

## Chapter 10 Perceptual Control Theory an Alternative Perspective

Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) is a systems model for the regulation of actions based on negative feedback loops as used in engineering control theory (Powers, 1973; Robertson, & Powers, 1998). An everyday example of an engineering control system is the cruise control in your car. By way of illustration, the speed limit is 70 mph, so you set the cruise control at 70 mph. The cruise control now has a *reference value* and must regulate the actions of the car so that its performance conforms to the reference value. The cruise control monitors the speed of the car, i.e., the *controlled variable*, as indicated by a *signal* from the speedometer, and compares this monitored value to the reference value that has been set. If the car encounters a hill, i.e., a *disturbance*, sufficient to cause the car to slow down, there will be a difference between the monitored speed and the reference value. This discrepancy generates what is called an *error signal*. The cruise control then initiates *actions* to regulate the speed of your car, e.g., increasing the flow of fuel to the engine. As long as the signal to the cruise control from the speedometer corresponds to the reference value set, the control system simply continues to monitor and initiates no actions.

The PCT approach to human behavior builds on the engineering approach to control theory. The PCT model of behavior is a radical departure from previous theories about why the observed behavior of individuals occurs. The process of perception plays a central role in this theory. Perceptual processes in PCT can be thought of, in some respects, as being the process that monitors the signals being generated about controlled variables. Most controlled variables reside in the environment, i.e., events in the environment that are important to an individual, but some reside within the organism, i.e., biological variables such as hunger and cognitive variables such as self-image. One is not aware of all perceptual processes as they take place, nor even most of them. Awareness is usually present only when control of a variable is being organized, when there is a disturbance of a controlled variable that requires a choice between programs or after a programmed response fails to produce congruence between the reference value for a controlled variable and the perception of that controlled variable. In most cases, a disturbance of a controlled variable automatically initiates a previously developed and successful programmed response and does not require conscious awareness. Perception in the PCT model is hierarchical and includes eleven levels of perception (see Figure 10.1). Higher levels in the hierarchy set reference values for lower levels in the hierarchy. With each step up the hierarchy, the processing time for perceptual input slows down so that processing at the highest level in the hierarchy proceeds at the slowest rate. Briefly, these levels are as follows:

### Experience Levels

1. **Intensity**, the awareness *threshold*. This is the attribute that all sensory events have in common. The perception of this attribute is the direct result of stimulation of sensory nerve endings, i.e., a perception of intensity. The relative level of experienced intensity, for any given individual, is a product of that individual's neurological sensitivity to sensory input. The neurological *threshold*

**Perceptual Hierarchy**

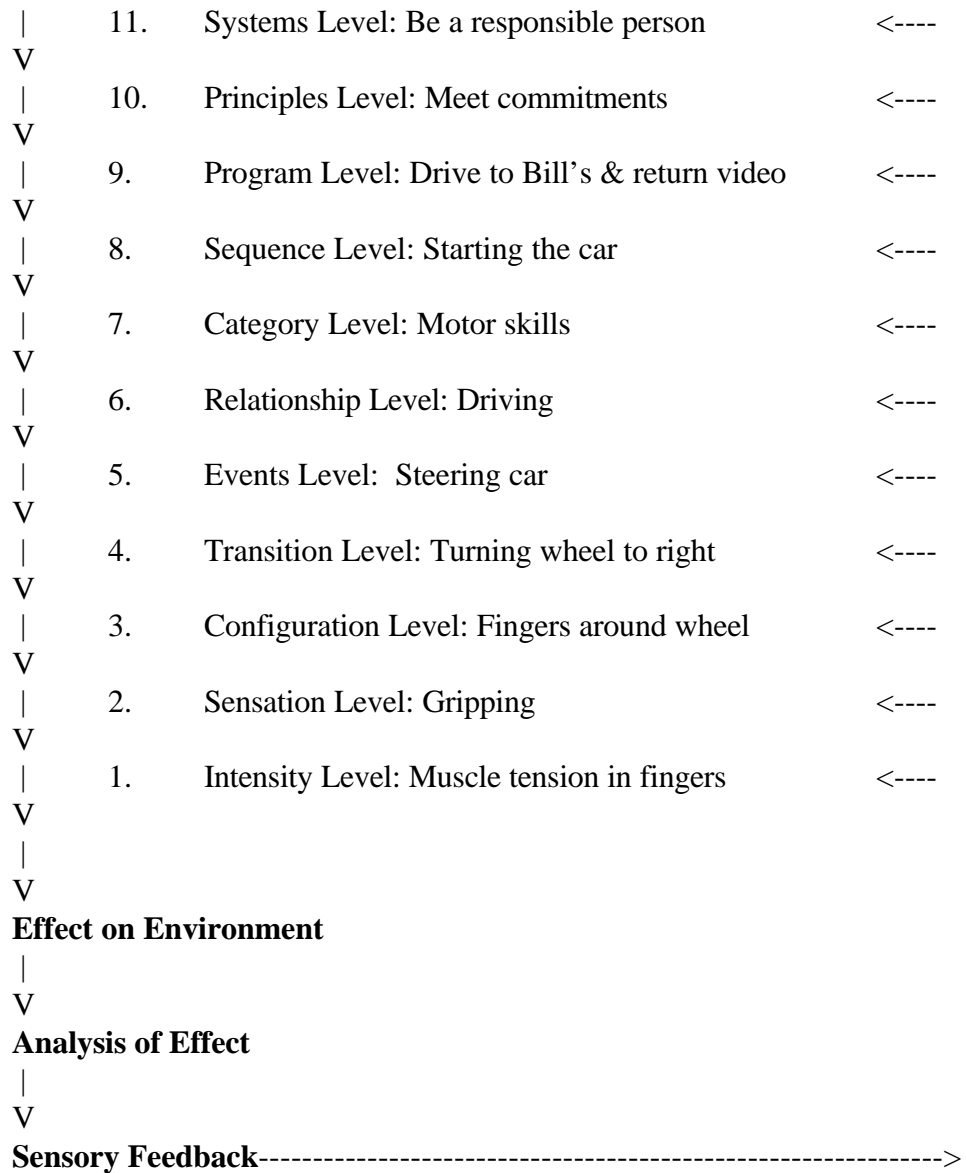


Figure 10.1. An illustration of an hierarchical feedback loop based on the eleven level PCT model.

of awareness is variable across individuals and is set, in whole or part, by one's genetic inheritance.

2. **Sensation**, the *quality* of a sensory event. Sensation is a product of the combined intensity signals arising from different sensory receptors. Such signals may amplify, diminish or cancel one another. The resulting combination of intensity signals produces a perception of sensation with a unique quality, e.g., color, texture, temperature, shape, etc.

3. **Configuration**, *patterns* of sensation. Sensations aggregate and the resulting new signal that is generated is experienced as an *object attribute* or perception of a configuration. An object attribute is a familiar arrangement or *pattern* of sensations which is perceived and recognized as a unit or configuration. For example, shape, size, color, and texture are individual sensations, which in the aggregate are perceived as a configuration, e.g., a basketball.

4. **Transition**, recognition of *changes* in configuration. A configuration can change so as to generate a new signal, which is perceived as a change in some quality of a pattern or a perception of a transition. For example, the perception of the basketball may change from that of an object at rest to one that is bouncing. Generally, the use of "-ing" words denotes transitions. On a less concrete level, increasing loudness in an auditory pattern would also represent a transition.

5. **Events**, recognition of *continuity* in experience. Perception of an aggregate of transitions, configurations, sensations and intensities with a familiar pattern in time is perception of an event. While an event may have multiple aspects, it is experienced as a single perceptual occurrence, e.g., shooting a basketball through a hoop. An event may be of short or long duration; however, ongoing transitions alone, e.g., the flow of water through a pipe, do not normally constitute events. The physical world cannot be accurately construed in terms of discrete events, e.g., stimulus and response, because there are reciprocal relationships between physical variables and these change across time. Events are, in a manner of speaking, constructions of an observer.

6. **Relationship**, recognition of *association* between events. When two apparently independent perceptions are associated in some manner so that they are not fully independent, there is a perceptual relationship. Relationships are usually described with prepositions, e.g., as, in, on, above, and beside, as in "the book is on the table." A man climbing a tree or a woman bathing a baby also describe relationships; i.e., the verbs climbing and bathing describe relationships. Relationship is not a quality of individual perceptions; rather, relationship is a type of perception that arises from an interpretation made about the *association of* two or more perceptions. One important type of relationship is the perception of cause-and-effect. Once we place an interpretation on a relationship, such as the boy is crying because his father is spanking him, the relationship is perceived to be causal. However, in many such cases, we could just as easily make an entirely different interpretation, e.g., the boy is annoying the father by crying. In other words, the father is spanking the boy because the boy is annoying him.

