

ACQUISITION OF RESPONDING AND ATTENDING SKILLS AMONG  
THERAPEUTIC RECREATION PRE-PROFESSIONALS  
AND PROFESSIONALS

By

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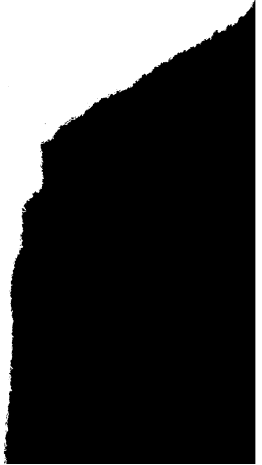
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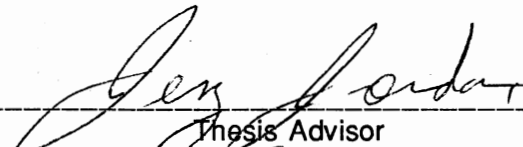
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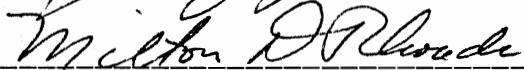
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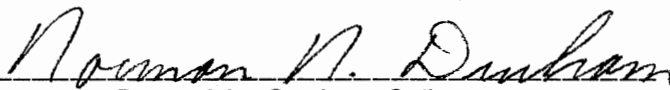
  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose and Hypotheses .....	3
Definition of Terms .....	4
Assumptions .....	5
Delimitations .....	5
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	7
Introduction .....	7
Higher Education .....	7
Therapeutic Recreation Competencies .....	8
Interpersonal/Communication Skills Identified as a Competency .....	10
Responding and Attending Behaviors as Foundation for Interpersonal/Communication Competency .....	12
Summary .....	13
III. METHODOLOGY .....	14
Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses .....	14
Description of the Subjects .....	15
Description of the Instrument .....	16
Design of the Experiment .....	19
Statistical Design .....	20
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .....	21
Results .....	22
Responding Skills .....	22
Attending Skills .....	25
Discussion .....	27
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	30
Summary .....	30
Conclusions .....	32
Recommendations .....	33

Chapter	Page
REFERENCES .....	36
APPENDIXES .....	40
APPENDIX A - SCORE SHEET .....	41
APPENDIX B - CONSENT FORM .....	43
APPENDIX C - THERAPEUTIC RECREATION SPECIALIST'S INSTRUCTIONS .....	45
APPENDIX D - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION .....	47
APPENDIX E - CLIENT'S INSTRUCTIONS .....	49
APPENDIX F - LETTER TO UNIVERSITIES .....	51
APPENDIX G - SCHEDULE OF TAPING .....	53

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Means and Standard Deviations for Responding Skills . . . . .	24
II. Analysis of Variance on Responding Skills . . . . .	24
III. Tukey's HSD Test for Responding Skills . . . . .	25
IV. Means and Standard Deviations for Attending Skills . . . . .	26
V. Analysis of Variance on Attending Skills . . . . .	27



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The discrepancy between competencies acquired through the academic classroom, internship, and on the job training is a recognized concern in the therapeutic recreation profession (Mobily, MacNeil, & Teague, 1984). Discussion has transpired in reference to the role of academia, to the role of the internship, and to the role of on the job training in regard to competency preparation of therapeutic recreation personnel.

Within the field of therapeutic recreation, survey research has been completed which identified knowledges and skills needed for competent therapeutic recreation practice.

These surveys represented professionals' perceptions of what the therapeutic recreation competencies are and where they are best acquired (Jordan, Dayton, & Brill, 1978; Jordan, 1979; Kelly, 1982; McGhee, 1987). To date, however, no study has used a causal comparative design to identify where or when these competencies are acquired. Such research is important, as it could provide validation of previous survey research and aid understanding of the dimensions of professional preparation.

The purpose of this study was to identify where specific knowledges and skills are learned as related to one important competency (i.e., communication skills) using a causal comparative design. This study attempted to identify which educational experience (college courses, internship, or the job) permits therapeutic recreation specialists to acquire proficiency in attending and responding skills. Attending and responding skills are the foundation for interpersonal/communication competencies

within a helping relationship (Ivey & Authier, 1978).

Austin (1982, p. 2-3) stated that through helping relationships therapeutic recreation specialists help guide clients to meet their problems or needs. The helping of people is through interpersonal relations, understanding human behavior, and communicating effectively. Kunstler and Austin (1982, p. 145) stated that "interpersonal relationship skills are today considered an essential competency for therapeutic recreation personnel." Austin (1982) stated if a therapeutic recreation specialist is unable to communicate effectively with clients, the therapeutic recreation process is almost certainly doomed to failure.

The competency of communication is what this study addressed. Competence is "the application and use of the knowledge base to perform the tasks of a profession" (Webster, 1975). Competencies are defined as specifically identifiable behaviors which together comprise professional performance (Olson & Freeman, 1979). The specific behaviors of communication skills which this study tested are those of responding and attending.

An unanswered question in therapeutic recreation has been where, specifically, do therapeutic recreation specialists acquire the competencies identified as essential to the profession? Research about the acquisition of competencies in therapeutic recreation is inconclusive and has relied entirely upon survey research. Robb (1973) addressed the integration of education and professional functioning. He contended therapeutic recreation specialists are unprepared to serve as members of treatment teams due to inadequate education in the areas of communication skills, understanding of etiologies, and diagnosis. Austin (1974) agreed with Robb as he felt universities could not adequately prepare students in therapeutic recreation unless the student received agency based training. He thought this would enable the student to learn the "tricks of the

trade" from one who practices therapeutic recreation on a daily basis.

McGhee (1987) studied the acquisition of competencies within the following educational experiences: 1) bachelor's classes; 2) bachelor's internship; and, 3) on the job. Using her research as a point of reference, the present study focused upon the educational experiences of (1) university course work; (2) the internship; and, (3) the job, to determine when the specific competencies of interpersonal skills (attending and responding) are acquired.

### Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to assess when competency in interpersonal skills is acquired; whether during the therapeutic recreation specialist's formal coursework at the bachelors level, during the internship, or on the job.

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between responding skill scores of junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
2. There is no significant difference between the responding skills score of the junior/senior students and interns.
3. There is no significant difference between the responding skills score of the junior/senior students and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
4. There is no significant difference between the responding skills score of the interns and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
5. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

6. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the junior/senior students and the interns.
7. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the junior/senior students and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
8. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the interns and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

Certified therapeutic recreation specialist: a professional in the therapeutic recreation field who is currently certified as a CTRS by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (excluding provisional certification).

Certifiable therapeutic recreation specialist: one who has met all requirements by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification.

Competency: specifically identifiable behaviors which together comprise professional performance. (Olson & Freeman, 1979).

Interpersonal skill: operationalized into two categories, attending skills and responding skills.

Attending skill: the behavior demonstrated to express the understanding of feelings and information expressed by the client. It includes facing the client squarely, open posture, leaning slightly forward, eye contact and using minimal encouragers to talk (Baker, 1981a).

Responding skill: the behavior which demonstrates understanding, respect, authenticity, and concreteness. The specific behaviors are assessed by open invitation to talk, open ended questions, paraphrasing, reflections of feeling, clarification, and

summarization (Baker, 1981a).

### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

1. Interpersonal skills needed for interviewing are acquired at one of the educational experience levels addressed in this study.
2. Adequate interpersonal skills exist for the selected sample to interact with the researcher and the research instrument.
3. The selected sample represents certified therapeutic recreation specialists and students, who at the end of their formal education, will be eligible for certification. Noncertified persons may be significantly different.

### Delimitations

This investigation has the following delimitations:

1. Only persons with formal therapeutic recreation background are subjects. Other graduates may work in therapeutic recreation positions and some may develop the skills examined here.
2. Only accepted therapeutic recreation curricula from the SPRE/NRPA Curriculum Guide and Who's Who in Recreation are used. The therapeutic recreation coordinator at each institution attested to the fact that their curriculum was in line with certification standards. No formal examination of curricula was included within this study.
3. The respondents in this study were from the Southwest region. Other areas of the country may or may not be similar.

4. The sample included junior/senior level therapeutic recreation students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists (worked 6-18 months) from educational programs which insured their eligibility for certification by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification at the completion of the student's formal education.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter reports a review of literature pertinent to this study. The topics considered were higher education, therapeutic recreation competencies, interpersonal/communication competency and attending and responding skills.

Mobily, MacNeil, and Teague (1984) reported there is a recognition within the therapeutic recreation field that higher education should prepare students in therapeutic recreation for professional practice. However, there is a discrepancy between competencies acquired through academic preparation and knowledge actually utilized by professionals delivering therapeutic recreation services. This study was designed to investigate when the interpersonal/communication competency (attending and responding skills) was acquired.

#### Higher Education

Historically, higher education has debated where the acquisition of skills should occur for occupations and professions. Vesey (1965, p. 469) stated the theory of a profession is learned through books, but the technical competence is acquired during an apprenticeship. Brubacher and Rudy (1976, p. 100) noted that this concern was paramount in the nineteenth century. The utilitarianism and social efficiency of higher education was demanded by society. Vesey (1976, p. 59-60) stated "...from the day of

Benjamin Franklin forward, individuals had urged a new kind of higher education which would prepare young men directed for a wide variety of employments..."

In 1986, Witucke voiced her concern of higher education not preparing students for their occupation. She stated that proficiency of an occupation's skills could only be accomplished through fieldwork, practicums or internships together with classroom instruction. Lewis (1973) addressed this concern of classroom instruction and competencies within a profession as he stated:

Those who design curricula ought to recognize that excellence, as viewed by them, requires a reality transformation in order to result in competent practitioners. Otherwise, we may produce increasing numbers of excellent individuals who are totally incompetent in practice settings. Those who establish the criteria for excellence in education and those who define competence in practice must work together (p. 62-63).

### Therapeutic Recreation Competencies

The training and education of therapeutic recreation specialists has always been a major concern for therapeutic recreation professional organizations. At the first meeting of the Council for the Advancement of Hospital Recreation (November 4, 1953) one of the primary concerns was standards and curricula which would better prepare those in the therapeutic recreation profession (Cox & Dobbins, 1970). Peterson and Connelly (1981) stated that one of the most significant issues and concerns for therapeutic recreation specialists is professional preparation.

Knowledge is defined as "the fact or condition of understanding a science, art or technique" (Webster, 1965). Competence is "the application and use of the knowledge



base to perform the tasks of a profession" (Webster, 1965). The concept of competence is too unwieldy to operationalize as a whole, thus, Olson and Freeman (1979) suggested the defining of competencies as more appropriate. Competencies are defined as specifically identifiable behaviors which together comprise professional performance (Olson & Freeman, 1979).

The identification of therapeutic recreation competencies began over 16 years ago. Stein, Park, and Hillman (1973) published the first competency guidelines. Kelly, Robb, Park, and Halberg (1976) used a national survey to identify entry level competencies. These 50 competencies included such skills as program assessment and development, group dynamics/leadership/communication skills, and knowledge of disabling conditions. Jordan, Dayton, and Brill (1978) sought to identify the frequency with which therapeutic recreation specialists performed selected tasks, and tried to determine where the skills/competencies to perform these tasks were acquired. Their study revealed the classroom was the best place to acquire knowledge of the tasks, but the practicum and job were selected equally as the location to acquire skills needed to accomplish the tasks. Kelly (1982) surveyed therapeutic recreation professionals asking where they perceived the 50 competencies were acquired. Kelly's study indicated that the therapeutic recreation student acquired competencies through internship and/or on the job experience.

