Assertiveness Training for Black College Freshmen

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ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING FOR BLACK COLLEGE FRESHMEN

by

Ollie G. Barnes III

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Psychology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1983
This study was designed to train Black college freshmen to be effectively assertive in their interactions with University faculty and staff. Thirty freshmen students were randomly assigned to two groups of fifteen each, the control group and the training group. Following the pretest, the training group took part in a 32-hour assertiveness training program. The program consisted of modeling, coaching, behavior rehearsal, peer and trainer feedback, homework, self-recording and instructional training. These techniques were used to train students to effectively use nonverbal skills, assertive content and select appropriate conflict management strategies. The control group received no formal training. Significant differences were found between the training group and the control group on both the written and behavioral portion of the posttest.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Richard Malott for his invaluable instruction and guidance and extreme motivation throughout this research. I also wish to thank Dr. David Lyon and Dr. Jack Michael for their constructive comments. I give many thanks to Mr. Danny Sledge, Director of the Martin Luther King program for his unending pledge of support from the onset of the study. I would also like to thank Denise Gipson-Tyiska for her unending support throughout the final year of my graduate work. My special thanks go to Gloria McElrath for the many hours she spent helping me prepare this manuscript. I would also like to thank Mark Jackson, Denise Lavender and Toni Woolfork who worked extremely hard as assistant trainers. A special thanks to the members of the Western Michigan University chapter of the Black Psychology Student Association for their unending support.

Ollie G. Barnes III
DEDICATION

WITH LOVE TO

My parents, Ollie and Marlene Barnes, Jr., my sister Cynthea and brother Kenny, my grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Ollie G. Barnes, Sr., Miss Ruth Ames, and also my dear and loving friend Toni Y. Woolfork.
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. METHOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. RESULTS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Written Consent Form</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Passive/Aggressive Screening Inventory</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Pretest/Posttest</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Scenario Feedback Sheet</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Situational Scenarios</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Comparison of Assertive Behavior on a Paper and Pencil Test Before Training for the Training Group</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Comparison of Control Groups' Performance on Paper/Pencil Test on First and Second Video Taping</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Results of Nonverbal Responses During Behavioral Pre- and Posttest Scenario</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years university administrators, as well as social scientists, have studied the social adjustment of Black students in large universities and colleges (Donnerstein & Wilson, 1971; Cheek, 1976). Casual observations tend to suggest that the success of the Black students' adjustment is generally based on their ability to emulate the social behaviors of their White counterparts. Formal support of this issue comes from Donnerstein (1975) who suggests Blacks' social skills could be improved by observing appropriate skills modeled by Whites. However, there is a sparsity of literature to support the efficacy of such a training technique in modifying inappropriate social skill behaviors in Blacks.

Black students have generally experienced much difficulty adjusting to large, predominantly White universities. Smith (1980), King and Price (1979), and Banks and Grumbs (1972) suggest that the reason for Black students' poor social adjustment in educational environments is their debased self-concepts. These authors affirm that Black students, who from birth have consistently been rejected, understandably grow up questioning and doubting their ability to be successful in an educational setting. These poor self-concepts are also believed to perpetuate poor academic performance (Banks & Grumbs, 1972).
Other literature asserts that poor adjustment by Black students in White universities is a result of the way Black and White students view themselves through different social perspectives. Many social scientists have devoted considerable attention to this issue (e.g., Campbell, 1971; Gordon, 1964). The concept of social perspective has two components: lack of communication and the persistence of racial conflict. This lack of communication is a barrier between Blacks and Whites which arises because of a limited awareness of each other's culture. This lack of communication causes both Blacks and Whites to rely on historical stereotypes. The "racial conflicts" persist because there are so few immediate reinforcers available for Blacks and Whites when they attempt to learn about the other's culture.

Presently, some literature suggests that Black students have an equal amount of difficulty at Black universities. However, this study deals with some specific problems which Black students are more likely to encounter at predominantly White institutions, which may increase adjustment difficulties. This researcher believes that poor adjustment by Black students in White universities is the result of two inter-related problems: limited response alternatives in the repertoire of Black students and misinterpretations by university Whites regarding Blacks, which are manifestations of poor stereotypes. These misinterpretations may also be brought on by the large difference in cultural norms between the White university faculty and staff members and the Black college student. Behavior that may be viewed as aggressive in a White culture may well be appropriately assertive in the Black culture. For example, a Black student may approach a Black professor after receiving a low grade and say "Man, you gave me a 'D' on this assignment." The Black
professor will generally respond, "Hey, that is the grade you earned." In most cases that will be the end of the conversation. But if the student makes the same statement to a White professor, there is a good possibility the professor may become defensive and reply with "Are you suggesting that I am unfair? Are you stating that I have treated you different from the other students?" Limited response alternatives refer to the fact that Black socialization historically has developed passive or aggressive responses as ways of managing self-esteem threats. This may be brought on by aversive situations with (1) Blacks, (2) Whites that misinterpret Black assertive behavior, and (3) Whites that may respond in a racist manner. However, Blacks' assertive behavior may be intensified into aggression in their interactions with Whites (Minor, 1978). This developmental conditioning has caused Blacks to abstain from developing a more practical response, assertiveness. The development of a repertoire of assertive behavior as opposed to passive or aggressive behavior would provide an additional, seemingly more useful coping response.

