Use of Contingency Contracting for the Generalization of Social Skills of Emotionally Impaired Students

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USE OF CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING FOR THE GENERALIZATION
OF SOCIAL SKILLS OF EMOTIONALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

by

Michelle M. Kapp

A Specialist Project
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Faculty of The Graduate College
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requirements for the
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USE OF CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING FOR THE GENERALIZATION OF SOCIAL SKILLS OF EMOTIONALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

Michelle M. Kapp, Ed.S.
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The present study investigated the effects of contingency or behavioral contracting on the generalization of emitting polite words. Generalization as a result of social skills training was compared to generalization as a result of contracting. The subjects were three elementary students identified as emotionally impaired. The experimental design was a combination reversal and multiple baseline across subjects. The results of the study supported the hypothesis that contracting would be more effective than the social skills training in initiating generalization of emitting polite words. It was suggested that additional research be conducted to investigate the long term effects of contracting on generalization of emitting polite words and whether contracting for generalization would be effective with other behaviors. It was also suggested that additional research investigate what stimulus functions the contract possesses.
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Michelle M. Kapp
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The area of social skills training has become a very popular research topic in the past few years. This popularity is at least in part based on the dual benefits that can arise from the presence of good social skills: Those accruing both the client and society at large. People lacking appropriate social skills often find it difficult or impossible to function under the standards set by society. Kelly, Wildman and Berler (1980) noted that deficits in social functioning have an adverse impact on success in competitive employment situations.

Poor social skills not only affect adults, but children as well. Children and adolescents who have not had appropriate role models or who have learned inappropriate social skills are often the same children who have problems in school and/or with the law. They are frequently candidates for programs for the emotionally impaired which can result in removal from the regular education classroom and even sometimes from the school. If these problems are not remedied the child may go through school as an isolate loner or as a "problem" student. Also, as noted by Berler, Gross, and Drabmen (1982), children with poor interpersonal relationships are at a high risk for developing adjustment problems as adults.

Society has recognized the problems that can arise from inadequate social skills training and has attempted to deal with
them. One such solution was the development of the special education category of emotionally impaired (Michigan Special Education Rules, 1980). The special classrooms that resulted from the law, however, are too often means of placing the "problem" students together where they can be closely monitored rather than teaching them the behaviors necessary to function in a regular education classroom. It has most often become a solution of control rather than remediation.

Another solution, and a more favorable solution, is the direct teaching of social skills. Social skills training has been conducted with a variety of populations, with inadequate or no social skills being the common variable (Foxx, McMorrow & Schloss, 1983; Fottman, Gonso & Schuler, 1976; and LaGreca & Santagrossi, 1980).

A variety of programs and procedures have been used with adults and children with procedures incorporating a variety of techniques. Foxx et al. (1983) used a modified table game to teach social skills to mentally retarded adults. They found that the modified table game was effective in altering compliments, social interaction, politeness, criticism, social confrontation and questions/answers. LaGreca and Santagrossi (1980) employed a training package that included viewing peer modeling tapes, coaching, behavioral rehearsal, and viewing videotape feedback tapes in an attempt to train social skills to elementary students. They found that the skills training package was more effective than an attention placebo, or control setting in training social skills. Matson,
Esveldt-Dawson, Andradik, Ollendick, Petti and Hersen (1980) used a program similar to that of LaGreca and Santagrossi (1980) to train social skills in four psychotic children. They compared direct social skills training to observation training and found that direct training was more effective. Hollandsworth, Glazeski and Dressel (1978) used a social skills training program to increase interview effectiveness in a male with extreme interview anxiety.

While most of these procedures have been successful in training or teaching appropriate social skills, they often have a major pitfall: The skills are not used by the subjects outside of the training setting. Berler et al. (1982) stated that while social skills show improvement during training, generalization of these skills is not consistently positive. The primary criterion of success for any social skills training procedure is whether the program taught the subject how to deal more effectively with the environment. If the subject does not use the newly acquired skill then the program was basically ineffective.

The transfer of social skills, or any response, to new settings is referred to as generalization. Sulzer and Mayer (1972) defined generalization as the process through which a behavior learned or strengthened in one stimulus situation tends to occur in other stimulus situations. For example, the child learns to raise his/her hand in math class and then raises his/her hand in other classes as well. The response transfers to situations other
than those in which training has taken place (Craighead, Kazdin, & Mahoney, 1981). Stokes and Baer (1977) defined generalization as the occurrence of relevant behavior under different, nontraining conditions without the scheduling of the same events on those conditions as had been scheduled in the training conditions. As they point out, this definition is a pragmatic definition that does not closely follow the traditional or experimental definition of generalization that requires the identification of the dimensions of the stimulus to be changed. The transfer or generalization of responses occurs, according to Stokes and Baer (1977) and Sulzer and Mayer (1972) when the subject emits the behavior in settings or conditions other than those in which it was trained.

As stated, when training social skills the desired outcome is that the subject will use the social skills outside the training setting. Generalization, however, often does not occur following training. Stokes and Fowler (1978) found that preschoolers did not emit the trained response in the natural environment. They had trained the subjects to cue the staff to judge their work. This cueing response, however, did not generalize to the natural classroom setting. The experimenters then implemented contingent delayed reinforcement to get the behavior to occur in the natural setting. Following training, the subject should be able to use the newly acquired social skills to enhance his/her social interactions. However, using the skill in the reinforcing training environment is completely different from using the skill in social
interactions that may have a punishing or aversive history. Like other skills, social skills often do not generalize to non-training settings.

Even though generalization is the desired outcome of treatment, approximately one half of the research conducted uses the "train and hope" approach (Stokes & Baer, 1977). Using this approach, the experimenter trains the desired response or behavior and hopes that it will generalize to the natural environment. All too often this leads to a large investment of time and money to train skills that may never be used outside the training setting. Stokes and Baer (1977) stress that generalization is not a natural result of a behavior change program, but rather must be actively programmed. Baer, Wolf, and Risley (1968) concur that generalization should be programmed rather than expected.

