

AFFECT, COMMUNICATION STYLE, AND THE  
MAINTENANCE OF EFFORTFUL BEHAVIOR  
IN SECOND GRADE STUDENTS

by

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## PREFACE

The following study addresses the role of affects and the communicative environment in which affects are expressed upon the maintenance of effortful behavior in early elementary grade children. The aim of this study is to investigate the predictable ways in which these variables may affect the task-oriented behavior of normal school children. It is hoped by the present author that this study will be of interest to those persons interested in the affective life of children and the ways in which we communicate with children during affective experiences.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the administrators of the Bristow and Cushing school systems for allowing me to conduct my study in their area. The cooperation and interest of the teachers and building principals made the collection of data most trouble free and uncomplicated.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Background Information

The wide-spread appeal of educational affective programs as Bessell and Palomares' "Magic Circle" (1970); the utilization of educationally oriented mental health books represented in the work of Glasser (1969), Rogers (1969), and Gordon (1970, 1974), and the exploratory work in transpersonal education of Hendrick and Fadiman (1976) gives the appearance that educators, parents, and other involved with children are becoming more concerned about the quality of communication and interaction between the child and other individuals. It also appears that some importance has been given to recognizing and responding to the needs and feelings of the individual child in a constructive and foresighted manner. Levine (1973, p. 147) feels that this trend arises in part from ". . . a serious ignorance and lack of practice in dealing with feelings, resolving conflicts and relating to others." Levine has noted that much of this literature differs in instructional methodology yet ". . . the authors have taken psychodynamic and behavior theory and skills, adapted and operationalized them most effectively for mental health hygiene practice in the schools (p. 147)."

The concern of these authors regarding the affective life of the child and the incorporation of sound methods for dealing with and



responding to the affective life of the child has moved the recognition of the importance of the affects in human functioning and human awareness well beyond the classical conditioning; approach-avoidance orientations of persons as McClelland et al. (1953) in studying the affective components of motivation in lower level learning. This concern has also grown beyond studies in the classification and categorization of the affects as viewed in the work of Tomkins (1962, 1963) or in the establishment of the initial parameters in which the affects might be studied (Tomkins and Izard, 1965).

This is not to imply that this latter work is outdated. It provided the foundations for the study of affective reactions; the unique types of positive and negative affects and their interrelationship with cognition and action. However, in this author's opinion, the affects are now perceived as more potent and unique forces in the life of the individual child and that child's development (cf. Levine, 1973; Brown, 1974) over the earlier orientations regarding the affects as "attracting" or "repulsing" mechanisms. In summary, it appears to have been recognized that the affects of the child are important determinants of behavior and that the child's affects and the ways in which they are responded may in part determine the amount of success educators and parents may enjoy in a child's responding to the educational and learning experience. Much of the earlier mentioned work also stresses that the environment created between the adult and child will in a significant way determine the child's feelings of success in the classroom (Glasser, 1969) and our chances of diminishing disruptive and maladaptive behavior in the classroom and home (Glasser, 1969; Gordon, 1970; Gordon, 1974).

Abraham Maslow (1969, 1970) has noted that certain basic human needs must be secured by a given individual before there can be any true concern regarding personal growth or the acquisition of knowledge. In a strong sense, these needs (as for psychological or physical safety or the need for love and self-esteem) could be perceived as negative affective experiences when they go unmet. They are strong determinants of whether a child can or will direct and focus energies to engaging in learning activities. An example of this line of thinking is seen in Reisman's (1972) incorporation of Maslow's work in her book speaking to the diagnostic teaching of arithmetic. In doing this, she explains that a child's concern over unpleasant occurrences in the home; a fear of physical harm from classmates in a strange school or similar circumstances might be possible reasons why a given child is not concerned with concentrating on academic learning.

Rudolf Dreikurs (1968, 1972) is much more specific in the behaviors which can be expected from a given child when basic needs are not being met. This is seen in his recategorization of Adlerian psychology. Rudolf Dreikurs and Alfred Adler are speaking primarily to the child's feelings of social isolation and social discouragement. Dreikurs has suggested that children may operate in modes of passive-constructive, passive-destructive, active-constructive or active-destructive behavior (1972). The goal of a child's misbehavior within these modes is generally a desire to gain needed social status and esteem. Dinkmeyer and Dinkmeyer (1976) feel it to be essential that one understand these patterns of behavior as they are the key to understanding the child's level of discouragement. This is especially true as the child moves from attention getting mechanisms to actual strivings for power to

desires for revenge to displays of a disability in seeking a response to these needs.

The communicative environment which "surrounds" the child during affective experiences and problem situations has been the subject of persons as Fritz Redl, Thomas Gordon, and Barry Weinhold. It is felt by these persons that there are certain techniques of communicating with children during affective or problem states which are potentially beneficial to the child, diminish negative feelings, and create positive growth. This is as opposed to techniques often used by parents and teachers which tend to ignore the feelings and problems. Redl (1959) has incorporated his communication techniques under the title of the "Life Space Interview" (LSI). Bryen (1975, p. 139) has described the LSI to be a "psychoeducationally oriented technique aimed at dealing with everyday interactional problems." This technique describes both the attitude required of the "interviewer" and the ways in which to communicate with the child. It is literally directed towards providing "emotional first aid" (Redl and Wattenberg, 1959) in problem or emotional situations. The basic technique centers around questioning and confronting a child's feelings and behavior in a nonthreatening and accepting manner. This helps the child to understand feelings and behavior and allows for the generation of solutions to problems. Thomas Gordon (1970, 1974), in his effectiveness training packages for parents and teachers, has outlined a variety of listening, communication, and problem solving techniques generated from counseling psychology. They are directed to promoting a close and working adult-child environment. Weinhold (1975) has outlined techniques and orientations which are similarly based. The basic assumptions here are that the ways in which

we communicate with children during affective and problem situations will in large part determine the probability that the child will communicate with us, that the relationship will be warm, close, and focused on the nature of the difficulty; that the child will learn to deal with feelings and solve problems and that the child will be better equipped to deal with difficulties and feelings experienced in adult life. As Levine (1973) has pointed out in summarizing this line of work:

The aim is to establish rapport, i. e., empathetic, relevant verbal transactions; this constitutes the medium for helping children grow toward a healthy, potent, relatively intact sense of self in adulthood (p. 147).

