Maintenance of Housekeeping Skills in an Independent Living Situation for Developmentally Disabled Persons

Kenneth E. Bauman

Western Michigan University

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MAINTENANCE OF HOUSEKEEPING SKILLS
IN AN INDEPENDENT LIVING SITUATION
FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS

By
Kenneth E. Bauman

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1975
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this thesis I have benefited a great deal from the help of several people. First, I wish to express my deep gratitude to my advisor, Brian Iwata, who worked closely with me each step of the way and whose advice and encouragement were invaluable to me. I also wish to thank Kathleen Lockhart and Malcolm Robertson for all the help and suggestions they gave me. To my parents, Kenneth and Helen Bauman, go my appreciation for believing in and encouraging me in everything I've endeavored. Mostly, I want to thank my wife, Joanne, who managed to live with me through all of this and for the advice, guidance, total understanding and support she has always given me.

Kenneth E. Bauman
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Western Michigan University, M.A., 1975
Psychology, clinical

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing trend toward the placement of institutionalized persons within the community. This has come about for a number of reasons. People are beginning to more carefully examine the rights of the retarded and to question the benefit of institutional living (Johnston & Fraser, 1972). It has been well documented that institutions generally provide only custodial services and are either not equipped or do not feel a need to teach residents the skills needed to live in the community (Wolfensberger, 1969, 1972). By their very nature, institutions are segregated and non-normalizing; i.e., they do not "provide an accurate model of the society to which some of the residents will eventually need to adjust. . . . By definition, the institution is an abnormal environment" (Levinson, 1960). Finally, institutions have been shown to be economically unfeasible in providing custodial care for retarded persons for the duration of their lives (Wolfensberger, 1969). With these factors in mind, alternatives are being developed within the community to serve the needs of the retarded individual.

A few of the more common alternatives to institutions have been foster care homes, half-way houses and group living homes. These alternatives have advantages over institutions in that they provide a more normalized setting for the residents. These settings often mean increased responsibility and increased ownership of property for the residents. These settings also tend to house fewer individuals; therefore, the supervisor/resident ratio is greater. In addition,
Community placement has been shown to be less expensive per year than institutional care (Wolfensberger, 1969).

In determining the results of community placement, Campbell (1971) assessed the effectiveness of community based hostels versus traditional hospital settings in the development of self-care skills. Subjects in both settings were scored on their ability to perform a group of self-care skills. Campbell found that the hostel group scored significantly higher than a matched hospital group. Those in the hospital group were all deemed suitable to be transferred to a community hostel but were unable to move due to geographical and space limitations.

Although much research is favorable, problems do exist with many of these placement settings. Both adult foster homes and group homes can easily become mini-institutions and deteriorate to the point of simply providing custodial service. "Staff members who were initially energetic and enthusiastic about providing training and programming often lost their enthusiasm after the clients had remained in the residence four or five years" (Skarnulis, 1974, p. 8). In addition, group homes and foster care homes are still, in essence, dependent settings and therefore promote dependent behaviors on the part of the residents. Examples of this dependency are that (a) food is usually purchased and prepared by someone else, (b) problems are often solved by the houseparent instead of the resident, and (c) residents generally feel that they are in someone else's house and that they are under the control and protection of others. According to Campbell (1971), "Observation of the daily routine in the hostels unquestionably
reveals that the hostels are to some extent non-developmental. Staff do things for residents (washing their hair, lacing their shoes, etc.) that many residents could, with training, do for themselves" (p. 308).

These same residents, however, are often not prepared to function on their own. When residents of half-way houses were given a chance to live independently, it was discovered that there were many skills that they still did not have that were necessary prerequisites to living totally on their own. Their inability to function in such a situation was due to their lack of experience living in a community and lack of appropriate models and teachers for independent behaviors, not because they were retarded (Perske & Marquiss, 1973). Thus, there is a need for additional programming during the transition from group residences to independent living situations.

Family and Children Services of Kalamazoo, Michigan developed an Independent Living Project (ILP) in response to the need for an intermediate step between dependent and totally independent living. The purpose of the project was to place selected adults who had previously lived only in dependent settings such as foster homes, group homes, or institutions, into training apartments and teach them some of the necessary skills to live independently.

A psychology graduate student was employed to work closely with these clients in the ILP but he was not to live with them. The clients would thus live separately from the "trainer" but the trainer could be available on short notice and was able to make frequent contacts with them. Two clients from the area were placed in such an apartment situation.
Upon placement in the ILP, deficits were noted in many areas, including budgeting, shopping, communication, meal planning and preparation and housekeeping skills.