In the attempt to program generalization, experimenters have employed a variety of techniques. Sulzer and Mayer (1972) state that generalization can be accomplished by emphasizing the similarities between the training and generalization setting or by presenting stimuli that were present during training. Sulzer and Mayer (1977) also stated that generalization can be increased by switching to intermittent reinforcement, identifying and using discriminative stimuli, and training the response under a variety of stimulus conditions. McLeskey, Rieth, and Polsgrove (1980) state that generalization can be accomplished through modeling, prompting, and self-control.
Stokes and Baer (1977) also identified possible procedures that can be used to increase generalization. They are: 1) sequential modification of variables in the non-generalized condition (implementing the behavior change program in every setting to which generalization is desired), 2) transfer from experimental contingencies to natural contingencies that operate in the environment, 3) train sufficient exemplars (train in a variety of stimulus situations), 4) train loosely (train with little control over the stimuli presented and the correct responses allowed), 5) use indiscriminable contingencies (use delayed or intermittent schedules of reinforcement and punishment), 6) program common stimuli between training and generalization settings, 7) mediate generalization (train language or self-control techniques in training that will be used in the generalization settings), 8) train the behavior to generalize (place contingencies on the generalization behavior--train generalization as if training any behavior), 9) instruct generalization (tell the subject about the possibility of generalization and then ask for it).

The last two approaches, train to generalize and instruct generalization, are infrequently used in applied behavior analysis. Stokes and Baer (1977) stated that this is probably due to the preference of behaviorists to consider generalization as an outcome of behavioral change, rather than as a behavior itself. The practice of considering generalization as a by-product of behavior change rather than an operant behavior has led to the failure of
many behavior change programs. The programs effectively train behaviors that may never be emitted outside the training setting.

Stokes and Baer (1977) state that it is worth hypothesizing that generalization may be treated as an operant response to see what useful results occur. Accordingly, they feel that generalization should no longer be treated as a phenomenon that occurs as the result of a behavior change program, but instead specific procedures should be incorporated in every program to train for generalization. As stated by Stokes and Baer (1977), the experimenter may instruct generalization and subsequently reinforce the generalized response. One procedure that incorporates these two components is contingency or behavioral contracting.

A contingency contract may be defined as a written agreement between two or more people identifying the behaviors that must be emitted by one of the subjects and specifying the resultant reinforcement for emitting these behaviors or punishment for not emitting these behaviors. Contracts also frequently include the dimensions of the desired behavior (frequency, duration, etc.), the length of the contract, and criteria for contract completion. The duties of those involved are also specified in the contract. For example, the therapist may be responsible for reinforcement and the subject responsible for emitting the desired behavior. As with other contracts, in general, all persons that are participating in the contract indicate their acceptance of the conditions by signing it.
Behavioral or contingency contracts have been used in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations for the purpose of initiating behavior change. Rose (1978) used contingency contracting in an assertion training program to increase the number of completed homework assignments. Contingency contracting proved successful in five of the six training groups in increasing the rate of subjects completing behavior assignments such as keeping a behavior diary and monitoring behavior. Jayaratne (1978) used contingency contracting as a component of a program to change the interaction patterns of families with juvenile delinquents. Jayaratne stated that the contract served as a model for cooperative decision making and facilitated the development of more efficient and less conflictive family interactions. Jacobson (1977) used contracts in the treatment of marital discord. The couples contracted with each other for changes in behavior that were viewed as problematic. Jacobson found that the couples who participated in the program that included contracting evidenced substantial changes.

Contingency contracts have also been used extensively in the school setting. Aminillo (1980) stated that contingency contracts can be used effectively in the schools to replace undesirable with desirable behavior. Sulzer and Mayer (1972) stated that the school contract delineates the desired behavior and the consequences to be applied to the specific behavior and the stipulations for the student, teacher, parents and behavior specialist.
Contracting in the school setting, however, typically involves only the teacher (or other school personnel) and student negotiating the terms of the contract, stating the behaviors to be emitted by the student and teacher and the kind or amount of reinforcement to be delivered when the student meets the contingencies. Contracting is a unique procedure for schools in that it involves the teacher and student in a negotiation process for behaviors that lead to enhanced student progress. Another unique feature is that the student formally agrees to accept the responsibility for his/her behavior.

Homme, Czanyi, Gonzales, and Rechs (1970) note that there are four general types of contracts used in academic settings. They are 1) the structured contract--all component parts of the contract are predetermined by the teacher; 2) the partly structured contract--some component parts are predetermined by the teacher while the teacher and student negotiate the rest; 3) the mutually structured contract--all parts of the contract are negotiated; and 4) the unstructured contract--the student initiates and develops the components of the contract and then negotiates those with the teacher.

While all four types of contracts have been utilized, contracts in general have proven to be a very useful tool for initiating behavior change in academic settings. White-Blackburn, Semb and Semb (1977) used contingency contracting to increase "good" classroom behavior. The teacher and students negotiated contracts
specifying conduct and assignment goals and the resultant reinforcement and/or punishment. They found contracting to be an effective tool to alter or increase specific classroom behaviors of students. Weekly grades and on-task behavior increased while disruptions decreased. Thompson and Davis (1970) used contingency contracts to increase math grades of eighth grade students. Like White-Blackburn et al. (1977), they found that contracting led to an increase in grades. Contracting has also been found effective in increasing other indicators of productivity such as the amount and accuracy of work completed by second grade students (Brigham & Amith, 1973). Brook (1974) and Vaal (1973) both effectively used contingency contracting to increase attendance of chronic truants. Davis and Borgen (1978) used contingency contracting as a tool for initiating counseling with junior and secondary students and for specifying the objectives of counseling. As evidenced by the research, contingency contracting has been shown to be an effective means for initiating behavior change with a variety of populations.