#### Need for the Study

Even with the background information now available speaking to the affective side of education and the adult-child experience, little research effort has been directed to the controlled study of the simple relationship between the affects of the child and the ways in which these affects are responded to by another party as they alter measurable behavior. It is the intent of this study to incorporate a design to analyze these relationships as they affect a child's effortful behavior at a task so that a clearer picture might be generated relative to the predictable role of the affects (positive and negative) and the communicative environment in which the affects are expressed (confluent or disruptive) upon a child's task-oriented behavior. A review of the research literature speaking to the affects is offered along with an incorporation of the work of Thomas Gordon to analyze these relationships as they affect a child's effort at a school-type task.

## Review of the Literature

### Strategies in the Study of Human Affects

Three basic strategies have been employed to study the role of the affects in human functioning. The first is termed a naturalistic-descriptive approach as was employed by Wessman and Ricks (1966). They requested that a small group of male and female college students monitor their daily mood fluctuations for a period of six weeks. The students were to self-administer a battery of questionnaires before retiring each day and respond to items in a manner reflecting their self-perceptions and social behavior during the "high", "low", and "average" feeling states of the day. Here is how Wessman and Ricks interpreted the results in terms of self-perception:

The self-concept, in which the greater change took place, was more favorably described in elation than in depression . . . depression is characterized by an increase in derogatory attitudes regarding the self, and by a marked and strongly felt discrepancy between one's actual self and one's personal ideal (p. 43).

It was also found that one's interest in the environment is appreciably diminished during the "low" feeling states.

A second method of investigation towards the study of affective states stems from attempts at creating affective reactions in persons through the manipulation of interpersonal variables. Izard (1964) hypothesized that one member of a dyad behaving as a highly emotional individual (a confederate) would influence the affective and cognitive functioning of the other member of the dyad in college females. Dependent variables included scores on a number of intellectual tasks. These tasks included naming the potential uses of a common object, naming as many words as possible which began with a particular letter and solving

practical problems. There was also an affective evaluation of the "highly emotional" individual and the feelings experienced by the naive subject. There were four experimental roles which the confederate portrayed in this study. She either portrayed a highly enthusiastic person, a warm-friendly person, an angry-hostile person or a fearful-anxious person. The confederate was an actress and played these roles using prepared protocols. Though no significant differences were shown in performance between the two "positive" (enthusiastic; friendly) and the two "negative" (hostile; anxious) conditions, differences were found on the intellectual tasks between the combined "positive" and "negative" groups at the  $p = .07$  level for how well the "positive" groups performed on the intellectual tasks over the "negative" groups. Additionally, both the affective ratings of the confederate and self-reported affect were apparently governed by the roles portrayed showing differences at highly significant levels. Izard's basic postulate that positive affect facilitates constructive behavior and effective functioning while negative affect inhibits or decreases constructive behavior (Izard, 1964; Izard et al., 1965) was said to be upheld at statistical levels "approaching significance" (Izard, 1964). This is quite interesting in that the affective roles were only performed in the presence of the subjects during the completion of the tasks and were not directed at the subjects. This study hints at the potency of affective stimulation upon behavior in interpersonal situations. Zahn-Waxler has hypothesized that we begin to assimilate and respond to the emotions of others; especially in terms of altruism or empathy at a very early age. A child's capacity in this regard increases as childhood egocentrism diminishes (1977).

The third major strategy is of particular importance here and could

be termed a cognitive strategy towards the study of affective states. The cognitive strategies have implemented the directing and cue properties of verbal behavior (cf. Dollard and Miller, 1960; Lovaas, 1969; Ellis, 1963) to directly induce and study behavior during positive and negative affective states.

Velten's (1968) work is classic in the sense that it directly investigated the theoretical and applied work of "semantic" psychotherapists as Albert Ellis to induce feeling states through the reading of prepared statements which were either "elating" or "depressing" in content. In addition, the study contained two demand characteristic groups to judge if persons "faking" positive or negative affect exhibited divergent qualitative signs of emotion than those receiving the actual treatment (which was the case). Sample "elation" treatment sentences included: "If your attitude is good, then things are good, and my attitude is good"--"This is great--I really do feel good--I am elated about things." Sample "depression" treatment sentences included: "Every now and then I feel so tired and gloomy that I'd rather just sit than do anything." It was found on five of seven measures to assess the effects of the mood states generated that performance on the tasks of the "elation" subjects exceeded that of the "depression" subjects at significant levels. In effect, Velten was programing feelings by providing the necessary verbal material to facilitate these feelings. The dependent measures included writing speed, distance approximations, decision times in guessing weights, reaction times for word associations, and the number of spontaneous words uttered by the subject during the data collection. In summary, the performance of the "depressed" group was markedly lower than that of the "elation" group. Strickland (1974) found similar effects

for general activity level and self-reported affect using Velten's method.

Gouaux and Gouaux (1971), using identical procedures as the Velten (1968) study, found that "depressed" subjects maintained higher levels of acquisition in the extinction trial of a lever pulling task through the receipt of nonsocial reinforcers (money) over those subjects receiving social reinforcers (verbal praise). It was felt on the basis of prior research that the reinforcement value of social reinforcers and nonsocial reinforcers may vary with the affective states of the subject. The conclusions were that "depressed" subjects were not as responsive to social praise offered by another as are "elated" persons or those in a nonactivated state. Negative affective states seemed to be related to social-avoidance behavior which supports the findings of Wessman and Ricks (1966) and the work of Tomkins (1962).

Siprelle and Ascough (1976) dealt directly with the clinical induction of affect via the subject's own verbalizations. This began as a therapy procedure to promote behavioral change and consisted of four phases. In phase one, a baseline was initiated and the subject was allowed to adjust to the experimental setting. Phase two consisted of the subject being asked to relax. Phase three was termed the "affect elicitation phase" and the subject was given instructions "to focus upon and experience affectively charged thoughts, images, and feelings together with contingent verbal behavior for overt emotional behavior." In phase four, the subject was allowed to relax and was debriefed. It was felt that the affective responses would infer internal states as could be observed from sexual arousal, laughter, grief or anger. Though the magnitude of affective and behavioral change was small, diagnostic



information was generally yielded regarding conflicts present in the individual.

Wessman and Ricks (1966) provide an excellent light in which to view these studies:

. . . One learns and generalizes, appropriately and inappropriately the sources of both wanted and unwanted affects. A great variety of relationships are established between affects and their object and between the objects themselves. Words and their associations play a determining role in many of these connections. Any affect can be activated and endlessly maintained by words and what they symbolize. Not only does speech enable the individual to express or intensify or reduce his own affects; it also enables him to evoke and intensify or to muffle and reduce them in other people. Thereby he is enabled to control the behavior of others and thus increase his power to maximize his own positive affects and minimize his negative affects (p. 8).