## Concept Levels

7. **Category**, *classification* of events. The critical attribute of category is class membership, i.e., a collection of things with a common characteristic. Categories are man-made constructs that allow us to consistently predict, at least, one thing that is common to all members of a category. Communication largely depends upon commonly understood categories. Categories are designated by words, i.e., symbols. However, the words are configurations or events, not categories. Categories are either-or perceptions; i.e., a thing either belongs to a category or it doesn't. Something may, however, belong to more than one category, e.g., dog, canine, and predator. Perceptions below the category level cannot be identified in terms of categories. This is the first level at which experiences can be thought of as elements of language.

8. **Sequence**, complex *ordering* of events. At the sequence level we perceive an order among discrete elements. A sequence is a single or repetitive ordering of elements, which come from any lower level of perception. Short sequences can be combined to form longer sequences. Sequence perception is involved in all complex skills in which actions must be controlled in an organized manner. In language, for example, a syntactical form, such as, subject, verb, and object would be a sequence of categories.

9. **Program**, a *decision* system that leads to choices about actions available in our behavioral repertoire that operate on perceptual variables. A program consists of symbols, sequences and relationships. At this level of perception we perceive implications. At the previous two levels perception is descriptive. Programs involve the manipulation of symbols in a way that we describe as understanding and thinking. Programs allow us to compare what we perceive to be happening to descriptions of what we want to be happening. When we perceive a difference we reason out what can be done to reconcile the perceived difference. We then choose actions that we think will alter what is being perceived at lower levels and thereby the implications of what we perceive. Programs can be very complex, but once neurally organized, they have a fixed structure. While the pathways leading to a choice-point are fixed, i.e., completely determined, reaching a choice-point in a program does not result in a predetermined action. The action is a product of our reasoning about what will change the implications being perceived. Many programs can run simultaneously, in parallel, and outside of immediate awareness. When a choice-point is reached or the necessary action required by a choice-point has been reasoned out, one may become aware of the program. One is most likely to be aware of a program when it is being organized, reorganized, when the action needed to control a perceived implication is not apparent, or the program comes into conflict with another program.

10. **Principles**, *general standards* for guiding programs. At this level we create, alter, and evaluate programs. Principles are usually general and imprecise and might be labeled values by some, e.g., honesty or responsibility. To perceive a principle like honesty doesn't mean perceiving a program that was created to be consistent with this principle, but rather to perceive a generalized pattern or sense of all programs that relate to this standard. Little or nothing is really understood, procedurally speaking, about how this level actually works.

11. **Systems**, *beliefs* about how things ought to be. At this level of perception, we aggregate principles into an overall belief system that defines who we think we are, including our relationship to the world, i.e., our sense of self. System concepts are often evident in broad goals, e.g., to be a good person. We then compare our actual sense of goal attainment with our reference system concept of what we want to attain. This level of perception can lead to the modification of principles, which can lead to the modification of programs until our perceived sense of a system concept is consistent with our reference system concept. It is unusual for anyone to be fully aware of their system concepts, their effects on how they think and live, or how they came to be established. This is due, in part, to an inability to be directly aware of the perceptual level that one is operating from or any level above it. Since the System Level is the highest level in the hierarchy, it is the most difficult to systematically examine and change. Thus, it is rare for anyone to have a set of system concepts that are mutually consistent.

The top three levels are of most immediate interest in this discussion. It is at the Systems Level that reference values are set, not to be confused with *personal values* or standards that come from the Principles Level. Reference values can also be thought of as goals or wants. Reference values may be established in several ways. Reference values may have a biological basis, as in the case of physical needs like reproduction; a social basis, as in the case of beliefs acquired through socialization, e.g., that reproduction should take place within a marriage; and a personal basis, as is the case of beliefs that are the product of unique individual experiences in interaction with one's biological individuality, e.g., personal preferences for certain characteristics, such as., blue eyes are beautiful (Center, 1997). Biological reference values are probably best described as needs, while other types of reference values are probably better thought of as wants or desires. At the Principles Level *standards* are developed to detect discrepancies between *perceptual signals* originating from controlled variables and the reference value or values related to a controlled variable. At the Program Level there is a repertoire of neurologically programmed actions that are available to reduce or eliminate any perceived discrepancy (error signal). Actions, according to PCT, aren't responses caused by environmental stimuli, but are caused by an individual's intent to reduce an error signal and thereby achieve congruence between a goal or reference value and the perception of some related controlled variable (see Figure 10.2). In other words, the actions have a purpose, and the purpose behind the actions resides not in the environment but within the individual. Purpose in PCT becomes an important causal variable in human behavior or actions. Accepting a view of causation in human behavior that includes human agency as a causal factor has a number of implications affecting epistemology, behavior theory, and intervention approaches (Center, 1997).

Let's look at an illustration (see Figure 10.3). James wants to be popular with his peers (a reference value from the Systems Level). He believes that to be popular requires being invited to weekend parties (standards from the Principles Level). James isn't getting any invitations (perceptual signal from his social environment). The discrepancy between his standards for the reference value and his perceptual signal generates an error signal. In an attempt to reduce or eliminate the error signal, James starts dressing and acting more like his peers (actions from the Program Level). James'

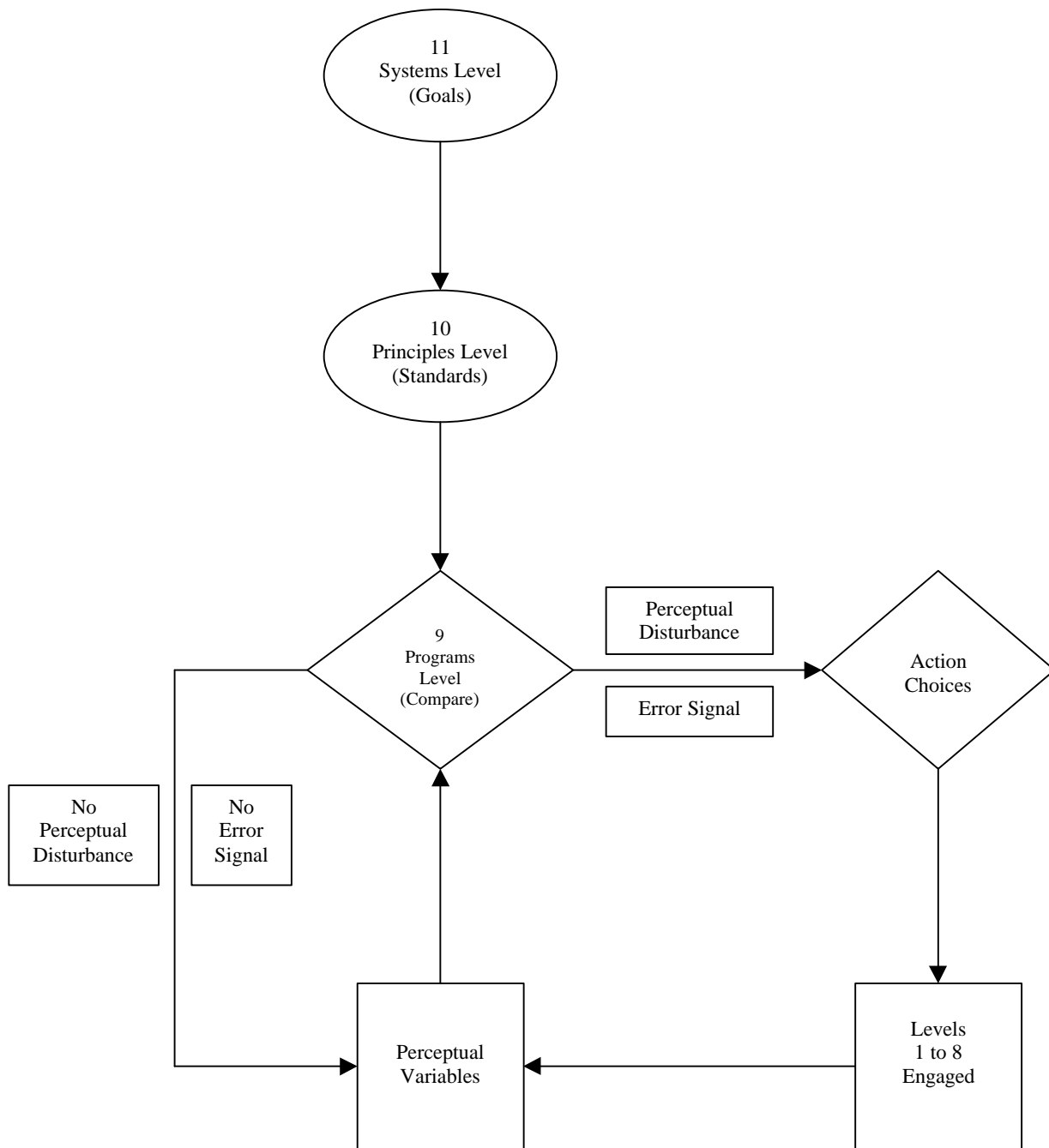


Figure 10.2. A flow chart representing the top three levels of a perceptual control system.