Even though contracting has been effective in changing behavior, it has not been demonstrated to be an effective means for producing generalization. Contracting can, however, incorporate two of the approaches set down by Stokes and Baer (1977) for getting generalization to occur. First, it provides for instructed generalization. The contract clearly states when and how the behavior is to be emitted. Second, the contract may be used to train generalization of the behavior by placing...
contingencies on the desired behavior. The desired behavior to be generalized has specific contingencies placed on it as with any other operant behavior being trained. Thus, specific procedures are incorporated to obtain generalization. With contingency contracting generalization becomes a behavior rather than a by-product of other learning.

The purpose of the present study is to determine the extent to which contingency contracting will lead to the generalization of social skills. Social skills generalization as a result of contracting is compared to the generalization of social skills as a result of training. The purpose is to determine the extent to which contracting is more or less effective than the social skills training alone in initiating the generalization of social skills.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects of the study were three elementary students. Two of the subjects were male and one was female. The female subject was placed at the fourth grade, one male was at the fifth and the other at the sixth grade level. Their ages ranged from 11 to 13 years. All three subjects were identified as Emotionally Impaired based on Michigan Special Education Rules (R.340.1706, 1980). The subjects were enrolled in a classroom for the emotionally impaired on a full time basis.

The subjects were chosen based on three criteria. First, the teacher reported that all three subjects had good attendance. Second, the classroom teacher reported that all three subjects needed to improve their social skills during unstructured activities. Third, and most important, the students scores on the Accepts Social Skills Placement Test (Walker, McConnell, Holmes, Todis, Walker & Golden, 1983) indicated they needed improvement on all of the social skills taught in the program (Appendix A).

A fourth subject was originally designated to participate in the study. He was eliminated from the study, however, due to his excessive absences during the training phase.

Two of the subjects had previous experience with contingency
contracting. These subjects have previously lived at a residential facility in which contracting was used to decrease their inappropriate behavior. The other subject had no experience with contingency contracting.

Setting

The experiment was conducted in an urban elementary classroom for emotionally impaired students. The total number of students in the classroom was eight. There was also an aide in the classroom who assisted the students and teacher.

The observation sessions were conducted between 2:50 and 3:15 p.m. This was the optional time period in the classroom which served as the period for the generalization sessions. During this period the students engaged in optional activities such as playing games and listening to tapes if they earned adequate daily points. This period was chosen as the generalization session for several reasons. First, the activities allowed during optional time were conducive to social interactions in that the students would have the opportunity to emit the target behavior. Secondly, this period of time was temporally separated from the daily social skills training and contracting sessions thus it met the criteria of a generalization period. Also, since the setting and conditions were different from the training setting it was a generalization setting according to Stokes and Baer's (1977) and Sulzer and Mayer's (1972) definition of generalization.

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The materials used in the experiment included (a) data sheets for the recorder (Appendix B), (b) contract forms for the experimenter and subjects (Appendix C), and (c) objects to be used as reinforcers for each student. The reinforcers available to the students included tapes, notebooks, paper tablets, colored pencils, gum, and cards. Other reinforcers were open to negotiation. An example of one such reinforcer was lunch with the experimenter.

Two criteria led the experimenter to assume that the objects would serve as reinforcers. First, the teacher reported that the subjects purchased these objects from the classroom store when they were available. Second, it is unlikely that the subjects would request an object or activity that was not reinforcing to them.

Procedure

The behavior that was observed and measured was saying polite words. The Walker et al. (1983) Accepts Program defined saying polite words as saying nice things at the right time (Appendix A). Polite words were further defined as words said by the subject to any other person in the room that were courteous. Such words as "Please", "Thank You" and "Excuse Me" were polite words. Compliments such as "I like your..." or "That was good" were also considered polite words (Appendix D).

The experimenter chose polite words as the social skill to be measured for a variety of reasons. They were; (1) a conversation was not necessary for the words to be emitted, (2) polite words are
discrete behavior with an observable beginning and end, (3) duration is short as not to limit the frequency, (4) the potential for high frequency, and (5) pre-baseline data showed zero occurrence for all three subjects.

Since the subjects were deficient in most social skills, the experimenter chose polite words as the dependent variable since polite words function as a component of more complex social skills such as conversations. The only prerequisite skill required was that the subjects could speak. All three subjects had this prerequisite skill. The behavior also had a definite beginning and end which led to ease in observation and recording. Polite words are of short duration which made it possible for a potential high frequency emission. Polite words did not require the subjects to engage in a lengthy conversation and thus the opportunity to say polite words to a variety of people in the classroom was increased. This also led to the possibility of increased frequency.

The independent variable was contingency contracting. The contracts included the dates of the contract period, the contract review date, the number of times the student was to emit polite words during the generalization sessions and the reinforcer the experimenter provided upon successful contract completion.

The contracts used were "partially structured contracts" (Homme et al., 1970). The experimenter predetermined some components of the contract. For example polite words was the only behavior that could be listed in the contract. The experimenter
and subjects negotiated the other components of the individual contracts such as length of the contract and reinforcers to be earned. The experimenter had final authority over the inclusion of specific contract components. For example, when the subject chose a component that was likely to lead to failure (e.g. contract that was too long) or was impossible to fulfill (e.g. a reinforcer the experimenter did not have access to), the experimenter explained the reason it could not be included and asked for alternative suggestions. The experimenter and subjects signed the final draft of the contract and each received a copy.

Recorder Training

The classroom aide served as the recorder. Prior to baseline, the experimenter trained the aide in recording procedures. The experimenter provided the aide with a clipboard and data sheets. The data sheets were identical to those used in the experiment with the exception that the names of non-experimental students were on the sheets. Non-experimental students were those students who would not participate in contracting.