The research cited immediately above has primarily concerned itself with adults (Zahn-Waxler, 1977, is an exception) and has taken a rather clinical orientation of the role of the affects in human functioning. However, there has been some meaningful research performed with children who are the focus of this study. These studies have primarily utilized cognitive strategies or approaches to induce and study the affects' relationships to children's behavior and behavioral orientations. Though the research is by no means exhaustive, it does provide some direction and method for the study of affects in the behavior of children.

### The Relationship of the Affects to Children's

#### Behavior: Empirical Studies

Underwood et al. (1973) and Rosenhan et al. (1974) have found evidence to suggest that positive or negative affect induced through a child's reminiscing over past "happy" or "sad" events for a short period of time (a method loosely based on Velten's work, 1968) has a strong

effect on a child's self-gratification. It was found that early elementary grade children are more likely to be generous to themselves when experiencing positive affects than when experiencing negative affects. However, in the Rosenhan et al. (1974) study, both the children in the negative affect group and the positive affect group self-gratified more than controls. It was hypothesized that this may have been due to self-therapeutic behavior on the part of those children experiencing the negative affect. Crockenberg and Bryant (1976) yielded similar findings using a success-failure paradigm to induce the feelings.

Moore et al. (1976) found that affect moderates delay of gratification using similar procedures to Underwood et al. (1973) and Rosenhan et al. (1974). Children experiencing positive affects are more willing to receive a highly desirable reward at a distant date over a less desirable reward offered immediately as compared to children in the negative affective states. Children in the negative affective states were more inclined to seek gratification immediately.

The procedures utilized in these studies were quite different from earlier attempts at inducing feelings within a social learning theory framework. Berkowitz and Conner (1966) and Isen (1970) were successful in demonstrating that success experiences yielded greater other-oriented behavior in adults than do failure experiences. Isen (1970) additionally found that persons having experienced positive affective states (success) were much more aware of what was or had happened in their immediate surroundings over those in control or "failure" settings. Moore et al. (1976), Moore et al. (1973), Underwood et al. (1973), and Rosenhan et al. (1974) took a more direct approach to facilitating the affects which success or failure would be assumed to breed.

Rosenhan et al. (1974), in simultaneously studying self- and other-oriented behavior found that the negative affects suppress altruistic behavior in children as was found by Moore et al. (1973). As Rosenhan et al. (1974) summarized this line of research: ". . . Affect is a general setting condition for self- and other-oriented behavior (p. 550)." Cialdini and Kendrick (1976) found this to be the case over a wide range of ages as it applies to altruism.

The procedures were quite simple in the Moore et al. (1973), Rosenhan et al. (1974) and Underwood et al. (1974) studies. Children were simply asked to reminisce and focus upon happy or sad experiences for a brief period of time before the chance to self or other gratify with tangible rewards. The induction procedures were directed by the experimenter. Fry (1975) additionally demonstrated that these same procedures were effective in modifying resistance to temptation.

Masters and Santrock (1976) have demonstrated the role of affectively loaded cognition on facilitative self-control in the motor persistence of preschool children. Using five experimental conditions and two dependent measures, they found that the cognition of children (supplied by the experimenter) moderates the degree to which children will persist at a relatively boring task. This was based on the belief that positive thoughts would be rewarding while negative thoughts would be punishing. It was generally found that children who rehearsed negative evaluations of the task; negative thoughts unrelated to the task; evaluations that the task was difficult or evaluations which were self-critical during the task persisted significantly less than children who were instructed to generate thoughts of a positive valence related to these areas. They summarized their results as follows:

One clear finding concerned the unimportance of the relevance of the cognitive or affective events for the maintenance of behavior with which they are associated . . . / T / here was no indication that the task relevance of the content of a cognitive-affective event was related to its reinforcing effectiveness since the contingent verbalization of content which bore no relation to an ongoing behavior exercised clear control over that persistence (p. 346).

Guaged against the work of Moore et al. (1973), Underwood et al., (1973) and others, it was suggested that the cognitive stimuli which is associated with ongoing behavior may affect persistence at that behavior through the affective state generated (Masters and Santrock, 1976).

Santrock (1976) took a similar line of investigation in noting how affective interchanges with an experimenter, the ecological setting in which work is performed and the affective content of thought regulated first and second grade children's persistence at a motor task. In effect, experimental conditions were generated in which the child was related a "happy" or "sad" story by an experimenter; this was placed in combination with the child's working at the motor task in a positive or negative affective environment (visual stimuli) while rehearsing thoughts of either a positive or negative valence during the motor task.

Santrock (1976) maintained that the study documented the importance of evaluating the microecology of the child's world to determine its importance on his social behavior. It was found that:

1. Children maintained effortful behavior longer in a happy physical setting than in a neutral or sad physical setting.
2. Children who thought about neutral or happy things persisted longer than those who thought about sad things.
3. Under the effect of "happy experimenter" (being told a happy story by the experimenter), children who thought happy things persisted longer

than those who thought about sad or neutral things.

4. Significant differences were shown in the "happy experimenter" setting relating to the effects of the happy, neutral, or sad cognition.

The general line of thinking which emerged was that

. . . children who think about happy things, have happy interchanges with teachers and who work in a happy room could be expected to persevere longer as tasks become repetitive and boring to them than students who experience less positively valenced affective situations (p. 534).

It was felt that the basic tenets of social learning theory were upheld in that ongoing thoughts and social encounters within a specific milieu are powerful determinants of subsequent behavior (Santrock, 1976). This supports Rosenhan et al. (1974) and their assertion that the affective components of many social encounters are primary determinants of subsequent behavior. Additionally, Amsel's theory regarding frustrative nonreward settings was upheld. That is, a child's persistence at a task is supported in nonreward settings through the environment's decreasing or increasing frustration as the child maintains effort at a task (1958). In this instance, environmental stimuli was viewed to support behavior when the stimuli was positively valenced and to not provide a great deal of support when stimuli was negatively valenced.

Of parenthetical interest in the Masters and Santrock (1976) and Santrock (1976) studies is the facilitative components of self-control being studied. This is as opposed to the research effort addressing inhibitory self-control through overt or covert cognitive mediation (Hartig and Kanfer, 1973; Meichenbaum and Goodman, 1971; Kanfer, 1971; Mahoney, 1972, et al.). It appears that the affects and the social setting in which the affects are generated have an important motivating function in human behavior.

