

This Week's Citation Classic

CC/NUMBER 30
JULY 25, 1983

Phillips E L. Achievement Place: token reinforcement procedures in a home-style rehabilitation setting for "pre-delinquent" boys.
J. Appl. Behav. Anal. 1:213-23, 1968.
[University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS]

Token reinforcement procedures were used to reduce antisocial behaviors and increase prosocial behaviors of delinquent adolescents in a treatment-oriented group home. Clinical responsibility for the program rested with a highly trained husband-wife team ('teaching-parents') who lived full-time in the home. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 145 publications since 1968, making it the 13th most-cited paper published in this journal.]

Elery L. Phillips
Boys Town USA Department
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
Boys Town, NE 68010

April 21, 1983

"This paper consisted of a series of experiments that formed part of my master's degree work at the University of Kansas. My wife Elaine and I had started a group home for delinquents, and our early attempts to codify a systematic program were unique enough at the time that much of our research contributed to our graduate degrees. Modifying token economy techniques for our setting and population, we demonstrated that antisocial youth behaviors (e.g., aggressive statements) could be improved without interfering with the clinical relationship between ourselves and the boys in our home.

"In retrospect, I suspect one of the reasons the work continues to be cited is that it was a blending of several trends that have influenced current work with delinquents. In the late-1960s, it was uncommon to find a residential treatment program for delinquents that was in a neighborhood home, used a token economy, and employed a research orientation in a humanistic manner. The fledgling field of applied behavior analysis formed the scientific framework and the paper was published in the founding year of the field's journal.

"Of course, looking back on this early work highlights the simplicity of the youth behaviors we addressed; but, since then, my work and that of numerous colleagues has moved to far more complex human enterprise. We realized early on that, if we were going to seriously attempt to help the hundreds of thousands of troubled youngsters who need it, we must provide a 'package' that others could use, including necessary staff training, program evaluation, and management systems in addition to the psychological youth treatment techniques.¹ Further, we realized that we must borrow concepts from the business world (e.g., marketing) and find ways to communicate what we learn to others.² As part of this effort, we started in the mid-1970s to adapt the community-based model at the large institution³ of Boys Town, since many youths will continue to be served in such established settings. In the 16 years since the paper was published, several hundred more papers, manuals, films, and related materials have been produced by colleagues using the same model (now called the Teaching-Family Model) as we have begun working with new populations. Currently, over 180 homes in 18 states follow the same approach started years ago at our home in Kansas.

"Although trained as psychologists, we have come to appreciate the benefits of borrowing elements from other fields to construct a human service program that seems to do well in different locales, with different staff working with different populations, and funded from different sources—with comparable effects for the clients no matter where they are. We have learned from political science, management, training and development, personnel, communications, computer science, and other disciplines.

"I have been fortunate in my associations with colleagues such as my wife Elaine, co-workers Dean Fixsen, Montrose Wolf, and numerous others who remain friends as well as professionals committed to helping today's youth. We've learned that it takes far more than small-scale research projects... but that's where it started."

1. Phillips E L, Fixsen D L, Phillips E A & Wolf M M. The Teaching-Family Model: a comprehensive approach to residential treatment of youth. (Cullinan D & Epstein M H, eds.) *Special education for adolescents: issues and perspectives*. New York: Charles E. Merrill, 1979. p. 203-33.
2. Phillips E L, Phillips E A, Fixsen D L & Wolf M M. Behavior shaping works for delinquents. *Psychol. Today* 7:75-9, 1973.
3. Coughlin D D, Maloney D M, Baron R L, Dahr J, Daly D L, Daly P B, Fixsen D L, Phillips E L & Thomas D L. Implementing the community-based Teaching-Family Model at Boys Town. (Christian W P, Hanna G T & Glahn T J, eds.) *Programming effective human services: strategies for institutional change and client transition*. New York: Plenum Press. In press, 1983.