However, literature tends to suggest (Cheek, 1976; Colbert & Jenkins, 1976; Minor, 1978) that Blacks who have responded assertively in their efforts to secure their rights as human beings have often been misinterpreted by Whites as being aggressive. Whites' misinterpretation of Blacks' assertive behavior is the second part of this bipolar problem; Whites, over time and because of certain historical and cultural events, have come to expect Blacks to respond to conflict in certain ways, either passively or aggressively (Minor, 1978). Consequently, when Blacks have failed to provide the expected response (passive or aggressive), they create cognitive dissonance for Whites (Cheek, 1976; Minor, 1978). When
Blacks respond assertively, their responses stand a good chance of being misinterpreted. These misinterpretations have contributed, in part, to the Black student's adjustment difficulty at predominantly White institutions. A major example of how misinterpretations have led to "perceived" Black adjustment difficulties would be the disproportionate amount of Black students who are expelled for disciplinary problems from schools all over the country for what may be aggressive insubordination. As stated earlier, these perceptions may be brought on by poor stereotypes about the Black culture or vast differences in Black and White cultural norms.

Because of this bipolar problem, Black students are still having either perceived or real adjustment difficulties and, as a result, are not receiving the best education possible from institutions of higher education.

Each school year a group of freshmen come to WMU's campus as students under a conditional admission through the Martin Luther King (MLK) program. These students all have fallen just under the university admission requirements.

Casual observations suggest that several of these students are not adjusting well to campus life, academically or socially. Their poor adjustment may initially be caused by undeveloped social skills for managing their new environment. Observations suggest that these students respond to interpersonal interactions either too passively or too aggressively.

Many authors have suggested that Blacks have a bigger problem with assertiveness than Whites, at least in a White culture. Although this
researcher has been unable to obtain objective data to support this notion, we will tentatively assume it to be true until hard data are provided to disprove it. However, casual observation suggests that a sizable percentage of Black students, and more specifically MLK students, have shown difficulty in this area.

This study will concentrate on training Black college freshmen to be "effectively assertive" in their interactions with faculty and staff members and peers at the university. The term "effectively assertive" will serve as the training motto for this study. In an attempt to establish a positive effect for this assertiveness training program, a contrast between simply being assertive and being effectively assertive has to be presented. Black students often experience a great deal of interpersonal conflict in their response to Whites. The struggle they experience is the continuous assessment of whether they are conforming to White demands and sacrificing their own rights. As stated earlier, literature suggests that Blacks in the past have attempted to respond assertively, but received little reinforcement for their efforts and were misinterpreted.

Therefore, the motto to be effectively assertive approaches the idea of getting what you need from an interaction, maintaining a positive self-image, and both the sender and receiver are comfortable that their rights have not been violated. The notion of effective assertive behavior is supported by Cheek (1976) who states that message matching could reduce the degree to which Black assertiveness is misinterpreted. Message matching involves helping the Black student to technically modify his behavior so that it is less likely to be misinterpreted.
The present training program will utilize a behavioral approach. The well documented technique of behavior rehearsal (McFall & Lillesand, 1971; McFall & Marston, 1970; McFall & Twentyman, 1973; will serve as one of the three major training techniques used in this program. Behavior rehearsal in regard to this study of assertiveness training will allow the practice of assertive skills in simulated, real-life situations. The rehearsal will serve to shape and strengthen assertive behaviors not previously in the student's repertoire. A study conducted by Lazarus (1966) was the first study to show a positive effect from the uses of behavioral rehearsal. In this study, behavior rehearsal was compared to non-directive therapy and direct advice. Behavior rehearsal presented the greatest amount of change, followed by direct advice and then non-directive therapy.

The technique of structured feedback will provide the students with direct and immediate information regarding their performance during the behavioral rehearsal. The structure of the feedback was that of one positive statement and one wish statement. The positive statement reinforced the student for behaviors performed correctly. The wish statement was designed to alert students to areas in which their behavior could improve.

