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BEHAVIORAL SOCIAL WORK IN COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Principles and methods of behavioral social work have found little application at the community and organizational levels of intervention. It is the contention of the authors that integration of such content would enhance practice at these levels. Components of behavioral community intervention are indicated and illustrated in micro/macro settings, with advantages to practice specified. Ethical Considerations in using this methodology are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The addition of procedures derived from the experimental analysis of behavior into the practice procedures of social workers represents a major step towards fulfillment of the field's long-standing commitment to the twin goals of effective service and accountable practice. Despite a few dissenting opinions (Bruck, 1968; Strean, 1973), behavioral social work has come to be recognized as one of the major schools of social work theory (Thomas, 1970; 1973) and is now a significant

component of graduate social work education (Thyer & Bronson, 1981).

A recently published bibliography of behavioral social work found over 350 articles, chapters and textbooks on the subject in print (Thyer, 1981). The magnitude and comprehensiveness of this body of literature is suggestive of the utility which many practitioners and researchers have found in the behavioral perspective. A topical analysis of the references found in the behavioral social work literature reveals an uneven distribution in content, however. Articles devoted to social work intervention at the community level comprised only four percent of the total (n=14), with interpersonal practice at the individual and group levels forming the large majority of the citations (Thyer, 1981). This is unfortunate, since, as Sheldon and Hudson point out, with respect to social work literature in general, ". . . a certain amount of attention is given to the problems and practicalities of running programmes in community and social care settings, but this is woefully insufficient given the magnitude of the problems usually encountered . . . social workers cannot be just therapists, behavioral or otherwise" (1981, p.2).

Despite early suggestions that behavioral methods could contribute to the development of more effective intervention at the community level (Fellin, Rothman & Meyer, 1967), the integration of such principles into the training and practice procedures of social workers in community and organizational settings appears to have lagged behind that of education in micro-level intervention. As an illustration, Weisner and Silver's (1981) recent article on community work and social learning

theory drew more from the psychological than the social work literature, reflecting both the significant impact behavioral methods are having on the related field of community work and social work literature, reflecting both the significant impact behavioral methods are having on the related field of community psychology and the relative neglect of the approach by community - and organizational - level social work practitioners and researchers.

Intervention at the macro level has a number of goals, including coordinating the activities of organizations, encouraging citizen participation and self-help activities, enabling groups to resolve social conflicts, advocacy, direct action and strategic decision making. As recently as a decade ago, Gurikn noted that, "There is as yet no comprehensive theoretical framework for dealing effectively with either the causation of social problems or the evaluation of intervention methods" (1971, p. 1331). If social workers take the view that societal problems are the result of the behavior of individuals, groups, organizations or the society at large, then learning theory is a unifying framework for conceptualizing the nature and causation of social ills, and the methodology of the experimental analysis of behavior is an appropriate tool for the furtherance of macro-level practice.

A number of theoretical analyses of social problems based upon learning theory have been published (Maclean, 1977; DiGiacomo, 1977; Saleebey, 1976; Siddal & Balcerzak, 1978), but of greater importance is the expanding body of experimental research demonstrating the effectiveness of behavioral interventions in fulfilling some of the traditional goals of community and organizational practice. Behavioral

analysis and intervention are effective in improving the job finding skills of the chronically unemployed (Jones & Azrin, 1973; Azrin, Flores & Kaplan, 1975; Pierce & Risley, 1974), improving the nutrition of children (Madsen, Madsen & Thompson, 1974), improving public health (Fawcett, 1977; Reiss, Piotrowski & Bailey, 1976), facilitating racial integration (Hauserman, Walen & Behling, 1973), reducing crime (Schnelle, Kirchner, McNeés & Lawler, 1975), increasing the self-help group activities of welfare recipients (Miller & Miller, 1970), and the problem-solving skills of low income community board members (Briscoe, Hoffman & Bailey, 1975). These studies clearly show that macro-based interventions are susceptible to the experimental analytic methodology found useful at the individual level, and that group, organizational and community behavior may be approached through similar behavioral principles. Although community practice is carried out through the medium of group and organizational structures, macro-level practitioners have been slow in adopting behavioral approaches. There has been a fear that these methods are mechanistic, impositional, or work against the democratic ethos of community organization philosophy (Bruck, 1968). In our opinion, these views have been oversimplified to the detriment of the more effective, and at the same time, ethical practice. We will come back to a discussion of this issue later in the paper.

