Editorial

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The past year has been an interesting one for *BASA*. We developed a new, more professional appearance that has been very well received by readers. We undertook our first concerted subscription drive in years and more than tripled our circulation. We have been included in *Psychological Abstracts*. Finally, we solicited manuscripts from a broad range of behaviorists.

All of these behaviors were contingently reinforced — except the last one. Very few individuals responded to our invitation to submit their work to *BASA*, although several indicated that they would soon have material ready to send to us. But, as this issue goes to print, we have received few of those. And many of the manuscripts we did receive were rejected for publication by reviewers due to lack of behavior-analytic conceptualization — including content and terminology. Nevertheless, you will note that the current issue includes some articles that could only be termed “behavioral” in the broadest sense (if at all). *BASA* can be more behavioral only if it receives behavioral manuscripts.

Thus, the question arises: do behavior analysts have a unique contribution to make to the analyses of, and solutions to, social problems? We claim that we do, but the evidence of such behaviors is tenuous at best. Perhaps many behavior analysts share Lamal's (1986) pessimism concerning the likely social impact of behavioral contributions in an intellectually nonbehavioral, pluralistic society.

Lamal (1986) asks what “public policy, law, status, regulation, or court decision at the national level can be attributed to the efforts of behaviorists?” He also questions our impact on the state level. Basically, Lamal is asking whether behaviorists have affected statutory or case law in any significant manner. I am convinced that this is the wrong question to ask at this point in time. First, behavioral technology is pervasively applied throughout society, sometimes in progressive fashion, other times regressively. Behavioral principles, for example, have been utilized both ways in psychotherapy and in business and industry. This suggests that behaviorists concerned with social change must understand the larger context in which they work: they must develop precise abilities to analyze the social and political environment and relate their “micro” work to the “macro” context.

This “macro” context can be analyzed — through any number of traditional intellectual approaches — or behavior analytically.

A second reason I believe Lamal is asking the wrong question derives from my behavior analysis of the behavior of behaviorists. I think that behaviorists' social action behavior requires a great deal of additional shaping before it is sufficiently refined to have the social impact that Lamal desires. We must first learn to analyze our global environment in behavioral terms before we can suggest, advocate, and ultimately implement changes. This is difficult work — we must not only translate nonbehavioral descriptions of the phenomena of interest into behavioral conceptualizations; we must also illuminate the phenomena in unique, intellectually stimulating ways. In other words, we must contribute to the discussion that is before the intelligensia.

This is the primary purpose of *BASA* — and is what differentiates us from *The Behavior Analyst*, *Behaviorism* and the other journals associated with our tradition. The question I have presents a formidable challenge to our readers: do we as behaviorists have really new ideas, or are we simply “old wine in new bottles?” If we believe we do indeed have substantive intellectual contributions to make, then the issue becomes one of shaping the desired behavior — which at this point is only an approximation to the terminal response, i.e. behavior that influences public policy. After all, covert thinking behavior and overt writing behavior are components of overt political behavior.

BASA's function in the behavioral world is to provide S^D 's and S^R 's for such thinking and writing behaviors. An empirical assessment clearly indicates that our previous stimulus value, by itself, was inadequate to maintain the desired behaviors. Therefore, we have made several changes in the journal format. First, commencing with this issue, *BASA* will regularly contain two special sections: “Peace Issues,” edited by Tony Marcattilio, and “Feminist Forum,” edited by Janet Ellis. Second, we will strive to present a thematic “Forum” in each issue. We began this in our last issue with one on “Working For Peace” and continue it now with the topic “Education and Literacy.” However, even with these enhancements, *BASA's* influence on your scholarly be-

havior is likely to be modest. I ask you to look in your community, region, world for additional S^D 's: they are there (I can see them). And I ask you to look to your values as sources of additional secondary reinforcement: they too are there (I infer their presence from your behavior of reading this journal).

Behaviorism certainly does not have all the answers to our social problems. Indeed, I have argued that any behavioral framework must be cognizant of, and draw data from, a multidisciplinary perspective (Rakos, 1983). And, behavioral theory itself may impose certain limits on its intellectual strength (e.g. Michael, 1986). But I think we can contribute more than we have so far. Economic sanctions, terrorism, teen-age pregnancy, AIDS, education, disarmament, pollution, poverty, and endless "isms" require our urgent attention.

I await a flood of thoughtful manuscripts — or, at least, perhaps some reactions to my comments!

References

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