Of immediate importance to health were meal planning and preparation. Of secondary importance, but also necessary for health reasons as well as for acceptance by the community, were appropriate housekeeping skills. It was felt that since acceptance into a community was difficult and since people often judge others by the way their house is kept, the teaching of housekeeping skills would be an integral part of any community integration process.

A review of the literature indicates that little research has been done in the area of training adults who have been institutionalized or who are retarded in these kinds of independent living skills. It is known, for example, that behaviors can be taught using strong external control such as token economies (Phillips, Phillips, Fixsen & Wolf, 1971; Ayllon & Azrin, 1968), attention (Madsen, Becken & Thomas, 1968; Hall, Lund & Jackson, 1968), and punishment (Risley, 1968). As effective as these methods are, they were deemed inappropriate for use with the clients of the ILP, since a major goal of the program was to train them to perform these tasks independently; i.e., with a minimum of external control.

Self-recording has been used as one method of behavior change which does not rely heavily on external control. Broden, Hall and Mitts (1971) found self-recording to be effective in modifying classroom studying and talking out behavior. McFall (1970) found that self-recording was sufficient to change the frequency of smoking.
behavior. McKenzie and Rushall (1974) determined that self-recording increased the frequency of attendance at swimming practice.

Findings such as these, however, have not been unanimously confirmed. Fixsen, Phillips and Wolf (1972), for example, found that self-recording was unreliable when compared with reports of other observers and that the self-recording procedure itself had no effect on the target behavior. These findings were supported by Santogrossi, O'Leary, Romanczyk and Kaufman (1973), who reported that self-evaluation procedures alone were ineffective in reducing disruptive behavior. They pointed out that studies supporting the use of self-recording have primarily used normal subjects and that it might not be possible to generalize these results to special populations.

Quilitch (1975) compared the effects of memos, workshops and schedules on the performance of attendants in leading daily recreational activities in an institutional setting. Neither the memo nor the workshops motivated staff to lead activities; however, when staff were scheduled and given performance feedback, they conducted sessions more frequently.

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate several procedures in maintaining appropriate meal preparation and housekeeping behaviors on the part of two adult subjects. The effects of instructions, scheduling plus self-recording and self-scheduling plus self-recording were examined. These procedures were chosen because they rely less heavily upon powerful external contingencies.
**Method**

**Subjects and Setting**

Two 20-year-old males served as subjects. Subject A was diagnosed as an achondroplastic dwarf. He had lived in a Michigan institution for the retarded until the age of 17, at which time he was placed in a foster home where he lived for 3 years. At the time of his placement into the ILP he had graduated from high school and was beginning to take classes at the local community college. He had tested in the normal range of intelligence at that time.

Subject B had lived in an adult foster home for the last 8 months prior to entering the ILP. He had lived with his parents before that time. He was working in a vocational rehabilitation program at Goodwill industries at the time of his placement into the ILP. He had tested in the mildly retarded range of intelligence.

The subjects lived in a two-bedroom, single-floor apartment which had an adjoining living-dining room area, a modern kitchen and a full bathroom.

Subjects were not aware of the specific purpose of the study but were aware that a study was being conducted and that the experimenter and a reliability observer would be coming in to take data. Written consent was obtained from both subjects.

**Observation**

Throughout the study, data were taken Monday through Friday on two major categories of housekeeping skills. These categories were:
preparing appropriate meals and clearing the kitchen area, and cleaning the living areas. A total of 21 sub-items were included in these two categories. The categories, sub-items and definitions appear in Appendix A. Data were taken at dinner time and at 9:00 p.m. daily. During the dinner observation, the experimenter marked a YES to indicate presence of or a NO to indicate absence of items in the dinner category. At 9:00 p.m. the experimenter would determine whether the kitchen, living area and bathroom were clean according to the definitions of the sub-items. A YES would be marked if these sub-items met the criteria for clean or clear and a NO response would be marked if criteria were not met.

Reliability

Independent reliability checks were made approximately once each week. Observers stood at opposite ends of the rooms and thus were unable to see the other observer's data sheet. This procedure was followed to assure independence of observation. Reliability was calculated over all 21 items by dividing the total number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplying by 100. An agreement was scored if both the experimenter and the observer recorded a YES for a particular item or if both recorded a NO for a particular item. A disagreement was scored if one recorded a YES and the other recorded a NO for the same item.
Procedure

Baseline. During the baseline phase the experimenter went to the apartment each night and marked either a YES or a NO for each of the 21 items on the data sheet. These were marked according to whether the conditions met the criteria of the definitions. At no time did the experimenter make any verbal comments about the condition of the apartment.