The social problems mentioned above have long been the focus of social workers in community settings and it would seem to be to the profession's advantage to incorporate any methodology, congruent with the values of social work practice, which afford solutions to such long-standing

difficulties. The present article will describe the basic principles of behavioral intervention, discuss their application at the macro level, and draw from the authors' practice experience and the social work literature to illustrate the practical employment of such procedures.

BEHAVIORAL COMMUNITY INTERVENTION: THE APPROACH

A learning theory perspective of behavior at the organizational and community levels assumes that such behavior is a function, like the behavior of individuals, of its environmental contingencies such as consequences (rewarding, aversive or neutral), antecedent stimuli, such as settings and past experience, and vicarious or indirect learning acquired via observation and instruction. It also assumes an empirical, experimental approach to analyzing behavior. A prerequisite to implementing a behavioral model for community practice is the establishment of an operational definition of both the problem and the anticipated goals of intervention. Past experience by community researchers suggests that "when goals are formulated in such global generalizations as 'prompting community self-help,' it is difficult to be responsible for failure or clear about success We need to say specifically what it is that we are trying to do, and to be held responsible when things do turn out as we had hoped. This kind of rigorous goal definition permits what we have always said is elusive: evaluation. And certainly accountability is important in keeping faith with the people we serve" (Rothman, Erlich & Teresa, 1976, p. 4). The behavioral approach attempts to define the problems and select goals based upon the criteria of measurability and specificity.

As an example, assume that the focus of community-level intervention is the lack of minority participation in local government. Conceptualizing the problem in terms of voter apathy and the goal as increased political awareness contributes little to either measuring the problem or selecting intervention methods. An operational definition of the situation is the number of minority representatives on civic boards. An operational goal is the election of three minority members to the school board in the next election. Concern over minority representation is likely already present before the arrival of the social worker on the scene and concretizing a feasible, immediate objective is a way to meet that concern in practical terms. Similarly, "raising the consciousness" of citizens regarding the high occurrence of sexual assaults is a goal which is quite difficult to measure, however noble the intent. Establishing a night-time companion service to escort single individuals from work or campus safely to their homes has the added virtue, besides nobility of intent, of being quantifiable (i.e., number of escorts per night, or a reduction in the number of reported assaults). If the service is under-utilized, perhaps it should be disbanded. If the frequency of assaults remains unchanged, some new tactic may be implemented. The intelligent determination of such actions on the part of the practitioner is only feasible if the problem and goal have been quantified in some manner and data is available to make such decisions.

The Community Intervention Project, (CIP) at the University of Michigan School of Social Work, is an example of such a behavioral approach to macro-level practice. The project has been described

elsewhere (Rothman, Erlich & Teresa, 1976; Rothman, Teresa & Erlich, 1977; Rothman, Teresa & Erlich, 1978; Rothman, 1980), therefore, a comprehensive description will not be given here. The project took a research utilization-social research and development form. Existing research knowledge was retrieved and synthesized, and generalizations were developed from consensus findings. These were then converted from descriptive to prescriptive form, suggesting interventive strategies and techniques which included, among others: offering or increasing relevant benefits in order to stimulate participation in community groups; partializing an innovative service or program in a segment of a target system; increasing the power of groups favoring a given change; and, altering the structure of influence within an organization as a means of changing the goals of an organization. These techniques were then implemented systematically by agency practitioners in a field test that sought to operationalize the intervention techniques and to evaluate their effectiveness in attaining their intended objectives.

Some interventions were more directly behavioral in concept than others (for example, use of relevant benefits to foster participation), but the overall perspective had distinct behavioral methodological aspects. Let us delineate some of these:

1. Intervention methods were formulated from empirically-based research and theory. A thorough search of the relevant empirical literature was conducted and interventions were designed from findings which had a reasonable level of consensus among different

investigators.

