychotherapy, while they would show increases over time in their endorsements of the principles of economic and political social reform and non-intervention with delinquent youth. It was expected that nonparticipating undergraduates' attitudes towards these intervention styles would remain constant over time. If the field experience process (i.e. training in specific intervention techniques and interaction with a delinquent youth) can promote positive attitudes in accord with training, then the effectiveness of the field experience as a mechanism for teaching will have been demonstrated.

METHOD

Subjects

Interested undergraduates were recruited and required to attend two orientation meetings designed to clarify the purpose and requirements of the course field experience. As part of these meetings, they completed six personality and attitude measures as well as contracts indicating their interest in, and commitment to, participation in the field experience course. The majority of these students were juniors and seniors planning a career in a human service field or a graduate education in a related discipline. (Psychology and criminal)

justice majors comprised 90% of these students and the remaining 10% were majors in other social sciences. Once the undergraduates had completed the requirements for admission to the course, they were randomly selected to participate in the field experience (n=16) or comprise a nonparticipant control group (n=36)..

Target Population

A youth was eligible for referral to this project if he/she had (1) a court petition filed against them by police; school, parents or others; (2) the court accepted the petition; and (3) during the inquiry and preliminary hearing the youth admitted to the charges presented against them. This project did not accept youth who were involved in only a single minor offense or who would have otherwise been dismissed by the court.

Independent Variable: Field Experience

Training. Undergraduates in the experimental group were enrolled in a formal three-term psychology course which consisted of one term of training in the intervention techniques (approximately 8 weeks) and two terms of individualized contact with a delinquent youth (approximately 18 weeks). Training centered around a specifically designed manual covering a behavioral conception of human behavior and delinquency, an environmental resources conception of human behavior and delinquency, and the rationale for a multi-level intervention which addressed all areas of the youth's life (i.e., family, school, job, and free time). The manual also covered specifics such as: assessment as a prelude to intervention; assessment in practice; initiation of an intervention; and termination of contact with the youth.

During training, weekly class sessions involved extensive discussion of concepts and practices which required that students master the appropriate section of the training manual and assigned readings. Degree of mastery of the material was monitored by weekly oral and written essay questions. In addition, role

To facilitate administration, analysis, and interpretation, the original 121 item questionnaire was reduced to 41 items based on endorsement frequency and a rational and empirical scaling procedure (i.e., principal components factor analysis). This procedure yielded four subscales consisting of items corresponding to the major four Schur intervention orientations.

Next, an evaluation for convergent and discriminant validity was completed to ensure maximum homogeneity of each of the four subscales. Any item which correlated higher with a subscale other than its own was eliminated from the questionnaire.

Alphas, indicating the degree of internal consistency within each subscale were computed and revealed an ample degree of inter-item reliability: punitive subscale, $\alpha = .79$; treatment subscale, $\alpha = .81$; social reform subscale, $\alpha = .75$; and radical non-intervention subscale, $\alpha = .72$.

Finally, all remaining items were factor analyzed utilizing a principal components solution with a varimax rotation. Again, this analysis confirmed the existence of four orthogonal subscales (punitive, individual treatment, social reform, radical non-intervention), resulting in the final questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Procedure

Prior to selection for participation in the field experience, all undergraduates were administered the DOS along with several other personality measures at the required introductory group meetings. Undergraduates were then randomly assigned to the experimental ($n=16$) or control group ($n=36$). The control group consisted of those who were not selected for program participation and had no further contact with the program during the school year. At the end of the third school term, control students were recontacted and offered \$12.00 to complete a series of measures which included the DOS. Experimentals were also administered the DOS at this time.

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comparisons were not significant. Thus, the significant Condition by Time interaction appears to be the result of a decrease over time by the experimental group in their endorsements of individual treatment while the control group remained constant in their degree of endorsement.

Social Reform Subscale

Results indicated no significant main effects or interactions. See Table 3 for means, F ratios, and probabilities.

