Assumptiveness can be defined as a set of behaviors that when combined and put into practice respect the rights of others as well as oneself (Alberts & Emmons, 2009). Previous research has shown that engaging in nonassertive behavior can have negative effects, and that assertive behaviors can lead to a healthier life (Elder et al., 2014; Elliott & Gramling, 1990; Morgan, 1974; Lattanzio et al., 2010). There is limited behavioral research on teaching this skill set; however, behavioral skills training (BST) may offer an appropriate intervention option. BST is a method for teaching skills that includes four components: modeling, instructions, rehearsal, and feedback. BST has been effective in reaching a range of skills to multiple populations (e.g., Jones et al., 1981; Miltenberger et al., 1985; Sarokol & Stumet, 2004). The current study evaluated the effectiveness of BST to teach assertiveness skills to college students. Generalization to novel situations along with overall satisfaction with training was assessed.

Method

Participants & Setting
- Participant 1 was a male graduate student. Participants 2 and 3 were female undergraduate students.
- Sessions were conducted in a private 2 m x 3 m room equipped with two chairs and a video camera for recording sessions.

Materials
- Three scenarios representing three different social situations relevant to a university student were used during training to prompt role-plays.
- Three different scenarios were used to test for generalization of assertiveness skills.

Baseline Training Scenario
1. Your roommate tells you to go to a party but you don’t want to go.
2. Your academic advisor recommends that you take a class that you would rather not take.

Dependent Measures
- Percentage of assertive behaviors as measured by the Assertiveness Checklist (Project 12-2007). Assertiveness was defined using behavioral definitions for 9 behaviors that comprise an assertive response (Figure 2). Assertive behaviors earn a score of 2 while nonassertive and aggressive behaviors earn both a score of 0 or 1.

Procedure & Experimental Design
- Participants 2 and 3 were running a concurrent multiple baseline design. Participant 1 was run concurrently. The procedure is outlined below.

Pre-Training (Baseline) Sessions
- Session: 20–30 min
- The need for assertiveness skills was discussed, and the assertiveness definitions were presented.
- A video model was presented demonstrating nonassertive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors for scenario #1.
- Rehearsal in the form of a role-play began after the primary researcher provided positive and corrective feedback.
- This process continued until the participant achieved a score of 80% on the assertiveness checklist.

BST: Session 1
- Session: 20–30 min
- Scenario #2 and #3 were presented, and the participant scored using the assertiveness checklist.
- If the participant reached the 80% criterion training was complete.
- If the participant did not meet mastery on scenario #2 or #3 then BST began as described above.

BST: Session 2
- Session: 20–30 min
- Scenario #2 and #3 were presented, and the participant scored using the assertiveness checklist.
- If the participant reached the 80% criterion training was complete.
- If the participant did not meet mastery on scenario #2 or #3 then BST began as described above.

Post-Training Sessions
- Sessions were similar to pre-training sessions.
- Responding at 80% for 3 different scenarios across 3 sessions was considered mastery at post-training.
- Satisfaction questionnaire was administered following completion of the final scenario during the last session.

Discussion
The current results indicate that BST is effective for teaching assertiveness skills to college students. At this time only Participant 1 has completed the entire study showing that assertive behavior was successfully taught and maintained through three post-training sessions. Generalization occurred with three novel scenarios presented during post-training. Participant 1 also indicated in the satisfaction survey that the training was useful and applicable to everyday life. Participants 2 and 3 have not yet completed the post-training phase of the study. However, each participant met criterion during BST sessions and Participant 2 performed above criterion in her first post-training session. Participant 2 also showed a significant improvement with the generalization scenario that was presented during the first post-training session.

While this sample size is adequate for the single subject design of the study, in order to demonstrate external validity the study should be replicated. A limitation to this study is the lack of situ training, training in the natural environment. Because of the nature of the study it was impossible to complete in situ training with the participants. In situ training has been shown to increase scores in follow-up assessments when compared to the use of BST alone (Johnson et al., 2006).

At this point in time the full implication of BST in teaching assertiveness skills cannot be determined. However, the current data indicates that BST will be effective at teaching assertiveness skills in various social situations.