Overcoming Unadaptive Behavior: An Assertive Skills Program for Women Entering the Workforce

Wolf

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Educational Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
OVERCOMING UNADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR: AN ASSERTIVE SKILLS PROGRAM FOR WOMEN ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

by

Julia Sara Wolf

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
April 1983
OVERCOMING UNADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR: AN ASSERTIVE SKILLS PROGRAM FOR WOMEN ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

Julia Sara Wolf, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1983

This study examined the various relationships between the assertive content of a structured phone call and the probabilities of obtaining an interview in a program designed to generate new assertive behaviors for women entering the workforce. This study was implemented in the setting of a job finding program. It was shown that the difference between calls that produced interviews and those that didn't was a higher percentage of component use in those calls that resulted in an interview. In addition, the utilization of two specific assertive components when placing a call was associated with a higher probability of obtaining an interview. Interpretations of these results indicate that the current procedures of this job finding program could be refined by stressing more assertive behavior techniques as well as providing continuous prompting and rehearsal of behaviors learned.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Doctors Dale Brethower and Barbara Fulton for their support, guidance and evaluations during the course of this study. I especially thank Dr. Norman Peterson for having faith in me to operate the Job Club program. His direction and guidance have been invaluable to me. I also thank Matthew Carman for his expertise in statistical analysis which clarified the results of this study. Finally, I thank my parents for their continued support in all my endeavors.

Julia Sara Wolf
INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.
WOLF, JULIA SARA

OVERCOMING UNADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR: AN ASSERTIVE SKILLS
PROGRAM FOR WOMEN ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY          M.A. 1983

University
Microfilms
International  300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106
PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark √.

1. Glossy photographs or pages ______
2. Colored illustrations, paper or print ______
3. Photographs with dark background √
4. Illustrations are poor copy ______
5. Pages with black marks, not original copy ______
6. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page ______
7. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages √
8. Print exceeds margin requirements ______
9. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine ______
10. Computer printout pages with indistinct print ______
11. Page(s) ________ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author.
12. Page(s) ________ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows.
13. Two pages numbered _________. Text follows.
14. Curling and wrinkled pages ______
15. Other ________________________________________________________________

University Microfilms International

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Probabilities of Obtaining Interviews when Specific Components were used .............. 25
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Percentage of Components used per Call (first ten calls placed) ............... 22

FIGURE 2: Differences in Component use between Interview and Non-Interview calls ............ 24

FIGURE 3: Percentage of Components used for all calls across Subjects .................. 26
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept of assertiveness for women is integrally linked to sex role socialization and contingencies of reinforcement. It is widely believed that the rules of the feminine role teaches and reinforces women to be passive and dependent. Block (1973) states that, while for males, socialization "tends to enhance experimental options... the male socialization experience involves learning to be assertive, competitive, independent, aggressive," for females, "the process tends to reinforce the nurturant, docile, submissive, and conservative aspects of the traditionally defined female role and discourages personality qualities conventionally defined as masculine." These traits include self-assertiveness, achievement orientation, and independence. Block found these statements to accurately reflect her research involving interpretations of various sex role scales and inventories. Truly, the traditional concept of the feminine role is one in which the woman conceives of herself as the "other", the counterpart of the man and children in her life. Her achievement is to help others achieve (Steinmann, 1974). It is largely because of the docile programming of the female roles, denying their own needs and devoting themselves to winning others' approval, both on and off the job, that women in particular seem to wind up with such severe deficits in assertive behavior (Wolfe & Fodor, 1978).
In recent literature, there is a strong belief that the enormous difficulties in the area of assertion do not exist only because women are unaware of the opportunities to act in a manner that would be reinforced or because they do not know how to assert themselves. What appears to be the most important factor blocking women's effective assertiveness is a welter of irrational beliefs, reinforced early in life, that leaves them anxious and fearful of losing others, of hurting others' feelings, of being too aggressive, or of unleashing a flurry of catastrophic retaliation (Wolfe & Fodor, 1978). Furthermore, the social community can also control these fears by punishing a woman for displaying assertive traits, causing her to refrain from such behavior in the future. Similarly, the social community may not support assertive behaviors, which then decline because of the lack of reinforcement.