Instructions. The experimenter spent 2 hours with the subjects discussing the importance of eating a well-balanced meal, of setting the table properly and of keeping the apartment clean.

Several reasons were given to emphasize the importance of these matters. These included:

1. the possibility of its being a health hazard,
2. the likelihood that having a messy house might cause arguments between the two roommates,
3. that others in the apartment community may complain about the way the apartment was kept,
4. that guests to an apartment would feel more comfortable if the apartment were clean.

There was also a discussion of the importance of eating a good meal, and the advantages of setting the table properly and of using appropriate utensils.

The experimenter talked about each area of the apartment and what had to be done for each area to be considered clean. He paraphrased each definition so that the subjects understood its content.
After the discussion, the experimenter asked the subjects questions about the various areas to determine if the subjects had learned the basic content of the definitions. Examples of the questions asked were, "How many items are allowed on the bathroom counter?" and "What needs to be done to set the dinner table?" If the subjects' answers to any questions were incorrect, the experimenter would provide additional information and would then ask the question again, but word it differently. Instructions were not repeated at any time after the initial discussion.

**Scheduling plus self-recording.** The experimenter spoke with the subjects and in cooperation with them, prepared a schedule dividing responsibilities for preparing dinner, setting the table, and for cleaning and clearing the kitchen, living area and bathroom. An agreement was made as to how frequently each of the chores was to be done. For example, dinner and setting the table were nightly chores. Other chores needed to be done only twice a week. Chores were divided equally between the two subjects.

Also contained in the schedule were columns in which each subject was to make a check next to a chore after the chore had been completed. At the end of each week the experimenter removed the schedule with the self-recorded checks and posted another schedule sheet. At no time did the experimenter comment on the number of chores completed by either subject. The chore schedule is presented in Appendix B.

**Self-scheduling plus self-recording.** At the beginning of this phase the experimenter told the subjects that they had progressed sufficiently that they could make out their own schedule of chores. A list
of all the chores was collected weekly and a new list posted. The list contained only the day and the chores rather than having the chores listed under each person's name. When one of the subjects completed a chore he was told to write his initials next to the chore. The subjects were told to schedule the chores in any fashion that was agreeable to both of them.

**Experimental Design**

Following collection of baseline data on all sub-items, the Instruction condition was employed simultaneously over both categories. A multiple baseline design (Baer, Wolf & Risley, 1968) across behaviors was employed for the Schedule plus self-record condition. The Self-schedule plus self-record condition was instituted across both categories simultaneously.

**Results**

**Reliability**

A total of eight reliability checks were conducted across both categories. Reliability scores ranged from 95% to 100% with a mean of 97%.

**Data**

Figure 1 (page 11) shows the daily percentage of tasks completed in both major categories during the experiment and the mean percentages for each separate condition. Low completion rates were observed during baseline and the effect of instructions produced little or no change.
Figure 1. The Daily Percentage of Tasks Completed in the Dinner/Kitchen and Living Areas and the Mean Percentages for Each Separate Condition.
in chore completion. Observable increases in chore completion were seen in both categories as a result of scheduling the chores and asking the subjects to record their completion. This effect was maintained when the scheduling of chores was turned over to the subjects.

Discussion

This study indicated that it is possible to use scheduling plus self-recording procedures to modify behaviors of two adult subjects in an independent home setting. These results are important in that they show the feasibility of generating and maintaining appropriate meal preparation and housekeeping skills without the use of strong external contingencies. In addition, it was shown that subjects acquired a degree of skill necessary for independently scheduling household chores and for recording the completion of those chores. It was also shown that fading experimenter involvement had little or no detrimental effect on performance. Thus, these results do not support the suggestion by Santogrossi et al. (1973) that self-recording may not be an effective change procedure to use with "non-normal" subjects.

Baseline data clearly indicated a low frequency of meal preparation and housekeeping behaviors. During the first 3 days of baseline, a higher percentage of chores completed in both categories was evident, when compared to other baseline days. This high percentage was assumed to be a "honeymoon effect," as the subjects had just moved into the new apartment at that time. An additional factor may have been that it takes several days for some areas to become sufficiently dirty as to be measurable.
The Instruction condition was implemented to determine whether the subjects needed to learn that it was important to do the chores and exactly how to do them or whether they merely needed to be motivated to complete them. A multiple baseline design was not used in the Instruction phase because it was hypothesized that their problem was one of motivation. Instructions on the benefit of appropriate meal preparation and housekeeping skills along with clear definitions as to what was appropriate in these areas did not prove beneficial; thus, providing evidence in support of the hypothesis.

