

## Editorial

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Articles in this issue of *The Behavior Analyst* (*TBA*) span the range of subjects appropriate for *TBA*, including “theoretical, experimental, and applied topics in behavior analysis,” “the past, present, and future of behavior analysis, as well as its relation to other fields,” and “behaviorism as a philosophy.” In particular, two general themes run through most of the articles in the current issue: the application of research and theory in behavior analysis to significant social problems; and the origin, nature, and function of what are termed *private events* and their place, if any, in a natural science of behavior.

### **TO A YOUNG BASIC SCIENTIST, ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A PROGRAM OF TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH**

To begin, Critchfield tackles both experimental and applied issues in behavior analysis in a reply to the commentaries on his article “Translational Contributions of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior” that appeared in the Fall 2010 issue. Critchfield crafts his current article cleverly in the form of “advice to young investigators who seek to apply their basic science training to translational studies” (p. 137). He synthesizes the main points of the commentaries in discussing the challenges and relative risks in devising use-inspired research rather than either strictly pure basic or applied research. And despite identifying many potent challenges and risks, he concludes that devising a program of translational research may be critical at this time, given the uncertainty of financial support

for pure basic research and, more important, the threats facing humankind that call out for behavioral solutions.

### **OBSERVING BEN WYCKOFF: FROM BASIC RESEARCH TO PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION AND SOCIAL ISSUES**

The article by Escobar and Lattal takes an historical look at L. Benjamin (Ben) Wyckoff’s seminal contributions to both theory and application in behavior analysis. The article traces Wyckoff’s development, at Indiana University in the late 1950s, of the observing-response procedure, partially under the guidance of B. F. Skinner, and his application of the resulting mathematical model of secondary reinforcement to the creation of two successful companies, one dedicated to the advancement of programmed instruction and the other focused on teaching machines that improve education and human relationships. Thus, without planning to conduct translational research (indeed, the term was not yet even coined), Wyckoff took his discoveries in the basic research laboratory, mostly with nonhuman subjects, applied them to an analysis of distinctly human problems in both the educational and clinical arenas, and then figured out how to deliver the technologies to help people. Thus, as Escobar and Lattal note, Wyckoff’s story is an “instructive counterpoint to the numerous examples of gaps among basic research, applied research, and service delivery aspects of behavior analysis” (p. 150). In addition, Wyckoff’s story is also part of the larger narrative of the early development of behavior analysis.

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONTINGENCIES IN MODERN SOCIETIES TO “PRIVACY” IN THE BEHAVIORAL RELATIONS OF COGNITION AND EMOTION**

Behaviorism as a philosophy is addressed in the next several articles. First, Tourinho, Borba, Vichi, and Leite discuss the conditions that may have given rise to social contingencies that resulted in our modern view of cognition and emotion as internal and private. In particular, based on the work of German sociologist Norbert Elias, they argue that the shift from feudal economies to market economies and the resulting individualizing of people produced such contingencies. The authors begin with the assumption that what we call *cognitions* or *emotions* originated as public behavioral relations in earlier societies in which each individual’s behavior was closely dependent on another’s. They then suggest that “this individualizing process includes the socially maintained contingencies that bring some verbal responses under control of private stimulation and reduce the magnitude of some verbal responses to a covert level” (p. 171). The authors then discuss four types of “societal contingencies that gave rise to individualization and the attribution of privacy to cognitions and emotions” (p. 171).

**BEHAVIORISM, PRIVATE EVENTS, AND THE MOLAR VIEW OF BEHAVIOR BY BAUM, WITH COMMENTARIES BY PALMER, RACHLIN, MARR, HINELINE, AND CATANIA**

The next section includes a target article by Baum titled “Behaviorism, Private Events, and the Molar View of Behavior”; commentaries by Palmer, Rachlin, Marr, Himeline, and Catania; and Baum’s reply to the commentaries. Baum essentially makes two main points in his article:

that a molar approach that views behavior as extended in time is the only tenable strategy for a science of behavior, and that there is no place for private events in such a science. All of the commentators except for Rachlin disagree with most of Baum’s arguments, including his rejection of the consideration of private events in a natural science because they are unobservable (Marr, Himeline, and Palmer), and his depiction of Skinner’s position (Catania). At least two of the commentators (Catania and Himeline) argue for an approach that includes analyses at different levels, including behavior that is more (molar) and less (molecular) extended in time. Rachlin prefers a molar approach he calls *teleological* behaviorism, which places an emphasis on final causes as a whole pattern of behavior into which any single act fits.