The results of attempting to break out of the stereotypic female roles can be painful. Feelings may build up into inappropriate behaviors and ineffectual attempts at self assertion, in the form of hysterics and aggression. Typical of the aggressive female in a male dominated profession is the feeling of the "Queen Bee" as proposed by Staines, Tavris, & Jayaratne (1974). The female has an air of aloofness and selfishness to the point to which her male colleagues may generalize all women to be in similar management positions. The "Bee" holding hostile feelings, is individualistic and does not identify with women as a class. Instead, she identifies with specific male colleagues. However, these male colleagues may look upon her as being too domineering, aggressive, or even "bitchy".
Research by Wolfe & Fodor (1978) has shown the difficulty women find in acting assertively both in attaining entry and later in their professions. Relating to traditional sex role stereotypes, they suggest that women frequently damn themselves for their non-assertive behavior; however, they tend to doubt and berate themselves even more strongly when they depart from appropriate feminine behavior, feeling either that they are being "selfish", or "too masculine" or "aggressive". For example, many women, while progressing in their job search with such activities as phoning employers for potential interviews, will fail to do so properly, thereby failing to get the interview. They may view the call itself as an unauthorized intrusion of the employer's time.

Schein (1972) proposed that if once on the job, a woman's self image incorporates aspects of the stereotypical feminine role, she may be less inclined to acquire the job characteristics or engage in the job behaviors associated with masculine managerial positions since such behaviors are inconsistent with her self image. To clarify Schein's statements, the rules governing acting in a certain manner have directed the woman to act according to what she has been reinforced for in the past. If she has not been reinforced for engaging in job behaviors that are considered masculine, she will display other traits that will provide reinforcement for her, typically the feminine ones.

The inflexibility of the woman's sex role has helped keep the potentially achieving woman from untold accomplishments once she has entered the workforce. Block (1973) states that an individual's
conception of sex role will influence her in important ways in both her behavior and self evaluation. With the traditional socialization training and reinforcement women have been given, the behavioral options for such women are extremely narrow. A study involving sex-role questionnaires by Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz (1972) revealed that when describing male versus female traits, the male valued items seemed to reflect a "competency" cluster, including such attributes as being independent, objective, active, competitive, logical and self-confident. The absence of these traits characterizes in full detail the stereotypic perception of women. Relative to men, women were perceived to be dependent, subjective, passive, and non-competitive. Obviously, this is not surprising considering that women in their early reinforcement history have been reinforced for these traits. Under these contingencies, how could any woman easily act in an appropriate manner not related to the stereotyped feminine role without being frowned upon. In other words, women are inhibited by the consequences of punishment for their assertive actions.

Major studies were carried out dealing with the issues of assertiveness and its consequences of anxiety for the working woman. Studies by Horner (1969, 1972) discuss what she refers to as "The Motive to Avoid Success". Many women report that their anxiety about producing interpersonal conflicts often prevents them from taking stances and expressing their true feelings, beliefs, and opinions. Horner (1972) states that femininity and individual achievements which reflect intellectual competence or leadership potential are desirable but
mutually exclusive goals. Women have been so involved in their correct roles, that when faced with a situation in an organization that calls for her consultation or ideas, she does not want to come across as too assertive for fear of being rejected by men who value those sex role stereotypes. The Motive to Avoid Success is centered around the fact that a woman equates intellectual achievements with a loss of femininity. If she fails on the job, she is not living up to standards of performance. On the other hand, if she succeeds, she is not living up to societal expectations about the female role. This fear that women tend to hold about success alerts them to success's negative consequences, specifically, unpopularity and a loss of femininity. Therefore, the result is an inhibition of achievement motivation, which could be considered a response to an aversive stimulus. Horner's (1972) research consisted of administering the Thematic Apperceptive Test to both male and female students to measure the achievement motive using verbal leads instead of pictures. The Motive to Avoid Success was scored as present if the subjects, in response to a thematic lead about a successful figure of their own sex, made statements in their stories showing conflict about the success or other inappropriate responses to the cue. Horner found that this fear is more characteristic of women who are capable of success, are career oriented, and this anxiety would be greater in competitive situations rather than working alone. This is indeed true for the highly educated woman who, in the process of her education, was highly reinforced for assertive traits involving personal success in business or the professions (Steinmann, 1974). Horner (1972) con-
cludes that when faced with the conflict between the feminine image and expressing her competencies or developing her abilities or interests, a woman will adjust her behavior to her internalized sex role stereotype. This can be interpreted in the sense that the control society places on her behavior could change it so that she would receive reinforcement.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to ascertain that the non-assertive woman who has the potential to achieve but is inhibited by societal constraints, must find a solution and release to this limitation. Women feel the pressure for growth, yet at the same time feel unprepared to meet their raised aspirations. As mentioned earlier, women are not unaware of their rights, but cannot readily extinguish their stereotyped behavior they were so typically reinforced for in the past. Women would become effectively assertive, specifically in their job search and once employed, if they were reinforced for those behaviors continuously. The studies mentioned detailed various interpretations of the problem women have in displaying appropriate traits involved in acting assertively. However, these studies provide little empirical evidence that their interpretations are correct. Regarding solutions to the problem, the evidence is indeed sparse. Investigations have been limited primarily to attitude surveys and reports on what women think about their own femininity and inquiries about what males think about the female role. By completing an attitude survey, an individual has the chance to express his or her reactions to the behavior in question. The behavior measured on surveys is verbal behavior. But verbal behavior is not necessarily influenced by the same variables.
as the non-verbal behavior it describes. What an individual says about how he or she would behave in a certain situation doesn't always mean that the behavior will occur as planned. Furthermore, society also places control over appropriate responses. Measuring attitudes and feelings does not provide solutions as the results are not accurate indications of actual behavior. There is a need to provide methods that would aid in increasing appropriate behaviors.