In order for behavior rehearsal to be effective, a major role of the trainers was to provide the student with modeling and coaching (Bandura, 1969; Kelly, 1955; Wolpe, 1969). This aspect of the training appears to be the most therapeutic (Bandura, Blanchard, & Ritter, 1969; Sarason, 1968). These techniques were then used to effectively train the student to use conflict management strategies, nonverbal skills and appropriately assertive content.
Conflict management was added to provide skills in the strategic use of assertiveness. It is the belief of this researcher that skills of assertiveness are ineffective unless delivered at the appropriate time and in the correct situation. For example, assertiveness would be ineffective between two roommates if one of them became unexpectedly defensive or bitter. Wilmot & Wilmot (1981) found that there are a few specific tactical strategies for dealing with conflict: postponement, escalation, avoidance, and compromise. The present researcher has adopted these strategies and adjusted their meaning to train students to be effectively assertive. The efficacy of conflict management strategies as a training component of assertive behavior has yet to be documented.

Postponement is generally utilized when one or both parties of an interaction become too bitter to effectively discuss the ongoing problem. The assertive person then arranges a time when both parties can agree to calmly discuss their differences.

The escalation strategy functions to increase the intensity of a conflict in which the assertive party feels a personal right has been violated. This is done by highlighting the specific area in which the assertive person is uncomfortable. This act of assertiveness puts pressure on the other party to immediately respond to the stated difficulty.

Avoidance is often an effective strategy when people can gain nothing by assertively escalating their dissatisfaction to that particular party. An example is a situation in which a store attendant refuses to provide satisfactory service. The assertive person will then avoid further interaction with that person and contact a manager or supervisor.

The strategy of compromise demands the most from the assertive party. This strategy requires both parties to agree to give up a right in order to gain a right. Once both individuals understand that both parties are
winners and both are losers, the conflict is reduced and the assertive party has been effective.

A second component of the program was the training of the effective use of nonverbal behavior during the behavior rehearsals. The major goal of incorporating the nonverbal component into the assertiveness training was to establish a balance between the verbal and nonverbal behavior, which increases the effectiveness of the assertive response. This is supported by Mehrabian (1968); Mehrabian & Ferris (1967), and Wolfgang (1979) who found that in many situations nonverbal messages are perceived as more important than verbal messages. The specific nonverbal components that are important are voice tone and volume, latency of response, eye contact, and facial expression (Serber, 1972). In addition, the researcher has added body gestures as an important nonverbal element.

In developing this program to train Black college freshmen to be effectively assertive, a behavior-based modality with three proven training techniques was used: behavior rehearsal, structured peer feedback, and behavior modeling and coaching. These techniques aided in the training of effective assertive behavior. The combination of training techniques was selected in order to provide data that conflict management strategies in conjunction with three well documented assertiveness techniques can train Black college freshmen to be effectively assertive in a university setting. A two-group pretest/posttest design was used. Both groups were the same with the exception of the type of training provided.

Assertiveness will be assessed on several key measures: (1) effective use of conflict management strategies during behavioral rehearsal, (2) effective use of nonverbal skills during behavior rehearsal, and (3) response to a posttest as compared to their pretest.
In the present study of assertiveness training, it was hypothesized: that subjects receiving assertiveness training would exhibit more effectively assertive behavior during a posttest exam than would subjects in the control group who received an intervention.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subject

Thirty Black freshmen students participated as subjects in this study. The researcher recruited these students from the Martin Luther King (MLK) summer program by asking the entire group of 130 students for volunteers to participate in an assertiveness training program. Each of the volunteers was given a consent form to sign, which served as confirmation of the student’s understanding of the manner in which the training program would be conducted (see Appendix A for consent form).

The researcher then administered a self report screening inventory which was used to identify the most passive and aggressive students from the volunteering population of eighty-nine students (see Appendix B for screening inventory). There were two criteria for inclusion in the assertiveness training program: students who indicated a high interest on their screening inventory, and those who scored at least 12 out of 19 on either the passive or aggressive scale of the screening inventory.

The thirty students included in the program were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the training group or the control group. The assignment was based on the table of random numbers with the restriction that both groups were as evenly matched as possible with passive and aggressive students. The students ranged from 17-19 years old. None had ever lived outside of the home more than 1.5 weeks without the accompaniment of their parents. Also, none of the students participating in the training

10
were currently involved in any type of therapy, nor had they previously received assertiveness training.

Procedure

The training groups met twice a week for a four-hour training session each time, for a total of four weeks. During the initial session the students were informed that there would be two training groups. Training groups I and II were given a pretest that included five situational scenarios dealing with university interactions (see Appendix C for pre/posttest). The first scenario required a behavioral response that was videotaped. The remaining four called for a written response.