The experimenter reviewed with the aide the definition of the behavior to be observed and recorded and provided her with a list of polite words. A continuous recording procedure was used. The experimenter instructed the aide to put a tally mark under the name of the student for each polite word emitted. Any words that were questionable were listed and reviewed with the experimenter after
the recording period. If the experimenter designated that the questionable words were polite words they were added to the list.

The aide recorded the number of polite words for the non-experimental students during the same time period to be used for experimental sessions. This was done to ensure that the aide became familiar with recording behavior while the students were engaged in "optional activities".

The experimenter also recorded the frequency of polite words during the recorder training sessions. The experimenter compared these data to the aide's data and calculated reliability. When 100% agreement for two consecutive days was obtained, the experimenter provided the aide with the data sheets for the experimental subjects.

During the experimental phases, the aide recorded in exactly the same manner with one exception. When the subjects did not participate in optional time activities (the generalization sessions), the aide noted the reason for non-participation. Some reasons for non-participation included absences, suspensions, and not earning adequate daily points for participation in optional time activities. These days were recorded as "no data days" since the subject did not have the opportunity to participate and thus emit the desired behavior. If the subjects had "no data days" while participating in contracting, the contract dates were extended so as not to punish the students by making it impossible to meet the contracts.
The experimenter conducted reliability checks on 20% of the experimental sessions. The minimum number of reliability checks per experimental phase was one. Since the experimenter was in view of the recorder, she observed and recorded other student behavior on the days reliability checks were not conducted to prevent the possibility of recorder bias. Thus, the aide was unaware of when the experimenter was conducting reliability checks.

The experimenter compared her data with the aide's data during recorder training and experimental sessions and calculated reliability using the following formula:

\[
\text{% agreement/student} = \frac{\text{agreements}}{\text{total agreements} + \text{disagreements}} \times 100
\]

\[
\text{total % agreement} = \frac{\text{total agreements}}{\text{total agreements} + \text{total disagreements}} \times 100
\]

Individual reliability was calculated in addition to total reliability to check for possible recorder bias with individual subjects. The experimenter plotted the reliability data on the subject's individual charts and the group chart. If the total percent agreement was less than 90%, the experimenter reviewed the behavior definition and list of polite words with the recorder.

The experimental or generalization period was between 2:50 and 3:15 p.m. on school days. This was the classtime for optional activities. As stated, these generalization phases were temporally separated from the classroom social skills training periods which the classroom teacher conducted earlier in the school day. Since the teacher instructed the subjects in social skills, she was not involved in the study in order to eliminate the possibility of bias.
Experimental Design

The experimental design was a combination multiple baseline across subjects and reversal design. Phase 1 was Baseline 1. During Baseline 1, the aide recorded the frequency of polite words for each subject. At this time the teacher had not instituted training of polite words. The consequences for emission of polite words were not structured. Normal classroom contingencies for polite words such as teacher approval were not manipulated.

Phase 2 was the generalization social skills training phase. During this phase, the teacher instructed the subjects (both experimental and non-experimental) in the use of polite words. Training activities included the teacher and students defining polite words (saying nice things at the right time, Appendix A), listing examples of polite words, teacher role-play scenarios of positive and negative examples, teacher modeling, student practice of using polite words in given situations, and criterion role-play (Appendix A). The program used a direct instruction approach which provides the teacher with a clear script of instructions. Also, correct student responses were specified.

The teacher conducted the polite words training for four days. Each training session lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The teacher conducted the sessions between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The time of the training varied due to other classroom activities such as music, physical education, and special assemblies.

During this phase, the classroom aide continued to record the
frequency of polite words during the 25 minute generalization period. This was done to measure the effect that training had on the generalization of polite words to the optional time period. Since the polite words training was instituted and terminated for all three subjects on the same days, the "generalization of training" phase also began and ended on the same days for the three subjects.

Phase 3 was Baseline 2 in which the consequences for polite words were identical to those in Baseline 1. The experimenter implemented the Baseline 2 condition to assess the maintenance of generalization of polite words that may have occurred due to training. During Phase 2, the teacher had trained the subjects prior to the generalization session every day. Thus, the experimenter implemented Baseline 2 (phase III) to assess the maintenance of generalization that resulted from training. The return to baseline conditions also determined the extent to which changes in the behavior were due to training or some other uncontrolled variable.

During Phase 4, the experimenter sequentially implemented behavior contracting with each subject. Contracting was implemented sequentially to rule out the possibility that behavior changes were due to some other variable besides contracting. Subjects not contracting continued in Baseline 2 conditions. The experimenter monitored the Baseline 2 subjects frequency of polite words while the other subject(s) began contracting to detect any concurrent changes. This was done to rule out the possibility of other variables besides
contracting causing changes in the frequency of polite words.

When the contracting phase began for Subject 1, the experimenter removed the subject from the classroom to discuss the contracting procedure. This was done on the day prior to when contracting began. The experimenter explained to the subject that she was deficient in the number of polite words she used. The experimenter then explained that the subject could participate in a special procedure called contracting. The experimenter explained that the student could earn a special reward for increasing the number of polite words she used during optional time. The experimenter explained that the subject could refuse to participate, but Subject 1, as well as the other two subjects, said that she wanted to participate. Also, the parents of each subject received a letter describing the program and whom to contact if they objected to their child participating. None of the parents objected to their children participating in the study (Appendix A).

The experimenter and subject then negotiated a contract specifying the number of polite words to be emitted, the length of the contract, and the reward to be earned. The experimenter and subject signed the contract and the experimenter provided the subject with a copy of the contract. The contract began on the following day.

