

Public Information, Dissemination, and Behavior Analysis

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Behavior analysts have become increasingly concerned about inaccuracies and misconceptions in the public, educational, and professional information portraying their activities, but have done little to correct these views. The present paper has two purposes in this regard. First, the paper describes some of the conditions that have given rise to these concerns. Second, and more important, the paper surveys various procedures and programs for the dissemination of public information that may correct inaccuracies and misconceptions. Special consideration is also given to issues involving (a) the assessment of the problem, (b) the content and means of dissemination, (c) the possible contributions of behavior analysts to current misunderstandings, and (d) relationships between behavior analysts and the media. The dissemination of accurate and unbiased information constitutes an important new undertaking for behavior analysis. The future of the field may depend in part on such activity.

The political and social contexts in which the behavioral sciences are conducted have changed dramatically in the last century, perhaps the most important of which is that scientists now rely almost exclusively on the public for funding and support (Miller, 1979). Because of this, many professional associations have become increasingly concerned about the dissemination of information about their activities. Such information, in general, already reaches the public, as well as opinion leaders, politicians, and funding agencies, through news and other media coverage. In addition, professional associations receive numerous inquiries directly from many members of our society. In response to these inquiries and interests, and to the concerns of those who support scientific activities with taxes and votes, several behavioral science associations have begun programs to coordinate and disseminate accurate and unbiased information.

Despite the general sense that behavior analysis is often inaccurately depicted and

unfairly maligned, the behavior-analytic community has shown but modest interest in disseminating accurate and unbiased information. Although members of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division 25 for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, the oldest formal behavior-analytic group, have expressed some concern over these matters (see Brownstein, 1981; Hayes, 1983, 1984a), the Division has not gone beyond the 1982 appointment of a public information officer, which was done at the request of APA's Public Information Office. APA, itself, though, has taken vigorous steps for a number of years to disseminate information and provide services to the media in order to generate public and professional support and understanding. This advocacy, however, offers no guarantee that behavior analysis will always benefit by these activities.

Among the extant behavior-analytic associations, only the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy (AABT) has had an ongoing information gathering and dissemination program, which is run through its Public Education Committee and Media Watch Committee. Until 1984, the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis (SABA) had not established any formal means for handling such information beyond the routine answering of requests through its central office. Recently, however, SABA has established a Research Action Com-

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mittee and a Public Relations Subcommittee. Likewise, the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies has also just become active in these matters, in this case by establishing a press office program for the dissemination of news releases about the behavioral sciences.¹

The dissemination of information may seem unsavory and unscientific business. Indeed, questions might even be raised about whether behavior analysts are actually adversely affected by current inaccuracies and misconceptions, and about whether the dissemination of information can really have an effect if so. The answers to these questions are not always clear, but they will not be known until the experiment is conducted, which seems quite in accord with the general behavior-analytic attitude towards problems of social importance.

Granted, many behavior analysts have jobs, and their research projects are funded, but this is to overlook how many more jobs, how much more funding, and how many more behavior analysts might be produced, not to mention the improved quality thereof. Beyond that, the effectiveness of dissemination may be evidenced in the development of public information programs by many scientific associations; one would assume that this activity is not independent of its consequences. Moreover, the advertising industry and political campaigns both show that the effects of "public relations" are not to be considered lightly.

At issue here is not just the uninteresting question of whether what people say about behavior analysis can be changed through the dissemination of information, but rather whether what people say and what they otherwise do, and

the reasons (i.e., the controlling variables) for what they say and do, can be changed through such procedures. Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior (Skinner, 1957) and rule-governed behavior (Skinner, 1969, pp. 133-171) present a clear case that such controlling relationships do indeed occur and are not to be trivialized.

That said, the purposes of the present paper are these: (a) to characterize some of the inaccuracies and misunderstandings that make dissemination an important issue, (b) to point out issues related to the assessment, content, and means of dissemination that need to be taken into account, (c) to describe some procedures and programs for disseminating information, based in large part on what are taken to be effective practices by several professional associations, and (d) to discuss some concerns about adverse contributions behavior analysts may be making to current misunderstandings, as well as concerns about relationships between behavior analysts and the media.