### Nature and Purpose of Study

Building upon the previously cited work, the present study is an attempt to create a setting in which two potential determinants of a child's purposeful task-oriented behavior might be studied. The first determinant regards the affects of the child before entering a task situation in which purposeful behavior is requested or implied. The second interdependent determinant regards the ways in which these affects are responded to by another party. What in effect is being done is to study a microecological setting which recreates situations in which children are often involved in the home and classroom relative to their feelings and the social setting in which these feelings are expressed.

From the previously cited work of Maslow, Adler, Dreikurs, and others, a firm orientation has been provided from which one can come to understand how such factors as basic human need deficiencies and social discouragement in the child may affect behavior to a degree which would potentially disrupt the educational process. A number of empirical studies have shown how induced feelings (which one could assume that need deficiencies, social discouragement, and specific affective occurrences might create) affect human functioning closely tied to the affective experience. (See Table I for a summary.) Though these empirical studies have yielded very interesting results, they have primarily studied the affects as isolated factors (Santrock, 1976, is an exception).

Most anyone who has had close contact with children knows that the affects a child is naturally experiencing (or an adult for that matter) are almost always expressed either verbally (e.g., the direct expression of feelings; sharp language; laughter) or behaviorally (e.g., "dawdling";

TABLE I

A LIST OF FACTORS DETERMINED TO BE DIRECTLY OR  
INDIRECTLY LINKED TO POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE  
AFFECTIVE STATES AND CONDITIONS

| Nature of Affect                                  |   |
|---|---|
| Positive  | Negative  |
| 1. Self Ratings of Positive Feelings              | 1. Self Ratings of Negative Affect                |
| 2. Enhanced Intellectual Functioning              | 2. Diminished Intellectual Functioning            |
| 3. Increased Other-Reward                         | 3. Diminished Other-Reward                        |
| 4. Increased Self-Reward (Hedonistic)             | 4. Increased Self-Reward (Therapeutic)            |
| 5. Social-Approach Orientation                    | 5. Social-Avoidance Orientation                   |
| 6. Increased Compliance to Desires of Another     | 6. Diminished Compliance to Desires of Another    |
| 7. Enhanced Persistence at a Task                 | 7. Diminished Persistence at a Task               |
| 8. Decreased Misbehavior and Destructive Behavior | 8. Increased Destructive Behavior and Misbehavior |
| 9. Increased Interest in Personal Growth          | 9. Diminished Interest in Personal Growth         |
| 10. Problem Solving is Facilitated                | 10. Problem Solving is Inhibited                  |
| 11. Enhanced Attention to Self                    | 11. Diminished Attention to Self                  |
| 12. Increased Awareness of Surroundings           | 12. Diminished Awareness of Surroundings          |

jumping in excitement; smiling; aggressive attacks) and most often in the presence of another individual. The affects may be the primary motivators in many situations (as has been the underlying notion of the theoretical study of the affects; especially Tomkins and Izard, 1965) yet the ways in which the affects are responded to by another party may be just as important in resultant behavior as the affects themselves.

To analyze this contention, a four block independent subjects design is put forth which shall hopefully be useful in generalizing to how a given child's feelings and the ways to which they are responded affect behavior in a task situation. The specific dependent variable in this study is effort at a task after engagement in a social setting which is artificially created. The independent variables are the affects of the child and the communicative environment in which the affects are expressed. In a simplified form, positive and negative affects are being studied within a positive ("warm-accepting") or negative ("cold-evaluative") communicative setting as they affect effortful behavior in children. Additionally, as the teacher or significant adult who potentially creates both the "warm-accepting" and "cold-evaluative" interactions with children are also the persons commonly directing children to tasks, such will be the case here represented by the experimenter.

The affective states within this study shall be facilitated through the use of an affect induction procedure which requires that the child generate either happy or sad thoughts to the request of another person (Underwood et al., 1973; Moore et al., 1973; Moore et al., 1976; Rosenhan et al., 1974). The two communicative environments shall be facilitated through the abbreviated use of two communication styles while the child is generating and focusing upon the "happy" or "sad"



thoughts. One communication style shall be the use of "active" and "passive" listening and reflection techniques while the child is generating and focusing upon the "happy" and "sad" thoughts. These techniques are designed to show acceptance of the child and what they have to say; to keep the lines of communication open and to create an environment in which a child can "own" his feelings and solve his own problems without undue verbal interference (Gordon, 1970; 1974). The other communication style shall be the use of what Thomas Gordon might label as "Typical Twelve" responses. That is, communication styles which tend to block the lines of communication, force decisions on the child relative to feelings and problems and often times send unwanted messages over the content actually spoken (1970, 1974).

In essence, this study is attempting to investigate: 1) If affects induced prior to behavior effects that behavior in a similar fashion as has been demonstrated with ongoing affectively-toned cognition; 2) If the use of divergent communication styles in response to the expression of affects alters that same behavior; 3) If both of these factors are significant variables in nonreward persistence settings.

#### Experimental Hypotheses

The following research questions are advanced:

1. Will children experiencing positive affective states show greater persistence at a task as measured by the quantity of work performed over children experiencing negative affective states?
2. Will the differential use of a "warm-accepting" or "cold-evaluative" communication style within the negative or positive affective conditions show any differential effects in the children's effort at the task?

Stated in the form of hypotheses:

1. Children introduced to a positive affective state shall show greater effort at a task as measured in the quantity of work performed over children introduced to a negative affective state.
2. Children in positive or negative affective states shall show greater effort at a task as measured in the quantity of work performed when responded to in a warm and accepting manner over children responded to in a cold and evaluative manner.

And stated in the form of the Null Hypothesis:

1. There will be no differences shown between the groups in the maintenance of effortful behavior at a task.

#### Definition of Terms

1. Affects - This author is speaking of a stirred up sense of feelings, either positive or negative, as opposed to a person simply being aware (after Brown, 1974). The affects in this study could be labelled as "moods" and "feelings" in that this author is referring to sensations and thoughts which can be easily labelled, recognized and tied to past emotional experiences by the child.
2. Cognitive Strategy - As Albert Ellis (1963) has maintained, we cannot easily distinguish between thought and emotion. Cognitive methods in psychotherapy were built upon the notion that changing a person's actual thought patterns, introducing new ways of perceiving situations or properly attributing negative sensations to their cause can help to alleviate unwanted feelings of discomfort. Upon this assertion, a cognitive strategy towards the induction of feelings entails providing or eliciting the necessary verbal material to facilitate the experience of affects.
3. Effortful Behavior - Defined here as the quantity of work performed before abandoning a task.