Subjects 2 and 3 began contracting later, and the experimenter used the same procedure as used with Subject 1. The criteria for transition to the contracting phase were: 1) Subject 2 had to continue in Baseline 2 for at least two sessions following contract...
initiation with Subject 1, 2) Subject 3 had to continue in Baseline 2 for at least two days following contract initiation with Subject 2 and, 3) No upward trends in the frequency of polite words during Baseline 2.

On the review day, the experimenter again removed the subject(s) from the classroom. The experimenter and subject(s) compared the data sheets to the contract. If the subject met the contract the experimenter provided the designated reinforcer. If the subject did not meet the contract, the experimenter explained why the reward was not earned. Whether or not the subject met the criteria of the contract, the experimenter and subject then negotiated a new contract.

Following contracting, the experimenter again implemented baseline conditions. This phase was identical to Baseline 1. The experimenter implemented this phase to assess the maintenance of generalization in the absence of contracting. The criterion for transition to the Baseline 3 condition was steady responding during the contract phase (no trends).
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Reliability

Reliability data yielded 95% total observer agreement. This is the total percent agreement between the experimenter and recorder on the frequency of polite words emitted.

Experimental Manipulations

The combination of a multiple baseline across subjects and reversal design allowed for a comparison of responding during the five experimental phases across the three subjects.

Subject 1

Figure 1 illustrates Subject 1's frequency of polite words emitted across the five experimental phases. During Baseline 1, Subject 1 emitted only one polite word in 11 sessions.

The next phase was the Training phase. Subject 1 again emitted only one polite word during the generalization sessions. Following the Training phase, baseline conditions were re-instituted. As in the Training phase, Subject 1 emitted only one polite word in four sessions.

Following Baseline 2, the experimenter began contracting with Subject 1. Subject 1's first two contracts required the subject
Figure 1. Frequency of Polite Words Emitted by Subject 1 per 25 Minute Generalization Session across the Five Experimental Phases.
to emit three polite words per 25 minute generalization session. Subject 1 met both of these contracts. The third contract required the subject to emit four polite words during each generalization session. Subject 1 also met this contract. Also, during the second session of the last contract, Subject 1 emitted six polite words as compared to the required four for contract completion.

As illustrated in Table 1, Subject 1's mean number of polite words per generalization session during contracting was 3.5. This is compared to .09 polite words per session during Baseline 1, .25 during Training and .25 during Baseline 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>B₁</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>B₂</th>
<th>Contracting</th>
<th>B₃</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 2</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following contracting the experimenter implemented Baseline 3. Subject 1 dropped from 3.5 polite words per session during Contracting to an average of 2.2 polite words per session during Baseline 3.

Subject 2

Figure 2 illustrates Subject 2's frequency of polite words

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Figure 2. Frequency of Polite Words Emitted by Subject 2 per 25 Minute Generalization Session across the Five Experimental Phases.
across the five experimental conditions. During Baseline 1, Subject 2 emitted two polite words in eight generalization sessions. This low frequency of polite words emitted continued during the Training and Baseline 2 conditions. Subject 2 emitted one polite word in three generalization sessions during the Training condition and two polite words during the Baseline 2 condition.

Following Baseline 2, the experimenter implemented contracting with Subject 2. The contract required Subject 2 to emit three polite words per generalization session. Subject 2 met this contract. During the second and third sessions of the Contracting phase, Subject 3 emitted four polite words while the contract required only three polite words per session. Subject 2 emitted an average of 3.4 polite words per 25 minute generalization session during the Contracting phase. This is compared to .25 responses per 25 minute generalization session during the Baseline 1 phase, .33 responses per 25 minute generalization session during Training, and .22 responses per 25 minute generalization session during Baseline 2 (see Table 1).

Following Contracting, the experimenter reinstituted baseline conditions. During Baseline 3, Subject 2 emitted an average of two polite words per session. This is a slight drop from the Contracting phase, but still higher than responding during Baseline 1, Training, or Baseline 2.
Subject 3

Figure 3 illustrates Subject 3's frequency of polite words per 25 minute generalization session across the five experimental phases. During Baseline 1, Subject 3 emitted 0 polite words in eight sessions. This increased slightly to two polite words emitted in four sessions during the Training phase. Following the Training phase, Baseline 2 was instituted. Subject 3's emission of polite words dropped to one polite word in 10 generalization sessions during this phase.

During Contracting, Subject 3's emission of polite words in generalization sessions increased. Both contracts specified that Subject 3 had to emit three polite words per session to meet the contract and earn the designated reinforcer. Subject 3 met both contracts by emitting three polite words for five generalization sessions. Contract phase frequency of an average of three polite words per session is compared to the Baseline 1 average of 0 polite words per generalization session, the Training average of .5 polite words per generalization and the Baseline 2 average of .1 polite words per generalization session (see Table 1).

Following Contracting, the experimenter implemented Baseline 3. Due to the subject's absence and the end of school, only one generalization session during Baseline 3 was possible. Subject 3 emitted three polite words during this phase, as he did during the Contracting phase.
Figure 3. Frequency of Polite Words Emitted by Subject 3 per 25 Minute Generalization Session across the Five Experimental Phases.
As illustrated in Table 2, the mean number of polite words emitted during Baseline 1, Training, and Baseline 2 was less than one. The mean number of polite words emitted was .11, .36, and .17 respectively. When the experimenter implemented contracting, the mean number of polite words per 25 minute generalization session increased to 3.39. This rate dropped slightly to 2.25 polite words per session during Baseline 3.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Phase</th>
<th>Mean Number of Polite Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline 1</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline 2</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracting</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline 3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the study show that contracting led to the largest increase in the number of polite words emitted during the generalization session. Following contracting, the frequency of polite words emitted maintained at a level higher than during Baseline 1, Training, or Baseline 2 (see Figure 4).
Figure 4. Frequency of Polite Words Emitted by the Three Experimental Subjects per 25 Minute Generalization Session across the Five Experimental Phases.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of contingency contracting on the generalization or transfer of social skills. Generalization as a result of social skills training was compared to generalization as a result of contracting. Maintenance of generalization as a result of these two procedures was also assessed. It was hypothesized that contracting would be more effective than the social skills training for initiating the generalization of polite words.