Equally important to the dissemination of information about behavior analysis to the public is its dissemination to the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government, and their related agencies. Informative discussions of this topic are available in Gonzalez's (1984) description of how scientists can work in the legislative arena; in articles by Jones, Czyzewski, Otis, and Hannah (1983) and by Ulicny, Otis, Czyzewski, Jones, and Hannah (1984) about AABT's efforts to develop a national Social Policy Information Network (see also AABT's *Guidelines*, 1984); and in discussions by Stolz (1981) and by Paine, Bellamy, and Wilcox (1984) of issues related to the dissemination of applied behavior analysis in the public and political arenas. These topics, however, go beyond the intended scope of the present paper, and deserve independent treatment of their own. Although they cannot be covered in any detail here, a few strategies for such dissemination are referred to where appropriate in what follows.

Before continuing, some acknowledgments need to be made. Many of the

¹ Numerous other professional associations whose interests overlap with those of behavior analysis (e.g., American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Society for Neuroscience) or who are regional affiliations of behavior analysts (e.g., the Chicago Association for Behavior Analysis) have also developed or begun to develop programs and procedures for interacting with the media. This present paper, though, is focused on those associations to whom most behavior analysts have the closest ties.

points and suggestions offered in this paper are not my own. They come from correspondence and conversations with many people, most notably Jon Bailey, Joe Brady, Aaron Brownstein, Charles Catania, Mare Czyzewski, Mary Jane Eimer, Steve Hayes, Phil Himeline, Terrence Keane, Vic Laties, Andy Lattal, John Lutzker, Dave Lyon, Virginia O'Leary, Mark Pavlovich, Stephanie Stolz, Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, and Joe Wyatt. In addition, Don Kent of APA's Public Information Office deserves special recognition for educating me so well about APA's excellent dissemination procedures and programs, most of which are mentioned in the material that follows. All of these contributions are gratefully acknowledged; indeed, the paper almost wrote itself because of them. Nevertheless, I assume responsibility for any inaccuracies and misrepresentations.

MEDIA, EDUCATIONAL, AND PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION

Inaccurate information and misinformed opinion about behavior analysis appear in three primary areas: (a) in the news and entertainment media (see Turkat & Feuerstein, 1978; Todd, Larsen, & Morris, 1984), (b) in educational materials (see Champagne & Tausky, 1979; Cooke, 1984; Todd & Morris, 1983), (c) and in professional materials of the other behavioral and social sciences (see Hayes, 1984b; Moore, 1984). Each of these areas is addressed briefly below (see also Franks & Wilson, 1975; Todd, Atwater, Johnson, Larsen, & Morris, 1984; Todd, Larsen, & Morris, 1984; Wyatt, 1984; cf. various sections of Skinner, 1974, 1979, 1983).

The Media

Inaccurate and misinformed reporting in the news and entertainment media can be most vexing. Not only is such coverage detrimental to legislative action and funding (see Ervin, 1973; Gallagher, 1972), but personal and professional interactions among behavior analysts and

their misinformed peers and colleagues are adversely affected. These problems are even more broadly relevant now that the media has become the most pervasive educator and socializer of our society, once formal education is completed.

News media. Inaccurate coverage in the news and information media appears in daily newspapers, where behavior therapy has been equated with psychosurgery, drug treatment, and Nazi Germany (cf. Turkat & Feuerstein, 1978); in articles written in major news magazines, where B. F. Skinner and behavior analysis have received pejorative coverage (e.g., Leo, 1983; Staff, 1971); and in feature stories, books, and specialty magazines (e.g., Abrahamson, 1983; Day, 1974; Fodor, 1981; Hilts, 1974; Holden, 1973; Mason, 1974). A current misrepresentation of behaviorism by Asimov is particularly disturbing (Asimov, 1984, pp. 837-842). The only behaviorism he presents is that of J. B. Watson (e.g., Watson, 1919); the contemporary behaviorism of Skinner is not mentioned. Asimov's case is that even if Watson's behaviorism were correct, it must be discredited for being unenlightened about any behavior of real interest, for being unable to identify all the determinants of behavior, and for being incapable of anything but a methodologically empty stance on thoughts and beliefs. But no matter, according to Asimov, behaviorism is not correct because it cannot deal with mental intuition. Enough said.