An assertive skills training program would provide opportunities to practice assertive behaviors that could result in receiving respect from others, among other positive consequences. Assertive training can be one of various solutions to the problem that many women face, especially when obtaining and maintaining employment. A program in assertive skills would be structured to teach various assertive skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment.

Structure of the Program

The focal point of an assertive skills training program is the ability to distinguish between assertive, non-assertive, and aggressive behaviors. Assertive behavior, as defined by Dawley & Wenrich (1976), is the ability to secure and maintain one's rights while respecting the rights of others. Jakubowski-Spector (1973) notes that assertive behavior communicates respect, not deference for the other person, as it has the characteristics of an honest, direct and appropriate expression of one's own feelings, beliefs, and opinions. Assertion can also be measured by the degree to which the behavior is effective in producing, maintaining, and enhancing reinforcement (Hull & Schroeder,
1979). To clarify, specific stimuli set the occasion for the female to display a repertoire of responses that are considered assertive because reinforcement follows. Assertive behaviors can then be roughly defined as any set of responses that leads to reinforcement for that person and does not provide punishment to others. In previous work by Lazarus (1973), he defines four different response classes for assertive behavior. Specifically, they are 1) the ability to say no, 2) the ability to make requests, 3) the ability to express positive and negative feelings, and 4) the ability to initiate, continue, and terminate conversations. Assertiveness is an adaptive behavior because it is functional in a given context, is self-enhancing, and generates positive feelings towards oneself and others.

Non-assertiveness, as defined by Jakubowski-Spector (1973) is that type of behavior which is self-defeating. Non-assertive behavior is ineffective as it fails to enhance or produce reinforcement. In other words, non-assertiveness is a failure to act as one would like to, holding back and refraining from actively expressing one's own thoughts and feelings because of fear, inhibition, or modesty. In addition, non-assertive behaviors are seen as unadaptive ones because they go counter to the goals of the individual and to those of society, and because they are dysfunctional and ineffective in a given context.

A third set of responses that needs defining in a program of assertive training is aggressiveness. This set of responses is again seen as self-defeating and unadaptive because in the woman's desire to pursue her goals, specifically obtaining and maintaining employment, she does so at whatever costs to the rights and welfare of others.
(Dawley & Wenrich, 1976). Aggressiveness provides reinforcement for that person, yet punishes others. In the long run, however, these hostile and offensive actions are self-defeating as they will cost the woman respect and cooperation. What is really important to learn from any program of assertive training is the difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness, especially for the woman entering the business world. To avoid confusion of the two, it is important to regard assertiveness as a positive and adaptive trait, while aggressiveness is a negative, unadaptive trait that has delayed emotional consequences such as fear, remorse, anxiety, and alienation. Consequences like these may lead to unfortunate observable consequences such as missed interviews, or inappropriate non-verbal behaviors during the interview. These behaviors could then result in lost employment opportunities.

Too many women don't know about this distinction. Mixing assertiveness and aggressiveness together has not gotten many women in the work force the proper respect and sense of accomplishment. The overly aggressive woman in business may have learned from past experience that she has to act like a man in order to reach her potential on the job. As Schein (1972) found, a managerial job is thought to be a masculine position that would seem to require personal attributes more characteristic of men than women. Yet when women are alienated for being too pushy, they cannot understand why are are left frustrated and anxious. It is these women that a program of assertive training would most benefit. To be able to differentiate among assertiveness, aggressiveness, and non-assertiveness and to know how to behave in the
most effective manner for the achievement of employment is an important step in becoming an assertive woman in business. Assertive training would also benefit those women who are afraid to achieve because of their expectations of negative consequences of crossing over their sex role stereotypes. As Andrew Salter (1949) suggests, because women have been socialized to be submissive, they particularly get confused when they want to speak up. They see the alternative to keeping quiet as aggressiveness and that is unfeminine. However, this can be rectified as the assertive training goal is to be effective in an appropriate way. To be specific, a training program should include both verbal and non-verbal assertive behavior exercises. These exercises should include techniques for making requests of others, identifying personal rights, as well as appropriate non-verbal behaviors necessary for situations such as interviews.