Following the pretesting of group II which served as the control group, the peer counselor for the MLK program observed the students' behaviors and provided a daily report to the researcher. This data was used to develop situation scenarios for the training groups' behavior rehearsals. No further data analysis was conducted on this material. The peer counselors also responded to the students' aggressive behavior problems according to traditional techniques learned in their peer counselor orientation. The traditional technique called for immediate disciplinary actions for any aggressive behavior. These actions ranged from a verbal reprimand to full restrictions of outside activities. Repeated acts of aggression were dealt with by complete dismissal from the program. The traditional techniques provided no intervention for passive students.

Following the pretesting of group I, which served as the training group, the group took part in a 32-hour assertive training program. The training involved as its major training technique: behavior rehearsal, structured feedback, modeling and coaching. These techniques aided in
teaching conflict management strategies, nonverbal skills, and appropriately assertive content. In order to maximize the amount of rehearsal time for each member, the researcher divided the training group of 15 into two small groups. The groups were as evenly distributed with passive and aggressive students as possible. The groups were headed by two well trained upper level psychology graduate students. The researcher provided input to both groups. Prior to assembling in small groups, the entire group, which from this point on will be referred to as the "large group", would gather for instructional training, demonstrations, and question and answer periods.

During behavior rehearsals that took place in both the large group as well as the small groups, students were coached by trainers on: (1) the appropriate selection of an assertive strategy, (2) correct use of nonverbal behavior, (3) and an appropriate use of overall assertive content. Students also received written feedback from each of their fellow trainees on formal feedback sheets (see Appendix C for feedback sheet). The feedback provided information about the student behavior based on the above objectives. Behavioral rehearsal was based on situational scenarios that placed the student in actual campus situations (see Appendix D for training scenarios).

The behaviorally based point contingency system was used to provide incentives for the completion of outside self-reporting, attendance at training sessions, being on time to training sessions, and daily phone calls to their small group trainers and reinforcers for appropriate use of assertiveness skills during behavior rehearsals. Students could receive a possible 850 points which could be traded in at the conclusion of the training program for an assertiveness T-shirt. Each student who completed the program received a certificate of award.
The following is a chronological sequence of the format in which each training session was conducted. Each session consisted of a basic format that remained constant throughout the training program, with the exceptions of the first and last sessions. These sessions were different because of pre- and posttesting. The general format included an opening exercise, instructional training, behavioral rehearsal in small groups, a short break, a question and answer period and feedback from students on the training program.

Week 1/Session 1 -- During Session 1, the subjects of both groups, I and II, were taken to the library where they were given the pretraining examination. The exam consisted of five situational scenarios that required a behavioral response to one situation and paper/pencil response to the other. Following the pretraining exam, the students were escorted back to the residence hall where the remaining session would be conducted. Next the students were given an overview of the training program, and all materials needed to begin self-recording of daily behavior.

Week 1/Session 2 -- Following the opening exercise, instructional training began. Based on the important use of peer feedback, the researcher planned to train subjects on the use of effectively giving and receiving constructive feedback. They were then assigned to small groups headed by graduate training assistants. The time spent in the group was used to record data on where each student viewed his/her current level of assertiveness. When the student returned to the large group, the researcher, with the aid of his two training assistants, presented a role-play on the use of behavioral rehearsal.
Week 2/Session 1 -- Once again an interpersonal communication exercise opened the training session. An overview of that week's training was presented. Next an instructional training presentation was given on conflict management which provided strategic uses of assertiveness skills. Following a short break, the students assembled in their small groups to rehearse a list of situational scenarios. The session was concluded with a question and answer period with the large group of students.

Week 2/Session 2 -- By this time, the students had begun to settle into the flow of the training schedule. The theme of the instructional training for this session was "My roommate? or Me?". During this presentation, students were trained on specific issues that confront persons who live in residence halls. Following the presentation, the students were allowed rehearsal time in their small groups.

Week 3/Session 1 -- In order to insure training success for each student being trained, this session called for a rapid review of all materials presented to that point. Following the review, students divided into their small groups where training assistants provided mid-training feedback. Each student received both written and oral feedback as to what was being done well and what skills needed the most work as training continued. Next the students rehearsed a variety of campus-related situational scenarios.

Week 3/Session 2 -- Following the opening exercise, students were allowed to view the pretraining videotape. Each student critiqued his peers' performance by both verbal and written feedback. Then the students assembled in their small groups and spent the remainder of the training session rehearsing campus-related scenarios.
Week 4/Session 1 -- During the session, students worked in a large group on scenarios developed from their "Daily Data Diary". The Daily Data Diary was a book in which students recorded daily passive, assertive, or aggressive behaviors. Because this session would be the last opportunity for students to rehearse before taking the post-training test, the entire session was used for practice.