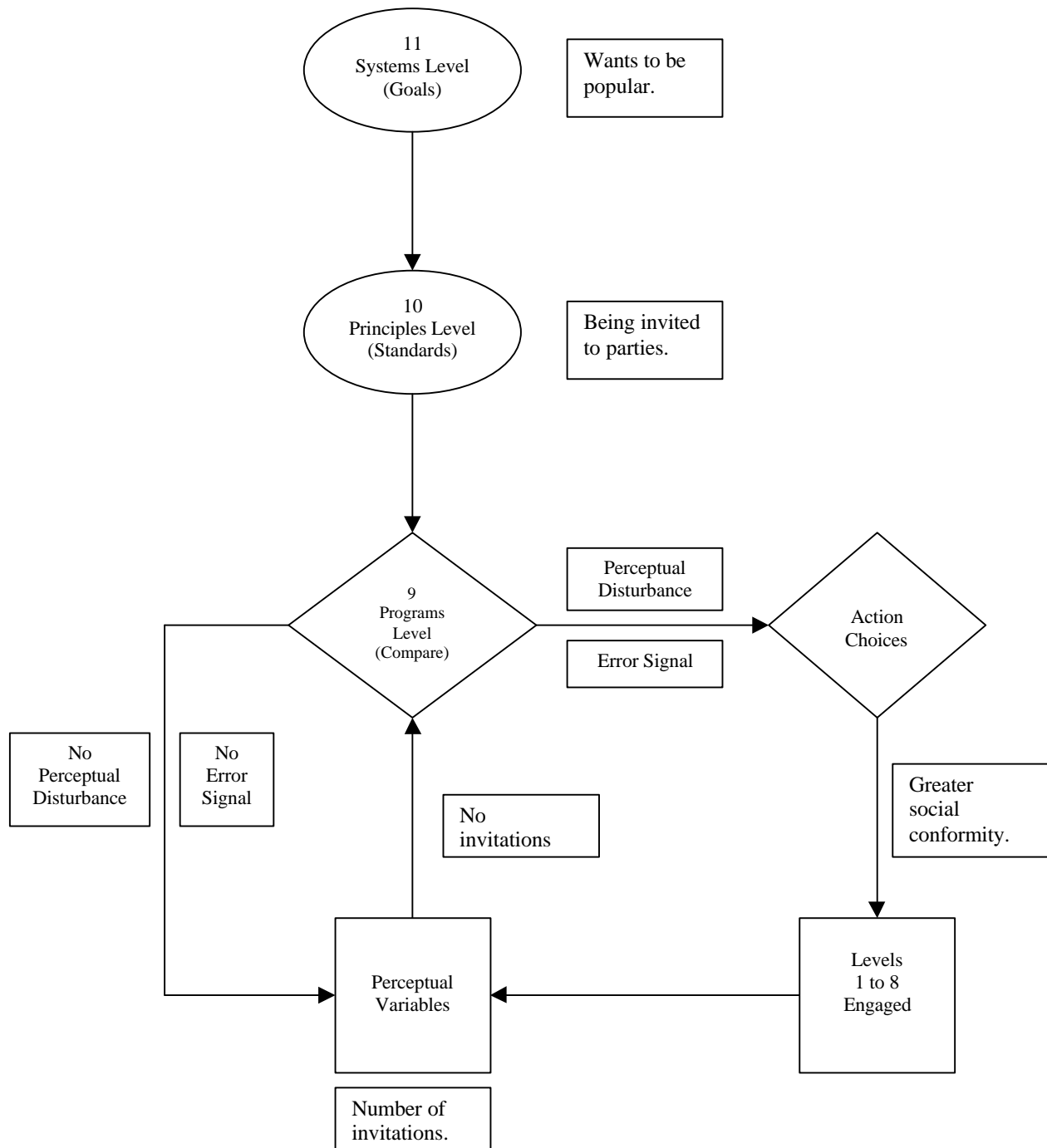


Figure 10.3. A diagram of a control system to control for the perceptual variable number of invitation to parties related to the reference value “social popularity.”

actions thus have a purpose and are intended to change his perception of the controlled variable “invitations to parties” in the direction of reducing his error signal. On the other hand, assume that James has congruence between the reference value and his perception of the controlled variable. At a party he commits a social blunder. This new event, social blunder, would be called a *disturbance* by PCT. A disturbance may, if large enough, result in a change in the status of controlled variable, i.e., James begins to be invited to fewer and fewer parties. This in turn will produce an error signal and will result in actions to decrease the error signal. An analysis of James’ control system for popularity follows:

11. **System Level:** Be socially popular, a reference value.
10. **Principle Level:** Get lots of invitations to parties, a standard.
9. **Program Level**
  - a. **Processing:** Compares the standard for a reference value to the perception of events (input). If an error signal is generated, i.e., there is a discrepancy between the standard for the reference value and the perceptual input, actions will be selected that are most likely to reduce the error signal.
  - b. **Acting:** Perform the actions selected (output). For example, James attempts to conform more closely with the way his peers dress and talk and to show more interest in the things they appear to like. Output is intended to affect a positive change (discrepancy reduction) in the controlled variable “party invitations.”
  - c. **Feedback:** The effect of the output on the controlled variable generates new input which is processed by comparing it to the standard for the reference value. If the error signal has been reduced, the output continues. If the error signal has not been reduced, the output is modified. This feedback loop is active for as long as James continues to want to be socially popular and has the same standard for popularity. If either the reference value or the standard for the reference value changes, there will be a reorganization at the program level, which will result in a change in his choice of controlled variables or a change in how he processes a controlled variable.

The PCT model suggests that you cannot permanently control or change anyone’s behavior through the manipulation of environmental stimuli. The PCT model indicates that one’s behavior or actions are not caused by environmental stimuli as suggested by the behavioral model. Rather, PCT indicates a person’s behavior or actions are caused by a perceived discrepancy between a controlled variable and a related reference value held by the person. In other words, the behavior has a specific purpose or intent that comes from within the individual. *At least in part, the motivation for one’s actions is the intrinsic satisfaction obtained from achieving congruence between a reference value and the perceived status of a controlled variable related to that reference value.* The concepts of reinforcement and punishment are, in PCT, probably roughly analogous to the emotional and physical experiences of pleasure and pain. A variable’s relation to these emotional and physical experiences, for a given individual, is one factor in whether it becomes or does not become a controlled variable



for that individual. Each of us wants or, in some cases, needs those things that bring us pleasure, in one form or another, and want to avoid those things that bring us pain, in its various forms. As previously stated, variables associated with our wants and needs become perceptual variables and we develop standards for evaluating the status of our perception of those variables relative to our reference values. We also will develop programs that include actions that are successful in modifying our perception of those variables.

Each of us has a fairly large set of reference values, which will come to be organized in a hierarchy of priority that includes both *superordinate* reference values and *subordinate* reference values. Whenever there is a conflict between a subordinate reference value and a superordinate reference value, the superordinate reference value will take precedence. When two mutually exclusive and equal reference values apply at the same time, an individual becomes conflicted. Persistent conflict is most probably behind what is called *anxiety*. The only way to get out of a conflict loop is through a reorganization of the hierarchy of reference values. This may entail modification of a reference value leading to a change in the priority structure, elimination of a reference value, or the adoption of a new reference value superordinate to the conflicted reference values. Personal difficulties may also arise because an individual has reference values that lead to attempts to control perceptual variables that produce conflict with others. Problems can also arise as a result of inappropriate standards at the Principle Level. Standards that result in problems may be arbitrary, too lax, or too demanding. Finally, problems may arise because the actions available through the Program Level are inappropriate; i.e., the goal but not the means is socially acceptable. Actions may also be ineffective or bring one into conflict with others who are attempting to control the same perceptual variable associated with one's actions.

From the perspective of PCT, you may be able to manipulate the behavior or actions of someone perceived by you to have a problem through the application of either positive or negative external stimuli, although there are clearly ethical issues related to such attempts. In order to manipulate another person's behavior, the stimuli used must be things the other person wants or wants to avoid, be under your control, and be contingent upon the behavior to be manipulated. McClelland (1994) discusses four basic approaches that behavior change strategies are based upon: force, threat, incentive and persuasion. The first two rely on the use of coercion. The effects of coercive strategies have been extensively discussed by behavioral psychologist Murray Sidman (1989). Clearly, force and threat can change behavior, but there are ethical and logistic reasons for not employing such strategies under most circumstances. However, one can argue that incentive or reward, too, is a form of coercion when it is used as leverage to externally manipulate an individual's choice of actions (Delprato, 1995; McClelland, 1994). The effects of such manipulations are the bane of incentive-based interventions, because all too often, as soon as the imposed incentives are reduced or removed, the distortion being produced in an individual's behavior by these contrived incentives ends (Center, 1997). Or, as a behaviorist would say, there is no generalization. Once environmental inducements are removed, a person will usually revert back to behavior or actions that he or she thinks will be effective in reducing error signals arising from the perception of a controlled variable important to that individual.