McGhee (1987) researched a continuum of educational experiences for acquisition of competencies which included: bachelor's class, bachelor's internship, master's class, master's internship, inservice/staff training, conference/workshop, structured continuing education units, on the job experience, and personal development activities. She found therapeutic recreation educators/researchers, administrators/directors, and practitioners/leaders agreed that competency-skill acquisition occurred in three areas:

1) bachelor's coursework; 2) bachelor's internship; and, 3) on the job. However, her study did not address at which educational experience the specific competencies were acquired.

#### Interpersonal/Communication Skills Identified As A Competency

Therapeutic recreation is defined as "...a process which utilizes recreation services for purposive intervention in some physical, emotional, and/or social behavior to bring about a desired change in that behavior and to promote the growth and development of the individual" (Sherrill, 1981). Austin (1982, p. 2-3) stated that through helping relationships, therapeutic recreation specialists guide clients to meet their problems or needs. The helping of people is through interpersonal relations, understanding human behavior, and communicating effectively.

Robb (1973) addressed the integration of education and professional functioning. He stated one skill therapeutic recreation specialists need is the ability to relate appropriately. Smith (1976) surveyed practitioners and found knowledge of communication skills, ability to work with people, and understanding the impact of recreation and leisure to special populations, as the most needed competencies of therapeutic recreation specialists. His data revealed which competencies were most needed: 1) the ability to work with people; 2) ability to integrate recreation services; and, 3) knowledge and appreciation of leadership needs.

Jordan et al., (1978) listed two competencies within their research: planning of therapeutic recreation activities and leisure counseling, as directly relating to interpersonal communication skills. The planning of therapeutic recreation activities addressed the need to develop a rapport with clients to enable the therapeutic recreation specialist to assess the client's interests. The competence in leisure counseling required

basic helping skills, counseling approaches, and leisure counseling techniques.

Jordan (1979) did a task analysis of the duties of therapeutic recreation leaders. Listed within the programming duties, the task of conducting client assessment was of prime importance. According to Austin (1982), Kraus (1983), Carter, Van Adel, and Robb (1985), client assessment within the field of therapeutic recreation consists of an interview, observation, and use of secondary sources of information.

Another body which views interpersonal skills as a necessary competency within therapeutic recreation is the National Recreation and Parks Association and the American Association for Leisure and Recreation Council on Accreditation (1981). This council (NRPA/AALR), recognized by the Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation, is responsible for evaluating curricula of recreation and leisure programs in regard to meeting specified standards. The accreditation of a leisure science curriculum, with an emphasis in therapeutic recreation, must meet standard 9B.17 "ability to conduct client assessment procedures...", and 9B.19 "knowledge of theory and technique of therapeutic interventions including, but not limited to reflective listening ...". Kelly (1982) listed helping skills and principles and techniques of verbal and non-verbal communication as areas in which therapeutic recreation specialists should be competent. Kunstler and Austin (1982, p. 145) stated that "interpersonal relationship skills are today considered an essential competency for therapeutic recreation personnel." Austin (1982) stated if a therapeutic recreation specialist is unable to communicate effectively with clients, the therapeutic recreation process is almost certainly doomed to failure.

## Responding And Attending Behaviors As Foundations for Interpersonal/Communication Competency

Interpersonal skills, interpersonal communication, and/or social skills are terms which have been used interchangeably. They describe behaviors which deal with relationships between persons (Bochner, 1985). The relationships are indicative of interactions in some type of communication (Travelbee, 1971). Within nursing, physical therapy, counseling, and/or therapeutic recreation, communication is seen as a basic competency in the helping relationship between the client and the therapist (Travelbee, 1971; Morse & VanDenberg, 1978; Brammer, 1973; Austin, 1982). Brammer (1973, p. 43) stated that this helping relationship is composed of verbal and nonverbal communication. Egan (1982) and Ivey et al., (1978) found that this verbal and nonverbal communication are basic attending and responding skills which need to be taught. Attending is described as the demonstration of a desire to understand feelings of the client (Munson, Zoerink, & Stadulis, 1986). Stewart & D'Angelo (1975, p. 186) referred to attending as listening with verbal and nonverbal confirming behaviors. Patterson and Eisenberg (1983, p. 13) defined the attending and responding skills as body and verbal messages needed during basic helping sessions with clients. The verbal response to the client is the responding skill. Baker (1981a) operationalizes this skill as behaviors such as open ended questions, paraphrasing, reflection of feeling, clarification, and summarization.

Ivey & Authier (1978, p. 34) stated that there is an attitude within society that individuals "naturally" learn these social skills (interpersonal communication). However, Ivey and Authier (1978) addressed research which indicated that occupations ranging from secretaries to medical doctors enhanced interpersonal communication

through the learning of the basic attending and responding skills. Baker, Scofield, Munson, and Clayton (1983) took a random sample of 44 females involved in an introductory counselor education course and taught the attending and responding skills to part of the sample while not to the other. The study showed a significant difference between the group which had been taught the attending and responding skills by microskill practice and the group which was not. Munson et al., (1986) used microskill practice and mental practice to instruct therapeutic recreation students in attending and responding skills, and found a significant difference between students who had training and students who had no training in basic communication skills. These studies suggested that the basic interpersonal communication skills of attending and responding are teachable skills. Munson et al., (1986) recommended the exploration of the efficacy of interpersonal skills of therapeutic recreation specialists because effective communication is necessary for interviewing, counseling, and activity leadership.

### Summary

As shown by the various authors, the acquisition of skills for an occupation or profession is part of the educational process. However, this may occur outside the classroom and during a field work or internship experience. Specifically, competency in interpersonal/communication skills are imperative for a therapeutic recreation specialist to be effective. Using the research of McGhee (1987) as a point of reference, the present study focused on the educational experiences of (1) university course work, (2) the internship, and (3) the job, to determine when the competency of interpersonal skills (attending and responding) are acquired.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify when pre-professional and entry level therapeutic recreation specialists acquire proficiency in the basic communication skills of attending and responding. This chapter is a description of the protocol employed in the selection of the sample, collection of data and analysis of the data. The following sections describe:

1. Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses
2. Description of Subjects
3. Description of the Test Instrument
4. Design of the Experiment
5. Statistical Analysis Applied

#### Statement of The Problem and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to assess when the interpersonal skills of attending and responding are acquired. The question to be answered was: Is the acquisition of attending and responding skills occurring during the junior/senior year of a therapeutic student's educational experience, or does the acquisition of these skills occur after the student's internship, or are the skills acquired during their employment?