While an assertive skills training program will benefit women in their job seeking efforts and once employment is obtained after they leave the training setting, more likely than not some, if not most, of the appropriate behaviors learned will be extinguished due to lack of positive reinforcement and rehearsal because of the lack of control over the timeliness of reinforcement. Therefore, a more beneficial way for women to maintain the assertive behaviors learned would entail having individuals remain in the structured setting the program would initiate. Such a setting would be a job finding group or club that would require women and men alike to practice appropriate assertive behaviors as well as other job seeking techniques on a daily basis (Azrin, Flores, & Kaplan, 1975). It would be
recommended then to hold the assertive skills program in such a setting. Such a setting already in existence for the general public is an outcome oriented procedure designed specifically to help unemployed individuals in all areas of job finding. This procedure, developed by Azrin et al. (1975) is called the Job Club. This behavioral approach to job counseling has several characteristics that differentiate it from other approaches. The Job Club approach to finding a job is an application of the operant behavior approach as designed by Skinner (1938, 1953) and is identified as behavior modification (Azrin & Besalel, 1980).

When behavioral theory is applied to job finding, it directs the Job Club counselor/trainer to be concerned with an outcome, finding a job for the client. Job seeking, according to Azrin et al. (1975) was viewed as requiring a number of complex skills which should be learned best in a structured learning situation that emphasizes such learning factors as motivation, maintenance of behavior feedback, imitation and feedback. The Job Club approach applies these factors in a structured situation where clients are able to see and chart their progress in various aspects of job finding, such as number of calls made to potential employers, number of interviews obtained, letters of recommendation obtained, as well as receiving continued support from peers, counselor and family. Assistance can also be provided for problems as well as seeking out new job leads, preparation of resumes, interview skills, scheduling of one's time, and expanding one's vocational choices.

The objective behind the Job Club approach stems from the fact
that job seeking is usually considered a solitary practice, often without reinforcement from others. The Job Club program alleviates this concern as it is a socially based effort. Clients meet in a group setting which lends itself to mutual reinforcement, practice of appropriate job seeking behaviors, guidance, and feedback. Specifically, clients usually provide each other with job leads, review of their employment history, and continued encouragement in expanding their goals. Clients can also acquire new job seeking behaviors through observational learning. Members of Job Club are continually exposed to other members practicing the phone script or rehearsing interview questions. This, in turn, helps those clients with their acquisition of new skills. In addition, whereas the job search conducted on one's own is usually considered a part time effort, the structure behind the Job Club approach emphasizes job seeking as a full time occupation (Azrin et al. 1975).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the Job Club approach to vocational counseling incorporates several behavior modification guidelines (Azrin & Besalel, 1980). Reinforcement is used as a major concept and procedure. This principle is applied to the Job Club by providing positive reinforcement for every correct response, such as following the script for telephoning and obtaining an interview. Reinforcement is programmed throughout the daily sessions as well as throughout continued sessions. Several potential sources of reinforcement are usually arranged concurrently to increase the effectiveness of reinforcement, alleviating the problem of satiation or loss of effectiveness of a single reinforcer. The counselor's praise is
not the sole source of reinforcement. Rather, the client receives praise from other members as well as from family and friends.

Another guideline is the use of feedback. Azrin & Besalel, (1980) suggest that this permits both the client and the counselor to observe progress and it allows the counselor greater opportunity for reinforcing the client's progress. Therefore, the client records the number of daily telephone calls, letters, interviews, and other job contacts, such as calling friends and relatives. Clients are provided with standardized forms to record all job seeking behaviors, from recording names and addresses of job leads to recording interview behavior immediately following each interview.

Extinction, not punishment, is another behavioral guideline that is followed. During the course of daily sessions, minor errors made by clients are ignored by the counselor who concentrates on praising and reinforcing correct responses. The positive approach rule (Azrin & Besalel, 1980) is followed in that correction of major errors is accompanied by prompting correct responses, not by criticizing. In addition, reinforcement for correct behavior is very specific to the behavior in question, not general praise for a completed task.

A major guideline that the Job Club advocates is to arrange for all the necessary activities in job seeking to occur in the Job Club office so that no generalization is needed. Participants receive continued reinforcement and instructions so that extinction of correct behavior rarely occurs. There is little reason to be concerned about extinction of behavior as the client remains in the Job Club setting until employment is obtained. This is a major reason that an
assertive skills program for women entering the workforce should be held in a structured job seeking setting such as the Job Club.