Entertainment media. The misrepresentation of behavior analysis also occurs in the entertainment media. *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess, 1963), of course, has been a major and obvious source of misunderstanding. Many other smaller incidents, however, commonly occur (see e.g., *Ghostbusters*). One particularly curious case has appeared in a contemporary science fiction book which describes a "Behavioral Sciences Department" at the University of Kansas as a place where staff members take fees "to condition little boys out of playing with themselves (Brunner, 1975, p. 252). Even a popular new board game, *Trivial Pursuit*, asks: "Who invented the box that psycholo-

gists use to shock rats?" (Answer: B. F. Skinner.)

Educational Materials

Not only are inaccurate views about behavior analysis being presented to society at large, but also in educational materials for students, where one would expect a higher premium on accuracy. Recently published reviews, for instance, have shown that behavior analysis is commonly misrepresented in introductory psychology textbooks (Todd & Morris, 1983), in teacher education materials (Cooke, 1984), and in texts on organizational business management (Champane & Tausky, 1979)—a problem that seems more troublesome now than in an earlier era (see Kantor, 1922), though perhaps not for the other sciences (see e.g., Mach, 1893, pp. 1–5). Among the inaccuracies and misrepresentations are those related to terminology, to basic and applied research, and to metatheoretical assumptions. These problems are not merely the consequence of some necessary simplification of material, but rather they reflect clear errors of commission.

To compound these problems, only a small percentage of the many students who take an introductory psychology course enroll in further psychology courses, hence once students are misinformed, that misinformation has little opportunity for subsequent correction, especially in light of current media coverage. For those students who do continue in psychology, few will be favorably disposed to pursue behavior analysis; and even if so, advanced texts in psychology offer no great hope that students will receive more accurate presentations of the field (Todd & Morris, 1983).

Professional Representation

Not only should behavior analysts be concerned with presentations in the news and entertainment media, and in educational materials, but also by peers in academic departments (cf. Morse & Bruns, 1983), applied settings (cf. Jason, Ginsburg, Rucker, Merbitz, Tabon, & Harkness, 1984), and professional asso-

ciations. Inaccurate and prejudiced treatment in this arena is quite plainly "scientific malpractice" (Sidman, in press; cf. Lewontin, Rose, & Kamin, 1984, for examples of such malpractice).

Although B. F. Skinner is commonly recognized as the most eminent living psychologist and as one of the most influential psychologists of all time (see Heyduk & Fenigstein, 1984), the field of psychology has not often been very careful in its portrayal of the man or of radical behaviorism. Behavior analysts have too often heard from supposedly knowledgeable peers that behavior analysis is a quaint anachronism of but minor historical importance. The dissemination of information that such is not the case, both on philosophical and practical grounds, might at least force our peers to engage behavior analysis intellectually, rather than not at all.

Of major concern for professional representation are APA's central office publications—the *APA Monitor*, the *American Psychologist*, and *Psychology Today*—which have been known to present views inimicable to a science behavior despite APA's statements that the field of psychology is just that science. For the most part, the articles published in the *APA Monitor* are straightforward news pieces. When news of behavior analysis reflects well on the field, then that news is included, as for instance in the recent report of Fred Keller's awards from Brazil (see Staff, 1984). Feature stories also appear at times, and are generally evenhanded, although basic details may sometimes be in error (e.g., the use of negative reinforcement as punishment, see Cordes, 1984). The *Monitor*, however, also reflects many broad constituencies, and hence anti-behavioral opinions may also be found, even from APA journal editors, as in Hogan's (1979) comment: "I think we got tracked off into this natural sciences objectivity with Watson and the behaviorists, and I'm absolutely convinced that it was a blind alley" (p. 5). Hogan was then an editor of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. The *Monitor*, though, is not without some sense of justice. It has also

been so bold as to quote Joe Brady (1981): "Psychology is to the experimental analysis of behavior what astrology is to astronomy."

The articles published in the *American Psychologist* reflect the same sorts of problems. In addition, even among articles written by behavior analysts, those that have been published, while accurate in large part, and often excellent, do not always reflect favorably on the field. This has been especially true of articles commenting on the lack of "analysis" in applied behavior analysis (e.g., Deitz, 1978; Emery & Marholin, 1977).