Week 4/Session 2 -- The students assembled in Waldo Library where they were given the post-training test. The post-training test was run using the same format as the pretraining test. Following the posttesting, students were allowed to view both the pre- and post-training videotapes.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Thirteen out of the fifteen students selected for the training group completed the entire training program. Only six of the fifteen control group students were still willing to participate at the conclusion of the study. As can be seen in Table 1, the training group showed 86.5% positive responding on the written portion of the post-training test. The six control group students showed a 41.6% positive responding, as can be seen in Table 2.

There were four possible positive (effectively assertive) responses that each student could have made on the written test. The control group's positive response mean (1.667) was then compared to the training groups' positive response mean (3.461). A t-test showed that the difference between these two groups was significant at the .05 level.

Nonverbal skills were assessed during both the pre- and the posttest scenarios that required a behavioral response. In order to obtain reliability, this portion of the test was recorded on videotape. The nonverbal skills that were assessed were eye contact, voice tone, body gestures and latency of verbal response. Facial expression was not included due to anticipated difficulty in obtaining reliability. The students were assessed on whether the assertive behavior occurred or did not occur. Latency of response was considered appropriate if the behavior occurred within 25 seconds of the start of the scenario. The nonverbal responses
for both the control and training group during the pre- and post-training test are presented in Table 3. Also included is the percent of improvement. The training groups' positive nonverbal response mean (3.769) was compared to the control group's positive nonverbal response mean (1.667). This comparison was based on the number of nonverbal responses made from four possible. A t-test shows that the results between the two groups was significant at the .05 level.

Reliability was calculated using the following formula:

\[
\text{agreement} \quad \text{agreement + disagreement} \quad \times 100 = \text{reliability}
\]

Six trained observers recorded their judgments based on the videotaped scenarios. The observers were asked to judge which scenarios were filmed prior to training or following training. Assessment was based on the students' use of nonverbal skills and whether they made an assertive response versus a passive or aggressive response. The mean level of observer reliability was 85.71%.

Observer bias was reduced by arranging the before and after scenarios in a mixed sequence on the videotape. However, there was still some chance for observer bias based on the fact that the pre- and posttest were filmed on two different days, and the worker with whom the students interacted wore different clothes. Also, the worker was on duty with a different person.

Reliability of the written data was collected by two independent observers. These observers were allowed to read the written portion of the pre-posttest. The readers were asked to judge if the students' responses were made prior to training or following training. Reliability
was calculated using the following formula:

\[
\frac{\text{agreement}}{\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement}}
\]

The mean of the observer reliability was 76.92%.

Casual observation suggests that, because the students were trained specifically on being assertive in university interactions, generalization to normal social interactions may not occur. However, students in the training group have been observed implementing assertive skills in classroom interactions.
### TABLE 1
Comparison of Assertive Behavior on a Paper/Pencil Test
Before and After Training for the Training Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Category</th>
<th>Same(-) Response</th>
<th>Same(+) Response</th>
<th>Detail(-) Response</th>
<th>Detail(+) Response</th>
<th>Different(-) Response</th>
<th>Different(+) Response</th>
<th>Total(-) Response</th>
<th>Total(+) Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive Male (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive Female (4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Male (4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Female (3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Passive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Aggressive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Female</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
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<td>11.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>13.46</td>
<td>86.5</td>
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Note: A minus sign indicates either passive or aggressive behavior. A plus sign indicates assertive behavior. Same response means the same as pretest. A more detailed response means the same pretest, but with more or less assertive content. Different responses means a completely new response from that given during pretest.
### TABLE 2

Comparison of Control Groups' Performance on Paper/Pencil Test on First and Second Videotaping

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Same(+) Response</th>
<th>Detail(-) Response</th>
<th>Detail(+) Response</th>
<th>Different(-) Response</th>
<th>Different(+) Response</th>
<th>Total(-) Response</th>
<th>Total(+) Response</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressive Male (1)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressive Female (2)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Passive</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Aggressive</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>58.3</td>
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Note: A minus sign indicates either passive or aggressive behavior. A plus sign indicates assertive behavior. Same response means the same as pretest. A more detailed response means the same pretest, but with more or less assertive content. Different responses means a completely new response from that given during pretest.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate Behavior</th>
<th>Pre-Training</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Training</th>
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<td>Eye Contact</td>
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<td>46.1</td>
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<td>Voice Tone</td>
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<td>38.4</td>
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<td>Body Gesture</td>
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<td>15.3</td>
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<td>Response Latency</td>
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<td>23.0</td>
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CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Examination of the training results suggest that Black college freshmen can be trained to tactfully assess a situation in which they believe their rights have been violated, appropriately select a strategy and effectively implement assertive behavior. This leads the researcher to conclude that training of this nature validates to Black people and Black students in particular the appropriateness of assertive behavior. Support of this notion comes from Minor (1978) who suggested that one possible reason Blacks fail to assert themselves is because they have historically been conditioned to believe that assertive behavior was inappropriate. Ten point seven percent of the possible assertive responses did not improve. This figure is readily accounted for through an examination of each student's attendance at training sessions. Students that averaged an overall attendance of 90% or better carried a mean of 4 out of 5 possible assertive responses on the posttest. Five of the seven assertive responses that did not improve were provided by students with below 90% in training attendance.