The Schedule plus self-recording condition was effective in modifying housekeeping and meal preparation behaviors. Some of the possible variables which may have in part influenced the success of this phase include:

1. the influence of the experimenters collecting data sheets at the end of the week,
2. the reinforcing properties of self-recording,
3. the avoidance of fights over who is doing a larger share of the chores,
4. the stimulus control aspects of scheduling,
5. the reinforcement of having a clean home.

The last variable is less likely to have had a significant effect as the subjects had little or no experience with "clean" being paired with any positive consequences. However, after the experimental procedures resulted in their keeping their apartment clean, it would be expected that reinforcement from others may serve to make having a clean apartment a conditioned reinforcer.
The results achieved with the schedule plus self-record procedure were sufficient to change the target behavior. However, if it had been determined from the data that such a condition was not sufficient to produce the desired behavior change, additional procedures would have been implemented, most likely involving the use of some type of contingencies, such as praise, contingent trips to the movies, etc.

It should be noted that during the Schedule plus self-record condition the target behaviors did not reach perfect levels of completion. No attempt was made to increase the behaviors to a 100% level of performance. The experimenter felt that the percent of chores completed in this condition was sufficient as to fall within a normal range.

The third condition, Self-schedule plus self-record, was implemented in order to transfer the responsibility for the program from the experimenter to the subjects, thus promoting more independent functioning. This procedure was effective in maintaining meal preparation and housekeeping skills at levels which were comparable to the previous condition.

Mahoney (1972) stated in his analysis of various self-management techniques that two of the most common problems with self-management studies are:

1. their reliance on subject collected data (which is often not accurate),
2. their absence of good experimental control.

The present study sought to account for these variables by not using the subjects' self-recording data as the dependent variable.
The data used as evidence of behavior change were taken by the experimenter. In addition, a multiple baseline design was instituted during one condition to increase the probability that any changes that occurred were due to its implementation.

Although some of the problems brought out by previous experimenters have been dealt with, many areas for additional examination are recommended. A study in which the scheduling and self-recording condition were employed separately might provide a contribution to the understanding of the effect that each component has on the total results.

Other studies may incorporate additional fading procedures after the completion of the Self-schedule plus self-record condition. This would have as its purpose total elimination of experimenter involvement. In addition, after the behaviors stabilized in each experimental condition, data could conceivably be taken less often, perhaps on a bi- or tri-weekly basis. Procedures such as these may also be used to maintain other living skill behaviors such as shopping or appropriate use of free time, and may be used to help subjects plan their own daily, weekly and monthly activities.

In summary, the results of the present study indicate that individuals previously from dependent living situations can be taught to schedule and monitor their own behavior and that strong external control may not be necessary.
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Johnston, R., & Fraser, M. Right to treatment. Mental Hygiene, 1972, 56(3), 13-16.

Levinson, E. J. Professionals and parents, a study in changing attitudes. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1960, 64, 765-769.


Appendix A

Category Definitions

Dinner/kitchen area

I. Prepare Dinner
   A. Definition. Dinner will consist of a main dish, a vegetable or side dish, and a beverage. A main dish is defined as meat, fish, casserole, pizza, eggs, or soup. A sandwich is not considered a main dish. A side dish is defined as applesauce, cole slaw, potato, salad, fruit, or similar food.
   B. Measurement. The experimenter will observe and record the presence or absence of
      1. A main dish
      2. A vegetable or side dish
      3. Beverage when the subjects are eating dinner

II. Setting Table
   A. Definition. A table will be considered set when it has on it a plate or bowl, a napkin, knife, fork and spoon, and beverage container for each person eating dinner.
   B. Measurement. The experimenter will observe and record the presence or absence of
      1. Plate or bowl
      2. Napkin
      3. Silverware
      4. Beverage container while dinner is being eaten
III. Clear Table

A. Definition. There should be no utensils used for dinner on the table except for the sugar bowl and salt and pepper shakers.

B. Measurement. At 9:00 p.m. the experimenter will observe and record the presence or absence of cooking and eating utensils on the dinner table.

IV. Clean Kitchen

A. Definition. The kitchen is clean when all food is off the counters, stove and sink. All pots, pans and cooking utensils should be off of the counters and stove. A water kettle is allowed on the stove. Pots, pans, cooking utensils, plates, bowls, silverware and glasses are permissible if they are in the dish drainer on the counter. There should be no more than six (6) eating or cooking utensils in the sink.

