

# PROCEEDINGS

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## The Pragmatics of Accountability

PHILOSOPHY INTO PRACTICE

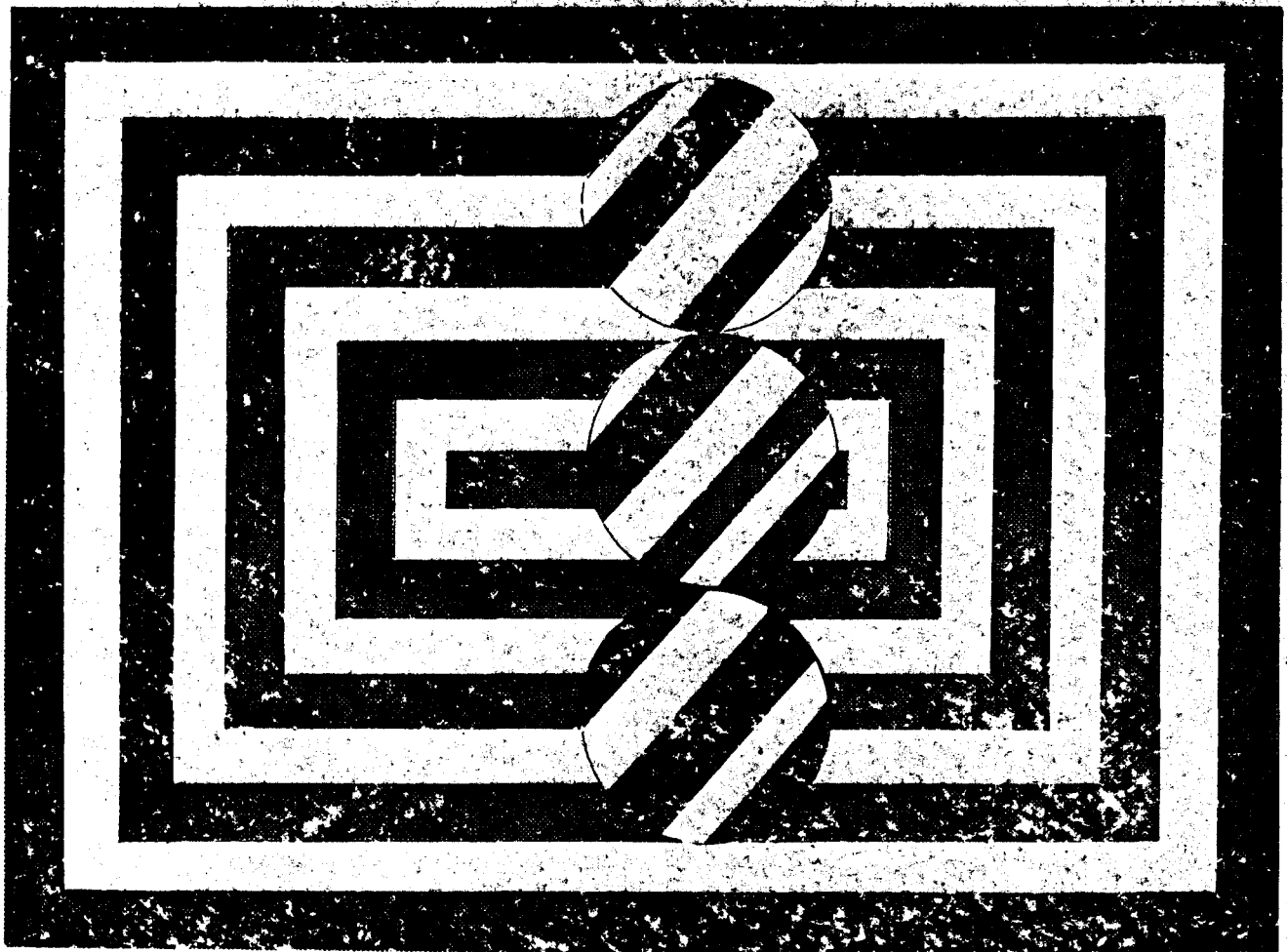


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SELF-PROGRAMMED CONTROL: A NEW APPROACH TO LEARNING

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My answer to the question - are Learning Skills Centers an effective educational service station? - is, no, not effective enough!

The basic problem as I see it is that until now Learning Skills Centers have focused primarily on the cognitive aspects of learning and not sufficiently on the affective aspects. Basic learning skills make up only one factor essential for efficient learning. Equally, if not more important, is the student's mental attitude and state of mind.

As I see it there are two major affective factors that must be dealt with. First, there is the student's usually negative attitude toward school. He most often finds schoolwork a chore and what's worse he usually doesn't think much of his learning capabilities. Secondly, there is the fact that most students are also plagued with any number of personal or emotional problems. Love, sex, drugs, parental difficulties, inferiority complexes, etc., are all capable of producing very real interference. If we are truly interested in improving our student's learning abilities, we have to take into account these two most crucial factors.

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I'm sure most of us are aware of this need. I think the main reason something hasn't been done about it heretofore is that we just haven't had any really effective means of dealing with the problem. I'd like to think that this may now no longer be the case. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to introduce a unique program that I feel goes a long way towards solving this problem. I refer to it as Self-Programmed Control (SPC).

Although this program has now been applied at a number of schools including UCLA, Golden West College and the University of Uppsala, Sweden (all within the past year), its main application has been at East Los Angeles College (ELAC) for the past two and a half years.

The program at ELAC began thanks to a Title III project, to help disadvantaged Mexican-American students. As a result of its initial success here it has been opened to all students as part of a regular 3-unit development study skills course for the past year and a half.

#### The Two Basic Goals of the Program

The basic goals of the program are 1) to help instill a new positive attitude toward learning, and 2) to provide a student with an effective means for handling personal and emotional problems.

#### The Three Components of the Program

The program is made up of three basic interacting components: 1) The Self-Programmed Control (SPC) Techniques; 2) Psycho-Cybernetics; and 3) The Shortcut Learning Techniques.

#### The SPC Techniques

Perhaps the most important of the components is the first -- the SPC Techniques, for it serves the purpose

BARRIOS..cont'd

of opening the door, of giving the student some real hope in the possibility of change. I'm sure I don't have to tell you that changing lifelong behavior patterns is not the easiest thing to accomplish. Much of man's behavior is so deeply ingrained that it has become automatic, that is, not that subject to voluntary control. Any remedial or rehabilitative program has to take this into account. The SPC techniques are aimed at eliminating or breaking through this "involuntary" barrier. They are a highly effective systematic means of giving a person greater control over his "involuntary" side (that is, his habits, attitudes, emotions, etc.)

There's no end to the possibilities of SPC. Just about any aspect of his behavior can now more easily be controlled by the student. For instance, he can gain greater control over his ability to react calmly in previously tense situations, e.g., studying, taking exams, giving a talk, socializing, handling everyday pressures. etc. He can also use it to more easily instill new study habits, be able to concentrate better, become better organized, stop procrastinating, break any bad habits, control his temper, express himself more assertively, control his moods, etc., etc.

#### SPC Explained

The approach is based on the premise that words and thoughts have the ability to produce reflexive or automatic responses. We know that words can act as conditioned stimuli. Pavlov long ago recognized this fact: "Obviously for man, speech provides conditioned stimuli which are just as real as any other stimuli...Speech, on account of the whole preceding life of an adult, is connected up with all the internal and external stimuli which can reach the cortex, signaling all of them and replacing all of them, and therefore it can call forth all those reactions of the organism which are normally determined by the actual stimuli themselves". (Pavlov, 1927)