2. Field practitioners were asked to formulate their objectives in clear, behaviorally specific terms. For example, the nature of participation needed to be specified: rate - what extent of increase in participation was being aimed at, either in numbers of participants or proportion of change in participation; form - attendance at meetings, taking committee responsibility, making financial contributions, expressing more verbal statements at meetings; duration - extent of stability or regularity of participation; and recruitment - the number of new members attracted to the organization.
3. Extensive logs were kept and the findings indicated specific actions to be taken, factors which facilitated or limited intervention progress, and aspects of the social psychological environment of implementation.
4. Operationalizing and proceduralizing intervention was based on the empirical realities of field implementation. The intervention techniques and strategies provided a general direction toward achieving given objectives. It was left to practitioners in the field to discover the details of the interventive design. Thus, practitioners had to determine what actual benefits or reinforcements were available to them to offer clients in

typical community work social agency situations, and which ones were effective with particular types of clientele. Through the field work and analysis of logs, four types of benefits were delineated. The first class consisted of instrumental benefits, either material resources such as loans, grants, or information, or anticipatory benefits such as setting up an action structure, or obtaining a verbal commitment as a partial achievement toward the material gain. The second class consisted of expressive benefits, either inter-personal ones such as enjoyable socializing, or symbolic ones such as receiving a community service award. In practice, these approaches were often used in combination; sometimes one was given special emphasis and supplemented by others.

5. Short-term objectives were employed, with each successive step an approximation toward a larger goal. This was stated as follows. "A practitioner should proceed by setting a sequence of goals that are specific, realistic, and proximate -- that is short-run and tangible. A general objective is by approached by moving through incremental stages; the attainment of one stage leads to the de-definition of the goal for the next one" (Rothman, Erlich & Teresa, 1976, pp.3-4). We also characterized this as a "stepping-stone procedure."

6. Practitioners were expected to indicate outcomes in clear, behaviorally specific terms. For example, the number of people participating in meetings at the end of the intervention period, or, to illustrate goal change in an organization, a budget statement indicating the amount of funds shifted over from recreational to educational programming. A panel of raters was used to judge the degree to which intended outcomes were achieved.

The case of the C.I.P. illustrates that behavioral perspectives, including the experimental analysis of behavior, can be applied in community and organizational settings. We will now expand the discussion to include other interventions using macro-level learning theory and demonstrate how these were applied in a variety of community intervention undertakings.

COMPONENTS OF BEHAVIORAL COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

Operant learning theory provides a basic framework for analyzing macro-level behavioral intervention. This learning theory model of community and organizational practice assumes that community level behavior is a function of specific ongoing contingencies of reinforcement which need to be detected and possibly altered. Previous social work writers have provided full descriptions of these principles (Fischer Gochros, 1975; Wodarski & Bagarozzi, 1979) which include the functions of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive, punishment, negative punishment, operant

extinction, shaping and observational learning. Examples will be taken from the behavioral social work literature which illustrate the employment of each of these interventive techniques. Certain limitations inherent in their application will also be presented. The behavioral operations listed above have led to the development of over 40 distinct interventions, each with its own indications and contra-indications for use. It is to those procedures which are transferable in some form to macro-level intervention to which we direct our attention.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement has been defined as "an increase (strengthening) in the probability that a behavior will occur as a result of the presentation of some stimuli (positive reinforcer) following that behavior" (Fischer & Gochros, 1975, p. 484). A specific example can be given from the Community Intervention Project. A housing project citizens committee being organized by a social worker was floundering due to a lack of participation. By providing material benefits to the members of the group, voluntary participation dramatically increased. The "benefits" included, for example, free roach spray, toilet repairs, school advocacy services, and transportation to dental appointments, illustrating how individual needs can be accommodated while employing a single interventive approach. One school/community social worker found that the use of an expressive, symbolic, benefit was more appropriate. The number of community members offering their services to aid the school's programs was quite low. Providing of service awards and publicizing the programs (complete with

pictures of the volunteers) dramatically increased not only the number of volunteers working at the school, but also attendance at the Parent-Teacher Organization meetings when the awards were given out. By holding the School-Community Council election during that same meeting, voter participation was also increased.