B. Measurement. At 9:00 p.m. the experimenter will observe and record the presence of food, pots, pans and cooking utensils on counters and stove. A YES will be marked for each area that is clean. Articles in the dish drainer will not be counted. The experimenter will count the number of cooking and eating utensils in the sink and will mark a YES if there are six (6) or less.

V. Clean Kitchen Floor

A. Definition. There should be no more than fifteen (15) foreign objects, e.g., hairs, food crumbs or pieces of
paper on the floor directly in front of and up to one foot out from the counters, stove, sink and refrigerator.

B. Measurement. The experimenter will mark a YES if there are fifteen (15) or less foreign objects on the designated area. A NO will be marked if there are more than fifteen (15) foreign objects on it.

VI. Amount of Garbage in the Kitchen

A. Definition. There will not be more than one container filled with garbage in the kitchen. Container will measure 12" x 6" x 36". The container will not be overflowing.

B. Measurement. At 9:00 p.m. the experimenter will observe the number of containers of trash in the kitchen. If there is only one container the experimenter will place a ruler across the middle of the width of the container. If the ruler touches both rims of the container without coming into contact with items in the container, then the container is considered not to be overflowing.

Living area

I. Cleared Living Room Floor

A. Definition. The living room floor will be considered cleared when there are no more than four (4) extraneous items on the floor. Extraneous items do not include objects that belong on the floor such as furniture, lamps, bikes, or plants. Extraneous items do include, but are not limited to shoes (a pair is one item), books, games,
recreational materials, pens and paper. One stack of newspapers will be allowed. A stack should not include more than four (4) days accumulation.

B. Measurement. At 9:00 p.m. the experimenter will observe and record the number of extraneous items on the living room floor. The experimenter will look at the largest stack of newspapers (if there is more than one) and mark down the dates. Each date over four (4) will be considered an occurrence of an extraneous item. A group of objects will be considered one (1) occurrence of an extraneous item when they are stacked such that at least fifty percent (50%) of each item is resting on the item below it in the pile. This includes each additional stack of newspapers beyond the largest one. If there are four (4) or less extraneous items on the floor it will be marked YES.

II. Cleared Living Room Furniture

A. Definition. Living room furniture will be considered cleared when there are no more than four (4) extraneous items on the furniture. Extraneous items do not include objects that belong on the furniture such as slip covers, T. V., ash trays and lamps. Extraneous items are defined as they are in I, Living area.

B. Measurement. See item I, Living area.

III. Clean Bathroom Toilet

A. Definition. There should be no visible ring or stain in the toilet (on the seat or down the side of the toilet).
There should be no more than ten (10) hairs on any part of the toilet.

B. Measurement. At 9:00 p.m. each night the experimenter will observe the toilet. The toilet will be considered dirty if there is a visible stain in or on the toilet or if there are more than ten (10) hairs on any part of the toilet.

IV. Clean Bathroom Counter and Sink

A. Definition. There should be no more than five (5) items on the bathroom counter. There should be no more than a total of ten (10) hairs on the counter or sink.

B. Measurement. The experimenter will count the number of items on the bathroom counter. If there are five (5) or less and if there are less than ten (10) hairs on the counter and sink, the experimenter will mark a YES.

V. Clean Bathtub

A. Definition. There should be no more than fifteen (15) hairs on any part of the bathtub and no visible ring.

B. Measurement. The experimenter will mark a YES if there are no more than fifteen (15) hairs on any part of the bathtub and there is no visible ring.

VI. Clean Bathroom Floor

A. Definition. There should be no objects on the floor of the bathroom except for rugs and garbage container. There should be no more than fifteen (15) hairs or extraneous objects on the floor of the bathroom.
B. Measurement. The experimenter will mark the floor as being clean if there are no more than fifteen (15) hairs or extraneous items on it.
## Appendix B

### Household Chores

#### Subject A

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<tr>
<td>1. prepare meal</td>
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<td>2. clear table</td>
<td>2. clean kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. set table</td>
<td>1. prepare meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. clean kitchen</td>
<td>2. clear table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. sweep kitchen floor</td>
<td>3. remove garbage</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. clean living room</td>
<td>4. clean bathroom</td>
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#### Subject B

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<td>2. clean kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. set table</td>
<td>1. prepare meal</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. clean kitchen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. set table</td>
<td>1. prepare meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. clean kitchen</td>
<td>2. clear table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. sweep kitchen floor</td>
<td>3. remove garbage</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. clean bathroom</td>
<td>4. clean living room</td>
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#### Sunday

| 1. prepare meal             | 1. set table                    |
| 2. clear table              | 2. clean kitchen                |

### Total

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