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the responding score of the

- junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
2. There is no significant difference between the responding skills score of the junior/senior students and interns.
  3. There is no significant difference between the responding skills score of the junior/senior students and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
  4. There is no significant difference between the responding skills score of the interns and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
  5. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
  6. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the junior/senior students and the interns.
  7. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the junior/senior students and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
  8. There is no significant difference between the attending skills score of the interns and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

#### Description of the Subjects

The subjects for this study were individuals who had been randomly selected from a list of students and entry level professionals received from universities in the southwest NTRS region of the United States. The universities were chosen from The Society of Park and Recreation Educators Curriculum Catalog (1987), Who's Who in Recreation (1983) and had a therapeutic recreation curriculum which the university reported as having met the standards of the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation

Certification. The subjects were junior/senior students in therapeutic recreation, seniors who had completed their internship, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists who had worked six to eighteen months in the field. Subjects were chosen from these educational areas because therapeutic recreation professionals perceived competencies to be acquired in these areas (McGhee, 1987). Subjects appeared to be representative of the three educational levels chosen (i.e. bachelor classes, internship, on the job).

#### Description of the Instrument

The Interpersonal Skills Proficiency Scale developed by Baker (1981b) was used as a systematic observation instrument to assess subjects during simulated helping interviews. This instrument was chosen due to its content validity, interrater reliability, and having been used with therapeutic recreation subjects in other studies.

Ebel (1972, p. 438) pointed out "a test has [content validity] to the extent that the tasks included in it represent faithfully and in due proportion the kinds of tasks that provide an operational definition of the achievement or trait in question." The Interpersonal Skills Proficiency Scale assesses the basic helping skills of attending and responding as described by Baker (1981a), Ivey and Authier (1978, p. 444) and Cormier and Cormier (1979, p. 32-38, 64). According to Kerlinger (1973) content validation is judgmental. He stated:

The items of a test must be studied, each item being weighed for its presumed representativeness of the universe. This means that each item must be judged for its presumed relevance to the property being measured, which is no easy task (p. 459).



This has been accomplished as the items on the Interpersonal Skills Proficiency Scale each address the observation of specific behaviors which constitute one's ability in attending and responding to individuals (Baker, 1981a). The second reason for choosing this scale was its previous interrater reliability. According to Darst, Mancini, and Zakrajsek (1983, p. 6), "systematic observation allows a trained person following stated guidelines and procedures to observe, record and analyze interactions with the assurance that others viewing the same sequence of events would agree with his recorded data." This has been demonstrated with the interrater reliability of the Responding Skill Proficiency Index having been .94 and .76. The interrater reliability of the Attending Proficiency Skill Index was 1.00 and .98 (Baker, Scofield, Munson, & Clayton, 1983; Munson, Zoerink, & Stadulis, 1986).

Lastly, the scale was used because it had been used previously in the assessing of attending and responding skills of therapeutic recreation students (Munson et al., 1986), and assessing students within other helping professions (Baker, et al., 1983).

The Interpersonal Skills Proficiency Scale is the result of a modified taxonomy from suggestions located in Ivey and Authier (1978, pp. 439, 470-471, 482-535). The modification of the taxonomy and the employment of frequency counts are a means of determining whether the subjects have learned the skills of attending and responding, and if the subjects are able to use the skills in a simulated counseling interview.

The Interpersonal Skills Proficiency Instrument has two scales, the Responding Skill Proficiency Index and the Attending Skills Proficiency Index. The Responding Skill Proficiency Index is scored by tabulating the verbal responses of the subject into one of four categories: advice giving, closed questions, open invitations, and other. Advice giving refers to the subject giving a client a recommendation regarding a client's decision or course of action (Webster, 1965). Closed questions "...often begin with 'do',

'is', 'are' and can be answered by the client with only a few words" (Ivey & Authier, 1978, p. 66). Open invitations include open ended questions, paraphrases, reflections, summaries, and clarifications. "Other" is the category used for unclassified responses.

The behavior of the subject was recorded on Baker's tally sheet (see Appendix A). A score was calculated by subtracting the number of inappropriate responses (advice giving and closed questions) from the number of appropriate responses (open invitations) and dividing by the total responses (advice, closed questions, open invitations, and other). This score was multiplied by 100, then 100 was added in order to transform the coefficient to a positive whole number.

The Attending Proficiency Skill Index is scored by observing the physical attending behaviors. Examples of these are:

1. Facing the client squarely, which is the basic posture of involvement. It says: "I am available to you." Turning to the side lessens one's involvement.
2. Maintaining an open posture, which indicates that the subject is open to communicate with the client and is not defensive. Crossed arms and legs can be viewed by the client as signs of reduced involvement or being defensive.
3. Leaning slightly toward the client indicates availability of the subject.
4. Maintaining good eye contact with a client is another indication that the subject is interested and is listening to the client. Failure in any of these four areas were considered attending breaks. These are valued on the following scale: 5 = no incidences of attending breaks; 4 = incidences in one attending category; 3 = incidences in two categories; 2 = incidences in three categories; and, 1 = incidences in all four categories. Every three seconds the behavior of the subject was recorded.

## Design of the Experiment

The subjects were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) to participate prior to beginning the study. They were informed this experiment required them to do a five minute interview which would be videotaped. A brief printed instruction sheet (see Appendix C) was given to the participants. They were told they would meet a female client, Carol, who was having a problem related to her leisure. This was only an introductory interview, so indepth exploration was not necessary. They were directed to a room with two chairs and video equipment where they met Carol, their client. The subject's chair was placed at an angle nine and one half feet from the camera. Located above the client's head was a clock with a timer set for five minutes to indicate the end of the session. Taping began as the subject met his/her client. After the interview, subjects were asked to fill out a short demographic information sheet (see Appendix D).