Given the conditions of the present study, it was found that contingency contracting was more effective than the social skills training in producing generalization of polite words. The subjects of the present study emitted more polite words in the generalization sessions during the Contracting phase than during the Training phase. Thus, the data support the hypothesis that contingency contracting is more effective than the social skills training employed in producing the generalization of polite words. Also, after contracting generalization of polite words maintained at a level higher than after Training.

During Baseline 1, the average number of polite words emitted per session was .11. This increased slightly to .36 during training. During the training condition the subjects were trained in the use of polite words each day prior to the generalization
sessions. Since the training time varied daily it was sometimes in temporal proximity to the generalization sessions. The slight increase in generalization of polite words during Training may have been a carry over effect due to the temporal proximity of training and generalization sessions. This is further supported by the findings that when polite words training was terminated the frequency of polite words emitted during the generalization sessions again dropped.

Of great importance is the effectiveness of the polite words training that was employed. If the subjects did not learn to emit polite words during training then this could have been the reason for the lower rate of polite words emitted in the generalization setting during the following training. This however is not a plausible explanation for two reasons. First, the teacher reported that the subjects actively participated in the social skills training. They participated in the defining of the behavior, role-playing, listing polite words, viewing modeling and practicing the behavior (see Appendix A). These procedures have previously been shown to be effective in the training of social skills (Hollandsworth et al., 1978; Stokes & Fowler, 1978; and Kelly, Wildman, & Berler, 1980). Thus it is reasonable to assume that the procedures would have been effective with these subjects also. Second, the more important, is the fact that the subjects possessed the skill of emitting polite words prior to training as indicated in Baseline 1. Subjects 1 and 2 emitted one and two polite words
respectively during Baseline 1. Subject 3 did not emit polite words during Baseline 1. However, the experimenter on another occasion had heard the subject emit a polite word (Thank You) prior to the experiment. Thus it is not plausible that generalization did not occur at a higher rate because the subjects did not possess the skill.

The present study supports the findings of Berler, Gross, and Drabman (1982) that while social skills show improvement in training, generalization of these skills is not consistently positive. As noted earlier, the teacher reported that polite words training was successful based on the criteria of the Accepts Program. The behavior, however, did not generalize as a result of training.

Following Baseline 2, the experimenter implemented contracting. All three subjects increased the frequency of polite words emitted in the generalization sessions to at least three polite words per session. This was a large increase over Baseline 1, Training and Baseline 2. All three subjects met the contracts they had negotiated with the experimenter.

Unlike the increase during the Training phase, the increase during contracting was not likely due to the temporal proximity between contracting and the generalization sessions. The experimenter and subjects negotiated the contracts on the day prior to when the contracts began. One school day passed between contract negotiation and the first generalization session for each subject.

The data support the conclusions of Stokes and Baer (1977)
that generalization is not the natural result of a behavior change program, but rather must be actively programmed. The social skills training led to a slight increase in generalization of polite words, but this increase was not noteworthy. Also, the small increase did not maintain once training was terminated. When generalization was programmed through contracting however, generalization of polite words increased. This is consistent with Stokes and Fowler's (1978) findings that preschoolers did not emit a trained response in the natural environment until generalization was programmed. This supports the conclusion that stimulus generalization may not result from a behavior change program, but must be actively programmed.

Once generalization was programmed through contracting, the maintenance of these generalization effects was investigated. The generalization effects due to contracting dropped slightly following the termination of contracting. The frequency of polite words emitted after contracting, however, was still higher than the frequency during Baseline 1, Training, or Baseline 2. This continued high rate of responding during a baseline condition may have been due to the behavior falling under the control of the natural contingencies in the environment. Since training did not significantly increase generalization, the behavior may not have been occurring at a rate high enough to come into contact with the natural reinforcers in the generalization setting. During contracting, however, the subjects emitted at least three polite words per session. Since the subjects emitted the behavior during every
generalization session they were present, they may have come into contact with environmental reinforcers such as peers reacting pleasantly to their polite statements and increased positive social interactions. The contracting may have served as a catalyst for the subjects to come into contact with the reinforcers available in their natural environment, and these reinforcers may have maintained the behavior following the removal of contracting.

Contracting led to favorable results in the generalization setting. The contracting led to some other favorable results that were not documented by the study. The teacher reported that the subjects emitted polite words at other times of the school day during and following contracting. The teacher also reported that she noticed the subjects using polite words with the other students in the class throughout the school day. Even though there are no data to support these observations, they are noteworthy. It is advocated that future research investigate the effects of contracting on generalization to settings other than those specified in the contract.

Also of note is the finding that during contracting Subjects 1 and 2 emitted more polite words than were necessary to receive the designated reinforcer. Since the contracting was sequentially introduced to the three subjects, and Subjects 1 and 2 did not emit more polite words than necessary during the same sessions, it is unlikely that other variables in the environment led to the higher rate of polite words than specified for contract completion. Future
research may investigate what components of the contract led to this increased rate of behaviors. For example, does the contract length lead to differing patterns of responding?