APA now also owns and operates *Psychology Today*, through which the Association is seeking to increase and expand its ability to present psychology to the public. (Pop goes the psychology!) But, how accurately *Psychology Today* will present behavior analysis is not clear when it publishes such statements as "The image of [George] Orwell's persuader is a Joe Stalin trained by a B. F. Skinner" (Zimbardo, 1984, p. 71) or when behavioral psychologists are characterized as overlooking individual differences in assuming that "all people respond similarly to the same stimulus" (Zilbergeld, 1984, p. 9). The recent article on Fred Keller, though, was a nice change of pace (see Chance, 1984).

These comments do not mean that behavior analysts should necessarily forsake APA. On the contrary, APA represents an important and powerful constituency in need of education about the ways of behavior analysis because, by most professional and public views, behavior analysis will remain closely tied to psychology. Moreover, Division 25 maintains representation on APA Council and on such committees as the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology, a quasi-political arm of APA composed of psychology department chairpeople. Behavior analysts should take advantage of such representation in order to influence APA in directions fitting their professional stance and in ways that lead APA to acknowledge and represent the behavior-analytic community more accurately and energetically. More-

over, behavior analysts should take advantage of the influence that APA exerts among psychologists, and in many sectors of government and society, so as to further the dissemination of accurate information.

SOME CONCERNS ABOUT THE DISSEMINATION PROCESS

Assessment

Although the materials described above present a pessimistic look at how behavior analysis is represented in the media and in educational and professional materials, the general accuracy of this view requires further assessment. One survey, for instance, has reported that college students do not see behavior modification as threatening (yet neither do they view it as "good") (Turkat, Harris, & Forehand, 1979). Moreover, AABT's Media Watch Subcommittee has been active in gathering information about behavior therapy, and has generally found behavior therapy to be favorably viewed (Keane, 1983).² In any event, a fuller assessment of how behavior analysis is represented is required in order to serve as a baseline for assessing areas in need of dissemination and for assessing the effects of any subsequent dissemination, the latter of which might serve as a useful basis for research projects (Wyatt, 1984; e.g., Jason, Marinakis, & Martino, 1985). Accurate behavioral assessment is part of what behavior analysis is all about.

Once an accurate assessment has been made, then functional or interpretive analyses can attempt to describe the nature and determinants of the inaccuracies and misconceptions, and to ascertain the possibly different reasons for formally similar misunderstandings—the law of equifinality holds for this subject matter as for any other. Some of the determinants are likely to be quite broad, encompassing contingencies that establish and maintain many traditional philosophical beliefs among the media and its audi-

² Information on this file may be obtained from Mary Jane Eimer, Executive Director, AABT, 15 West 36th Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10118 (212-279-7970).

ences. More circumscribed determinants relate to simple carelessness and failure to become informed, and to general failures to see the value of a behavior analytic approach. Other determinants will be narrower, and include various short-term consequences for presenting "sensational" depictions of behavior analysis to media consumers, students, and professional peers. In addition, behavior analysts might also look to themselves as possible sources of misunderstanding, an issue which is taken up more fully later.

Although the inaccuracies and misconceptions about behavior analysis may not be easily or immediately eliminated, they are not beyond eventual change. There is a curious irony in the ineffectiveness of behavior analysts, who are supposed experts in behavioral management, to influence the behavior of their critics in a positive direction (Marr, 1984, p. 354). The central purpose of this paper is to describe procedures and programs for effecting such change through the dissemination of public and professional information.

Content and Means of Dissemination

Dissemination may be either proactive or reactive, both of which are described in what follows. Before presenting this material, though, two further points need to be discussed because they are critically related to the efficacy and efficiency of any dissemination.

Content. First, the content of what is disseminated is subject to a number of important considerations. Although behavior analysts are of one science, disagreements will arise over what is to be disseminated, especially as these disagreements reflect tensions among various short-term and long-term interests of behavior analysts. Short-term interests are related to acute social, political, and financial challenges such as APA certification, animal rights legislation, and cutbacks in research and training support. Long-term interests are related to broader social issues of public understanding and the acceptance of behavior analysis. For example, the media, the

public, and politicians need to be better informed about, and appreciate better, the contributions of basic research to applied behavior analysis (e.g., Epling & Pierce, 1983). Needless to say, misunderstandings about these matters have been central to undeserved "Golden Fleece" awards. Another area in need of long-term action is the education of the public and politicians about the importance of preventative (as opposed to reactive) strategies for many of society's current problems, such as deviant development, education, corrections, and pollution. Quite clearly, the content of the material to be disseminated, and who is to make decisions about that content, are issues that need to be approached with great sensitivity.

