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Shoestring Adventures in Program Evaluation: A Model, Methods, Data, and Applications

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Shoestring adventures in program evaluation:
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This paper describes a model for program evaluation, provides a description of a research program with pertinent data from a variety of methods applied in six program settings: two university clinical psychology programs, Alabama and Kansas; the Memphis Internship Consortium; the University of Arkansas Student Development Center component of the Counseling Unit; and two county social service agencies, Benton and Washington counties in Arkansas. The evaluations of the clinical psychology training programs are described in some detail herein to augment (and antedate in methodology) the separate presentations of programs in the other four settings.

The model has the general format of (a) entree to setting; (b) shared planning; (c) participation in data collection by setting personnel; (d) informal oral feedback with all setting participants; (e) formal feedback between researcher and program; (f) a continuing relationship between researcher and program. The model encourages a continuity of relationship between researcher and program that stimulates shared involvement over time and increases the likelihood that findings will have an effect upon future program practices.

The methods employed have included: (a) interviews with participants; (b) group meetings with participants; (c) stream of behavior accounts and occupancy counts of behavior settings; (d) needs assessment data; (e) time logs of activities and concurrent feelings of program participants; (f)
questionnaire data. One intent of these methods has been to separate persons and settings so that feedback of findings may be individualized and personally relevant data as well as program relevant data may be provided to participants. Not all components of this model or all methods are represented in each evaluation. This has been an inevitable and desirable outcome of the evolving nature of the evaluation paradigm.