In actual practice, the job finding club setting can give those women in need of assertive training, specifically in the area of their job search, many opportunities to practice assertive behavior. One of these opportunities is to be able to ask friends and relatives for any information about job leads they might know about. This has been shown to be the most important source of job leads (Jones & Azrin, 1973; Sheppard & Belitsky, 1966). The program presents this procedure in a structured way as the counselor instructs the client as to what to say when calling friends and relatives for any job leads or letters of recommendation. Part of assertive skills training is to be able to make requests of others, so this component of the job seeking program gives clients ample opportunity. The telephone contacts with potential employers are a further opportunity to practice making requests. Telephone contacts with employers require less effort than traveling to the location to arrange an interview. The program also structures these calls, instructing the client to speak directly to the person in charge of hiring, to arrange an interview, and if not able to do so, to obtain suggestions for other potential employment opportunities.

The past studies mentioned earlier in this chapter discuss the components of anxiety and non-assertiveness in women, especially when attempting to achieve their goals of entering the workforce. An effective assertive skills program would help these women learn and maintain assertive behavior while in their job search and once
employed. Continued counseling that would be provided in a job
finding club lends itself to maintaining these behaviors until employ­
ment if obtained, through behavior rehearsal and active practice of
assertive skills. Therefore, the investigator incorporated the
assertive skills program in the setting of the Job Club itself. As
well as generating new assertive skills, this study investigated the
various relationships between the assertive content of the structured
Job Club phone call and the probability of obtaining an interview. By
investigating the effectiveness of current procedures, this study
provides a basis to refine those procedures for future Job Clubs, thus
increasing its effectiveness. The procedures programmed for the
present study have been developed to answer the following research
questions:

1. What are the major differences in the use of components in
calls that produced interviews and those that did not?

2. What are the probabilities of obtaining an interview using
varied amounts of the structured assertive telephone
components?
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects and Setting

Subjects in this study were five females, ages ranging from 18 to 44 years of age, $\bar{x} = 32.2$. Subjects were selected from a Job Club orientation group. All subjects attended identical orientations, held on two separate occasions, to seek additional information about Job Club as directed by the governmental agency which provided referrals for the Job Club. Women were selected from those clients in the orientation session who had signed a behavioral contract to become members of the Job Club. Subjects 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 had been unemployed for 3 weeks, 4 days; 7 weeks, 1 day; 4 weeks, 2 days; 1 week; and 56 weeks, 4 days; respectively, at the time they filed applications to enroll for Job Club. Subjects 2 and 3 were receiving unemployment compensation at the time of enrollment. Subjects 1, 2, and 3 participated in the same orientation and subsequent assertive skills program and subjects 4 and 5 started their assertive program at a later orientation session. The program took place at the Job Club in Allegan, MI during daily sessions.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this study were the number of calls placed to obtain interviews and also the assertive content (components
used) of each phone call placed. Amount of assertive content was measured over the opportunity to engage in the assertive behavior required of the phone call. Opportunity was defined by occasions when subjects emitted the components of the script without interruption from the employer. During orientation, subjects were taught the eleven components of an assertive phone call first developed by Azrin & Besalel (1980), entitled, Request for Interview Checklist (Appendix A). Continuous measurement was recorded by the use of a tape recorder as well as having another subject serve as a "buddy". The "buddy" recorded each call as it was placed and the assertive components that the subject used in the call, provided the subject had the opportunity to do so. The results were recorded on the Buddy's Telephone Checklist (Azrin & Besalel, 1980; Appendix B). In addition, the result of each call was monitored, e.g. whether an interview was obtained, or whether the employer was unable to talk.

Independent Variables

The major independent variable in this study was the assertion skills program package itself, implemented in the first regular session of Job Club that the subjects as well as other clients participated in. The program encompassed behavior rehearsal for identifying problem behaviors in obtaining employment, identifying personal rights, and identifying proper non-verbal behaviors for interviewing. An additional independent variable was daily prompting and continued role play of the script for the phone call using the Azrin model. In order, these components were 1, Give your name;
2, Ask for the name of department head; 3, Give your name to department head and call him/her by his/her name; 4, Give your qualifications; 5, Tell him/her who referred you (if anyone); 6, Ask for an appointment for possible openings in the future; 7, Suggest a time; 8, Repeat request for an appointment for possible openings in the future; 9, Arrange a time convenient with him/her; 10, If no appointment is possible, ask for other leads; and 11, Tell him/her you will check back.

Reliability

A reliability check was made by an independent observer of 25% of the tape recorded data from the phone calls to further verify accuracy of observation, using a random sample of calls placed. Reliability was calculated by dividing the number of agreements concerning each component used by the total number of agreements and disagreements concerning each component. Agreement between the two sources was 95%.