Radical Non-intervention Subscale

Results indicated a main effect for condition which approached significance, $F(1,50) = 3.77$, $p < .06$, such that the experimental group more strongly endorsed radical non-intervention principles than the control group. There was a significant main effect for Time, $F(1,50) = 4.70$, $p < .05$, such that the experimental and control groups increased their endorsements of these principles over time. However, Scheffe tests to examine differences between pre and post measures were not significant.

Discussion

It was predicted that undergraduates participating in the field experience would show decreases in the degree of their endorsements of punitive and individualized psychotherapeutic interventions with delinquent youths. Results showed that participating undergraduates decreased their endorsements of psychotherapeutic interventions over time while nonparticipating undergraduates did not. Thus, the field experience was successful in achieving its goal of disuading undergraduates of the usefulness of this technique with delinquent youth. However, participating undergraduates did not significantly decrease the strength of their endorsements over time of punitive techniques in intervening with delinquent youth. Interestingly, participating undergraduates were significantly less strong in their punitive endorsements than nonparticipating undergraduates at the end of the field experience. Thus, the field experience

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may have prevented participants from becoming more punitive in their orientation toward delinquent youth, but did not dissuade them of the potential usefulness of punishment in reducing delinquency. (Note that the cell means for participating students indicate a degree of agreement between the ratings of neutral and agree, rather than being in the range of disagreement, see Table 1).

It was also predicted that participating undergraduates would increase the strength of their endorsements for social reform principles and the principle of radical nonintervention. Contrary to predictions, participating undergraduates did not significantly increase their endorsements of social reform principles. Nor were they significantly different from nonparticipating undergraduates in the degree of their endorsement. In fact, both participating and nonparticipating undergraduate endorsements remained unchanged over time at ratings indicating agreement (see Table 3). This lack of findings may be due to the generally high level of agreement for social reform existing prior to the field experience (i.e., a ceiling effect). That is, among those applying for the field experience there was a generally positive attitude toward social reform principles. In addition, the social reform subscale may not have been sensitive to the concepts taught in training and the field experience. Further examination of this social reform subscale showed that the majority of items addressed issues of the causes of delinquency, rather than the treatment of delinquency which was the emphasis during training and supervision of the field experience.

Results from the analysis of the radical nonintervention subscale showed a trend in the predicted direction. That is, participating undergraduates endorsed these principles more than nonparticipating undergraduates. Since radical nonintervention principles were stressed during training and field experience supervision, it appears that participants' attitudes reflected this emphasis.

In addition, the increase in endorsements of non-intervention principles over time seems to be strongest for the experimental group. Again, since the

scores of both groups were initially high, increases in endorsements may have been difficult to measure. However, the experimental group means seem to reflect a greater degree of change over time (see Table 4).

Two final points should be noted. First, the utilization of a self-selected control group presents difficulties in interpreting results. These difficulties are lessened somewhat by the fact that the self-selected control group did not differ significantly from the experimental group on any of the numerous demographic and attitudinal variables measured prior to random selection and assignment (Mitchell, 1980). Second, it is unclear whether the training, the field experience, or both was responsible for the participants attitudinal change. However, the Delinquency Orientation Scale was also administered to participants after training and midway through their field experience, offering the opportunity for future research to investigate attitude change at various points in time.

In conclusion, it is clear that an extensive field experience can be an effective teaching strategy, producing desired changes in "targeted" attitudes among participating students.

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Table 1
Delinquency Orientation
Individual Punitive Scale

	Pre	Post
Experimentals (n = 16)	3.63	3.61
Controls (n=36)	3.82	3.89

Analysis of Variance

<u>Source</u>	<u>Df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Condition (C)	1	1.28	4.90	.03
Subjects (S)	50	.26		
Time (T)	1	.06	.95	.47
C x T	1	.05	.46	.50
S x T	50	.11		

Table 2
Delinquency Orientation
Individual Treatment Scale

	Pre	Post
Experimentals (n = 16)	4.66	4.17
Controls (n=36)	4.45	4.56

Analysis of Variance

<u>Source</u>	<u>Df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Condition (C)	1	.20	.79	.38
Subjects (S)	50	.25		
Time (T)	1	.14	1.22	.27
C x T	1	1.97	16.66	.0005
S x T	50	.12		

