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 indicates that this paper has been cited in over 145 publications since 1968, making it the 13th most-cited paper published in this journal.

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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 our treatment 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.