While Black students have shown the capability to effectively use assertiveness skills, there continues to be a need to fully understand why Blacks have not used these skills in the past. Once this is understood, researchers can better design training programs to facilitate their use.
As stated earlier, there is a sparsity of objective data that suggest that Blacks have more difficulty than Whites in using assertive behaviors; however, observation tends to suggest that Blacks do have some difficulty in this area.

In order to fully understand why Black people and Black college students in particular refrain from the use of assertive behavior, a psychological interpretation would prove to be extremely beneficial. Psychologically, not using assertiveness would seem appropriate when one considers the penalty for Blacks who stood up for their rights. Pugh (1972), Poussaint (1972), Banks & Grumbs (1972) and Smith (1980) have all suggested that Blacks' reluctance to assert themselves is due, in part, to pre- and post-slavery anxiety. Pugh (1972) further assert that Blacks practice an adaptive inferiority as an effective coping strategy.

First let us examine Blacks' anxiety which has been conditioned because of their blackness. This refers to a tendency to be deprecatory in responding to one's Blackness. This anxiety often causes passivity in the responding to one's Blackness. This anxiety often causes passivity in the responding of Black students during interpersonal interactions. Casual observations tend to suggest that while this anxiety is a problem for both males and females, it appears to have a more profound effect on Black males. Wilson (1982) suggests that Black males are continuously forced to carefully adjust their masculinity to fit that of White authority figures. Wilson further suggests that if the Black male does not learn to play this psychological game in the White environment, he stands the risk of having his actions completely misinterpreted as being aggressive. Therefore, this adjustment process must be done on a continuous
basis in order for the Black man to survive in the professional arena.

"Selective adaptation" has always been a key to the survival and success of the Black society (Poussaint, 1972). The practice of adaptive inferiority has proven to be one of the most effective coping strategies used. Adaptive inferiority refers to a tendency to assume an inferior posture as a means of coping with these situations when there is no precedent for Black assertiveness. These response tendencies cannot be generalized to all Blacks, but there is evidence to suggest that a substantial number of Blacks have been socialized into using them as coping responses to avoid misinterpretations (Pugh, 1972). In most cases, the behavior of anxiety and the behavior of adaptive inferiority continue as the Black child becomes the Black college freshman.

For many Black students, the large White university has been described as a cold, impersonal machine that calls for the survival of the fittest. This description stimulates two types of responses from the Black students. First, the students may present themselves as passive when interacting with faculty and staff members because of a historical conditioning that they are inferior. A second response by Black students is ineffective assertiveness in faculty and staff interactions. Jarmon (1980) suggests that this occurs because of the increase in knowledge of Black history. Because of this knowledge, students are asserting themselves more. In both cases where the student responds either passively or ineffectively assertive, there is a danger of their not surviving at the university.

The passive students may well be accepted at the university, but because of their underlying belief that they are academically and socially inferior to university Whites, they may not receive the best possible education. This belief will control the students' participation in class
when they are the only students that may not understand the assignment. The passivity of this student may also control his behavior in situations when his rights have been violated. Failure to respond assertively would be based on the student's belief that he may be viewed as uncooperative or even as an aggressive troublemaker.

The assertive student is more likely not to be fully accepted in the university setting. This student will generally be perceived as intimidating by the university faculty and staff members. Even a few passive Black students may encounter these feelings during interactions with this student.

In seemingly normal interactions that require assertive behavior, this student will generally be considered unruly, uncooperative, and a threat to the individuals whom they have confronted. These misperceptions will generally cause the student to be labeled negatively, sometimes officially or unofficially. In either case, these negative labels will tend to retard the student's success at that university. The assertive student will then survive by adopting coping strategies that are compatible to the university. However, these strategies may not always fully protect the student's personal rights.

Black student adjustment to predominantly White universities is not an easy problem to resolve. However, because of a tremendously high attrition rate, university administrators are devoting a great deal of interest to this area. In an attempt to bring us closer to an answer, this researcher will conclude with two recommendations. These recommendations will be more specifically directed to the university in which this study was conducted, Western Michigan University.
1. This study provided data that Black students can learn to demonstrate effectively assertive behavior in a university setting. It is the recommendation of this researcher that the university provide a special orientation for Black students that will address these issues. Many universities across the country are presently providing special orientations for special groups of students (i.e., handicapped and foreign students). These orientations help the students adjust to the university or to both the university and the American experience with less difficulty. While the American experience is not completely novel to the Black students, the transition from a completely Black environment to a mixed university environment is.