4. "Active" and "Passive" Listening Techniques - These are listening techniques distilled from counseling psychology which note the importance of not interpreting, evaluating, or taking away the feelings a person is experiencing or thoughts s/he is expressing. This allows for the child or adult to take a more active role in sorting out and dealing with their feelings and difficulties and does not overly intrude upon the person's own problem solving strategies. In a strong sense, the "listener" is actively tuned into the thoughts and expressions of another so that the verbal (and sometimes nonverbal) statements of the speaker can be accurately received, reflected upon, and the origins of the difficulties assessed.

5. "Typical Twelve" Responses - Twelve categories of responding to statements made by children which are identified by Thomas Gordon as doing what users of "active" and "passive" listening try to avoid. These responses are ineffective and inefficient modes of communication and tend to block, redirect and unduly evaluate the feelings and concerns expressed by the child.

6. Affect Induction - Affect induction methods have been utilized to create mood states in persons through providing the necessary cognitive material to facilitate these states; through eliciting verbal material from the individual or through the manipulation of interpersonal situations. It appears that artificially created feeling states have been useful in studying the role of affects in a variety of behaviors.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

#### Subjects

The subjects in this study were eighty second grade public school students from two school districts in Central Oklahoma. The classrooms were traditionally based both in classroom structure and curriculum opportunities. It was felt that second graders would be cooperative with the experimenters and the use of second graders was also an attempt to use subjects of similar ages to those in the Santrock (1976), Moore et al. (1973), Moore et al. (1976), Rosenhan et al. (1974) and Underwood et al. (1973) studies. All subjects from four classrooms were utilized save for those students identified by the teachers as having difficulties with fine-motor control or who had prior contact with an experimenter. There were forty-nine male and thirty-one female participants. Families of the subjects were predominantly of middle and lower-middle socio-economic status and the economies are primarily based in agriculture, light industry and private businesses. Each subject was randomly assigned to one of four treatments. One subject was excluded after treatment because she became highly defensive discussing "sad" things. She maintained that she had never done anything "bad" before. She was replaced by another participant randomly selected from another class. Those subjects felt to have fine-motor difficulties sufficient enough

to cause undue frustration on the task were allowed to work on the response measure free of treatment interference.

### Experimenters

Experimenters included this author, a male graduate student enrolled in School Psychology and a female undergraduate student who had had experience working with children over an extended period of time. Each experimenter was provided with the treatment materials prior to the dates of data collection and were made familiar with their content. The experimenters were cautioned regarding the possibility of extremely negative content being elicited from the children. They were instructed to redirect the child and to evoke content of a less negative valence. The influence of each experimenter was shown in each of the four treatment groups.

### Experimental Treatments

Each subject was taken independently to the treatment area which was in a semi-private area of the school building. The experimenters introduced themselves by their first name. The teachers were instructed prior to this time to give the children the impression that they were to "read some letters" for the experimenters and to "do some other things". This was done as they supplied the children with name tags. It was found in pretesting treatment methods that this was the most effective means of getting the subjects to the experimental area without preconceived notions as to the situation being potentially fun or burdensome.

Children were seated in regular classroom desks and were then shown an eight and one-half by eleven inch sheet of poster board containing

eighteen letters of the alphabet. Moore et al. (1973), Underwood et al. (1973), and other affect induction investigators used a brief hearing test preceeding their treatments. Subjects were to "read" the letters and were reinforced for their performance by being told that they had done a "fine job".

Upon the subject's reading the letters, a conversation was initiated which was supported by statements and questions typed on note cards; one for each of the four treatments. These protocols were prepared using the basic affect induction procedures of Moore et al. (1973), Underwood et al. (1973), and Rosenhan et al. (1974) in conjunction with either "active" and "passive" reflection techniques or "Typical Twelve" responses to the child's verbally expressed affective content.

The basic procedure was for the child to generate two things which made them "happy" (Groups I and II) or two things which made them feel "sad" (Groups III and IV). After this they were asked to focus upon the feelings associated with the content generated by "practicing thinking about what/the things we talked about."

As mentioned, two groups in this study were to generate things which made them feel "happy" and "really good" while the two remaining groups were to generate things which made them feel "unhappy" and "sad". From the two positive ("happy") and two negative ("unhappy") affect groups, one group of each was responded to in a confluent manner in that the experimenter reflected back what was said by the subject and reaffirmed the feelings associated with the content verbalized. This is the general technique of "active" and "passive" listening. This was intuitively termed a "warm-accepting" communication style. The two remaining groups from the positive and negative affect conditions were handled in

quite different ways in the communication style used. They were responded to in a "cold-evaluative" manner in that the affective content was responded to by the experimenter's asking if the content really made them feel "happy" or "sad" and subjects were then asked to concentrate harder on what they were doing, i.e., concentrating on what made them feel "happy" or "sad".

Figure 1 represents the experimental treatment blocks in graphic form. The protocols utilized are contained in Appendix A.

|                        |        | Type of Affective Content |           |
|------------------------|--------|---------------------------|-----------|
|                        |        | Positive                  | Negative  |
| Communication<br>Style | "Warm" | Group I                   | Group III |
|                        | "Cold" | Group II                  | Group IV  |

Figure 1. Experimental Treatment Blocks: Maintenance of Effortful Behavior in Second Grade Students

In essence, positive and negative affect was shared in two types of environment. One environment was created with a warm and accepting communication style and the other with a cold and evaluative communication

style.

Upon the completion of the affect induction and communicative procedures, subjects were then given the following instructions:

I have some drawings here. Under each one is a box. I'd like for you to copy the designs in the boxes below them. There are a bunch of sheets with designs on them and you may copy as many designs on them as you like. Just draw them as best you can. Do as many as you want. You have my permission to stop working and go back to class whenever you like.

Some variation occurred in these instructions to reinforce that the subject was only required to draw as many designs as s/he liked and that they could disengage themselves from the task at any time they desired.

At this point in time, the experimenter showed the subject where an extra pencil could be found and reinforced the fact that many sheets were available on the desk top upon which they could draw; six sheets in total.

The experimenter then went to a station out of view of the subjects and recorded the time and memorial content verbalized by the child.