Miller and Miller (1970), in an experimental analysis aimed at increasing the self-help group activities of welfare recipients, found that the provision of material reinforcers, client advocacy, and liaison services greatly improved the participation of AFDC clients. Perhaps more importantly, generalization or transfer was observed to occur with related forms of self-help, such as attending other civic meetings where explicit benefits were not contingent upon participation, and by the increased use of academic tutors for the children of group members.

Positive reinforcement, as an intervention, was employed by Wodarski and his colleagues toward a somewhat larger scale social problem, that of excessive energy consumption. In an early successful demonstration project, material benefits were provided contingent upon reductions in electricity use in a single-family dwelling (Wodarski, 1978). Symbolic benefits (recognition through letters and posters) proved more appropriate toward reducing energy consumption within the workplace (Wodarski & Horne, 1981). Using a group contingency plan, small biweekly payments were found to be a cost-effective means for encouraging electricity conservation among residents of large master-metered apartment complexes (Slavin, Wodarski & Blackburn, 1981).

Positive reinforcement, applied above

to increase group participation, self-help activities, community involvement and energy conservation, represents a potent intervention technique. Of course, community workers have always attempted to provide benefits to their clients as a means of influencing behavior. The behavioral approach differs in that reinforcers are provided consciously and deliberately and are contingent upon the occurrence of specific behaviors, thus strengthening them. This precludes the paradox noted by Siddal and Balcerzak (1978) that, "The predictable difficulty with the present welfare system can be traced to poorly programmed reinforcement contingencies . . . reinforcers (financial aid, etc.) are primarily available on a noncontingent basis. When positive reinforcers are presented on a noncontingent basis, behavior incompatible with the intended productive behavior may be increased Thus, behavior incompatible with self-support may be inadvertently maintained" (pp. 243-44).

By definition, positive reinforcement is applicable in any situation wherein it is desirable to increase some behavior. A limitation of this approach consists of the practical realities of the social worker's ability to deliver benefits. To the extent that material resources are unavailable for the practitioner to contingently apply, positive reinforcement may be impractical. In such cases, however, creative substitution of low-cost symbolic-expressive benefits can be applied in the absence of material ones. It is, of course, desirable for the purposes of generalization and maintenance to have symbolic, intrinsic, or naturally occurring benefits ultimately serve as the self-perpetuating contingencies of reinforcement. For example, in the study by

Miller and Miller (1970), it would be hoped that the positive consequences of effective group self-help would eventually be enough of an incentive for the group to sustain itself, following the gradual withdrawal of the material benefit contingencies. This underlines the importance of careful analysis and planning, and effective intervention at the macro-level in order for behavioral techniques to be viable.

Negative Reinforcement

Negative reinforcement has been defined as, "An increase (strengthening) in the probability that a behavior will occur as a result of withdrawing, or escaping or avoiding, some stimulus (aversive) following that behavior" (Fischer & Gochros, 1975), p. 484). The community worker may be able to make use of naturally occurring events or situations in the natural environment in order to employ the principle of negative reinforcement. This approach was used by Bennett (1971) in his behavioral intervention to prevent eviction of a family with a continuous 20-year history of incurring rent arrears. In one nine-year period, they received 12 eviction notices, eviction being precluded each time by the intervention of a social worker or a temporary reduction in arrears. A final eviction notice was sent by the housing authorities, on which occasion behavioral methodologies were employed for the first time. In order to prevent the family from being evicted, it was necessary for them to both pay their rent on a regular basis and to reduce their indebtedness to the housing authorities. Bennett constructed a colorful graph which vividly depicted the amount of the arrears (an aversive stimulus). The housewife agreed upon a small monthly payment which she could pay over and above the cost of the rent. Each

payday the social worker personally collected the rent, plus the small payment to reduce indebtedness, and ceremoniously recorded this reduction on the graph with the accompaniment of a great deal of enthusiastic praise and attention. Eventually, the social worker stopped collecting the rent personally (this task was carried out by the regular rent collector) but continued the graph reduction ceremony during his weekly visits.

Portraying the arrears in a vivid fashion by means of a colorful graph brought home to his clients their aversive situation (serious indebtedness to the housing authority). By reducing this aversiveness in a symbolic yet understandable manner, contingent upon proper payment, regular rent paying was established and indebtedness eliminated over a 20-week period. While a one family example is provided, the same technique can be applied within a given population. One drawback is that direct negative reinforcement by the practitioner may be difficult to implement in many community work situations and it may run counter to the trust and collaboration required in many areas of practice.