Table 3
Delinquency Orientation
Social Reform Scale

	Pre	Post
Experimentals (n = 16)	4.21	4.13
Controls (n=36)	4.13	4.12

Analysis of Variance

<u>Source</u>	<u>Df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Condition (C)	1	.04	.11	.74
Subjects (S)	50	.40		
Time (T)	1	.03	.22	.64
C x T	1	.03	.27	.60
S x T	50	.13		

Table 4
 Delinquency Orientation
 Radical Non-Intervention Scale

	Pre	Post
Experimentals (n = 16)	3.70	4.01
Controls (n=36)	3.52	3.67

Analysis of Variance

<u>Source</u>	<u>Df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Condition (C)	1	1.53	3.77	.06
Subjects (S)	50	.41		
Time (T)	1	1.00	4.70	.04
C x T	1	.16	.74	.39
S x T	50	.21		

~Appendix A

Delinquency Orientation Scale

N.B. This appendix does not represent the actual format of the final questionnaire. It has been reorganized to more easily reflect the structure of each of the four subscales as well as the structure of the items. The final questionnaire is available upon request.

Instructions

The following statements present a wide range of opinions regarding the causes and treatment of juvenile delinquency, as well as the role of the juvenile justice system. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each by circling the appropriate number.

Sample Item

1. Juveniles would be better off if they were not officially handled by any agency

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

Individual Punitive Scale Items

1. Delinquents should be prosecuted fully.
2. We have every right to force our youth to follow laws set down for them by legislation.
3. Giving adults within the community more control and power will have a direct effect on delinquency rates.
4. The juvenile court is generally too lenient with delinquents.
5. One must be strict when dealing with a delinquent.
6. By separating the delinquent youth from the rest of the community reform will be made easier.
7. Immediate punishment will reduce delinquent behavior.
8. If police arrested more youth, there would be less delinquency.
9. Police should release fewer of the kids they arrest.
10. Programs utilizing the "soft" approach will not remove delinquency.
11. To prevent delinquency it is necessary to make it known that the offender will receive complete punishment for their act.
12. Courts must see to it that delinquents are adequately punished.

Individual Treatment Scale Items

1. Increasing individual therapy will lessen delinquency.

2. A basic disturbance in the process of socialization of the individual causes delinquency.
3. Individual service should be provided for those youth identified as predelinquent.
4. It is possible to spot "predelinquents" before they get into serious trouble.
5. Providing more counselors will aid greatly in decreasing delinquency problems.
6. The best way to prevent delinquency is to identify predelinquents early.
7. Prevention of delinquency should be based on psychological principles.
8. The most beneficial approach to the delinquency problem is to improve the quality of counseling.
9. Schools are the best agents to identify potential delinquents.
10. Special counseling programs should be provided for the youth who engage in delinquent activities.

Social Reform Scale Items

1. The societal factor of racism is the most critical variable underlying delinquency.
2. Lessening discriminations and inequality will lessen delinquency.
3. Redistributing the wealth in our society so that all individuals receive equal wages will reduce delinquency.
4. The best way to prevent delinquency is to bring about changes in the economic structure of society.
5. Delinquency causing factors are not under the control of the youth.
6. In dealing with delinquency one should aim at changing groups and neighborhoods not individual youngsters.
7. Factors giving rise to delinquent behavior are found in external social and economic conditions rather than within the personalities of certain individuals.
8. An investigation into the cause of delinquent behavior should involve a look at societal rather than psychological factors.
9. Poverty causes delinquency.
10. The most important causes of delinquency are to be found outside of the individual.

Non-Intervention Scale Items

1. Juveniles would be better off if they were not officially handled by any agency.
2. There is no such thing as a delinquent.
3. The juvenile court strips the youth of their identity.
4. The search for the cause of crime is useless since everybody at times is criminal but only certain people happen to come to the attention of officials.
5. It should no longer be illegal to run away or skip school.
6. Making a youthful offender of the law go through juvenile court proceedings can only cause more problems in the future for the youth.
7. Juveniles are best served if they are diverted totally from the court.
8. It is of primary importance that the juvenile court limit its activities to criminal acts only.
9. The organizational structure of the police department determines who becomes a delinquent.