

Behavioral Supervision Versus Informational Counseling of Job Seeking in the Job Club

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This study evaluated the role of behavioral supervision in the Job Club program by comparing the supervision of actual job search behaviors with an information-discussion-role-playing variation of the program using 346 job seekers. At the 6-month follow-up, 88% of the clients who were supervised had obtained a job versus 71% of the nonsupervised. Also, the supervised clients were working 75% of the time versus 61% for the unsupervised clients, and the salaries and number of hours employed per week were higher for the supervised clients. These results suggest that job-seekers should be given supervised practice of the actual job search rather than simple advice, discussion, and role-playing.

An intensive method of job search counseling, the "Job Club," has been developed and found to be more effective than alternative methods with the general job-seeker (Azrin, Flores, & Kaplan, 1975), job-handicapped persons (Azrin & Philip, 1979), and welfare recipients (Azrin, Philip, Thienes-Hontos, and Besalel, 1980). The method is based on a behavioral counseling model and consists of distinctive techniques for obtaining interviews, arranging transportation, obtaining family support, discovering and creating unpublicized positions, utilizing friends and relatives, and incorporating other job-seeking activities (Azrin & Besalel, 1980) that differ from usual methods of job seeking. The method of teaching these techniques is also somewhat different from the common format of lecture, discussion, and role-play in that the Job Club clients actually carry out these various procedures in the counseling room under the counselor's constant supervision and instruction.

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Learning theory suggests that the supervised practice should be more effective since response measurement and differential reinforcement (Skinner, 1938) of the desired job-seeking behaviors can only be performed if the behaviors were actually being carried out under the trainer's direct supervision. Studies in applied behavior analysis (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968) typically arrange the treatment situation so as to allow for supervision of the actual behavior, as in the studies of classroom problems in the classroom (Hall, Lund, & Jackson, 1968), of mental hospital behavior in the actual mental hospital ward (Ayllon & Azrin, 1968), and home behavior problems directly in the home (Hawkins, Peterson, Schweid, & Bijou, 1966). Similarly, behavior therapy designates such behavioral treatment as in vivo treatment in which direct supervision is given for the real-life performance as differentiated from verbal or symbolic training of a behavior to be performed later (Wolpe, 1973).

Behavioral studies have repeatedly found counseling to be more effective for a variety of behavioral deficits or problems when the desired performance is supervised and reinforced directly rather than relying on less direct verbal instructions alone. The mealtime behavior of mental hospital patients, for example, was improved only temporarily by verbal instructions until direct reinforcement was added to the verbal instructions (Ayllon & Azrin, 1964). Telling children what rules to follow in a classroom had no effect whereas teacher supervision and positive reinforcement of the children's classroom behavior resulted in a substantial decrease in disruptive behaviors (Madsen, Becker, & Thomas, 1968). In industrial studies, feedback and direct supervision of employee safety practices resulted in fewer industrial accidents than did the provision of information, explanations, and discussions (Komaki, Heinzmann, & Lawson, 1980). Written instructions (bibliotherapy) were less effective than supervised practice of therapists in improving the social skills of psychiatric patients (Monti, Fink, Norman, Curran, Hayes, Caldwell, 1979). Imitation has also been found to be less effective than supervised reinforcement of the goal behavior in reducing phobias (Blanchard, 1970). The general finding has been that supervised instruction of the desired behavior appears to produce better results than verbal instruction, discussions, written instruction, or learning by imitation.

This study attempted to evaluate whether greater job-finding would result from supervision of the job-seeking experience than from simple verbal and written instruction. The Job Club was conducted according to two different formats. In both, the job-seekers received a verbal and written description of the various special techniques in writing, calling, speaking, and so forth used in the Job Club method. In the "Information" counseling group these techniques were explained

and discussed, whereas in the "Supervision" group these techniques were actually performed under the supervision of the counselor. Interview training is a special case since the actual interviews could not be supervised directly; consequently, this behavior was taught by simulation and instructions in both formats.

METHOD

Participants and Experimental Design. A total of 346 clients participated through response to a newspaper advertisement and referral by other agencies, especially the local Job Service agency. At the time a client arranged a definite starting date, usually by phone, a coin flip determined assignment to either the supervised (196 clients) or the advisory program (150 clients). The basis for the difference from equality is not known. All clients were included as participants who attended at least one session and stated that they desired a full-time job. This minimal attendance requirement eliminated the need to set arbitrary criteria for dropouts for data analysis purposes. The clients in the supervised versus the advisory group did not differ significantly with regard to mean age (26.0 vs. 25.6 years), mean years of education (13.3 vs. 12.9 years), number of days worked during the past year (184.7 vs. 190.5 days), proportion of blacks (15.8% vs. 16.0%), student status (13.3% vs. 19.3%), CETA enrollment (4.6% vs. 6.0%), receiving unemployment compensation (15.3% vs. 12.7%), disability insurance (11.2% vs. 16.0%), food stamp recipients (4.6% vs. 5.3%), veteran's benefits (2.6% vs. 2.0%), or veteran status (13.8% vs. 10.0%), but did differ somewhat in the proportion of males (65.3% vs. 50.0%).

The clients were assigned randomly, by the coin flip, to the two counseling programs with the understanding that they could cross over to the other program after six months. Since several of them did change after six months, the data analysis of group differences was limited to the 6-month period.