Positive Punishment

The use of punitive interventive techniques represents a more controversial aspect of behavioral community practice than do reinforcement procedures. In part, and rightly so, some of these reservations stem from ethical considerations. More empirically based cautions have been noted by Wodarski and Bagarozzi (1979) who suggest that "a substantial use of punishment simultaneously may increase the probability that: 1) the worker will lose

reinforcing power; 2) the client will quit; and 3) the client may develop aggressive behavior toward the worker" (p. 43). Some writers in the field of behavioral social work have completely repudiated the employment of punishment procedures (Schwartz & Goldiamond, 1975), while others advocate their use only with highly refractory, severe or life-threatening problems.

One punishment technique involves the behavioral operation of positive punishment, or the "decrease (weakening) in the probability that a behavior will occur as the result of the presentation of an aversive stimulus following that behavior" (Fischer & Gochros, 1975, p. 484). The operation of our legal system comes to mind as an example of behavioral contingencies based primarily upon positive punishment designed to reduce or prevent certain activities.

Lind (1967) describes the use of mild positive punishment procedures within an organizational context, consisting of aversive confrontation and reprimands contingent upon employee tardiness. He suggests that positive punishment procedures are primarily indicated when reinforcers are unavailable to the change agent or are ineffectual. Nevertheless, a useful dictum is "proceed with caution".

Negative Punishment

Negative punishment is the operation in which "A decrease (weakening) in the probability that a behavior will occur as the result of the removal of a positive

reinforcer following that behavior" (Fischer & Gochros, 1975, p. 484). Examples of this procedure seem somewhat more numerous than those for positive punishment. DeVoge and Downey (1975) describe the operation of a token economy-based community mental health day treatment center. In this approach, de-institutionalized psychiatric patients residing in a half-way house attended the program from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Points, exchangeable for material and symbolic benefits, could be earned for behaviors conducive to social integration, and ultimately, completely independent living, such as task completion, personal grooming and appropriate verbal expression. The system combined positive reinforcement and negative punishment; points were not only earned for appropriate behavior, but were removed for inappropriate activities (tardiness, unkempt appearance, bizarre verbalizations, etc.). Over the course of the treatment program, the mean number of reinforcing points earned per day increased, whereas the average number of punishment points removed per day declined, indicating the effectiveness of the intervention system at promoting prosocial behavior. In this instance, we are dealing with a therapeutic community rather than a geographic area. However, similar contingency relationships can be found at macro levels. For example, financial grants to agencies are stopped or diminished by the United Way or Community Development Block Grant Program when agency service reports or grant applications do not conform with stated expectations.

Extinction

The principle of extinction involves attempting to decrease the probability of a response by removing the reinforcements

which serve to maintain that behavior. As such, extinction probably has a limited use of community practice as a whole, but may be applicable in highly specific situations. An example from the C.I.P. (Rothman, et. al., 1976, p. 109) is that one member of a group persisted in offering impractical suggestions and digressions, largely as a means of focusing the attention of others on himself. The suggestion was that the chairperson of the group ignore or only briefly address these undesirable participations in a routine manner, as opposed to giving it his/her usual special attention. By removing the expressive benefits previously contingent upon the inappropriate comments, the frequency of such comments should decline. It would probably facilitate this process to begin presenting the desired attention contingent upon the member offering useful and practical suggestions, thus combining the extinction procedure with positive reinforcement.

Shaping

One of the useful action guidelines developed in the C.I.P. is a strategy designed to promote the acceptance of innovative services and programs. Specifically, the action guideline stated that "Practitioners wishing to promote adoption of an innovation should attempt to formulate it in such a way that the total innovation can be experienced initially by a limited proportion of the target system" (Rothman et al., 1977, p. 46). In short, this concept advocates approaching terminal goals by means of an incremental, partialized completion of short term goals. A successful implementation in a given population group, shapes acceptance in a next-step larger population group. A diffusion effect is sought after. Although

not specifically derived from a behavioral perspective, this action guideline is markedly congruent with the learning theory concept of shaping, that is, "The process of reinforcing units of behavior that successively approximate some goal . . . in order to achieve the terminal behavior that is desired" (Fischer & Gochros, 1975, p. 485).