The client, Carol, was a masters student who was provided with a role description of a woman recently released from a rehabilitation facility, who was having difficulty finding satisfaction in leisure (see Appendix E). In developing the role, emphasis was placed on preparing the simulated client for presenting a standard stimulus to each subject. She was instructed to limit her responses to two sentences (maximum) in order to facilitate the subject's use of attending and responding skills.

Data, for analysis, were derived from the ratings of two raters; the principal investigator and a masters student trained in the use of the Interpersonal Skills Proficiency instrument. Raters separately practiced their ratings on videotaped interviews similar to the ones used in this study until 90% of their rating were in agreement, indicating a high degree of interrater reliability. The tapes for this study were separately viewed and scored by each rater. If a discrepancy in scores occurred,

the raters viewed the tape together arriving at a consensus to the subject's score.

### Statistical Design

This study was a post-test design with a stratified sample. In order to determine the number of subjects needed, a power test was executed. For a power of .90 with a small effect size .20 (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) and an alpha of .05 with a nondirectional test, 22 subjects were needed for each group (junior/senior students, interns, entry-level professionals) making a total of 66 subjects for the study. The statistical technique used was the multiple analysis of variance, due to having one independent variable with three levels (educational experiences) and two dependent variables; responding skills and attending skills. Alpha was calculated at the .05 level of significance. Tukey's HSD post hoc comparison test was used to identify significance between any of the groups.

Pearson's product moment correlation was computed between scores assigned by the two raters to yield the interrater reliability for the attending and responding proficiency scales.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the point at which pre-professionals and entry level therapeutic recreation specialists acquired proficiency in the basic communication skills of attending and responding. This was accomplished by inspecting the differences between the mean scores of the communication skills of responding and attending for the pre-professionals and professionals. Six universities in the National Recreation and Parks Association Southwest Region, which had therapeutic recreation curricula, were contacted first by telephone and then with a follow up letter (see Appendix F) requesting their cooperation within the study. Five of the six universities responded with lists of potential subjects for each population needed for this study. The sixth university was contacted but failed to furnish the list of students and alumni. One other university had to be eliminated because the university's program had not yet produced any interns or alumni. This left four universities; Northern Colorado University, Greeley, Colorado; Metropolitan State College, Denver, Colorado; University of North Texas, Denton, Texas; and, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, as test sites for the study. A power test was performed prior to the study in order to determine the number of subjects needed. For a power of .90 with a small effect size of .20 and an alpha of .05, 22 subjects were needed for each group.

A student assistant was hired at each university site to help with the logistics. A random sample was chosen from the lists of potential subjects and each student assistant

made appointments for the videotaping at the respective universities (see Appendix G). Because of disinterest and cancellations of some subjects, the final sample consisted of 14 junior/senior students, 12 interns, and 13 professionals. A post power test was computed for a power of .90, an alpha of .05, and 13 subjects per group. A medium effect size of .30 was estimated. This means there was 90% probability of detecting a .30 difference between groups (i.e., junior/senior students, interns, professionals) on responding and attending scores at the .05 alpha level.

The differences between groups were examined by a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). The assumption of homogeneity of variance was checked to verify if it had been violated. The null hypothesis for homogeneity states the population variances of the groups are assumed to be equal. The FMAX statistic for homogeneity indicated the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated as the calculated FMAX 1.89 did not exceed the critical value 2.40.

Discussed in the remainder of this chapter are the differences which were found between the groups (i.e., junior/seniors, interns, professionals) concerning responding and attending skills. The results are discussed under the headings of responding skills, attending skills, and discussion.

## Results

### Responding Skills

This section examines the findings concerning responding skills for junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

Research Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the responding scores of the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
2. There is no significant difference between the responding scores of the junior/senior students and the interns.
3. There is no significant difference between the responding scores of the junior/senior students and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
4. There is no significant difference between the responding scores of the interns and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

The scores from the Responding Skills Proficiency Index were indications of the verbal responses the subjects made in the categories of advice giving, closed questions, open invitations, and other. A score was calculated by subtracting the advice giving and closed questions from the open invitations, then dividing by the number of total responses. This score was multiplied by 100, then 100 was added in order to transform the coefficient to a positive whole number. The range of scores were 47 to 138. Group means and standard deviations are reported in Table I.

TABLE I  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR RESPONDING SKILLS

Source	$\bar{x}$	SD	N
Professionals	93.23	24.82	13
Interns	93.91	19.81	12
Junior/Seniors	73.38	22.84	14

A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. It reported a two-way analysis of variance comparing the means of the three groups at the .05 alpha level. The summary of this analysis is reported in Table II. The F was statistically significant

TABLE II  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON RESPONDING SKILLS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob. of F
Between Groups	2	3588.58	1794.29	3.98	0.027*
Error	36	16238.65	451.07		
Total	38	19827.32	521.77		

\*p<.05



( $F=3.97$ ,  $df 2, 36$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The strength of the effect as indexed by eta squared was .18; indicating 18% of the variance of the responding skill from the sample can be accounted for by the level of experience of the therapeutic recreation subject. Tukey's honest significant difference (HSD) test for specific comparison, a post hoc analysis, was conducted (Table III). This revealed the mean responding score for the junior/senior students (73.57) was significantly different from the mean responding score of the interns (93.92), as well as the mean score of the junior/senior students being significantly different from the mean responding score of certified therapeutic recreation specialists (93.23). However, the mean score of interns did not differ significantly from the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

TABLE III  
TUKEY'S HSD TEST FOR RESPONDING SKILLS

Experience Level	$\bar{x}$	Difference Between $\bar{x}$	Critical Difference	Hypotheses Rejected
Professional (P)	93.23	P - I	-.68	No
Intern (I)	93.91	P - J	19.91	Yes
Jun/Sr (J)	73.38	I - J	20.53	Yes

### Attending Skills

This section reports the findings pertaining to the attending skills for junior/senior

students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

Research Hypotheses:

5. There is no significant difference between the attending scores of the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
6. There is no significant difference between the attending scores of the junior/senior students and interns.
7. There is no significant difference between the attending scores of the junior/senior students and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
8. There is no significant difference between the attending scores of the interns and the certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

The scores from the Attending Skills Proficiency Index are tabulated by the observation of physical attending behaviors (i.e., facing the client squarely, maintaining open posture, leaning slightly, maintaining eye contact, being relaxed). Subjects were given one to five points in relation to the number of attending behaviors exhibited at three second intervals. After three minutes, the points were added to yield an attending skills score. The range of scores were 82 to 200. Group means and standard deviations of attending scores are reported in Table IV.