By way of illustration, consider a teacher, Ms. Igor, who has a student, Larry, who frequently engages in disruptive behaviors in her class. A PCT analysis would start with the assumption that this behavior has a purpose or intent. For the sake of this illustration, let's assume that Larry's purpose is to achieve status with certain peers within the class. Thus, we can infer that Larry has a reference value related to peer status and a perceptual variable related to the feedback he gets from certain peers in the class. The perceptual variable will be assumed to be peer imitation. We'll assume Larry's standard for judging the congruence between the perceptual variable and the reference value is the amount of imitation of his behavior by these peers and its effect upon the classroom climate. Now, Ms. Igor wants to control Larry's disruptive behavior, because it is a disturbance of her perceived control over one of her controlled variables, which we'll call "classroom order." Thus, Ms. Igor puts a punitive contingency on the behavior, e.g., a bonus response cost system, whereby Larry is "fined" a token each time he exhibits one of Ms. Igor's prohibited behaviors, or a differential reinforcement program, whereby Larry receives a token at the end of each ten-minute interval in which none of the prohibited behaviors occur. What will be the effect of Ms. Igor's intervention?

If Ms. Igor is adept at setting up such programs, she will select a reward to backup the token program she uses that is a controlled variable for Larry and that has a high priority in his system of reference values; i.e., control of this variable brings him immediate pleasure greater than peer status. Under these circumstances, Larry will forego the actions used to control imitation of peers in order to control the variable made available by Ms. Igor. In this case, Ms. Igor will judge that the token program is a success and believe she has exercised control over "classroom order" by eliminating the disturbance, "disruptive behavior." If the reward is not a variable related to one of Larry's reference values or does not have as high a priority in his system of reference values as "peer status," he will not forego the disruptive actions. In this case, Ms. Igor will judge that the program does not work. Let's assume, however, that the program works. After a period of time has passed, e.g., three months, Ms. Igor decides the problem is solved and that the intervention is no longer needed, so she discontinues the program. What will most likely happen?

Assuming that Larry still has a reference value for "peer status" and still thinks that disruptive behavior will result in peer imitation, he will renew his efforts to affect the controlled variable (peer imitation). In other words, although he has been temporarily diverted from one reference value to another through environmental manipulation of variables, the intervention did not change his reference value. Thus, the manipulation did not produce a permanent change in the actions he exhibits with the intent of controlling the perceptual variable (peer imitation) related to that reference value (peer status). One possible exception to this outcome would be a situation where the modified behavior proves to be more effective than the previous actions in controlling the perceptual variable (peer imitation). In this case, a student might continue the modified actions following the end of the environmental manipulation, because those actions produce either better or more efficient control over the student's perceptual variable. The mere fact that the behavior is being produced by external manipulation may precipitate enough resistance or opposition, what behaviorists call counter control, to prevent adoption of actions that would prove to be more effective or efficient.

McClelland (1996), a sociologist, has applied Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) to the analysis of social environments. Since schools and classrooms are social environments, his analysis will be drawn on for this discussion. Social structures, e.g., a class, are based upon the process of *collective control*, i.e., two or more individuals in a common environment, seeking to control their individual perceptions of a *controlled variable or variables* that they have in common. Individuals within a shared environment may be seeking to control entirely different variables. When this is the case, their non-conflictive sharing of the environment is called *mutual accommodation*. For example, two teachers, Ms. Smiley and Mr. Charles, are team-teaching in a classroom together. One of Ms. Smiley's controlled variables is "on-task behavior." One of Mr. Charles' controlled variables is "organized materials." Assuming that there is no correlation between these two variables, the teachers can both focus on their respective variable without conflict, and a condition of mutual accommodation exists.

If individuals within a shared environment are attempting to control the same variable or variables and have very similar *reference values* and *standards*, there is *cooperation*. For example, Ms. Smiley and Mr. Charles both have the same controlled variable "quiet classroom." For all practical purposes, they do not differ in their standard for a quiet classroom, and they will exercise cooperative control over the perceptual variable. When two or more individuals attempt to control the same variable, and their respective reference values or standards for the controlled variable are different but not grossly different, there is *conflictive cooperation*. In this case, the parties accept an intermediate level of control over the variable that falls between their respective reference values and standards, and they ignore or tolerate the resulting low intensity *error signals* that result. For example, if Ms. Smiley and Mr. Charles both have the same controlled variable "quiet classroom" and differ moderately in their standard for a quiet classroom, they will arrive at a compromise level for the controlled variable. Each may still perceive a small error signal, but one they can tolerate. They will then be in a condition of conflictive cooperation.

When two or more individuals attempt to control different but correlated variables and have different reference values or standards for those variables, a low level of conflict results that is called *interference*. For example, Ms. Smiley and Mr. Charles both have different but correlated controlled variables. Ms. Smiley's goal is "student attention," and her standard for this goal is "students looking at and listening to her." Mr. Charles' goal is for "quick transitions from one learning activity to the next," and his standard for this is "all materials and equipment for each learning activity are arranged and ready to be used before the activity begins." Mr. Charles attempts to setup for his lesson while Ms. Smiley is conducting her lesson." Mr. Charles' activity represents a distraction for the students, which creates a disturbance of Ms. Smiley's perception of her controlled variable and causes an error signal for her. Ms. Smiley engages in various actions intended to signal Mr. Charles that he should stop his activities. If he stops setting up for his lesson, Ms. Smiley's prompts create a disturbance of Mr. Charles' perceptual variable and cause an error signal for him. If he doesn't stop setting up, his efforts continue to disturb Ms. Smiley's perception of her controlled variable and her error signals continue. Their respective attempts to control correlated perceptual variables produces a condition of interference.

When there are significant reference value or standard differences between individuals for either the same controlled variable or for correlated controlled variables, there is *conflict*. For example, Ms. Smiley and Mr. Charles both have the same controlled variable “student movement about the classroom,” but they have different reference values for this perceptual variable. Ms. Smiley’s goal is for “orderly movement about the classroom,” and her standard is “only one student up moving about at a time”. Mr. Charles’ goal is for “an active learning environment,” and his standard for this is “students freely seeking one another out and working together.” Mr. Charles attempts to encourage free movement of students, and Ms. Smiley attempts to restrain student movement. Their respective attempts to control the perceptual variable “student movement about the classroom” will differ substantially and result in consistent and reciprocal disturbance of the other’s perception of control. Each will perceive error signals that they can’t ignore, and they will be in a state of conflict over this perceptual variable.

Mutual accommodation is most likely in environments with many *degrees of freedom*, i.e., in environments with many different and independent, controlled variables, such that control of one variable is unlikely to impinge on the control of another perceptual variable. When many of the variables are correlated or there are very few degrees of freedom, interference or conflict are more likely to occur. Rapidly changing actions or dramatic changes in the kind of actions being performed within an environment, especially if they are dynamic in nature, tend to quickly use up the degrees of freedom available for others sharing the environment. For example, if Ms. Smiley becomes so upset due to the conflict she is experiencing with Mr. Charles over “movement about the classroom” that she has an emotional outburst, this action would quickly exhaust the degrees of freedom within the classroom. When an individual’s actions significantly reduce the degrees of freedom in an environment, it is called *obstruction*. Obstructions can be either unintentional or deliberate. They occur when there is significant conflict between the reference values or standards of different individuals for a controlled variable. Obstructions can range from withdrawal from participation in the shared environment to the use of coercive behavior, e.g., disruptive, destructive or violent actions. Ms. Smiley’s outburst would be an example of an obstruction, and it would prevent either of the two teachers from achieving perceptual control over the controlled variable.

Coordinated social action, e.g., teaching, must involve the collective control of *social activities*, e.g., instruction and practice. Two or more individuals can independently adopt similar reference values and standards, agree to similar reference values and standards, or accept reference values and standards suggested by a third party in a given situation. The controlled activities of “key players,” those people whose actions affect large numbers of others, e.g., teachers, often determine the activities that other individuals, e.g., students, must pursue. The controlled perceptions of key players, which point to a portion of the common environment as an object of shared attention, are called *social designations*, e.g., classrooms. A classroom, which is a social environment includes the perceptions of objects, materials, and equipment therein that are necessary for the actions that take place in the shared environment. Thus, teachers generally attempt to get students to accept the reference values and standards that they set for their classroom activities.