Procedures

The assertive skills program was presented as part of the regular sessions of Job Club, provided specifically for the five subjects, yet all clients present for the two particular sessions received the information and exercises. The investigator first explained the purpose of the program, which was to acquire assertive skills that could be helpful in obtaining and maintaining employment. Subjects
were then asked to complete the Informed Consent request.

First of all, the investigator explained the definitions of assertive, non-assertive and aggressive behavior, relating these definitions to job seeking. In the first exercise, each subject as well as the other clients present were asked to state a certain behavior related to their job seeking efforts that they would like to change. The subjects discussed the fact that the behaviors they would like to change related to the phone call procedure, specifically to increase assertive behavior when calling an employer.

Next, subjects participated in an exercise to identify personal rights. This exercise was implemented to help subjects accept their rights to express opinions, beliefs, and make requests while not violating the rights of others. Subjects were asked to give examples of all personal rights they felt they deserved, e.g. disagreement, or ending a conversation. Subjects were then asked to select one right that they felt most uncomfortable with accepting and discuss how they would behave in that situation. Subjects discussed problems they had in asking for an interview and in placing a call back to an employer.

The investigator then discussed the differences between adaptive and unadaptive behavior, as it pertained to assertiveness, non-assertiveness, and aggressiveness. Subjects were told that adaptive behavior, assertiveness, was functional and effective in a given context, such as in job seeking. Assertiveness, it was explained, is self-enhancing and generates positive behavior toward one's goal. Unadaptive behavior, non-assertiveness and aggressiveness, goes counter to the goals of the
person and is dysfunctional and ineffective.

It was then explained why to act assertively in the situation that the subjects were now facing and once they would become employed. The investigator discussed the fact that acting assertively would increase one's self respect, confidence, and result in the proper behavior to attain goals, in this case, successful employment.

The final exercise was designed to increase proper non-verbal behavior specifically for the interview. Subjects were instructed to talk about an inane topic such as Kleenex, paper, or pencils for one minute so that they and the other subjects could see how the participant maintained eye contact, kept off-task body movements to a minimum, and maintained good posture. Subjects were then asked to critique one another's performance.

Following the assertive skills program, subjects were instructed to continue placing phone calls for obtaining interviews, as directed by the investigator. Calls were to be placed until employment was obtained or the time period of two months, a limit set by the governmental agency, had expired. At this time any subject would have to be referred back to the governmental agency for re-classification.
 CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Subjects 1, 2, and 5 obtained employment before the completion of the study. Subjects obtained 5, 2, 7, 7, and 10 interviews respectively and were active in the study for 4, 3, 11, 14, and 13 days.

Data were analyzed from the phone call monitoring form from calls in which the employer was available to speak. Figure 1 illustrates percentage of components used per call for the first ten calls placed. Since component 5, Telling the employer who referred the caller; was not applicable in any of the phone calls, it was not included in any of the analysis. Use of the assertive components during calls when the employer was available to talk and when the components were applicable showed a variety of individual differences.

The mean percentages of component use for each subject were 55.9%, 68.5%, 68.5%, 25.3%, and 63.8%, respectively. It should be noted, however, that data from Subject 2 were calculated from 8 calls, not 10. Figure 1 also illustrates percentage of components used when an interview was obtained. Discussing the first ten calls only, obtained interviews were associated with a higher percentage of use. At least 71% of all applicable components were used when the call resulted in an interview.

Figure 2 illustrates differences in percentage of components used for calls that resulted in interviews and those that did not.
Figure 1. Percentage of Components used per Call (first ten calls placed)
Results are shown both across subjects as well as individual results. The data illustrating these differences across subjects reveal that when subjects obtained interviews, specific assertive components were used a larger percentage of time. This was expected in the course of participation. Data illustrating individual subjects' results show the same pattern; however, the differences in component frequency are not nearly as large. Looking across subjects, major differences were seen specifically with component 6, Requesting an appointment to discuss possible future job openings; component 7, Suggesting a time; and component 8, Repeating the request for an appointment if applicable. Actual differences were 20%, 36%, and 52%, respectively. Furthermore, the absence of data for interviews obtained using components 10 and 11 was because those components were applicable only if an interview was not possible.

Table 1 lists the probabilities of obtaining an interview specifically looking at the use of components 7 and 8 and combinations thereof. These probabilities were computed by first subtracting all calls using component 7 and 8 from the grand total and using the remainder. For this calculation, the grand total was 171 calls, and the number of calls using components 7 and 8 was 76. Then the number of interviews that were obtained from calls not using component 7 and 8 was counted and divided by the number of calls placed not using components 7 and 8. For this illustration, there were 2 interviews obtained over 95 calls placed. The result from this particular calculation was .02. Identical computations were performed for the other probabilities, subtracting out non-appropriate calls, when
Figure 2. Differences in Component use between Interview and Non-Interview calls.
either component 7 or 8 was used alone and then in situations where both were used. These components were analyzed to ascertain their importance in addition to the first six, which are usually spoken in sequence. Results here indicate that the probability of obtaining an interview using both components 7 and 8 was much higher than for calls failing to do so.