Means. In addition to content, the means of dissemination also deserve careful attention. The means of dissemination are ultimately a matter for the analysis of behavior, and cannot be proscribed beforehand, and hence no specific system of procedures and programs is presented in what follows. Nonetheless, various systems can be suggested, from complex organizations within professional associations, which generate their own contingencies for dissemination, to simple instructional control over dissemination, which may then be influenced by the natural contingencies of the profession.

One issue, for example, is at what point(s) public information should be disseminated along a continuum ranging from (a) centrally organized committees within associations, or across a consortium of associations, to (b) the actions of informal groups of behavior analysts, to (c) individual behavior analysts acting on their own. Centralized responding has the advantages of greater resources and the ability to speak in a concerted manner for a larger constituency, and hence might be more effective. Such an approach, however, might also suffer from divided opinions over procedures, programs, and content. Decentralized responding could avoid some of these political and administrative wranglings. Indeed, the effectiveness of informal activities by indi-

vidual behavior analysts should not be overlooked. Another issue relates to the relative emphasis given to proactive and to reactive dissemination. One means of dissemination could be chosen over another, or various means could be coordinated simultaneously, which would presumably achieve the greatest effects. The latter approach would also be useful in that many proactive and reactive dissemination procedures and programs could make multiple use of the same organizational structures and resources, thereby increasing overall efficiency. The time commitment and financial expense of dissemination will, of course, vary with the means of approaching the problem, and hence the cost-benefit ratio should be carefully considered. Again, what the best system for dissemination will be is an empirical question. In what follows, I merely describe what some of the components of such a system might be.

PROACTIVE DISSEMINATION

Although behavior analysts have reason to be concerned about inaccurate representations of their field, and seek to respond reactively, the more effective approach might be proactive—an approach to dissemination that is preventative, educational, and sustained. A proactive approach that disseminated information to the public through the media, to authors of educational materials, to various professional sources, and to the government might greatly improve the accuracy and tone by which behavior analysis is presented. The steps that can be taken in this regard include the following: (a) establishing a public information office (PIO) and system of PIO officers, (b) offering services to the media, and (c) developing a media guide.

Public Information Office

Establishing a PIO office and a system of PIO officers is probably the most formal and organized step that can be taken towards the dissemination of information, although a special interest group within an association might serve the

same function. A PIO office could focus directly on misrepresentations of behavior analysis (a) by serving as a clearinghouse for solutions to existing social problems, as well as to means for having the culture adopt those solutions, (b) by providing liaisons to other professional associations and the government for mutual education about one another, (c) by consulting with school systems on matters of curriculum development in the behavioral sciences and on clinical and educational needs, and (d) by extending services to the media, which is the primary focus of what follows.

APA has been very active in all of this, and has established and generously funded a PIO office and a system of PIO officers at the national, division, and state levels. The PIO office and officers serve as resources for information, news releases, and professional opinion. Because of the clinical and applied nature of much of APA's work, these roles are clear at the national and state levels, and for some of the divisions (e.g., Division 16, School Psychology). What this role might be for other divisions, though, is not as clear, as perhaps attested to by the appointment of PIOs to only 17 of APA's 41 divisions.

APA's national PIO office provides a wide variety of material resources and personnel to its state and division PIOs and keeps them informed about the activities of the association. For instance, the PIO office consults with its PIO officers about procedures and programs for working with the media; it distributes public information and materials to be shared among PIO offices and officers; and it manages resource files for the media. Information on how to develop these services at a state or local level is provided in APA's Media Guide which is sent to the PIO officers, and which is described later.³ Let me turn first, though, to the various services that can be offered

³ For further information, contact the Public Information Office, American Psychological Association, 1200 17th Street, N. W., Washington, D.C. 20362 (202-955-7710).

to the media by a PIO office, and that would comprise a large part of its work.

Services to the Media

Among the services that a PIO office and officers, or others acting more independently, can provide the media are press releases, media referrals, and special events.

Press releases. A press release service can be established to issue material to the media, to other professional associations, to state and federal funding agencies, and to legislators—material that is based on behavior-analytic research published in basic, applied, and theoretical journals. Such a service has already been established by AABT, and just recently by other behavior-analytic organizations. In addition to these general releases, a media mailing list or computer-based information service could be developed to keep key members of the media (and others) informed about current concerns and advances in behavior analysis. Those who work for educational and research institutions, and institutions serving the needs of special populations, could also assist in these matters through their public relations offices by, for instance, providing announcements of awards, publications, and grant funding.