A *social structure*, e.g., a school, consists of the its members' collectively controlled perceptions of social activity and social designations. Social structure is both a set of perceptions and environmentally "real" objects, places, and events, because our perceptual control loops pass through the physical environment. Like social structure, *culture* consists of collectively controlled perceptions. While social structure perceptions refer to particular people, places, objects and actions in the physical environment, *cultural perceptions* have no more than symbolic connection to any particular person, place, or object. Education is a cultural perception and has no concrete association with any specific person, place, object, or action. *Cultural contingencies* link social actions and consequences in the environment. Such contingencies don't control behavior but rather specify what the socially approved means are for achieving a given goal or the penalty for employing means that are not socially approved. There are two types of contingencies, *exchange* and *normative contingencies*. Normative contingencies are of particular interest to educators, because they are contingencies resulting from collective control efforts of social organizations, e.g., schools, governments, or religions, and are embodied in laws, regulations, customs, and so forth.

The *social identities* or character of other people and the connections between them can also be thought of as collectively controlled perceptions. Social identity resides in the third of three broad types of perception. First, there are perceptions of others that pertain to their overt characteristics, e.g., height, weight, coloration, and voice tone. Next, there are perceptions related to classifications of others, e.g., woman, oriental, teacher, and Mary Wong. Finally, there are generalized, complex perceptions that comprise a person's social identity or character. You may recall from Chapter Eight that Hogan and Emler (1995) refer to social identity or character as one's *reputation*, e.g., honest, loyal, respectful, and so forth. For Hogan and Emler, reputation is the collective perception of how well one fills (meets the social standards) a social role (reference value or social identity) that one has adopted and then attempts to convince others to accept.

*Self-identity* is a special case of social identity and is based upon the reference values or goals that we hold for important aspects of ourselves, e.g., bodies, behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. Social interaction is important to the maintenance of our self-identity because our perception of self is largely dependent upon reflections from other people. You may recall from Chapter Nine that according to McAdams (1991), we represent and communicate our self-identity through personal myths or stories that we construct about ourselves. When we perceive a discrepancy between our image of self and our functioning in the course of activities, we either attempt to correct or moderate the perceived discrepancy. Generally, correction or moderation of a discrepancy is most easily accomplished by either a change in the way we are functioning or by explaining away the discrepancy as an acceptable and temporary state, e.g., having a bad day. A more drastic and difficult way in which the discrepancy can be corrected is to modify our self-identity. The latter requires either a change in our reference values for self, a reorganization of our reference values for self, or both. This type of change is unlikely to be attempted except in response to significant and persistent error signals.

Positive school and classroom climates that were discussed in Chapter Two are conducive to

learning and will be characterized by cooperation, conflictive cooperation, and mutual accommodation. Interference, conflict, and obstruction are barriers to establishing a positive climate. Effective teaching requires the cooperative control of social activities important for a safe and productive learning environment. Cooperative control of social activities, affecting an instructional environment, requires students to accept reference values and standards set by or endorsed by the teacher. When students accept the education-related reference values and standards of a teacher, they become an aspect of each student's self-identity. Once a student accepts the educational reference values and standards, the student's desire for perceptual control over the variables related to these reference values leads to actions that facilitate a condition of congruence between the educational environment and the educational reference values and standards that have been accepted. The process of gaining acceptance of educational reference values and standards by students can be thought of as an aspect of socialization.

An approach to socializing students based on PCT is the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) developed by Ed Ford (1996, 1997). An evaluation of RTP was recently conducted in an ethnically diverse elementary school in Phoenix, AZ, in which 65.5% of the students came from families that were at or below the poverty level (Ford, 1995). Control data was collected on physical assaults, possession of weapons, fights, and thefts during the period from August, 1993, to March, 1994. Experimental data was collected from August, 1994, to March, 1995. During the year in which RTP was used as the school-wide discipline program, there was a 62% decrease in physical assaults, 100% decrease in possession of weapons, a 60% decrease in fighting, and a 27% decrease in thefts. Whittier an elementary school in Texas reported the following results when comparing the year before implementing RTP with the year after implementing RTP: fighting/assault decreased by 58%, throwing objects down by 22%, being disrespectful/arguing decreased by 22%, defiance/non-compliance down by 51%, obscene gestures/language down by 35%, intimidation/threats decreased by 48%, disruptions requiring physical removal down by 30%, and total office referrals decreased by 50%. (Note: all data was collected by the schools employing their definitions and records)

### Responsible Thinking Process

RTP defines responsible behavior as adhering to agreed-on goals, as reflected in school rules and standards that permit individual choices while respecting the rights of others. The object of this program, in this writer's opinion, is to help teachers and administrators socialize students to the reference values (goals or rules, if you prefer) and standards of the school.

Earlier McClelland's PCT conceptualization of social environments, like schools, suggested that classrooms are *social designations*, which refer to commonly shared social environments in our society. Within these shared social environments, coordinated social activities like teaching take place that require collective control of the activities. For effective and efficient collective control of teaching activities, it is necessary that all individuals sharing the environment accept similar reference values (goals and rules) and standards. In educational environments this generally means that students accept the goals and rules (reference values) and standards of the "key players" in the

educational environment. The “key players” in an educational environment include the administrators, teachers, and support staff. RTP is a program that facilitates collective control of instructional activities through helping students to accept and adopt the reference values and standards of school personnel.

As discussed in Chapter Eight, public schools can be thought of as a reflection of the values of the communities that support them and that they serve. Thus, the rules in schools should probably be as consistent as possible with rules for which there is a broad consensus in the surrounding community. A specific set of rules that are universally valid for all schools may not be possible. However, if educators are going to ask students to accept the reference values and standards that we propose and use programs like RTP to facilitate their adoption, we have a moral obligation to ensure that what we propose is necessary, just, and reasonable. An illustrative set of rules that many communities, schools, and students might agree to are provided below:

1. Don't cheat or Be honest.
2. Don't lie or Be truthful.
3. Don't harm others or Respect the right of others to personal safety.
4. Don't steal or Respect the right of others to their possessions.
5. Don't vandalize or Respect the property of others.
6. Don't disrupt others or Respect the goals of others.
7. Don't coerce others or Accept the decisions of others.
8. Don't demean others or Accept the beliefs and motives of others.
9. Don't blame others or Accept Responsibility for yourself.

Whether one accepts the above set of rules, modifies them or develops an alternative set of rules, the rules taught must meet certain tests. If the rules meet these tests, they will generally be perceived as just and reasonable. Most students will accept or learn to accept and comply with rules that are perceived as just and reasonable. **First**, the rules must not interfere with the right of students to make for themselves personal choices that do not violate the rights of others; for example, the decision of an individual student to wear his or her hair in a certain style is a personal choice and does not violate anyone's rights. **Second**, the rules should be consistent with the objective of allowing individuals to peacefully share a common social environment, for example, a school. **Third**, the rules should engender broad support and acceptance both by the students and by the community; for example, participation in the development and subsequent modification of rules should be sought from faculty, students, parents, and the community. However, to be acted upon, suggestions must be consistent with criteria one and two above.

Success in the use of RTP will be most likely if students perceive that you care about and have a genuine interest in them. One way that the perception of caring and interest is established is by establishing a history of positive interaction with your students, in which you've shown a sincere interest in their problems and their development as human beings. One way for teachers to develop a history of positive interaction with and interest in students is through discussion groups that engage

students' interests and concerns and that require reflective thought (Custer-Knight, 1997). The discussion groups discussed in Chapter Eight can be used for this purpose.

The perception by your students that you have a sincere interest in their problems and development can also be facilitated by putting in place curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of each student and that is perceived by students as relevant to their needs (see the discussion of curriculum in Chapter Two). Perception of relevance requires that curriculum and instruction be related to the life goals of students in a way that helps them make a personal connection with what is being taught. A curriculum that meets the needs of students is one that conveys information and teaches skills that are functional for the legitimate life goals of each student. A legitimate life goal is to be a functional member of society, e.g., to be a responsible parent, to be a carpenter, or to be a lawyer. A functional curriculum is one that appropriately addresses the generic information and skills that a student needs to be functional in society, e.g., reading and arithmetic; and the specific information and skills that a student needs to meet his or her life goals, e.g., to be a good parent. Instruction that meets the needs of students is also appropriate for each student's ability and skill level and maximizes the likelihood of successful learning.

It is important that students perceive the school and classroom as having a positive climate and want to be there. If the suggestions above are followed, the majority of students will perceive the school and classroom as having a positive climate. In too many schools and classrooms the most compelling reasons to be there are parental expectations and interaction with peers. The latter is the only personal goal for school attendance in many students. Facilitating a desire in students to be in school is important because the RTP program does not employ any contrived extrinsic rewards for school attendance or classroom participation. The reason for this appears to be related to the concept of *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957; Carver, & Scheier, 1981). Studies on cognitive dissonance indicate that if people are asked to take a position contrary to their usual attitude about something, there is a greater likelihood that they will identify with the contrary position if they have not received an extrinsic reward for doing so. That is, if they are rewarded for taking the contrary position, it is easier to rationalize temporarily taking the position. Thus, when given an extrinsic reward for complying with the goals and standards of a teacher, the effect will only be temporary for most students. When students do not receive an extrinsic reward for compliance, an error signal is generated by the perceived discrepancy between their actions and their goals. One potential outcome of this is to reduce the discrepancy or error signal by adopting the goals and standards of the teacher, i.e., incorporating them into one's self identity. In short, PCT and RTP probably view extrinsic reward as a disturbance for a teacher's controlled variable, *student socialization*.