TABLE IV  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ATTENDING SKILLS

Experience Level	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	n
Professional	134.46	34.79	13
Interns	135.92	26.97	12
Junior/Seniors	120.71	23.48	14

A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to compare the means of the three experience groups at the .05 alpha level. A two way analysis of variance was calculated, the summary of which is reported in Table V. The F was not statistically significant ( $F=1.143$ ,  $df 2,36$ ,  $p \geq .33$ ). This suggests there is no significant difference between the three therapeutic recreation experience levels and attending skills score means.

TABLE V  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON ATTENDING SKILLS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob. of F
Between Groups	2	1885.97	942.99	1.143	0.33
Error	36	29689.01	824.70		
Total	38	31574.97	830.92		

### Discussion

The results presented in this study rejected the first three hypotheses which predicted: 1) no difference between the responding skill of junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists; 2) no difference between responding skills of junior/senior students and interns; and, 3) no difference between junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. Therefore, a significant difference existed between the three groups on responding skills. As this study's purpose was to address when the acquisition of responding skills occurred, the

findings imply this skill is acquired during the internship. This finding seemed to support previous literature. Smith (1976) said competencies appear to be acquired through a wide variety of course work and clinical experience. Jordan et al., (1978) stated that interaction with clients and personal counseling approaches were best learned in a practicum.

These results indicated the skill of responding is enhanced by the internship experience. This was demonstrated by no statistically significant difference between interns and certified therapeutic recreation specialists, rather the significant difference lay between junior/senior students and interns and junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. This also corroborates Austin (1982) who stated that students must gain practical experience (i.e., internship, practicums), if they are going to learn the "tricks of the trade".

Statistical significance suggested there was a difference between means which was not due to chance. The next step was to determine how strong the association was between the independent variable (i.e., junior/senior students, interns, professionals) and the dependent variable responding scores. Eta square indicated there was a weak association between the experience levels and responding scores, .18. Linton and Gallo (1975) indicated this result is better than the majority of behavioral science studies, yet 18% variance indicated a weak relationship between the experience levels (i.e., junior/senior students, interns, professionals) and responding skills. This suggests that other variables such as empathy, warmth, attitude, and other helper characteristics (Brammer, 1973) may be disturbance variables which would account for the remaining 82% of the variance for the responding skills.

This study failed to reject hypotheses four through eight as there were no statistically significant differences between: 4) responding scores of interns and

certified therapeutic recreation specialists; or, 5) between attending skills scores of junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. Since hypothesis number five was statistically nonsignificant, indicating no difference between the means of the three experience levels, hypotheses six through eight were not tested. Hypothesis six through eight addressed differences between a combination of two of the experience levels at a time. Results indicated no statistical significance between the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists for attending skills in the sample.

In summary, it appeared responding skills were acquired during the internship level. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences among junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists in regard to responding skills. Specifically, the responding skills differed between junior/senior students and interns, and between junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. It also appeared there was no difference between junior/senior students, interns, and professionals in respect to attending skills. The analysis of attending scores revealed statistically nonsignificant results.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study was an investigation seeking to identify when pre-professionals and entry level therapeutic recreation specialists acquire proficiency in the basic communication skills of attending and responding. The two main hypotheses were: 1) there would be no significant difference between the responding skill scores of the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists; and, 2) there would be no significant difference between attending skill scores of junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. If there were significant differences and the above hypotheses had to be rejected, then the study would have proceeded to investigate at which level the attending and responding skills are acquired; junior/senior students, interns, or therapeutic recreation specialists. A significant difference was found in regard to responding skills. It was determined that the difference occurred between junior/senior students and interns, and junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. No significant difference was found between any groups in regard to attending skills.

The sample was composed of randomly selected individuals from universities located in the Southwest National Recreation and Parks Region. These universities were chosen because they have a therapeutic recreation curriculum which meets the standards of the

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification. A list of students and entry level professionals was provided by Northern Colorado University, Greeley, Colorado; Metropolitan State College, Denver, Colorado; University of North Texas, Denton, Texas; and, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. The subjects were junior/senior students majoring in therapeutic recreation, seniors who had completed their internship, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists who had worked in their field for six to 18 months.

The subjects were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) and to complete a demographic sheet (see Appendix D) prior to participating in the study. The consent form advised them that they would be videotaped during a five-minute interview. A brief instruction sheet (see Appendix C) was provided to each subject which explained his/her role in this study. The instructions explained that they would meet a female client named Carol, who was having problems related to her leisure. This was an initial interview and they, as therapeutic recreation specialists, were supposed to gather information about Carol and why she was having problems related to her leisure.

Using the first three minutes of the interviews, the videotapes were reviewed and scores tabulated using the Interpersonal Skills Proficiency Index (Baker, 1981b). The first three minutes were chosen because some subjects were unable to maintain the interview for the entire five minutes. The researcher regarded the three-minute time frame as being sufficient to assess subject's attending and responding skills.

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences among junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists in regard to responding skills. Specifically, the responding skills differed between junior/senior students and interns, and differed between junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. This appeared to indicate the skill of responding is

enhanced by the internship experience because there was no significant difference between the interns' and certified therapeutic recreation specialists' responding scores. However, the experience level (i.e., junior/senior students, interns, certified therapeutic recreation specialists) accounted for only 18% of the sample variance in the responding skill scores indexed by eta square, leaving 82% of the variance unexplained.