APA has been quite active in issuing press releases based on research reported in its 17 primary journals; in addition, APA distributes releases on topics such as changing trends in human behavior and on events of a seasonal or timely nature (e.g., holiday depression). APA has also developed a National Media Mailing List for keeping about 2000 media professionals informed of APA activities. Within APA, some individual divisions have also established procedures for issuing press releases. Division 7 for Developmental Psychology, for instance, has been particularly effective in this regard (McCall, 1984). That Division has issued releases on parental influence on math performance and on the definition of childhood behavior problems, which reportedly reached 23 million homes through distribution to *Family Weekly*,

Woman's Day, *Parents*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Psychology Today* (McCall, 1984) (for examples, see McCall & Murray, 1984; see also COSSA, 1984).

Press release activities could also include the preparation of articles for submission to popular magazines, newspaper supplements, and professional journals on topics to which behavior analysts need to speak. In this regard, the Public Relations Committee of APA Division 14 for the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology has developed a "writer's kit" to assist Division members in developing and selling articles for popular print. The kit includes some introductory material, a list of potential markets, and six articles from *The Writer* and *Writer's Digest* on how to write non-fiction articles.

In addition to standard press releases, a PIO office could develop audio-visual materials for dissemination to the telecommunications media. APA, for instance, has produced a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) entitled "Psychology in Action," which portrays the contributions psychologists make across various fields, such as in counseling, research, education, industry, and geriatrics. Viewers of the PSA may also request and receive an accompanying public information brochure. The ABC television network broadcast the PSA ten times a month between February and August, 1983; in addition, 73 local stations across 40 states have used the PSA, which can be ordered with local association imprints.

Of the behavior-analytic associations, AABT has been the most active in issuing press releases (see Cataldo, 1984), which are coordinated through its Media Watch Subcommittee. This Subcommittee selects topics to be brought to the media's attention by AABT's Public Education Committee, which is then responsible for writing the releases and distributing them to the media through a mailing list developed and maintained by the Association. To assist in these dissemination efforts, AABT has also retained a professional media specialist. The Research Action Committee of the Society for the

Advancement of Behavior Analysis has also been established to obtain results of behavior-analytic research that are particularly beneficial to society. The Public Relations Subcommittee is to see that this information is properly released.

Media referrals. Media referral services can be developed to match inquiries from the news media, journalists, and science writers with experts in behavior analysis who could serve as consultants for background information, participate in radio and television interviews, or otherwise assist in developing a particular topic. Professional contacts are valued by the media for interviews requiring short notice, professional opinion, and verification of facts. Behavior analytic experts could serve either as official spokespeople for an association or simply as resources provided by an association, but not empowered to speak for it. The latter might prove the more reasonable approach both politically and legally; in any event, these experts should not be expected to function as PIO officers. Behavior-analytic experts could be organized into relatively broad categories that reflect the interests of basic and applied researchers, as well as those oriented towards conceptual issues. Or, these experts could be organized more specifically by specialty areas or special interest groups within professional associations.

APA provides an extensive media referral service which enlists over 1200 psychologists who can respond "authoritatively" on a wide variety of topics. APA also backs up these personal contacts with information from the Psych INFO computerized data base, as well as with journal publications, APA convention papers, and press clippings on the topic of interest. The APA PIO office keeps records of these match-ups between the media and psychologists, and of any coverage or products that ensue.

One issue a behavior-analytic media referral service will have to face is the need to emphasize the application of behavior analysis to what are deemed newsworthy topics, for instance, addiction (e.g., Grabowski, Stitzer, & Henningfield, 1984), the elderly (e.g., Pinkston & Linsk,

1984), child safety (e.g., Poche, Brouwer, & Swearingen, 1981), crime and delinquency (e.g., McNees, Egli, Marshall, Schnelle, & Risley, 1976; Van Houten & Nau, 1981), education (e.g., Sulzer-Azaroff, 1985), mental health (e.g., Turner, Calhoun, & Adams, 1981), and toxicology (e.g., Weiss & Laties, 1978). Although a focus on applied topics may strike some behavior analysts as unnecessarily narrow, not many members of the media are interested in basic research or in behavior analysis as a conceptual system. The media and the public are interested in behavior analysis for what it can reveal or offer in a practical, everyday sense. Of course, the public and our professional peers should be educated about the nature of a science of behavior, but applied issues will probably always remain a critical topic for dissemination.