Table 1
Probabilities of Obtaining Interviews when Specific Components were used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7, Suggesting a time</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8, Repeating the request for an appointment to discuss possible future job openings</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 and 8</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing to use either 7 or 8</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of use of all components in all calls, whether or not an interview was obtained. The results are shown across subjects. Results here show that component 1, Stating the name; component 2, Asking for the name of the department head; component 4, Stating qualifications; component 6, Requesting an appointment to discuss possible future job openings; and component 9, Confirming a convenient time after the interview was obtained; was each used over 70% of the time.
Figure 3. Percentage of Components used for all calls across Subjects.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to generate new assertive skills for women entering the workforce, and also explored the various relationships involving the components of Azrin & Besalel's (1980) Request for Interview Checklist phone script. The results of looking at separate components revealed interesting implications with the assertive call itself, illustrating that some components may be more important in obtaining an interview than others. This study also demonstrated that the probabilities of obtaining an interview vary with the combination of assertive components used.

The percentage of assertive components used per call fluctuated for individual subjects (see Figure 1). These fluctuations in the use of components signify a lack of consistent rehearsal of the phone script, especially preparing oneself for varied responses of the employer. The contingencies were not sufficient for the subject to repeat all of the necessary components of the script as directed. If the responses were controlled by certain stimuli, and if the stimuli were not made present by the employer's responses, the appropriate response as directed by use of the script was not made. In other words, the subjects may have failed to utilize all opportunities to use the components available because the employer emitted a response other than what was expected, thereby causing the subject to stray from the script. For example, an employer might have asked the subject
questions that did not pertain to the call, such as personal questions. However, it should be noted that the utilization of a higher percentage of components was associated with obtaining an interview as an interview was obtained when percentage of component use was above 70%.

There is also an interesting point to consider concerning the employer's role in the phone call. It could be possible that when the employer was pleasant to the caller, the caller used more components and obtained the interview. However, it is also possible that it is the other way around. In other words, the interview was granted because the subject used the necessary components, however many, to obtain the interview. In actuality, a subject would only have to use components beyond component 7 if an interview was not granted the first time it was requested. Obviously the employer was not as receptive as desired yet the subject continued to use additional components.

Results relating to the first research question indicated major differences in phone calls placed that resulted in interviews for potential employment and those that didn't (see Figure 2). Viewing each component separately across subjects, the results here show that the largest differences in component use occurred with component 6, Requesting an appointment to discuss possible future job openings; component 7, Suggesting a time; and component 8, Repeating the request for an appointment if necessary. However, it was also expected that there would be a large difference in the use of component 4, Stating one's qualifications. Unfortunately, this was not upheld.

When components 6,7, and 8 were used, a resulting interview was
substantially more likely. This indicates, for example, that 90% of the time a subject obtained an interview, component 6, Requesting an appointment; was used. This was compared to 70% of the time an interview was not obtained, component 6 was used. There are, however, factors involved here that were not under the control of the investigator or the subjects. As mentioned earlier, the responses in general of the employer were certainly a part of the decision to grant an interview. Even though the results do indicate that there is indeed a greater chance of obtaining an interview when using all necessary assertive components, the subject cannot rely entirely on the phone script as the reason for the resulting interview. A major implication to consider here is that all the components involved in the phone call are not independent of each other. At least the first six to seven components are spoken in sequence, and there was never an occasion for a subject to use all eleven components, as components 10 and 11 were used only if an interview was not obtained.

Looking specifically at components 6, 7, and 8, there are some interesting points to discuss (see Figure 2). Component 6, Requesting an appointment to discuss possible future job openings; was used 90% of the time when an interview was obtained. This means that the script was not followed in the exact form as instructed on the written outline the other 10% of the time, yet it still resulted in an interview. Component 7, Suggesting a time; and component 8, Repeating the request for an appointment; revealed the largest differences in percentages of use in obtaining an interview or not. These results suggest that these components were a major factor in obtaining an
interview. These components encompassed assertive statements not typically used by the subjects before the assertive skills program was implemented. This was based on statements made by the subjects by the fact that they had never used this procedure before when looking for employment.

