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Editorial

This issue of *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior* (*TAVB*) is special for me for several reasons. First, it is my last as editor. Second, the articles contained herein are indicative of the continued trend I noted in my editorials in Volumes 15 and 16 of an increase in the breadth and scope of a behavior analysis of verbal behavior. Toward that end, four of the current articles represent experimental approaches to the analysis of different verbal phenomena and, thus, answer the call for increased experimental analysis by several authors in the special section of Volume 15, "Current Status and Future Directions of the Analysis of Verbal Behavior."

Two of the experimental articles in the present volume studied basic processes in children with severe language delays and, as such, have important implications for language training programs. The article by Yoon and Bennett shows that a stimulus–stimulus pairing procedure can condition vocal sounds as reinforcers in preschool children with language delays and, thus, provides further empirical support for the concept of automatic reinforcement. The experiment identifies a procedure for increasing the variability of the baseline behavior of individuals with very limited vocal repertoires and, thus, may facilitate the shaping of more complex verbal responses. The article by Sundberg, Endicott, and Eigenheer demonstrates that an intraverbal prompt procedure was superior to an echoic procedure in establishing tacts in children with autism.

The other two experimental articles deal more with basic learning processes. The article by Polson and Parsons experimentally elucidates the distinction between topography-based and selection-based learning and its implications for understanding the results of some equivalence studies. The experiment by Byrne et al. is unique in its investigation of the effects of delayed reinforcement and the possible role of the subjects' verbal behavior on the acquisition of operant behavior in verbal humans. These articles also have implications for teaching verbal behavior. All four experimental articles, as well as the empirical articles found in previous issues of *TAVB*, contradict by deed and not only word the claim by Noam Chomsky (see the Chomsky–Place correspondence, this issue) that the concept of learning does not belong in a science of psychology and that behaviorism is "a rather curious deviation from rationality and science."

The present issue is special for another reason: It is dedicated to the memory of Ullin T. Place who, although he came to behavior analysis late and by a somewhat circuitous route, nevertheless understood the power of an objective, scientific study of verbal behavior in a field still dominated by nonexperimental and, ironically, largely philosophical thinking. Professor Place considered *TAVB* as a natural home for some of his own work, and it is fitting that in this volume his correspondence with Noam Chomsky is being published.

Speaking of Chomsky, one cannot help but notice the amount of attention devoted to him in this issue. It began with my interest from the beginning of my tenure as editor in reprinting Dave Palmer's chapter, "Chomsky's Nativism: A Critical Review," which was first published in Chase and Parrott's (1986) edited book, *Psychological Aspects of Language*. From the first time I read the chapter, I had hoped it could be available to a wider audience, and now it can. Palmer shows how Chomsky's nativist arguments, however logical sounding, are not based on principles derived from established sciences. Because Palmer's chapter was originally written in 1981, he reevaluated his critique in "Chomsky's Nativism

Reconsidered" (this issue) in light of changes in Chomsky's theory (which are noted by Schoneberger also in this issue) and concluded that even though there has been movement by some linguists toward a more functional analysis of language, the criticisms of Chomsky's theory are still valid. In short, logical analyses, no matter how compelling, are no substitute for empirical analysis. This is the position also held by Ullin Place.

After I negotiated for Dave Palmer's chapter to be published in *TAVB*, I received, independently, a submission from Ted Schoneberger, titled "A Departure from Cognitivism: Implications of Chomsky's *Second* Revolution in Linguistics." In his article, which the reviewers enthusiastically accepted, Schoneberger points out that Chomsky has modified his hypotheses regarding language away from his previous rule-based approach to one that is now called "principles and parameters," and that in so doing, his speculations move further from mainstream cognitive psychological approaches.

Then, after the untimely death of Ullin Place, I learned, through discussion on the Verbal Behavior Special Interest Group Web page, of the existence of a correspondence that took place between Place and Chomsky in the early 1990s. Over the next several months I negotiated via E-mail with Dave Palmer (who corresponded with Place's family), Ted Schoneberger (who edited the correspondence), and Noam Chomsky so that an edited version of the correspondence could be published in this issue of *TAVB*.