Fifteen minutes was set as a check level as time constraints in the schools and children using the time as an attempt to evade classroom activities made providing a totally open persistence situation impossible. It was found in the pretesting of procedures that allowing the subjects to operate independently without the experimenter's immediate presence gave a more true representation of applied effort to the task. Additionally, this closely resembled common classroom procedures. At fifteen minutes, children who desired to continue working were allowed to do so. It was found that the majority of those who wished to proceed did so for roughly five minutes beyond the check point. Most all of the children expressed satisfaction that they had drawn as many designs as they desired.



### Development of the Instrument

The research by Santrock (1976) and Masters and Santrock (1976) was directed to the study of facilitative rather than inhibitory self-control. The latter had been the subject of researchers as Hartig and Kanfer (1971) and Meichenbaum and Goodman (1971). Santrock (1976) and Masters and Santrock (1976) used Bandura and Perloff's (1976) "Tower of Lights" game to study the cognitive-affective and ecological components of facilitative self-control (persistence). Simply described, this is a motor task requiring the turning of a crank. Revolutions of the crank illuminated successive columns of lights and the number of revolutions were automatically counted. Masters and Santrock (1976) also used a simple matching task as one dependent measure in their series of five experiments.

The present author elected to develop his own instrument for measuring effort at a task which would contain the following attributes:

1. Would be more appropriate for older children and require more sophisticated effort.
2. Would minimize guessing by the children as to what was being studied.
3. Would contain educationally relevant attributes as the need to plan and attend to detail.
4. Would be initially challenging to the subjects.
5. Would minimize the amount of experimental hardware needed.

Towards this end, twelve abstract designs (taken in part from Marianne Frostig's Pictures and Patterns development program in visual perception, 1966) were randomly assigned to position and relationship to horizontal

creating two forms of the instrument; there were twelve designs on each page with boxes below them in which to copy the designs. As the child worked past the first twelve designs, the same designs were encountered on the second sheet though in a different order and altered in their relationship to horizontal. The third sheet would be the same as the first; the fourth sheet would be the same as the second, and so on.

Through three pretesting phases, designs were found which were approximately equated for time required for completion. Also, subjects helping this author with the pretesting helped to point out designs which caused some frustration. Extraneous detail in designs was also eliminated so that children would not unduly concentrate on exactly duplicating complicated designs. These designs can be found in Appendix B.

#### Collection of Data

After the subjects had stopped working or had stated that they had finished when approached, the designs sheets were carefully collected by the experimenter and stapled to the subject data sheet containing the subject's name, classroom identifier, memorial content and comments. Any design of which all noteworthy components had been duplicated was counted as completed. Each subject was spoken with twice after treatment; once at the fifteen minute interval and then during the three or four minute debriefing period. Feelings were requested directed towards the task and the treatment subject matter.

An attempt was made to complete a classroom of subjects in one day to diminish the influence of experimental gossip.

The data were then separated by treatment and subjected to an

analysis of variance by groups and then by a 2 by 2 factorial analysis of variance for the effects and interaction of affect and communication style upon the maintenance of effortful behavior in the children. Significance levels were set at the  $p = .05$  level.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Analysis of Data

The data were subjected to an analysis of variance to assess mean differences among groups in the maintenance of effortful behavior at the copying task. A summary of this procedure is offered in Table II.

TABLE II

SUMMARY ANOVA FOR MEAN DIFFERENCES IN THE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORTFUL BEHAVIOR: INFLUENCE OF TREATMENTS

| Source of Variance | Sum of Squares | Degrees of Freedom | Mean Squares | F Obtained |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|
| Among Groups       | 235.74         | 3                  | 78.58        | .92        |
| Within Groups      | 6599.65        | 76                 | 85.84        |            |
| Total              | 6835.39        | 79                 |              |            |

F-critical = 2.72. The obtained F failed to achieve the critical value of 2.72 (df = 3/76; p = .05) for the mean differences.

The data were then subjected to a 2 by 2 factorial analysis of variance with the main factors of affect and communication style.

These statistics are shown in Table III.

TABLE III  
SUMMARY ANOVA FOR MEAN DIFFERENCES IN THE MAINTENANCE  
OF EFFORTFUL BEHAVIOR: INFLUENCE OF AFFECT  
AND COMMUNICATION STYLE

| Source of Variance | Sum of Squares | Degrees of Freedom | Mean Squares | F Obtained |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|
| Among              | (235.24)       | (3)                |              |            |
| Between A          | 137.82         | 1                  | 137.82       | 1.53       |
| Between C          | 70.32          | 1                  | 70.32        | .78        |
| Interaction A X C  | 27.10          | 1                  | 27.10        | .30        |
| Within             | <u>6600.15</u> | <u>73</u>          | 90.41        |            |
| Total              | 6835.39        | 76                 |              |            |

A = Affect: Positive or Negative

C = Communication Style: "Warm-Accepting" or "Cold-Evaluative"

F-critical = 3.96; p = .05; df = 1/73

The effects of the affective conditions, communication effects, and the predicted interaction did not occur. Therefore, it was clear that there were no significant mean differences among groups. However, it was clear in a visual inspection of the data that large differences in within group variances were present. (See Table IV for the dispersion measures for each group.) Additionally, all of the groups showed positively skewed distributions. The distributions for Groups III and IV were extremely leptokurtic in nature as more than half (fifty-two percent) of the subjects elected not to work beyond the first twelve designs yet only thirty-two percent of Groups I and II combined behaved in the same

manner (twenty-five percent of Group I and forty percent of Group II; refer to Figure 1). Though this author realized that each page might provide a convenient termination point for the subjects, it was not suspected that it would provide such a barrier even when the subjects had additional work sheets readily at hand.

TABLE IV  
DISPERSION MEASURES, MEAN, MEDIAN, AND SUM OF X  
FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

|            | Group  |       |       |       |
|------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
|            | I      | II    | III   | IV    |
| $\bar{X}$  | 21.25  | 18.20 | 17.45 | 16.75 |
| md         | 15.5   | 15.0  | 12.5  | 12.9  |
| $\Sigma X$ | 425.0  | 364.0 | 349.0 | 335.0 |
| $s^2$      | 149.99 | 78.46 | 46.25 | 56.29 |
| R          | 49.0   | 36.0  | 24.0  | 29.0  |

Due to the large differences in variances, F-ratios were generated between each group and the results of these procedures are shown in Table V.