Numerous interventions occurred in the C.I.P. which illustrated the practicality of this approach, including such settings as a community mental health center in a semi-rural county, a traditional settlement house serving a largely black population, an urban social welfare employees union, and a multi-county regional planning council (Rothman et al., 1976, p. 28). In each instance, a broadly conceived terminal goal involving a community or organization's adoption of an innovative service or new responsibility was successfully accomplished by the social worker getting the innovation accepted within a subgroup of the target system and only then introducing the successful demonstration in the larger community context, often in several successive waves. The use of short-range intervention goals not only served to facilitate the ultimate achievement of the terminal goal, but also served the secondary but vital function of reinforcing the community worker's activities at more frequent, periodic intervals.

Social Learning Approaches

Although explicit operant factors may be responsible for the long-term maintenance of certain aspects of group, organizational, or community behavior, it is obvious that many skills are not initially acquired by such a conditioning process. In such cases the new behaviors were

probably learned via some process of social of vicarious learning, such as modeling or learning by imitation, direct or indirect instruction, peer influence and so forth, which are potent mechanisms for the acquisition of complex behavior (Bandura, 1977) and undoubtedly play an important role in many aspects of community and organizational practice. Until recently, formal application of social learning theory to the macro-level practice has been rarely found in the literature. This may be due in part to the fact that the bulk of research in social learning theory has been concerned with the influence of vicarious learning processes upon the behavior of individuals rather than groups.

One early suggestion advocating employing social learning principles within community organization practice is found in Fellin, Rothman and Meyer (1967). In this example, "The practitioner, working with a voluntary association, carries out the role of chairman of the group until a member learns the behaviors appropriate to the position. Group members may also observe the practitioner's representing the group in meetings or contacts with representatives of other groups. This technique may also be employed to develop indigenous leaders, who in turn serve as models for group members. Coaching, which requires a natural 'real life' setting, is still another technique that appears to be particularly adaptable to community organizations, especially where the practitioner works directly with persons in the course of their normal participation in civic affairs" (pp. 82-83).

Wodarski and Bagarozzi (1979, pp. 142-68) have outlined the major components which contribute to the success or failure of observational learning and the approach

has been extensively applied by social workers in recent years teaching individuals and groups a variety of adaptive interpersonal skills (see Thyer, 1981). Examples reflective of the broad application which social learning has for macro-level practice include the acquisition of job finding abilities for teenage mothers (Schinke, Gilchrist, Smith & Wong, 1978), assertiveness skills for low income black parents (Berman & Rickel, 1979), professional women (Brockway, 1976; Numeroff, 1978) and physically abused wives (Jansen & Meyers-Abell, 1981), and conflict resolution skills by children (Edelson, 1981).

A recent report (Schinke, Gilchrist, Smith and Wong, 1979) employed a pretest-post test control group design to demonstrate the effectiveness of social learning principles in helping para-professional community social service agency staff members acquire effective interpersonal skills. The procedures included the modeling of desired behavior by the social worker and overt rehearsal by the staff member with concurrent coaching, reinforcement and feedback by both the social worker and group peers. The discussion control group watched a film depicting interpersonal situations and subsequently members discussed their own past or present interpersonal difficulties. The results demonstrated the superior efficacy of the social learning theory approach, when compared to simple discussion and suggestions, which were largely ineffective.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Previous empirical studies have

established that large group behavior in many instances is a function of operations similar to those of individual behavior. The extent of this isomorphism has not yet been fully determined, although the initial indications are promising. A behavioral approach to community practice can contribute to the development of a more effective and accountable level of professional practice, potentially to the same extent behavioral methods have influenced the field of interpersonal practice (Fischer, 1981).