When evaluating the results of the attending skill scores, the data revealed no significant difference between the junior/senior students, interns and certified therapeutic recreation specialists. The lack of significance suggests that the attending skills of therapeutic recreation students have been acquired by at least their junior/senior year of school.

### Conclusions

The results of this study indicated:

1. A difference between the responding skills of junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
2. A difference between the responding skills of junior/senior students and interns.
3. A difference between the responding skills of junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
4. No difference between the responding skills of interns and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
5. No difference between the attending skills of junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
6. No difference between the attending skills of junior/senior students and interns.
7. No difference between the attending skills of junior/senior students and



certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

8. No difference between the attending skills of interns and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

Therefore, it may be concluded that:

1. Responding skills are enhanced at the internship level of experience as significant differences existed between junior/senior students and interns, and between junior/senior students and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.
2. Attending skills are at least acquired by the junior/senior student level as there was no significant difference between the junior/senior students, interns, and certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

### Recommendations

This study addressed the acquisition of basic communication skills of attending and responding. In retrospect, the researcher would recommend a revision in scoring the Baker's Interpersonal Proficiency Scale. While scoring the responding skills, advice giving is considered negative. Though this researcher followed instructions on scoring the index, advice giving may be viewed positively. Therefore, more refinement of scoring this category would provide a more accurate score.

In regard to the attending scale, it is suggested that posture not be observed. Often the subjects were relaxed, being very attentive, yet, due to the subject's posture, he/she would fail to receive full attending points from the scoring method used with the attending proficiency index. The use of such scales seems appropriate for the observation of competencies, however, the need to refine scales to accurately assess

therapeutic recreation competencies is necessary.

The results of this study have several implications for the enhancement of proficiency of skills in therapeutic recreation with regard to competencies. Specifically, findings should assist universities in the development of curricula, and, assist practitioners and students in the understanding of the role of the internship within preservice education.

The National Recreation and Parks Association, with the American Association of Leisure and Recreation, have developed accreditation standards which dictate what competencies and knowledge a therapeutic recreation curriculum is to include. Research in the therapeutic recreation field has specified that competencies are learned at school, during the internship, or on the job (McGhee, 1987). However, specifically at which point the competencies are learned has not been identified previously. With such information, appropriate sequencing of educational experiences could be developed for pre-professional (i.e., junior/senior year, internship) and professional levels. In other words a more realistic learning sequence could be developed between formal and on site educational experiences. The results of this study show therapeutic recreation seniors, within the Southwest Region of the United States, who have completed their internship, have similar responding competencies as professionals. As responding skills are being operationalized at the internship level, a suggestion would be to have guidelines set for specific internship experiences (i.e., interviewing clients). This type of information could aid practitioners and students in understanding the unique role the internship has for application of the theory learned in the classroom.

As the eta square indicated, 18% of the variance of the responding skill of the sample could be accounted for by the experience level. This leads to speculation as to what other variables are in the composition of the remaining 82%. Here, the

investigator would suggest the composition would include empathy, warmth, perception of client, capacity to cope, and attitude. Each of these characteristics was described as necessary to be an effective helper (Brammar, 1973; Egan, 1975; Austin, 1982), thus, the suggestion that they influence the responding skill proficiency. The need to study these characteristics is required for understanding effective communication skills.

This study also indicated the attending skills of junior/senior students are comparable with interns and professionals. This finding suggests that attending skills should be identifiable at the junior/senior level. With specific demonstration of knowledge, comprehension, and application of skills, the refinement of the overall role of the instructional and practical component of the educational experience could occur. If junior/senior students have competent attending skills, the need to address them in the classroom would be minimal.

The results of this study and its design provide a basis for and a guide for a variety of inquiries regarding competency acquisition. Experimental studies need to be completed which address: 1) development of instruments to test the skills for competency; 2) when the appropriate educational experience for specific competencies should be operationalized; 3) what other characteristics may affect therapeutic competencies; and, 4) what interventions are needed to enhance learning of communication skills for therapeutic recreation students and professionals.

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**APPENDIXES**



APPENDIX A

SCORE SHEET

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Research # \_\_\_\_\_

RESPONDING/EXPLORATION SKILLS  
 @Stan Baker, PSU, 1981

## TALLY FORM

TALLY HELPER LEADS IN THE APPROPRIATE COLUMNS				
ATTENDING BREAKS:	ADVICE	CLOSED QUESTIONS	OPEN INVITATION:	OTHER
S= facing O=open posture L=lean forward E=eye contact R=Relax			paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, summarizing, open ended questions, or open invitation to talk, clarification	

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Individual's Consent for Participation in a Research Project**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, voluntarily agree to participate in this study  
 (print full name)  
 entitled: Acquisition of Responding and Attending Skills among Therapeutic Recreation  
 Pre-professionals and Professionals.

I understand the purpose of this research study is to gather data to assess when the communications skills (responding and attending) of therapeutic recreation students and entry-level professionals occur. I understand I will be given instructions directing me to portray a therapeutic recreation specialist in a community health facility who will be conducting an initial interview with a client. I understand I will be given a brief description of the client and reasons for her referral to the facility. I will be directed to an office where I will have up to 5 minutes to begin the interview process.

I understand this is voluntary and I will receive no compensation for participation in the study. I understand that the only perceived discomfort from this research investigation is that of being filmed.

I understand by signing this consent form, I acknowledge that my participation in this study is voluntary. I also acknowledge that I have not waived any of my legal rights or released this institution from liability for negligence. I may revoke my consent and withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

I understand I was chosen as a subject from a random sample of therapeutic recreation pre-professionals and professionals within the Southwest Region of the United States. The video tapes will be viewed only by the principal investigator, Suzie Lane, a master's level rater, and advisor Dr. Jerry Jordan. I understand I will be identified only by a number, thus assuring confidentiality and the tapes will be destroyed after the completion of this research project (one year).