**IN RESPONSE**

We next present two papers that respond more or less to the special section on *The Human Response to Climate Change: Ideas From Behavior Analysis* that appeared in the Fall 2010 issue, and one that responds to Chance’s (2007) article on Skinner’s growing pessimism about behavior analysis being able to address global problems. These three articles accomplish two general goals. First, they remind behavior analysts about the serious problems we face on our planet that are caused by human behavior and result, ironically, from its sensitivity to operant conditioning. Second, each article offers an analysis of the problems, accompanied by suggestions for ways to change our behavior.

*Can We Consume Our Way Out of Climate Change? A Call for Analysis*

In the first article, Grant takes issue with the general thrust of many of the essays in the special section on

climate change by suggesting that although the contributors “offered many imaginative solutions,” they “were disproportionately focused on reducing carbon emissions through green consumption and were mainly concerned with making energy use more efficient” (pp. 245–246). He argues that such solutions are flawed because they perpetuate or even accelerate “economic growth that is incompatible with a sustainable culture” (p. 245). Grant discusses four classes of solutions that address climate change and sustainability, preferring culture-based solutions that “shift the maintenance of behavior from energy-intensive economic reinforcers to noneconomic reinforcers” (p. 249) such as those found in the arts, sports, and other activities. He urges behavior analysts to contribute to nothing less than a “cultural reinvention as a means of achieving sustainability” (p. 245). In other words, for Grant the solution is to convert from a growth economy to the steady-state economy of ecological economics.

*The Personal Life of the Behavior Analyst*

Bostow agrees with Grant that humans need to consume less, but he takes a slightly different approach to solving the same problem of overconsumption, namely to encourage individual behavior analysts to change their behavior. After reminding us of some of the serious problems that face us, Bostow suggests that “to consume less we need to deliberately reorganize our current daily living patterns” (p. 269) by applying “contingency-management skills ... to one’s own behavior in a manner similar to controlling the behavior of another person” (p. 270–271). According to him, we can achieve these changes as individuals, but “only if the probability of doing it is already high enough, prompting is skillfully employed, and changes in

targeted performance are magnified with methods of monitoring progress” (p. 271). Bostow then offers suggestions for personal self-management in several different areas, including food energy, growing more of what one eats, repairing things, and getting off the road.

*Beyond Freedom and Dignity at 40: Comments on Behavioral Science, the Future, and Chance (2007)*

Leigland responds to an article by Chance (2007) in which he documented a change in Skinner’s optimism that a science of behavior could successfully be used to solve the serious problems that, ironically, are caused by our susceptibility to operant conditioning. Leigland ranks nine behavioral findings described by Chance that “appear to interfere with effective problem-solving behavior on a large scale and in effective time frames” (p. 283) in terms of their perceived importance. Then Leigland describes recent research, for example, on temporal discounting, suggesting that “long-term contingencies can make effective contact with immediate behavior” (p. 284). Finally, Leigland discusses certain problems that may arise when trying to implement the type of “science-based cultural change” suggested by a behavior analysis of the problems.

**INTERESTING TIMES: PRACTICE, SCIENCE, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS**

Another article by Critchfield bookends this issue. This time he responds to the rumblings and ensuing, sometimes rancorous, debates that have occurred in the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) over the last few years concerning the respective roles of scientists and practitioners. Critchfield offers the surprising suggestion that “behavior analysts should approach such topics *as behavior ana-*

*lysts*, that is, by considering the behaviors involved and the contexts that give rise to them” (p. 297). Then, from his well-earned soapbox as a former President of ABAI and a scholar, Critchfield offers both an analysis of and a solution to the problems as he sees them, all in an historical context of similar issues faced by other professional organizations. Not everyone will agree with either his analysis or his solution, but I think everyone will agree that both are thoughtful and that his presentation is scholarly and fair. I have no doubt that his article will stimulate more discussion, even in the pages of this journal, which, in my opinion, is good for behavior analysis and for ABAI.

Finally, I'd like to thank my Associate Editors, Jim Carr and Matt Normand, for their many invaluable contributions to this issue and for making my job as Editor much easier.

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