

# The Behavior Change Project: A Field Assignment in Empathy Building, Self-Awareness, and Direct Clinical Practice

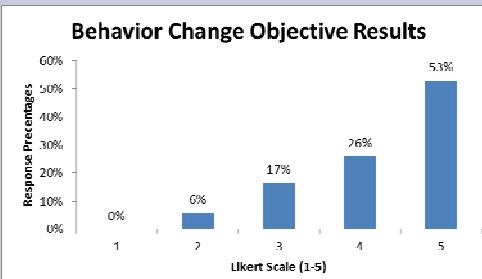
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Description
<b>2014 Field Educators Innovation Showcase</b> Field Seminar/ Classroom-based Best Practices
<b>Innovative Process-</b>  The behavior change project is an innovative classroom intervention implemented in a social work field seminar at the University of Memphis. Students select one of their own behaviors to change and implement an empirical study of their progress in changing the behavior. The project provides the students with an opportunity to put themselves in the client's place in a way that also assists them with understanding direct practice and evaluating clinical outcomes.
<b>Elements-</b>  Initiating the behavior change project includes an eight-step process. Each step is explained in detail in the published article (Elswick, 2013). This eight-step process does not have to be completed in the context of one seminar class, and it is highly encouraged to take each step and review the assignment across several days to ensure student competency in the assignment details. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Step 1: Identify a target behavior and write objective and measurable treatment goals.</li><li>• Step 2: Discuss preference assessments, data collection procedures, and how to graph data.</li><li>• Step 3: Students start baseline data collection.</li><li>• Step 4: Students research Evidence Based Interventions (EBI) for the target behavior.</li><li>• Step 5: Students identify possible obstacles to project.</li><li>• Step 6: Students start EBI, continue data collection on target behavior, graph data daily, and maintain a therapeutic daily journal about the behavior change process.</li><li>• Step 7: Students bring their graphic displays of data to field seminar, report on their progress toward goal attainment, discuss obstacles in treatment, and provide journal-entry feedback about the process.</li></ul>
<b>Experience of Innovator</b>

## Length of Time Used-

Dr. Susan Elswick was hired by University of Memphis Department of Social Work as the Clinical Assistant Professor and Director of MSW Field Placements in July 2012. Dr. Elswick immediately started employing this innovation in Field Seminar, and continues to use this as an intervention in field seminar to teach clinical skills, empathy, and self-awareness of graduate field students (*The Behavior Change Project has been utilized since 2012- current*).

Results	
<b>Assessment Procedures-</b>	
Progress and growth of the student learner is analyzed in a number of ways during this activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first method for measuring student progress during this project is the use of a social validity measurement questionnaire (0-5 Likert scale) that will identify the student's beliefs and perceptions about client noncompliance and their perceptions and opinions about the use of data-collection procedures in the applied setting. This will be provided in a pre- and post-test procedure.</li><li>• Another method used in measuring student progress is a single system research model to gauge the student's ability to identify a need, collect data, research and choose an effective EBI to address the need area, maintain consistent data collection on the target behavior, and analyze the data for progress (1-5 Likert scale).</li><li>• As part of the single systems research model, the students also participate in weekly class-wide staffing of their personal progress on target behavior change. Each student submits collected data that has been graphed for purposes of visual analysis and presents to the class a short synopsis of the target behavior, intervention chosen, and current data on the behavior change project. This is a great opportunity for students to present findings, review and analyze data collection, and obtain support and feedback from peers related to evaluation outcomes and changes in the current intervention plan.</li><li>• The final assessment method for this intervention is a daily journal activity. The students are instructed to maintain a daily journal related to the behavior change project, their perception of the progress of the intervention process, obstacles to the behavior change project, and a method of analyzing feelings about the intervention project (on a 10-point scale).</li></ul>	
<b>Results of Social Validity Measure:</b> <b>2012-2014</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results of the survey(s) indicated that in regards to the Behavior Change Project assignment used in 2012-2014 year, that 53% of the students felt that the weekly Behavior Change Assignment was helpful/very helpful. Overall results indicated that 0% of students felt that the Behavior Change Assignment was <i>Useless</i>, 6% felt that it was <i>Somewhat Helpful</i>, 16.5% felt <i>Neutral</i>, 26% felt that it was <i>Helpful</i>, and 53% felt that it was <i>Very Helpful</i>. These results also indicate that this assignment proved to be an effective pedagogical practice for this course and should be continued and enhanced. Some suggestions were made and will be taken into consideration for the 2014-2015 school year.</li></ul>	



Impact of Innovation
<b>Number of Student Participants-</b>  60 MSW students have participated in the classroom-based innovation (2012-2014), and currently an additional 20 MSW students will participate in this assignment in the 2014-2015 academic year.
<b>Number of Agency Partners –</b>  Each student is assigned to a local agency/ community partner to complete the required field internship hours so roughly 60-80 agencies have or could potentially be impacted by the student's participation in this assignment.
<b>Impact of the Innovation for these agencies-</b>  Direct impact of the agency with this portion of the assignment has not been assessed; however, in Field IV (the final field seminar class within our program) the behavior change project moves from assessment of the student's personal behavior to assessment of a client's behavior at the agency.
References and Resources
<b>Resources-</b>  Very few resources (outside of the classroom) are required to develop, implement, or maintain this innovation within a Department of Social Work. The students are an integral part of this assignment, the instructor of the field seminar class needs to have knowledge of research and evaluating outcomes (single-subject research, use of graphing software, and understanding how to monitor effective outcome in the therapeutic practice).
<b>References-</b>  Elswick, S. (2013). The Behavior Change Project: A Field Assignment in Empathy Building, Self-Awareness, and Direct Clinical Practice. <i>Field Scholar</i> , 3 (2).