In relation to the question of what led to higher rates of responding than required is how does the contract cause generalization? In assessing the functional relationship between the contract and verbal behavior, it is observed that the contract may serve a variety of stimulus functions. First, the contract itself, if in the subject's view, may serve as a discriminative stimulus for emitting polite words. Contracting may also lead to self-instruction or the self-prompting of the subject's behavior. O'Leary and Dubey (1979) found that self-instruction can be very effective in influencing behavior. The contracts may not only function as antecedents, but also as mediators of consequences. The contract is a permanent record of consequences to be delivered upon emission of the target behavior. Contracting may also induce self-recording and monitoring of the target behavior. O'Leary and Dubey (1979) state that self-assessment (monitoring and recording) is effective for inducing behavior change. Contracting inducing self-recording and monitoring may be supported by the data of the present study. The subjects emitted the rate specified in the contract in almost every session during contracting. The subjects may have been monitoring their emission rate of polite words. The information as to the specific function of the contract that led to generalization was not obtained in this study. It is suggested
that future research be conducted to assess how the contracting led to generalization.

Another area that is conducive to future research is the maintenance of generalization following contract termination. The follow-up period in the present study was short due to time constraints. Due to the end of school, only one Baseline 3 session was available for Subject 3. It would be important to note whether generalization would maintain over time following contract termination.

Another question that arises is, would the generalization due to contracting occur with subjects who had no history with contracts? In the present study, Subjects 1 and 2 had previously participated in contracting at a residential facility. Subject 3 had no history with contracts. Even though the results were the same with all three subjects, it would be important to further investigate the effects of contracting for generalization with subjects who have not had a history with contracting. Thus the present research supports the hypothesis that contracting was more effective than the social skills training in producing generalization of polite words. The combination of a multiple baseline across subjects and reversal designs controlled for the possibility of extraneous variables being responsible for the behavior change. The present study raises many questions that could be investigated in future research. Some of these include: Would the effects be replicated with subjects who do not have a history with contracting?; Would
the effects be replicated with a different population (i.e. adults)?; Would contracting lead to generalization of responses other than polite words?; Would the generalization of social skills maintain over a long period of time following the termination of contracting?; What caused the subjects to emit more responses than necessary during contracting and responses outside of the generalization setting?; and What specific function does the contract serve that leads to generalization?
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Accepts Social Skills Placement Test, Polite Words Training and Letter of Consent
APPENDIX 9

ACCEPTS Placement Test

SUMMARY SHEET

Each item on the Placement Test has an assigned Area, a Number, and an ACCEPTS skill which corresponds to it.

1. Fill in your rating for each item under the column which says RATING.
2. Place a checkmark beside those items given a rating of 1, 2, or 3.
3. For those items checkmarked, it is strongly recommended that the teacher teach the corresponding ACCEPTS SKILL(S) referred to in the right hand column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>SKILL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. CLASSROOM SKILLS:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Listening to the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>When the teacher tells you to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Doing your best work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Following the classroom rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. BASIC INTERACTION SKILLS:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Using the right voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Starting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Answering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Making sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Taking turns talking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>SKILL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III. GETTING ALONG: SKILLS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>A question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Continuing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. MAKING FRIENDS: SKILLS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Using polite words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Following the rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Assisting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Touching the right way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. COPING SKILLS:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>When someone says &quot;no&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Expressing anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>When someone teases you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>When someone tries to hurt you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>When someone asks you to do something you can't do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>When things don't go right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rule Review:

"Continuing means to keep the talking going. What is called what?"

CONTINUING (Reinforce or correct)

Practice:

"You can keep the talking going by asking and answering questions. If someone asks you a question, you can answer, then ask that person a question. Let's try it.

(Teacher pairs students or works individually with one student) "I'll start by asking a question," (or give one student in pair a question to start with) "and will try to keep the talking going. Remember to make sense. What are we going to do when I come over to your house after school today? What are kids doing at recess? What are you going to do this Saturday?" (Reinforce answering and asking questions, or correct)

Step 2: ROLE PLAY

"Let's use all of the skills we just talked about. Pretend it's a rainy day and your class is having inside recess. You would like to find someone to talk to. Show me what you would do. (Reinforce initiating conversation with teacher or other student or reteach starting) Reinforce or reteach eye contact, using the right voice, and listening. Reinforce continuing conversation for one or two minutes or reteach answering, making sense, talking turns talking, a question, and/or continuing as needed). (Repeat for each student in group).

AREA III: Getting Along

SKILL #1: Using Polite Words

REVIEW: Brief discussion of previous day's skill. Check to see if students followed informal contract.

Step 1: DEFINITION AND GUIDED DISCUSSION

Definition:

"Using polite words means saying nice things at the right time. What does using polite words mean?"

SAYING NICE THINGS AT THE RIGHT TIME (Reinforce or correct)

"Let's say this another way. Saying nice things at the right time is called using polite words. Saying nice things at the right time is called what?"

USING POLITE WORDS (Reinforce or correct)

"Please", 'thank-you', 'I'm sorry', and 'excuse me' are polite words. What are some polite words?"

PLEASE, THANK YOU, I'M SORRY or EXCUSE ME (Reinforce or correct)

"Mary borrowed her friend's crayons. Mary told her friend 'thank you'. Mary was using what?"

POLITE WORDS

"How do we know Mary was using polite words?"

SHE/MARY SAID 'THANK YOU' or SHE/MARY SAID A NICE THING AT THE RIGHT TIME (Reinforce or correct)

"Brad said, 'Please pass the salt'." Brad was using what?"

POLITE WORDS (Reinforce or correct)

"When you say nice things at the right time you are using polite words. When you say nice things at the right time you are using what?"

POLITE WORDS (Reinforce or correct)

Guided Discussion:

"Using polite words means you are being kind to other people when you talk to them. When you use words like 'please', 'thank you', 'I'm sorry', and
'excuse me' you are telling people how you feel in a nice way. Do you use polite words when you're talking to people?

YES/SOMETIMES (Reinforce or discuss)

"When someone does something nice for you and you say 'thank you' you are letting the person know at the right time you like what he/she did. If you are out on the playground and you bump into someone by mistake, polite words to use would be 'excuse me'. What other words could you use?"