Advisory Counseling Program. The clients in the advisory type of counseling were given 2 days of job search advice for 3 hours per day consisting of all the techniques constituting the Job Club method (Azrin & Besalel, 1980). They were advised to obtain unpublished leads by use of friends, relatives, former employers, co-workers, classmates, and the classified section of the local telephone directory, (the "yellow pages" section). They were instructed on how to construct a resume and what to say during the telephone calls, interviews, and above contacts. They were told how to keep records, to call back potential employers repeatedly, to structure their time, how to obtain transportation assistance, and all of the other usual Job Club search techniques. They read and discussed the printed forms, guide sheets,

and scripts normally used for each of these procedures and role-played the interview (Azrin & Besalel, 1980).

Supervised Counseling Program. The supervised clients were given all of the same advice as the clients in the advisory program; but in addition they performed the actual job search procedures in the office, except for the interview, under the counselor's supervision. While in the office they constructed their resume, obtained potential job leads, telephoned or wrote letters to the potential employer or information provider, made transportation arrangements, wrote out their job search schedule, and so forth. They were urged to continue attending every day to perform these tasks until they had obtained a job. Their first two sessions also lasted for three hours, but no attempt was made to limit participation to two sessions since unlimited opportunity for attendance was a distinctive feature of the job club program.

RESULTS

Follow-up data were available from 319 (92%) of the clients 6 months after the start of counseling, the results for whom are shown in Table 1. As compared to the clients receiving informational counseling, the clients who received supervised practice were more likely to obtain a job, maintained their employment for a greater number of days, had a higher mean salary, worked more hours per week, and took slightly (nonsignificant) less time to obtain the job. In calculating the data for "jobs obtained" in Table 1, only jobs involving half-time or greater were included. For purposes of calculating "labor utilization," all client employment and unemployment was included, 35 hours per week being considered 100% labor utilization. The salary represented in the Table is for the job held during the 6th month.

TABLE 1
Job-search outcome for 319 clients enrolled in a Job Club program conducted according to a supervised versus an informational format

	Informational Counseling (n=186)	Behavioral Supervision (n=133)	Statistic
% of clients obtaining a job	70.6%	87.6%	$\chi^2 = 14.24, p < .0002$
Labor utilization (% of days worked)	61.0%	75.0%	$t = 2.02, p < .05$
Mean hour/week worked	33.6 hrs.	36.9 hrs.	$t = 1.95, p > .05$
Mean number of days to obtain a job	60.7 days	32.1 days	$t = 2.59, p < .05$
Mean salary (dollars/hour)	\$3.93	\$4.99	$t = 1.65, p > .05$

The mean number of sessions attended for the informational clients was 1.6 of the two sessions scheduled and 3.0 sessions for the supervised clients. The reasons given for discontinuing participation by the supervised clients were that they had found a job (51%) or had moved away (5%); for the others, the reasons were highly individual or no reason was given. Of the jobs obtained by the supervised search clients, 7% were subsidized versus 10% by the advised clients, and 48% of the jobs of the supervised clients were in their preferred area versus 44% for the advised, neither difference being statistically significant. A separate analysis for men and women showed that the supervised group held more job placements than the informational group for the men (86% vs. 75%) as well as for the women (90% vs. 65%), indicating that the superiority of the supervised group could not be accounted for by its greater proportion of males.

DISCUSSION

The supervised job search appears to have increased the success of the clients as compared with the clients given the same information. The supervised-search clients were more likely to obtain employment, had greater labor utilization or job maintenance, averaged more hours of employment per week, and were paid at a higher rate. The jobs were fairly comparable in the two conditions with respect to being subsidized or being in the client's preferred vocational area. These results indicate that providing job-seekers with the information about the job search procedures of the Job Club was not as effective as assuring that the procedures were in fact used. The supervised performance of the actual job search appears to be a critical feature of the Job Club program. This superiority is in accord with the general finding with other behavior deficits and problems that supervision of the actual desired behavior is superior to providing information or teaching by other symbolic representational modes such as cognitive restructuring (Emmelkamp, Kuipers, & Eggeratt, 1978; Emmelkamp, Van der Helm, Van Zanten, & Plochg, 1980), imitation (Blanchard, 1970), instructions (Ayllon & Azrin, 1964), providing rules (Madsen et al., 1968), or a workshop format (Quilitch, 1975).

The present results confirm the findings of the previous comparisons of the Job Club program in showing more favorable results for the Job Club including more favorable job acquisition, job retention, salary, speed of job acquisition, type of job, and decreased welfare payments (Azrin et al., 1975; Azrin & Philips, 1979; Azrin et al., 1980; Azrin et al., 1981). The present mean of 3 sessions attended by the Job Club clients was somewhat less than approximately 5 sessions found in the previous studies and was 1.4 sessions greater than the mean of

the present informational group. This slight difference may have contributed somewhat to the superiority of the supervised program.

The present results have implications for the efficient conduct of the Job Club program, which can be considered as having 2 major components: First, the Job Club strategy includes a number of special job-finding techniques; second, it includes a special method of teaching those techniques. Greater effectiveness was found when the same techniques of job-seeking were taught by supervision of the actual job-seeking behavior than by describing these techniques by a lecture, discussion, written and role-playing format. A previous evaluation (Azrin & Philip, 1979) had also found that the Job Club supervised format was more effective than a comparison method with a lecture, discussion, and role-playing format, but the suggested job seeking techniques were not held constant in that study as they were in this study.

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