During the exchange with Chomsky, I sent him copies of the articles by Palmer and Schoneberger and offered him the opportunity to respond to either or both. He declined, saying, "I read them with interest, hoping to learn something from them. I did learn something, but won't comment on it." He added that "the conditions for response are not satisfied, so that is impossible. I could write something about the topics that I and others work on, which are ignored or hopelessly misunderstood here. But there seems to be little point in that." Chomsky concluded that "the basis for a constructive interchange . . . (or) communication does not appear to exist." He implied that we behavior analysts do not understand even the basics of his approach and that "it would be necessary to begin from the beginning and write what amounts to an elementary text. But these already exist. Why another one?" However, the invitation to reply stands.

One of the goals of Schoneberger's paper is to inform behavior analysts about Chomsky's theory of language as it has evolved over the past several decades and, together with the publication of the Chomsky–Place correspondence, we now have a clearer picture of Chomsky's views on a range of issues related to language.

Volume 17 contains two other articles that are not completely unrelated to the issues raised by Place and Chomsky. Each in its own way addresses the essence of a behavior-analytic view of verbal behavior. First, the thesis of Jay Moore's article is evident in the title, "Words Are Not Things." The article is kind of a compact primer of a functional analysis of language which views it first and foremost as ongoing behavior, and as such, counters the traditional philosophical and linguistic hypotheses of language as consisting of words and sentences with meanings independent of the behavior of speakers and listeners. Moore then looks at the implications of a functional analysis of language for the topics of meaning, the scientific role of theories and explanations, educational practices, and finally, the phenomenon of equivalence classes. Sam Leigland, in his brief article, looks at an apparent anomaly regarding reinforcement in conversational analysis, shows how it is not really an anomaly at all, and shows one way it can be interpreted according to established experimental analyses.

There is a fourth, and more personal, way in which this issue is special for

me; namely, it contains an article by two former students of mine, Matthew Normand and Jeffrey Fossa, in collaboration with my friend and one of my mentors, Al Poling. Their article and the two articles by Critchfield take a reflective look at *TAVB* itself, especially at the empirical articles published therein. Normand et al. conclude that, although a majority of the articles published in *TAVB* have not been experimental, such articles, nevertheless, constitute a consistent and increasing proportion. In the first of his articles, Critchfield notes that although *TAVB* continues to attract new authors doing empirical research, the number of repeat authors doing empirical research is also increasing, a sign, according to him, of "a maturing research community." In the second article, Critchfield, Buskist, and Saville show that about one third of the most frequently cited sources for empirical articles in *TAVB* are fairly recent empirical articles and that researchers are beginning to generate a critical mass of work. The authors still caution, however, that verbal behavior researchers run the risk of insularity.

As this is my last issue as editor of *TAVB*, I want to take the opportunity to thank the many people who helped me during the past 3 years, but particularly during the past year. First, I want to acknowledge the incredible editorial board of *TAVB*. I have been very lucky to have reviewers who take their role seriously and who provide thorough, detailed, and author-friendly reviews in the time requested. As a result, authors get quick and substantive feedback on their submissions, a luxury and courtesy every author appreciates. To those handful of reviewers who completed several reviews for me, I want you to know that your good work and help did not go unnoticed. For Volume 17, I want to thank the following guest reviewers: Ed Morris, Gary Novak, Mike Perone, Pete Peterson, Al Poling, Bill Potter, Steve Starin, and Janet Twyman. I also want to thank Mark Sundberg for his continued support and help and Genae Hall, with whom I've worked not only during my 3 years as editor but while I was associate editor as well. A special thanks goes out to Ted Schoneberger, Dave Palmer, and Noam Chomsky for their time and effort involved in getting the Chomsky–Place correspondence into a publishable form. And I want to thank Kathy Hill, who has made my job much easier; the pages of the journal look better since she became managing editor.

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to Dave Palmer who, during the past 3 years, not only graciously served as reviewer for more than his share of articles but also penned three superb articles himself. But more than that, he has been my friend and sounding-board, keeping me on the straight and narrow.

I conclude by welcoming Sam Leigland as the editor-elect of *TAVB* and by suggesting that the best way for you to welcome him is by submitting to him your empirical, theoretical, and applied work on the analysis of verbal behavior.

Henry D. Schlinger
Editor