2. As stated earlier, a large part of why Black students are misinterpreted is because of the vast difference in cultural norms between Blacks and Whites. These differences persist, in part, because there are few immediate reinforcers for Blacks and Whites to learn of the other's culture. With this in mind, attempts to change university faculty and staff members would be virtually impossible. Therefore, university officials would benefit well from hiring more Black professionals (professors, counselors, administrators) who are sensitive to the Black experience. These professionals would serve as (1) role models for Black students and (2) as facilitators of adaptive behavior.

It is the belief of this researcher that implementation of one or both of the above recommendations would decrease Black student attrition. Once improved, Black students should then more easily make a transition between their old familiar environment and the new unfamiliar environment.
Appendix A

Written Consent Form
Dear King Students,

My name is Ollie G. Barnes; I am a graduate student majoring in clinical psychology. I am presently working on a problem that I believe greatly concerns you. It is my hypothesis that students are more successful in adapting to a university and having the university adapt to them if they act assertively versus passively or aggressively.

I have structured a training program that I believe will help students achieve an effective level of assertiveness. Although the results of the training are not guaranteed, I believe that with your help more evidence can be provided. The training will run a time period of six weeks, one day per week. The program will include relaxation, instructional trainings, nonverbal training skills, behavior rehearsal, viewing of videotapes, structured feedback and some homework assignments. If you feel that you can benefit from this type of training, please complete the section below.

Based on the above and the presentation, I understand the nature and purpose of the assertiveness training program. I also understand that data obtained from my participation in this training will be kept completely confidential between myself and the research team. Also, I may at any time in the training withdraw.

STUDENT SIGN ___________________________ Date ___

RESEARCHER SIGN ___________________________ Date ___
Appendix B

Passive/Aggressive Screening Inventory
Passive/Aggressive Screening Inventory

The following questionnaire will help in assessing your aggressive and assertive behavior. Be honest in your responses and draw a circle around the number that describes you best.

Key: 0 means no or never
      1 means somewhat or sometimes
      2 means usually or a good deal of the time
      3 means practically always or entirely

1. Most people seem to be more aggressive and assertive than I. 0 1 2 3

2. I am careful to avoid hurting other people's feelings, even when I feel that I have been hurt. 0 1 2 3

3. To be honest, people often take advantage of me. 0 1 2 3

4. If a close and respected relative were annoying me, I would smother my feelings rather than express my annoyance. 0 1 2 3

5. I sometimes avoid asking questions for fear of sounding stupid. 0 1 2 3

6. I am prone to "fly off the handle". 0 1 2 3

7. When a latecomer is waited on before I am, I curse at the attendant. 0 1 2 3

8. I continue to pursue an argument after the other person has had enough. 0 1 2 3

9. I show anger by name-calling or using obscenities. 0 1 2 3

10. If a teacher makes a statement that I think is incorrect, I will have the class hear my point of view. 0 1 2 3

11. When I have done something important or worthwhile, I manage to let others know about it. 0 1 2 3

12. If someone has been spreading false and bad stories about me, I see him/her as soon as possible to "have a talk" about it. 0 1 2 3

13. I often have a hard time saying "no". 0 1 2 3

14. I tend to bottle up my feelings to keep from making a scene. 0 1 2 3

15. If I am disturbed by someone smoking, I tell them to put it out. 0 1 2 3

16. I walk away from potential fights that I may be involved in. 0 1 2 3

17. When a person in authority asks me to do something, I insist on knowing why. 0 1 2 3
18. When I am given a compliment, I sometimes don't know what to say. 0 1 2 3

19. When a salesperson makes an effort to sell me something, I find it hard to say "No" even though the merchandise is not what I want. 0 1 2 3

20. If someone is kicking or bumping my chair in a movie or a lecture, I ask the person to stop. 0 1 2 3

21. I find it difficult to keep eye contact when talking to another person. 0 1 2 3

22. In a good restaurant, when my meal is improperly prepared or service is poor, I complain. 0 1 2 3

23. If I am asked to lower my noise level by a counselor, I will argue the point. 0 1 2 3

24. I speak out in protest when someone cuts in front of me in line. 0 1 2 3

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

25. I get angry when __________________________________________________________

26. I fight after ________________________________________________________________

27. I was in ______ number of fist fights during junior high and high school.

28. I get angry and curse ______ number of times per week.

29. I have gotten mad ______ number of times in the past three months that I had to leave the room.

30. I argued with my teachers ______ number of times during high school.

If you feel you will benefit from the training, please indicate that you wish to be a part of the training and why.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Appendix C

Pretest/Posttest
Read each situation carefully, then write down how you would respond in that situation.