Because of such large differences involving the use of components 7 and 8 in obtaining interviews, a probability table was developed in answer to the second research question, to further investigate the relationships between the use of these specific components and the probability of obtaining an interview. The results indicate that when a call was placed and these components were not used when there was an opportunity to do so, the probability of obtaining an interview was extremely low (see Table 1). However, when using component 7 in addition to any of the first six, the probability of obtaining an interview was higher. Important here to consider is the fact that this probability may not be as exact as it could be because there were times when using component 7 was sufficient enough to obtain an interview, and component 8 was non-applicable. For this study, however, those situations were included in the analysis. Furthermore, when component 8 was used without using 7 when there was an opportunity to use both, the probability was even higher.

Finally, the highest probability of obtaining an interview occurred when subjects used both component 7 and 8 when there was an opportunity to do so. Here, the probability was .33. Implications here for future use of the Azrin & Besalel (1980) script would be to stress the use of these two components when necessary as the results
of this study revealed such positive outcomes.

Results from the frequency of use of each of the eleven components over the course of participation, whether an interview was obtained or not, are mixed (see Figure 3). Components 1, 2, 4, 6, and 9 were used over 70% of the time the subject had the opportunity. However, components 7 and 8, which were mentioned previously as a possible deciding factor in obtaining an interview, were used less than 30% of the total time in the study. Overall, the lack of use of components 7 and 8 could be due to similar reasons stated earlier for the results of percentages of components used per call (see Figure 1). Again, the responses made by the subjects were controlled by certain stimuli, and if they were not made present by the employer, the responses weren't emitted by the subject. In other words, if the employer emitted a response that the subject wasn't expecting, such as asking a personal question, the subject would have to answer, thus straying from the script. At that time, it might then have been an inappropriate occasion to use the next component because it would be said out of context in the now alter conversation. In addition, components 9, 10, and 11 should not be given as much weight as the rest of the components used. These components were only used in certain instances. For example, component 9, Arranging a convenient time; was only used when the interview was already obtained, thereby causing the results to show a high percentage of use. Component 10, Asking for other leads; and component 11, Telling the employer you will check back; were only used if an interview was not obtained. However, the lack of use of these two components could be due to lack of continuous, consistent
prompting on the part of the investigator.

In summary, this study on assertive skills training gave the subjects new information on the benefits of assertive behavior, specifically in the job hunt. Practice and use of the phone script for obtaining interviews made practical use of the skills that the training program implemented. By breaking down and analyzing the phone script into separate components, the investigator was able to illustrate some important relationships between the assertive content of the phone call and probabilities of obtaining an interview using varied components. Azrin & Besalel (1980), by developing the phone script itself, increased the effectiveness of a job seeker's efforts to obtain interviews by telephone. Yet, this study was able to probe further to uncover and analyze exactly what aspects of the phone call would be of maximum benefit for the job seeker to stress in the course of the job search. The issue of assertiveness as a set of responses, either in a phone call to obtain employment or in a situation once on the job that calls for assertive behavior, should be thought of as the most appropriate behavior that will provide reinforcement for that person. Consequently, assertiveness is situational because the stimuli present in different situations a woman must face will provide different opportunities to display assertive traits. Likewise, results from the phone calls in this study revealed that each phone call brought forth different stimuli that provided varied opportunities to behave in an assertive manner. It was also found that the consistent rehearsal of the assertive behaviors in the phone call is needed to prepare the job seeker for a more effective call each time. It is hoped that
the results and implications of this study will be used in future job seeking programs as an aid to already existing procedures.
Appendix A: Request for Interview Checklist

Component 1: Give your name.
Component 2: Ask for the name of the department head.
Component 3: Give your name to department head and call him/her by his/her name.
Component 4: Give your qualifications.
Component 5: Tell him/her who referred you (if anyone).
Component 6: Ask for an appointment for possible openings in the future.
Component 7: Suggest a time.
Component 8: Repeat request for an appointment for possible openings in the future.
Component 9: Arrange a time convenient with him/her.
Component 10: If no appointment is possible, ask for other leads.
a) Name of person, company and phone number
b) ask if "Would you mind if I tell this person that you recommended I call?"
Component 11: Tell him/her you will check back.
### APPENDIX B: BUDDY'S TELEPHONE CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person Calling</th>
<th>Buddy</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Did person give his/her name?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did person ask for name of department head?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did person give his/her name to dept head and call him by his name?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did person give qualifications?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Did person give name of referral? (if anyone)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Did person ask for an appointment for possible openings in the future?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Did person suggest a time?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did person repeat request for an appointment for possible future openings?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Did person arrange a time convenient with employer?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. If no appt possible, did person ask for other leads?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Name of person, company, phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Did person ask if &quot;Would you mind if I tell this person that you recommended I call?&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Did person tell employer that he/she would check back?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