RTP requires that rule breakers be given a choice between behaving responsibly or going to a more restricted area. This choice appears, in some degree, to be making use of what Adlerians call *natural and logical consequences* (Dreikurs, & Grey, 1968); i.e., if a student can't abide by the rules in a setting, the logical consequence is to go to an alternative setting. Natural and logical consequences provide feedback that is more appropriate than contrived reinforcement or arbitrary punishment for facilitating the modification of a control system. Since control systems depend upon



feedback loops, the more relevant the feedback to the purpose or intention of the control system, the more likely it is to result in adaptation or reorganization of the control system.

Before someone is treated as a rule breaker, the rules broken should be legitimate, i.e., rules that meet the tests discussed earlier. For example, a rule against chewing gum would probably fail to meet the test for a legitimate rule; i.e., it is probably a trivial rule that doesn't impinge on anyone else's rights. On the other hand, a rule against fighting to settle a grievance would meet the test for a legitimate rule. To be appropriate a goal must be one that is functional relative to the setting or a personal preference that doesn't impinge on others' legitimate goals in the setting. For example, an appropriate setting-specific goal for a classroom would be unimpeded access to the ongoing instruction in the classroom. An appropriate personal goal that doesn't impinge on others' rights in a classroom setting would be to affect a certain image through one's choice to wear baggy clothing. An inappropriate setting-specific goal for a classroom would be to conduct a personal conversation during instruction. Such a goal might, however, be appropriate at school in a different setting, e.g., during lunch. An inappropriate personal goal in a school setting would be to seek revenge against the school for a real or imagined wrong, e.g., vandalism.

#### Use of RTP By Classroom Teachers

The first thing to keep in mind is that RTP was designed to be a school-wide program. While it might be possible to adapt some aspects of the process to an individual classroom, the best results will be obtained when it is applied school wide and with the cooperative participation of the vast majority of the educational personnel in the school. Ford (1996) discusses in detail four critical requirements for a successful RTP program:

1. There must be a firm commitment to RTP both financially and in school policy.
2. There must be a strong commitment by most if not all of the teachers in a school using RTP.
3. There must be a trained and committed teacher responsible for the Responsible Thinking Classroom.
4. The building administrator must be committed to the program and take the lead.

There are four possible levels of intervention in a RTP program: verbal commitment, verbal plan (optional), Responsible Thinking Class (RTC), and referral to the principal (see Figure 10.4). These levels are related to the seriousness of the irresponsible behavior or actions exhibited by a student. Potential irresponsible actions should be classified, in advance, as mild (e.g., interrupting), moderate (e.g., cheating), or serious (e.g. fighting). This can probably best be done by considering the relative importance of the teacher's reference values, as reflected by the class rules, and standards for a positive classroom climate.

First, when an initial instance of mildly irresponsible behavior occurs, the irresponsible student has a choice between either a verbal commitment to behave responsibly or to move to either level two

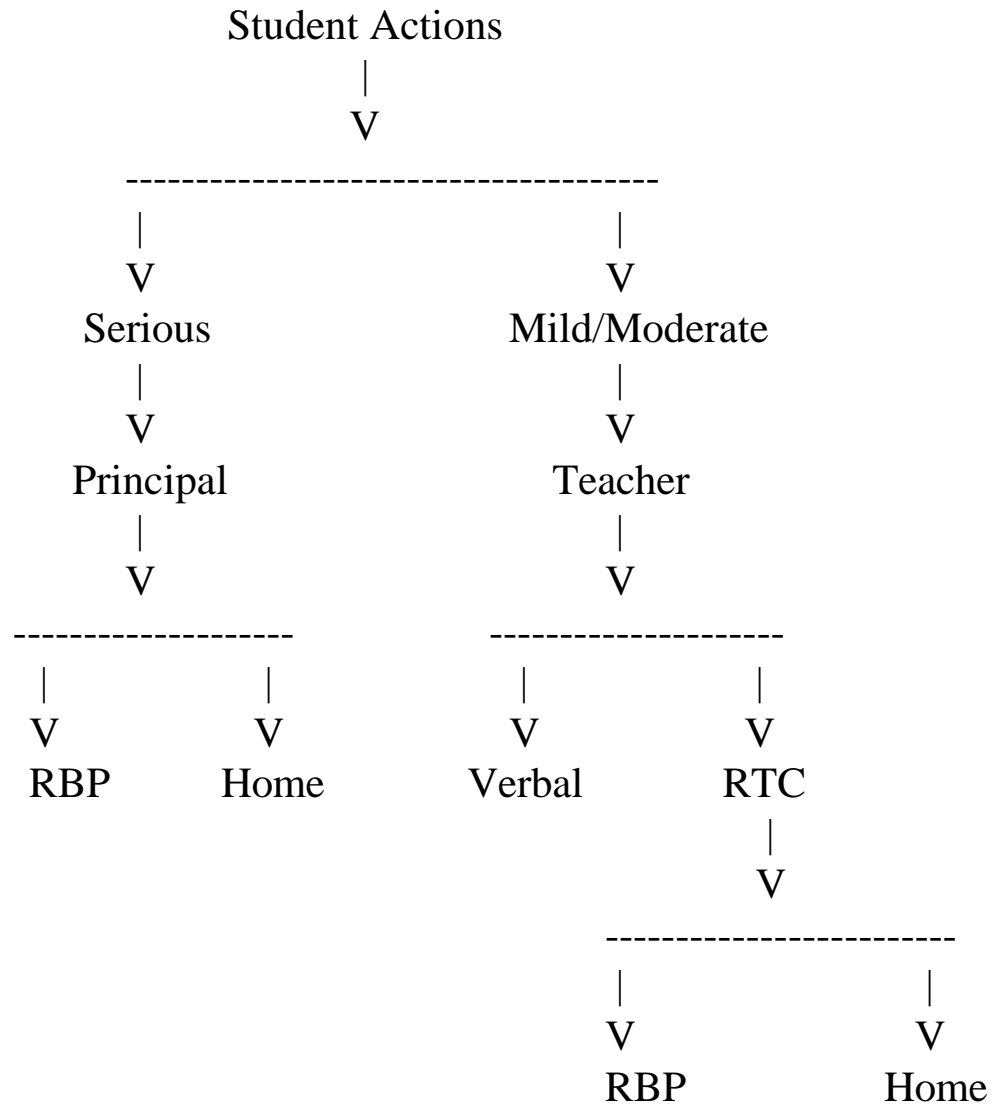


Figure 10.4. A decision tree illustrating the outcome choices following from student actions representing different levels of irresponsibility.

or level three. If a student has chosen to make a verbal commitment to behave responsibly, his or her actions are monitored by the teacher for the remainder of the class or activity period to see if the commitment will be honored. If the behavior is moderately irresponsible, the first choice could be either level two or level three. If level two is being used by the RTP program, the alternative choice is level three. If level two is not being used, the alternative choice is to go home. If a student's actions are seriously irresponsible, the student may choose between going to the principal or other designated staff member, e.g., the counselor, or going home.

Second, failure to meet a verbal commitment to behave responsibly or moderately irresponsible behavior is followed by a choice to be separated from ongoing activity within the classroom in a designated Responsible Thinking Area (RTA), e.g., an isolated desk or table (level two) or go to the RTC (level three). A student who chooses the RTA must develop a verbal Responsible Behavior Plan (RBP) that includes specific steps for correcting the irresponsible behavior. If level two is not being used, the choice is between level three or going home.

Third, a student who has engaged in moderately irresponsible behavior or who has chosen not to engage in either level one or level two has a choice between going to a Responsible Thinking Class (RTC), level three, or of going home. A student who chooses to go to the RTC must develop a detailed, written Responsible Behavior Plan (RBP) to correct irresponsible behavior as a condition for return to the classroom. If instruction is departmentalized, the student stays in the RTC during the class from which he or she chose to go to the RTC. The student leaves the RTC for other classes as regularly scheduled. If a plan is not completed while the student is in the RTC, he or she returns the next school day at the time when he or she would be in the class where the problem occurred.

The RTC is a separate classroom devoted to the function of assisting students to develop RBPs. The RTC is staffed full-time by a teacher who is committed to and well-versed in RTP. The RTC teacher may, depending upon circumstances, be assisted by one or more classroom aides or other staff members. Once in the RTC, a student has a choice between developing a RBP or of going home. If problems occur in the RTC, the student has a choice between going to the principal or other designated staff member to work on a RBP or of going home. Students who choose to go home rather than develop a RBP can return whenever they choose; however, they must bring a parent back to school with them. A returning student begins in the RTC. The student must work out a RBP, with the parent present, before returning to the class from which they chose to go to the RTC.