1. You are at the library, you need someone to help you find a book. You go the the circulation desk for help, but the lady is talking on the phone to a personal friend. She sees you waiting but continues to talk. How would you respond?

2. An instructor has just explained a hard math problem. The instructor asks are there any questions. Everyone appears to understand, but you don't. You are the only one in the class of 100 students that doesn't understand. What will you do?

3. You are presently failing a class that is still in the first five (5) weeks because the teacher is going over the material too fast. There are still 10 weeks left in the semester. What do you do?
4. You are standing at Drops & Adds and you have been in line for 30 minutes. Just before it is your turn, the 6'5" football player in front of you lets three of his teammates have a cut. What will you do?

5. You are a serious minded freshman living in Ernest Burnham dormitory. You have a roommate that parties all the time, drinking beer, smoking pot, and playing the stereo. You need to study in the room, but he/she wants to party. What do you do?
Scenario Feedback Sheet

The thing I feel you did well was . . .
Facial Expression:

Voice:

Body Gestures:

The thing I feel you could have done different was . . .

Facial Expression:

Voice:

Body Gestures:
Appendix E

Situational Scenarios
Situational Scenarios

1. You are at the library, you need someone to help you find a book. You go to the circulation desk for help, but the lady is talking on the phone to a personal friend. She sees you waiting but continues to talk. How would you respond?

2. You have just been waited on in a busy restaurant. The waitress takes your order of a steak, medium rare, and french fries. When she returns with your food, your steak is well done and you have a baked potato. How would you respond?

3. An instructor has just explained a hard math problem. The instructor asked are there any questions. Everyone appears to understand, but you don't. You are the only one in a class of 100 students that doesn't understand. What will you do?

4. You are standing at Drops & Adds and you have been in line for 30 minutes. Just before it is your turn, the 6'5" football player in front of you lets three of his teammates have a cut. What will you do?

5. You have just worked 8½ hours at your stockboy job, where you are on your feet most of the day. You get on the bus to go home and the only seat left has a $500 champion dog in it. What will you do?

6. You are a hard-working workstudy employee, always on time, and never complaining. You have worked late for the past four nights because the boss asked you to. But now it is Friday and you have no homework. You and some friends have plans to play basketball and go swimming. Now the boss says, "(name), you are one of my best workstudy employees. I am glad you work here. But you know I was wondering if you could work late this Friday night to finish some reports. What would you do?

7. A guy that you have disliked for a long time comes up to you at a college party and starts calling you names in the presence of your girlfriend. What would you do?

8. You are at the gym playing basketball. You have just been fouled, so you call it out. Players on the other team refuse to give you the foul. What would you do?

9. You are over in Canada where the American dollar is worth fifty cents more than Canadian money. You stop and buy a hotdog at the hotdog stand. You pay with American money but your change is in Canadian. You have just been short-changed fifty cents. What would you do?

10. You are at the family reunion. A well-respected uncle comes up and starts talking football for the fifth time that day. What would you do?

11. You have just found out that your girlfriend/boyfriend has been dating
another person at the same time as you. Your feelings are hurt bad. What would you do?

12. You are to get a loan from a bank back home so you can stay in college. But before you get the loan some forms must be completed by WMU's financial aid office. The deadline for this to be completed and you to remain in college is three days away. When you arrive at financial aids, you are told by a nasty secretary that the earliest appointment you could get is one week away. What would you do?

13. You are in the library studying for a big test tomorrow. You have got to do well on the test. The two people sitting at the table in front of you are talking and laughing loud. What should you do?

14. You are a serious minded freshman student living in Ernest Burnham dormitory. You have a roommate that parties all the time, drinking beer, smoking pot, and playing the stereo. You need to study in the room, but he wants to party. What would you do?

15. You have a roommate that has a boyfriend/girlfriend and they continue to sleep over every night. They stay up all hours of the night talking and playing the stereo on school nights. This has been going on for most of the semester. How would you handle it?

16. You have a roommate that continues to borrow your personal belongings. You have asked him/her to stop, but it continues. Recently he/she has worn an outfit that you were planning to wear. When your roommate comes home, how do you respond?

17. Being a freshman, everyone is bugging you to drink this or smoke that, and you really want to be liked. So at the next party, what will you do or say to those that talk about you for not being like the others?

18. You have a big new stereo and your new roommate has a new stereo. Both have brought them to school and there is only space for one to keep their stereo. How would you handle this?
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Lazarus, A. A. Behavior rehearsal vs. non-directive therapy vs. advice in effecting behavior change. Behavior Research & Therapy, 1966, 4, 209-212.