TABLE V  
 SUMMARY OF VARIANCE DIFFERENCES:  
 F-RATIOS BETWEEN GROUPS

|     | I   | II   | III   | IV    |
|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
| I   | --- | 1.90 | 3.23* | 2.65* |
| II  | --- | ---  | 1.70  | 1.40  |
| III | --- | ---  | ---   | 1.22  |
| IV  | --- | ---  | ---   | ---   |

I = Positive Affect/"Warm-Accepting" Environment  
 II = Positive Affect/"Cold-Evaluative" Environment  
 III = Negative Affect/"Warm-Accepting" Environment  
 IV = Negative Affect/"Cold-Evaluative" Environment  
 \*p < .05; df = 19/19

The F-critical value at the  $p = .05$  level was 2.46. Significant differences in variances were shown between Groups I and III and between Groups I and IV. That is, subjects in the positive affect induction group who experienced a warm and accepting interaction dispersed themselves over a wider range of scores than both of the negative affect groups.

#### Testing of Hypotheses and Conclusions

As for the first research question hypothesizing that significant differences would be shown among the negative and positive affect induction groups, the Null Hypothesis must be accepted as no significant mean differences were shown.

As for the second research question regarding the differences within the affect groups created by the communication style used by the experimenters, significant differences in variances were shown between subjects in Group I who were not subjected to the "cold-evaluative" communication style and the negative affect groups. That is, a greater range and dispersion of scores was shown between Groups I and III and between Groups I and IV than between Groups III and IV, Groups II and IV, and Groups II and III. It appears then that children who are experiencing and expressing positive affects in a warm and accepting environment will show wider ranges of persistence than children experiencing and expressing negative affects. Significant mean differences were not shown between the group of subjects expressing positive affects in a warm and accepting communicative environment and the group of subjects expressing positive affects in a cold and evaluative communicative environment. However, it is felt that studying these relationships further in a setting which controls a number of possible intervening variables would yield significant results. These variables are offered in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary

The present study investigated the role of positive and negative affects introduced prior to a task situation and varied as to their being expressed in a warm and accepting or cold and evaluating communicative environment as they effect a child's effort at a task. This is as opposed to previously used strategies in which cognitive-affective experiences were ongoing with behavior (Masters and Santrock, 1976) or where some environmental factors had been manipulated though were not directly tied to the cognitive-affective experience. (Santrock, 1976). This is also the first attempt of which this author is aware in which the practical communication methods outlined by Thomas Gordon have been utilized in an experimental nexus with affective studies or other investigations.

It appears that the general directionality of behavior observed in the results of Underwood et al. (1973), Rosenhan et al. (1974), Moore et al. (1976), Moore et al. (1973), Santrock (1976), Masters and Santrock (1976), and Fry (1975) were replicated and that the experience of unobstructed positive affect facilitated constructive, task-oriented behavior which is in agreement with the work of Dreikurs (1968, 1970), Izard (1964). and Izard et al. (1965) as shown in the differences in variances.

Though significant differences among means was not shown, significant differences were shown in variances and this was between Groups I and III and between Groups I and IV. It is quite interesting that an encounter of only one or two minutes with another human caused such variability in children's effort at a task. It is also interesting that communication style appeared to block to some degree the natural motivating powers of the positive affects and possible reasons for significant differences not being shown here are offered in the next sections. It is also compelling that so many subjects in the negative affect groups elected to abandon the task at the earliest socially acceptable point, i.e., where some closure was possible in the completion of one page of designs.

#### Limitations of the Research

##### Uncontrolled Variables

It is suspected that some of the large differences in within group variances may have been in part due to uncontrolled variables within the affect induction procedures. One unexpected variable may have been the experience of negative sensations during the induction procedures; especially within the positive affect groups. This came to light during the debriefing when one subject verbalized that she had felt a bit embarrassed when asked to tell what made her feel "happy" and "good". Some subjects may have felt uncomfortable with the nature of the induction procedure itself as they may have been quite inexperienced in sharing with another individual.

Another unanticipated variable may have been a reaction of the

subjects to the sensitivity of the experimenters across all of the groups. Webb (1971) found that lack of teacher sensitivity has its greatest impact on low ability, problem, and insecure students while problem-free students were not appreciably affected by either sensitive or low sensitive teachers to any varying degree. In this instance, students who were easily affected by another individual may have not been differentially affected by treatments over being affected solely by the perceived sensitivity of the experimenter.

Additionally, many subjects may have immediately reverted to pre-existing feelings towards task situations when given the task instructions or may have been informally taught to pursue a task regardless of the emotions involved. For these subjects, feelings towards the instructions and the task may have overshadowed the treatments and helped to create such large within group variances with no differences in means.

#### Goal Setting or Persistence

One interesting prospect for further study is the dynamics of effort within this affective-communication framework. It appeared that the affective and communicative environment may have been setting stages for a child's goal setting. When presented with the task, children seemed to immediately assess it for difficulty and length and many asked if all of the sheets were the same. It is possible that goal setting decisions were made immediately prior to engaging in the task. This is especially interesting since the children were often very certain that they had drawn as many designs as they wanted. Children experiencing the negative affects may have been more satisfied to set an easily attained goal and to follow through with this inclination. The nature

of the response instrument would have to be altered to analyze this potential relationship.

### The Active Role of Communication Style on Children's Behavior

What was interesting to all of the experimenters was the reaction of the children to the "cold-evaluative" response sets for both the positive and negative affect induction procedures. For the positive affect/"cold-evaluative" group, it almost appeared as though the happy feelings were literally being taken away from the child when asked if what they were speaking of really made them feel "that" happy and were then asked to concentrate harder on the task. Students of nonverbal behavior and the precipitating events of disruptive behavior would be interested in the number of children who broke eye contact, stopped smiling, became uncomfortable in the seat, and openly confronted the experimenters about what they were supposed to do when asked to focus on the things of which they had spoken during the cold and evaluative communication style treatments within the positive affect groups. The negative affect subjects were not so visibly affected by the communication styles except for a feeling which this author experienced that a larger psychological distance had been created between the subject and the experimenter.

### Suggestions for Further Research

It is felt that students should be equated for factors as manifest anxiety levels and general sensitivity to find how subjects responding low and high in these areas might be differentially affected by affects

and the type of communicative environment which surrounds the child during affective states. Additionally, some method should be devised to discover if goal setting is the actual factor being studied or if it is actually effort at a task. If children elect to abandon their initial goals due to the effects of factors as the affects and the communicative environment in which they are a part, this would have serious implications for the need to more closely inspect (and alter) the manipulative powers adults possess in communication and to increase our awareness of the ways in which children are spoken with in affective situations. (cf. Martin and Keller, 1976, for our deficiencies in this regard.)