Fourth, for serious irresponsible behavior, e.g., fighting, a student bypasses in-class intervention and the RTC. Such a student has a choice between going to an administrator, e.g., the principal or other designated staff member, e.g., a counselor, for the development of a RBP (step four) or of going home. There is a detailed example of a principal's interaction, using RTP, with a student who has been fighting that illustrates the nature of the RTP process at this fourth level (Venetis, 1997).

It has been observed that about 2% of a school's student population will be "repeaters." A

repeater is a student who engages in irresponsible behavior on an ongoing basis and who has had numerous RBPs that have not been followed. There is an additional level in the RTP program for such students. Repeaters are examined by a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) that is made of several types of personnel including an administrator, the RTC teacher, counselor, psychologist, and teachers. The CIT tries to identify why the student is not having success with his or her RBPs and how a better plan can be formulated. In some cases, it may be found that such a student appears to be having all of his or her problems in a particular class or with a particular teacher. In these cases, the class and teacher are looked at to see if there is something about the class or the teacher's practices that are contributing to the problem. If so, recommendations are made to correct the source of the problem. If this process is not successful, a repeater may be suspended from school.

Return to school by a suspended student or one who has chosen to go home begins in the RTC class. Upon return, a plan is negotiated for responsible behavior between the student, a parent and the RTC teacher, an administrator, or other designated staff person. The RBP developed requires an intensive supervision component. Only after such a plan has been developed may a student return to the classroom where the original irresponsible behavior occurred. In such cases, it is usually a good idea to gradually work a student back into the regular setting. If the student came to the RTC from a self-contained program, i.e., a class in which the student is with a single teacher for the whole day, the student should initially return to that classroom only for a single class period. The period selected should be one during which there appears to be a high likelihood of success. When the student is being successful in this class, another class period can be added and so on. If the student is in a departmentalized program, the same procedure should be followed. The only difference is that the class and teacher that the student appears to have a good chance for success with should be the initial placement. In either case, a student who is being returned to his or her regular program by successive approximations would return to the RTC during the other periods each day. When a student returns to his or her regular program, the student should be seated in an area of the room other than the area where the problem occurred.

When a student chooses to go to the RTC and doesn't immediately begin work on a RBP, he or she may choose to do classwork from the originating class, participate in discussions of the values underlying the school's rules, e.g., respect, or explore personal goals with the RTC teacher and how to responsibly meet them. If a student develops a RBP that requires the use of a social skill, e.g., negotiation, and doesn't know how to properly perform this skill, instruction on and practice with the skill may also be done in the RTC prior to the student's returning to class. Extended stays in the RTC accompanied by responsible behavior without developing a plan for return to class should result in convening of an intervention team to explore why the student may not want to return to the class. This might include such things as inappropriate instruction in the class, teacher behavior that is distressing to the student, or problems with other students that aren't being addressed in the class.

### Developing Responsible Behavior Plans

Ford (1997) describes the process for developing a RBP. The process has several steps, and

any teacher who will be involved in helping students develop a RBP should be familiar with the steps and have practice in working through them with students. The steps include the following:

1. Gather information by questioning the student who has behaved irresponsibly:
  - a. What were you doing?
  - b. What is the rule that applies?
  - c. What happens when you break a rule?
  - d. Is that what you want to happen?
  - e. What would you rather be doing? Or What do you want to happen?
  
2. Explore with the student the problem situation:
  - a. Is doing what you're doing responsible behavior?
  - b. Why isn't it responsible behavior?
  - c. Is what you're doing getting you what you want?
  - d. Do you want to work at solving your problem?
  
3. The RBP:
  - a. Have the student write down what they are presently doing in an attempt to get what they want and what change they want to make in the future.
    1. If the student's original goal was irresponsible, have the student state a new and responsible goal. Ask the student to give you a rationale for this goal, i.e., what makes it a responsible goal (not in Ford's sequence).
    2. If the means of achieving a goal is irresponsible, have the student state a responsible means of achieving the goal.
  - b. Have the student set a measurable outcome or standard that can be charted.
  - c. Have the student write down detailed steps for achieving the goal set earlier: what, when where, with whom, and so on.
  - d. Have the student specify how progress will be measured, including what data will be charted, what criteria will be used to evaluate success, who he or she will report to about progress, when progress reports will be made, and where they will be made.
  - e. Have the student explain to you his or her previous goal and actions and contrast them with the RBP.
  - f. Ask the student for a verbal commitment to the plan.
  - g. A RBP should be written and signed by both the student and the person who will monitor the plan.

Chronic failure of plans may indicate weak commitment when responding to the question, *Do you want to work at solving your problem?* Work on weak commitment by further exploration

of answers to the questions: *Is what you're doing getting you what you want?* And, *Is what you're doing against the rules?* And, *Why is it against the rules?* Analyze the details of the failed RBP and try to develop refinements. If the existing RBP can not be improved, develop a new plan. If you decide a new plan is needed, it should be more limited in scope than the failed plan. The new plan should also require that a student report on progress more frequently than required by the failed plan. If attempts to improve a student's RBP don't meet with success, convene an intervention team to look at the student's problems in greater depth and make recommendations for changes such as a change in teacher, referral for other services such as special education, movement to a more restrictive placement, or suspension.

### Other Strategies

Merton (1968) discusses a model for explaining social deviance that may also be adapted to the PCT view. Merton suggests a four factor-explanation for social deviance that depends upon two variables. The two variables are *goals*, which in Merton's model probably also includes standards, and *means*. Merton suggests four combinations of these two variables:

1. Accepting socially approved goals while rejecting socially approved means of achieving those goals is called *innovation*. A failure or unwillingness to achieve perceptual control through socially approved means may lead to adoption of socially disapproved means. A student who accepts the goal of making good grades in school but does not have the skills or is unwilling to use them to accomplish this goal may attempt to meet the goal through socially disapproved means such as cheating.
2. Rejecting socially approved goals while accepting socially approved means of achieving those goals is called *ritualism*. Such a student may be capable of achieving perceptual control, but has little or no interest in the goals. A student who rejects the goal of acquiring an education but accepts the means to accomplish this goal may appear unmotivated, disinterested and be labeled an underachiever.
3. Rejecting socially approved goals and means is called *retreatism*. Such a student may or may not be capable of achieving perceptual control, but is not engaged in the educational process in any way. A student who rejects both the goal of acquiring an education and the means may simply withdraw from participation or drop out of school. If pressured to engage in an educational program, this student may resist through disruptive behavior.
4. Holding goals and means that conflict with socially approved goals and means is called *rebellion*. Such a student may be capable of perceptual control but has his or her own agenda. A student who has conflicting goals and means may be disruptive and confrontational or drop out. Often such students become involved in a delinquent subculture that promotes alternative goals and means that are not socially approved and are similar to those held by the student.

In the case of goal rejection or conflict, the RTP socialization program may be able to

facilitate acceptance of the socially approved goals in the educational setting. If this process is not successful, a more individualized approach based on a *cooperative alliance* (Center, 1997) with a student may be able to facilitate acceptance of socially approved goals through personal persuasion. Such efforts should focus on helping students to recognize that a reorganization of their goal structure is in their best interest. A process like Values Therapy described below could be used in these situations. Goal or System Level issues should be addressed before attempting to deal with problems related to means or Program Level difficulties.

Individualized attempts at generalized behavior change can best be accomplished through a *cooperative alliance* employing persuasion (Center, 1997, 1999). A cooperative alliance should be student-centered effort in which a teacher plays a facilitation role in cooperation with a student that emphasizes the Programs, Principles and System Levels. To form a cooperative alliance with a student, two basic conditions must be met. First, you must have rapport with the student, i.e., a positive relationship based upon mutual respect and the perception, by the student, that you value what is in his or her best interest. Second, the student must both recognize that personal change is needed and want to change. A student-centered approach is needed because PCT views behavior as being caused, in large part, by internal factors, i.e., reference values, standards and programs. This is not to say that one does not respond to external stimuli but rather to say that actions taken to exercise perceptual control of external stimuli will be predicated upon whether or not a stimulus is perceived as being related to personal needs and wants.