If I have any questions about the research procedures, I will contact, the principal investigator, Suzie Lane, 405-744-5498 during work days. I can also write 117-C, Colvin Center, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078.

If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may take them to the Office of University Research Services, Oklahoma State University, 001 Life Sciences East, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 405-744-6991.

I have read this informed consent document. I understand its contents and I freely consent to participate in this study under the conditions described in this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Research Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Principal Investigator

**APPENDIX C**

**THERAPEUTIC RECREATION SPECIALISTS**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

## **SIMULATED INTERVIEW -- THERAPEUTIC RECREATION SPECIALIST'S INSTRUCTIONS**

Conduct this session as if it were an actual interview with a real client.

You are a therapeutic recreation specialist working in a local community human service agency which provides a full-range of therapeutic recreation services including rehabilitation, leisure education and a recreation program.

You will be directed to an office where your client, Carol Smith, will arrive. You have up to 5 minutes to do the initial interview. Your goal should be to identify all the concerns that brought Carol to seek your help, to find out what it is that is troubling her. Use whatever techniques you think would be helpful to get a complete picture of Carol's problems and needs. You are not expected to solve any problems or go beyond this initial exploration, so when you are finished you might simply suggest that the client make another appointment to continue working on the help she needs.

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

RESEARCH NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of University attended/attending

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Age \_\_\_\_\_

3. Gender \_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you taken a leisure education/leisure counseling course before?  
YES or NO. (please circle response).

5. What therapeutic recreation courses have you taken?

Please list:

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

E. \_\_\_\_\_

F. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you or are you currently working (voluntary or paid) in  
therapeutic recreation? \_\_\_\_\_. If so, how long \_\_\_\_\_.

Please list experiences:



**APPENDIX E**

**CLIENT'S INSTRUCTIONS**

## SIMULATED INTERVIEW - CLIENT'S INSTRUCTIONS

You are a client who has recently been released from a major rehabilitation hospital for the physically disabled. While you were in this facility, you had major surgery on your spine to correct an injury which was incurred during a car accident.

You have undergone various forms of rehabilitation at the hospital during the previous months (physical, vocational, and recreational) and are being encouraged by physicians to continue treatment at a local human service agency. While your progress has been very good in physical and vocational rehabilitation, the ability to enjoy recreational pursuits has been particularly difficult for you because of the very active lifestyle you led prior to your accident. In other words, you are somewhat restricted in the activities you are able to perform and have not found much satisfaction in sedentary activities. In addition, most of your friends continue to participate in activities you once enjoyed but can no longer do. You feel left out.

Therefore, you have made an appointment with a therapeutic recreation specialist at a local community human service agency which provides a full-range of therapeutic recreation services including rehabilitation, leisure education and recreation programs. You are hoping that this professional will be able to help you with your problem.

**APPENDIX F**

**LETTER TO UNIVERSITIES**

Dear

I would like to thank you for your assistance in locating therapeutic recreation pre-professionals and entry level professionals from your program. As I briefly explained, I am researching when therapeutic recreation pre-professionals and professionals acquire the interpersonal communication skills of attending and responding. In order to accomplish this, I will videotape subjects while they interview a client (a person I have trained) for five minutes. The videotape will then be analyzed using the Interpersonal Skills Competency Scale.

Your therapeutic recreation curriculum was selected as one having met NCTRC standards, thus enabling your students to be eligible for certification after graduation, which is one of my delimitations.

As I explained last week I would like a list of your current junior/senior therapeutic recreation students; undergraduate students who have just completed their internship and or have not worked past six months; and, entry level therapeutic recreation professionals from your program who have worked six to 18 months to be part of my random sample.

I appreciate you time and effort in this study. After the selection of my sample, I will be contacting you for assistance in locating the students and the possibility of setting up the interviewing at your campus.

If you have any questions about the study I can be contacted at 405-744-5498 or 405-372-8063. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Suzie W. L. Lane

**APPENDIX G**

**SCHEDULE OF TAPING**

## SCHEDULE OF VIDEO TAPING

DATE	LOCATION
9-07-88	OSU, STILLWATER
10-17-88	MERCY HOSPITAL, OKC
10-26-88	OSU, STILLWATER
10-28-88	CENTER FOR PHYSICALLY LIMITED, TULSA
11-06-88	BACHMAN CENTER, DALLAS
11-07-88	UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS, DENTON
11-09-88	OSU, STILLWATER
11-11-88	METROPOLITAN STATE COLLEGE, DENVER
11-12-88	NORTHERN COLORADO UNIVERSITY, GREELEY

VITA<sup>2</sup>

Suzie Wanda Lorraine Lane

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

**Thesis:** ACQUISITION OF RESPONDING AND ATTENDING SKILLS AMONG THERAPEUTIC RECREATION PRE-PROFESSIONALS AND PROFESSIONALS

**Major Field:** Higher Education

**Area of Specialization:** Therapeutic Recreation

**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Fort Bragg, California, February 26, 1956, the daughter of Campbell Norris and Hazel Lorraine Lane.

**Education:** Graduated from Atoka High School in Atoka, Oklahoma, 1974; received the Bachelor of Art degree in Sociology, from Oklahoma University, Norman, Oklahoma, May, 1978; received the Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education, from Oklahoma University, December, 1979; received the Master of Science degree in Psychology of Sports, December, 1983; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, May, 1989.

**Professional Experience:** Research Assistant, University of Oklahoma, 1980; Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Oklahoma, 1981- 1982; Adjunct Instructor/Grant Project Coordinator, Oklahoma State University, 1986-present; twelve presentations at national, state and regional conferences; two publications in state journals.

**Professional Organizations:** National Recreation and Parks Association; National Therapeutic Recreation Society; American Therapeutic Recreation Association; Southwest Therapeutic Recreation Symposium; Oklahoma Recreation and Parks Society; Oklahoma Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.