#### Concluding Remarks


What appears to have been shown in this study is that a group of children who are experiencing and expressing positive affects in an environment which communicates warmth and acceptance could be expected to show greater ranges of applied effort than children experiencing negative affects.

When children are filled with positive feelings and the environment is accepting and supporting of these feelings, one might well expect these children to show more differences in abilities than children who are experiencing negative feelings. The latter groups behaved in a very similar fashion to one another with no large exercises of individual potential being exhibited. In essence, the experience of negative affects (and possibly the use of a cold and evaluative communicative environment during the experience and expression of positive affects) seems to facilitate a restricted range of functioning in young children; that is, they will be more likely to abandon tasks and will be more

inclined to exhibit minimal effort at tasks.

The desirability of this shall lie in the values which educators and parents hold relative to the general learning climate of which they are a part. The teacher-social agent who desires a homogenous ability grouping of students would probably find little utility in inspecting the affective and communicative environment within and without the child. However, those who value an educational climate which provides for the greatest potential of children of all ability ranges would most likely feel comfortable dealing with the affective and transpersonal components of education and the wide exhibition of abilities which attention to these factors might yield.

In closing, some rather convincing evidence has been generated which points to the inhibiting properties of the negative affects in a child's task-oriented behavior and the facilitating properties of unobstructed positive affects. It is felt that one would do well to take into account this factor for it may be the major facilitator of a child's willingness to learn and to engage in and maintain effort at school tasks within our educational setting. It is also felt by this author that our communication styles should be more thoroughly investigated as they relate to children's behavior.



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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENTS BY GROUP

## GROUP I:

"I want you to tell me something that really makes you feel happy and really makes you feel good." --R--

"Yeah, that makes you feel really happy doesn't it."

"What else makes you feel happy?" --R--

"Yeah, you feel really happy when \_\_\_\_\_."

"Let's practice thinking about what we've been talking about. Do it now."

10 seconds

"Did you think about it real hard? Good, that's the way I want for you to think about it. Think about it now."

10 seconds - Go to task instructions.

## GROUP II:

"I want you to tell me something that really makes you feel happy and really makes you feel good." --R--

"Does that really make you feel that happy? I'd like for you to concentrate on this a little harder."

"What else makes you feel happy?" --R--

"So you think you feel happy when \_\_\_\_\_?"

"Let's practice thinking about what we've been talking about. Do it now."

10 seconds

"Did you think about it real hard? Good, that's the way I want for you to think about it. Think about it now."

10 seconds - Go to task instructions.

## GROUP III:

"I want you to tell me something that really makes you feel sad and that makes you feel really bad." --R--

"Yeah, that makes you feel really sad doesn't it?"

"What else makes you feel unhappy?" --R--

"Yeah, you feel really sad when \_\_\_\_\_."

"Let's practice thinking about what we've talked about. Do it now."

10 seconds

"Did you think about it real hard? Good, that's the way I want for you to think about it. Think about it now."

10 seconds - Go to task instructions

## GROUP IV:

"I want you to tell me something that really makes you feel sad and that makes you feel really bad." --R--

"Does that really make you feel that unhappy? I'd like for you to concentrate on this more."

"What else makes you feel unhappy?" --R--

"So you think you feel unhappy when \_\_\_\_\_?"

"Let's practice thinking about what we've talked about. Do it now."

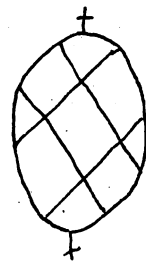
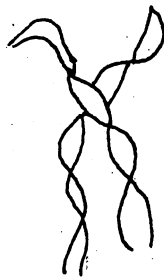
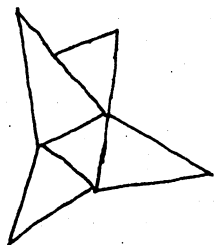
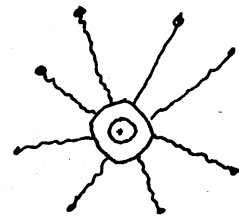
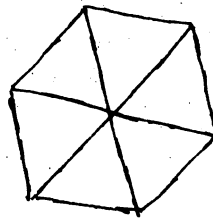
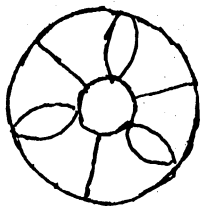
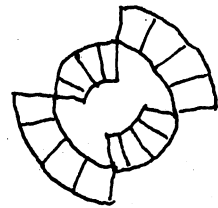
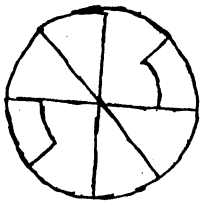
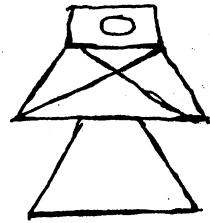
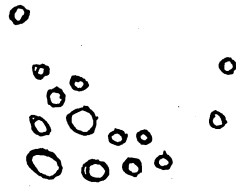
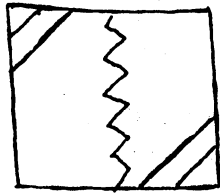
10 seconds

"Did you think about it real hard? Good, that's the way I want for you to think about it. Think about it now."

10 seconds - Go to task instructions

APPENDIX B

DESIGNS FOR INSTRUMENT





2  
VITA

Martin Wreno Anderson

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

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**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 5, 1953, the son of Jesse Wreno and Berniece Elaine Anderson.

**Education:** Attended public school in Tulsa, Oklahoma; graduated from Tulsa Edison High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, May, 1971. Received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology from Oklahoma State University, May, 1975, and completed requirements for Degree of Master of Science at Oklahoma State University in July, 1978.

**Professional Experience:** Volunteer counselor, Payne County Youth Services, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1974-1975; L.E.A.A. grant recipient and counselor/case worker at Kay County Youth Services, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1976; Graduate teaching assistant, Department of Applied Behavioral Studies in Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1976-1977; School psychometrist at Cimarron Valley Regional Education Service Center, Cushing, Oklahoma, 1977-1978; Member of National Association of School Psychologists; Oklahoma School Psychological Association; Phi Delta Kappa; acting Vice-President of Graduates in Applied Behavioral Studies, Oklahoma State University Campus.