The technique of *Socratic Questioning* employed by Adlerians (Stein, 1991) is an approach that is compatible with the concept of a cooperative alliance and could serve as a process model for conducting a cooperative alliance. In this technique the two parties are considered equals or partners in the effort. The person doing the counseling leads a student through the use of questions framed to help a student discover for himself or herself the logic of and self-interest in accepting socially approved goals. The general objective is to lead a student to recognize that he or she benefits from the socially responsible actions of others and has a responsibility to reciprocate. More specifically, a student is led to recognize that his or her beliefs have consequences for self and for others. Students are encouraged to explore the personal and social consequences, both immediate and long-term, of their goals and actions. The counselor never draws conclusions for a student but leads a student toward conclusions with the questions posed. There are no set questions because each question directed at a student depends upon the student's situation and comments. The counselor should keep the tone of these sessions friendly and not criticize or find fault with a student's comments. The counselor's goal is to lead a student to a better understanding of what he or she is doing and what he or she should be doing. The counselor must always keep in mind that students must do their own thinking and take responsibility for their own life, because neither the counselor nor anyone else can do it for them.

The RTP socialization process described earlier attempts to gain acceptance by students of the goals and standards of the school and teachers. That is, the socialization process is an effort to facilitate a change in students' goals and standards, i.e. a reorganization of their goals. It may,

however, be necessary to work in more depth on goals in some students. This may be required for students who are not responsive to the RTP socialization program. Such students may have such irrational goals that they insulate the student from the effects of the RTP process. Since goals can be considered as derivatives of a student's values or beliefs, it may be possible to adapt procedures discussed elsewhere in this book to help such a student. For example, some students may have irrational beliefs and goals with equally irrational standards that lead to perception of external events such that inappropriate emotional and behavioral programs are engaged that aren't suitable for the situation. The earlier discussion of Rational-Emotive Education in Chapter Nine, particularly Rational-Emotive problem-solving, may be useful in such cases if adapted to a PCT analysis of a student's problem. For example, the belief, "I must always succeed," leads to a perfectionistic standard against which one's performance in every situation is judged. This may result in self-defeating emotional programs, e.g., depression and self-defeating behavioral programs, e.g., reduced effort or withdrawal. Other irrational goals that are often encountered in students include: "I must be the center of attention," or "Everyone should feel sorry for me and give me special treatment," or "I must be free to do as I please," or "Everyone is against me and I must get even," or "I can't succeed."

Another possibility that might arise is a conflict among values or beliefs that result in anxiety. In such a case, you might assist such a student, using a cooperative alliance, to clarify and better prioritize his or her values or beliefs to resolve the conflict through a reorganization. One approach that might be useful in such cases is *values therapy* (Simon, 1993). This is a systematic procedure for working with system-level values. The following steps are employed in values therapy:

1. Help a student to identify what he or she wants from life, including both needs and desires. This should be written down as a list of wants.
2. Have the student rank order these wants according to their importance to him or her.
3. Have the student review the list to ensure that nothing important has been omitted, including things that might not be important now but may be important in the future, e.g., having children.
4. Help the student evaluate the list for potential or real conflicts.
5. Help the student evaluate current problems relative to identified conflicts.

Often problems are due to too much importance and effort being associated with a subordinate goal. For example, a student may give equal importance to being accepted by peers and being independent. The solution is to give greater attention to the higher-order value or goal in one's hierarchy, whatever it may be. In other cases, the values or goals in conflict may appear to have equal importance. In this situation, what is needed is identification of a superordinate value or goal that can be focused on in place of the two apparently conflicting goals. At school, this may be focusing on being a good student, which can include as subordinate goals, being an independent thinker and working independently. In social situations, a superordinate value for being perceived as friendly and cooperative can include, as a subordinate goal, peer acceptance. In other words, a way must be found to reorganize values and goals so that they can work together rather than conflict with one



another.

Further, a student may have difficulty, not because he or she has irrational beliefs, conflicting values, or inappropriate standards but because he or she doesn't have appropriate responses available at the program level to reduce or eliminate error signals. This will result in a self-perception of incompetence (Carver, & Scheier, 1982). Such self-perception may lead to reduced effort or withdrawal and reduced self-esteem. This is a condition similar to what is described by Peterson, Maier, and Seligman (1993) as *learned helplessness*. One of the requirements for learned helplessness to develop is repeated failure to control a perceptual variable. When one has such experiences the tendency is to attribute the failure to events outside one's control. That is, the failure to reduce error signals leads to the belief that the perceptual variable can not be controlled, which leads to a cessation of efforts to achieve perceptual control of the variable. This may in fact be due to the perceptual variable being unresponsive to individual actions. In such a case, it is adaptive to come to such a realization. In other cases, it may be that temporary circumstances are making the variable unresponsive. In this case, it is not adaptive to conclude that the variable can't be controlled. Finally, it may be that the variable would be responsive if the appropriate actions were applied. In this case also, it is not adaptive to conclude that the variable can't be controlled. For example, if the perceptual variable is reading performance, one's failure to control the variable might be due to temporary circumstances, e.g., a correctable vision problem; or the failure might be due to inadequate actions, e.g., a deficit in word decoding skills. In both of these cases, it would not be adaptive to conclude that the perception of the variable is not controllable.

When a variable is thought to be uncontrollable, an individual will quit trying to control his or her perception of the variable. At this point one may hear comments like, "I can't do it," or "It's too hard for me," or "I guess I'm just stupid," or "I don't want to do it," and so on. One might say that such a student has acquired a sense of learned helplessness. Learned helplessness relative to one variable may generalize to similar variables, e.g., arithmetic, and result in a sense of reduced *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1977). In such cases, teachers, through a cooperative alliance, must help the student reacquire a sense of being able to exercise perceptual control over the variable. This, of course, requires more than an attitude adjustment, because it is necessary that the impediment to control be removed whether it is a vision problem, a skills deficit, or whatever. In addition, the student must have experiences that facilitate reestablishing a belief in personal control over the variable. Dweck (1975) has shown that students can be inoculated against the tendency to develop a sense of learned helplessness. Dweck gave students difficult tasks which were within their ability to be successful at. If they failed at those tasks, she explored with the students what they attributed the failure to. If a student attributed failure to factors beyond his or her control, Dweck did reattribution training with the student that guided the student toward recognizing the true and controllable reason for the failure, e.g., lack of needed skills, insufficient effort, failure to use appropriate resources and so on. Such students proved to be much less susceptible to learned helplessness when subsequently exposed to difficult tasks than students who had success-only experiences with relatively easy tasks.

When there is a rejection of means or conflicting means, the first step is to determine if the student is capable of employing socially accepted means. If not, the objective should be to facilitate development of effective programs for achieving perceptual control over variables related to socially approved goals that the student accepts. Through a cooperative alliance, help a student develop specific academic skills that are needed through remedial instruction and to acquire the learning and study skills needed to maintain effective academic skills. If a student is having difficulties due to ineffective programs for dealing with appropriate social goals, e.g., making friends, the cooperative alliance might be used to facilitate the development of better social skills. The earlier discussion in Chapter Seven on teaching social skills, particularly through modeling and role-playing, may be useful in such cases. If a student is capable of employing socially accepted means but doesn't, acceptance of socially accepted goals should bring about use of the socially approved means. If not, a cooperative alliance should be used to try and persuade the student that it is in his or her best interests to meet goals through socially approved means.

A teacher can employ persuasion through a cooperative alliance; however, in resistant cases that become time consuming. In those cases, it will probably be necessary to pursue the cooperative alliance through some other arrangement. During the process, a resistant student might be assigned to the RTC or to some other program such as an in-school-suspension program at the direction of the CIT. In either case, the teacher in charge of that program may attempt to establish a cooperative alliance with the student. Another alternative is to employ a school counselor in this role. A student who chooses not to work on making an accommodation to the school's goals, standards, and means should be allowed to choose to go home until such time as they are ready. As a last resort, such a student should be expelled, with return contingent upon a willingness to work on making an accommodation to the educational program.

### Activities

1. Develop an annotated diagram of how you think a control system for a system level goal of your own might look.
2. Select an action that you perceive as a reoccurring and troublesome action performed by one of your students or some other person that you know. Develop an hypothesis about what the goal and standard are for this action. Develop an annotated diagram for this control system.
3. Based on the hypothesis in (2) above answer the following questions:
  - a. Is the goal socially/personally appropriate? Why or why not?
  - b. Is the standard socially/personally appropriate? Why or why not?
  - c. Is the action socially/personally appropriate? Why or why not?
  - d. If any of the above are inappropriate, what kind of change would make them more socially/personally appropriate?
4. Describe situations in your experience, involving other adults, that illustrate the PCT concepts of interference and of conflict.
5. Develop a set of standards or rules for your school setting. Discuss how the rules meet the criteria of necessary, just, and reasonable. Do you think the community served by the school would agree? Why or why not?
6. List the top ten non-academic, problems in your school. Label each as either mild, moderate or serious and give a rationale for the classification.
7. Design a form that could be used by your students to develop a RBP.
8. Try out the form developed in (7) above with one or more of your students.
9. Describe one of your students who you think exhibits one of Merton's four types of social deviance. Explain why you think this is the case.
10. Conduct a Values Therapy session with one of your students or some other person.

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