I'M SORRY (Reinforce or correct)

"If you needed to borrow a pencil from your neighbor you would say, 'Please may I borrow a pencil?'. After he/she gave it to you, what should you say?"

THANK YOU (Reinforce or correct)

Step 2: POSITIVE EXAMPLE

"Watch me and see if I use polite words." (Role play walking by a student and accidentally bumping into their chair) "(student name), I'm sorry I bumped into you." (Debrief: Point out/discuss why example was a positive instance of the skill).

Step 3: NEGATIVE EXAMPLE

"Watch and see if I remember to use polite words this time." (Role play previous example, but forgetting to use polite words). (Debrief: Point out/discuss why example is not a positive instance of the skill).

Step 4: REVIEW AND RESTATE DEFINITION

"Saying nice things at the right time is called using polite words? Saying nice things at the right time is called what?"

USING POLITE WORDS (Reinforce or correct)

"Polite words are: 'Please', 'thank you', 'I'm sorry', and 'excuse me'. What are some polite words?"

PLEASE, THANK YOU, I'M SORRY, EXCUSE ME (Reinforce or correct)

Step 5: POSITIVE EXAMPLE (Materials: Papers)

(Hand out papers) "Pretend I'm your teacher and everyone has just finished a test: Class, will you please hand me your papers?" (Students hand in papers). "Thank you." (Debrief: Point out/discuss why example was a positive instance of the skill).

Step 6: ACTIVITIES

Teacher models:

"Let's listen to me use polite words by saying nice things at the right time."

1. "Let's say I'm trying to find a seat in a dark movie theatre and I accidentally step on somebody's toe. I can use polite words by saying, 'I'm sorry', or 'excuse me'."

2. "Pretend I'm a student in your class working on math. Let's say the person who sits in front of me is talking to their neighbor and I can't do my work because they are talking. I can use polite words by saying, 'Could you please stop talking?' or 'Could you please whisper?' As soon as they lower their voices or stop talking I should say 'thank you.'"

3. "Let's say I've just finished eating a big lunch. The person sitting next to me offers me their apple, but I'm too full to eat it. I can use polite words by saying 'no thank you.'"

Students practice:

1. "Your turn to practice using polite words. Let's say I'm your teacher and you need to borrow a pencil. What polite word should you use?"

   PLEASE (Reinforce or correct)

2. "Let's pretend you came to school and you forgot your reading book. It's time for reading and I tell you that we can share my book. What polite words should you say to me?"

   THANK YOU (Reinforce or correct)

3. "Let's say you are chasing after a ball on the playground. You aren't watching where you are going and you accidentally bump into someone. What polite words should you say?"

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I'M SORRY or EXCUSE ME (Reinforce or correct)

4. "Let's pretend you are building a sand castle with a group of friends. Another friend comes by and asks you if you want to play basketball. Let's say you don't feel like playing basketball. What polite words could you say to your friend?"

NO THANK YOU (Reinforce or correct)

Step 7: CRITERION ROLE PLAYS

1. "Let's pretend it's raining after school and your friend offers you a ride home. Your mom is already coming to pick you up, so you don't need a ride. Tell me what you would say to your best friend." (Criterion: NO THANK YOU)

2. "Let's pretend you are in class sitting at a table drawing with some other students. You get up from the table and bump the arm of the person next to you. Tell me what you would say to that person." (Criterion: EXCUSE ME or I'M SORRY)

3. "Pretend you are at the lunch table and you would like someone to pass you the catsup. Tell me which polite word you would use." (Criterion: PLEASE)

4. "Let's pretend you just got a new dress/shirt and you're wearing it to school for the first time. I tell you, 'Oh, I really like your new dress/shirt.' Tell me what polite words you would say to me." (Criterion: THANK YOU)

Step 8: INFORMAL CONTRACTING

"Today I want you to remember to use polite words at the right time. What are you going to remember to do today?"

USE POLITE WORDS AT THE RIGHT TIME

VARIATIONS/ADAPTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small group, large group or class</td>
<td>• Review rule. Tell student(s) you are going to describe a situation. They should tell if they would say 'please,' 'thank-you,' 'excuse me' or 'I'm sorry' in the situation.</td>
<td>Situations which call for a response of 'please,' 'thank-you,' 'excuse me' or 'I'm sorry.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group, large group or class</td>
<td>• Review rule. Tell student(s) you are going to give them a word. They need to describe a situation in which they use the word. (Words: Please, thank you, excuse me, I'm sorry).</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
December 19, 1983

Dear Parents,

Your child will be participating in a program focusing on learning good classroom and playground behaviors.

The program is called ACCEPTS, and has some new ideas on teaching these social skills. We hope to start this program on January 16th.

There are many parts to this program. One part that is important for you to know about is called contracting. With contracting, your child will be able to earn extra privileges throughout the school day by using the social skills taught by the program.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child being a part of this program, please contact Annice O'Brien, 385-0591.

Thank you for your support and interest.

Sincerely,

Jane DeRight
Annice O'Brien
Michelle Kapp
APPENDIX B

Recorder Data Sheets
APPENDIX C

Sample Contract Form
CONTRACT

Contract Dates: From _____________________ to__________________

Review Date: ________________________________

We, __________________________________ (student) and Michelle Kapp agree to perform the following behaviors:

If ______________________________ performs the below behavior ______ times during optional time at the end of each day for _________ days, then Michelle Kapp will provide the reinforcer listed below.

Behavior: __________________________________________________________

Reinforcer: ________________________________

________________________________________(Student)
APPENDIX D

List of Polite Words
Polite Words

Thank You
Please
May I
Good Job
Excuse Me (pardon me)
Do you need help?
That's great
Compliments
   - I like your . . .
   - That was great how you . . .
   - You're good at that
   - etc.


Farris, H. & Redmon, W. *ABC's of behavioral contracting*, Unpublished.