Several advantages for community work stem from developing operational descriptions of treatment goals and employing a technologically based independent variable (intervention) such as those derived from learning theory. If goals are quantified and susceptible of reliable and repeated measurement, the effectiveness of community practice can be assessed by means of interrupted time series research designs. When applied to research on the outcomes of interpersonal practice, interrupted time series designs have been labeled as single-case or single-subject research (Thomas, 1978) but a number of recent publications have suggested how such designs can be applied to macro-level practice as well (Epstein & Tripodi, 1977; Tripodi & Harrington, 1979). Such designs can be used not only for program evaluation, but also for the more sophisticated purpose of experimentation. Evaluation of community practice is vital, not only for establishing professional accountability but for important ethical considerations as well. As Mullen has pointed out "... it is essential that professionals recognize that most of the principles that guide our interventions are unvalidated assumptions, open to question" (1977, p. 39). Some social work

interventions may be ineffectual (Bernard, 1975), while others may even exert a detrimental effect (Galinsky & Schopler, 1977; Blenkner, Bloom & Nielsen, 1971). Segal expresses a strong position regarding this: "Any new program established by an agency is unproven. A control study design seems not only ethical but mandatory . . ." (1972, p. 10). With interrupted time series research designs, the system which is the focus of practitioner effort serves as its own control for purposes of comparing the effects of intervention with those present prior to social work intervention. Since the design does not require the expensive requisites of group experimental research such as comparable control groups, representative sampling and random assignment, these designs place within the grasp of any community worker intervening in a macro-level system the means for systematic outcome research so urgently needed in the field.

A decade ago, Gelfand (1972) suggested that newly graduated B.S.W. and M.S.W. level practitioners in the year 1975 would be prepared to use behavioral methods with regularity. This prediction appears to have been overly optimistic for the practice of social work at the community and organizational levels, yet the potential of the behavioral approach mandates increased efforts for training in such interventions. A behavioral approach to macro-level practice has certain limitations however, in common with other intervention theories. For example, while behavioral procedures can be used to improve group communication skills, learning theory is silent when the issue is one of decision making itself. Similarly, situations involving political choices or value conflict may vary in terms of being amenable to behavioral approaches.

Behavioral methods may present special ethical and moral problems. A community does not present itself to the practitioner in his/her office requesting service. At the community level, within American society, precepts of democracy and self-rule are taken seriously. Some interventions may fall within a democratic framework, others may not. For example, in the case of a settlement house practitioner assigned to work collaboratively with a neighborhood group, it would be inappropriate for the practitioner to decide that integrated housing should be the priority objective and then to give positive punishment (verbal reprimand, let us say) to those members of the group who do not go along with him. On the other hand, a regional representative of a state civil rights commission would be justified in applying legal and regulatory sanctions against individuals or real estate agents who discriminate in the housing market. In the latter case, the individual is implementing a goal that has been established by the democratically elected legislature, as well as procedures that were similarly authorized. Different practitioners may interpret given situations in different ways. In the handbook developed from the C.I.P., the need to exercise individual discernment by the practitioner was recognized and given emphasis:

The reader will have to rely on personal judgement in the application: Does this initiative fit any situation? Am I comfortable with it organizationally? Philosophically? Does it seem as good or better than alternative approaches that come to mind? (Rothman, Teresa & Erlich, 1978, p. 59).

The ethical issue may be viewed in reverse. When an intervention is available which may effectively alleviate problematic conditions or promote social justice, does the practitioner not have an obligation to make use of it? If behavioral techniques can be demonstrated to enhance practice outcomes, a responsible practitioner can hardly ignore them on an a priori philosophical basis.

A way to avoid the impositional factor altogether is for the practitioners to serve as resource persons to established community decision making groups (representative committees, agency boards, and the like), presenting for their consideration behavioral strategies and techniques which might help them attain goals they have selected to pursue. In the C.I.P. case, the board of a community group was concerned over lack of sufficient participation. The practitioner introduced the "benefits" action guideline to the group, and when they expressed interest trained them in its application. The democratically elected board itself became the agent of implementation. This form of utilization could be employed widely.

CONCLUSION

A substantial body of research in a variety of social science disciplines supports the contention that operant conditioning and observational learning are potent influences upon group, organizational, and community behavior. Experimental approaches to analyzing behavior are widely accepted in the social disciplines and human service professions. Systematic application of such processes, aimed at the alleviation of social problems, can greatly contribute to the development of an effective empirically-

based macro-level social work practice.

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