Special events. Special events services could develop various procedures for disseminating important information about behavior analysis, from the sponsoring of behavior science fairs in local schools, to developing exhibits for museums and libraries, to organizing special programs at annual professional conventions.

Conventions, especially, can serve as major news-generating events for the many presentations that are made on current trends and advances in every area of behavior analysis. PIO officers or convention staff could organize press room facilities (e.g., in-person experts, typewriters, telephones, and telecopiers) and prepare press kits which could include background information on the particular behavior-analytic association and the practices of its members. Moreover, arrangements could be made for press conferences and special presentations for the media. The 1984 convention of the Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA), in fact, was concluded with just such a special event—a presentation for the media on the empirical success but legislative failure of the Behavior Analysis Follow Through programs (see Carnine, 1984). As with all attempts at dissemination, though, the effectiveness of such events has to be established in terms of whether that which is disseminated

reaches its intended audience, and then whether dissemination produces any effects, and in what direction.

Other attempts at dissemination through convention activities could focus on media presentations linked to contributions to behavior analysis made by well-known citizens in the host city and members of its local university faculty. Some of these events might be especially apropos for Division 25 to pursue because those activities could be linked with the other media services APA provides for the 300 or more reporters who typically attend the APA convention.

Copies of papers can also be solicited from authors for distribution to reporters before a convention. The availability of these papers is extremely valuable for media coverage, and can provide material for news stories throughout the year. In addition, a "hometown" news service can be developed whereby presenters at the convention could easily notify their local communities about their convention-related professional activities. This service may lead to articles published in a wide variety of sources and may strengthen local support for the field.

A Media Guide

A third approach to proactive dissemination would be for an association to develop a media guide for its PIO officers, media referral experts, and general membership. AABT is the only behavior-analytic association currently in the process of doing so. APA, however, has produced a very thorough guide, and an abbreviated version thereof. The topical contents of the former are presented here to illustrate the many areas that need to be addressed.

APA's guide has two sections. The first contains suggestions on (a) Dealing with Reporters One-to-One (e.g., answering questions, assuring accuracy, being interviewed, and reacting to media reports), (b) Publicity Ideas (e.g., news targets, media experts, media contacts, and public relations), (c) Responding to Reporters (e.g., the importance of responding as a psychologist, assisting the media,

shaping the story, and establishing rapport), (d) Identifying Yourself as a Psychologist (e.g., avoiding vague or misattributed affiliations), (e) the APA Public Information Office (e.g., descriptions of services provided), (f) Television Appearances (e.g., how to look and what to say), (g) Mailing Lists (e.g., size, resources, and maintenance), (h) Radio (what to say and how to say it), (i) Magazines (e.g., public information sources and sources of income), and (j) News Conferences.

The second section of the media guide contains materials on (a) a "grassroots" approach to dissemination, (b) news releases, and (c) news rooms. The materials on the grassroots approach emphasize the need for developing background and information sheets for the media at the local level. Advice is also offered on utilizing local events and speakers, the development of news stories, responding to poor media coverage, assembling media experts, and producing an information pamphlet for the public. The material on news releases is quite useful in its description of how to convey information to the media, with suggestions on how to organize and write up this information and on how to set up a standard news release format. Ten examples of news releases are then provided. The material on news rooms provides detailed descriptions of the purposes of such a facility at local meetings and a countdown checklist of how to plan and organize the facility, from reserving a room, to soliciting papers, to preparing news releases, to ordering ice water and coffee.

This completes the presentation of various procedures and programs for proactive dissemination. Let me turn now to reactive dissemination.

REACTIVE DISSEMINATION

Reactive dissemination has generated more interest than proactive dissemination among behavior analysts, perhaps because the effects of inaccurate public, educational, and professional material are so immediately apparent and aversive. Reactive dissemination might include all

or some components of the procedures and programs for proactive dissemination described above. Indeed, as mentioned previously, both proactive and reactive dissemination should be conducted concurrently, through the same organizational structures, and with the same facilities. So as not to repeat previous material, this section of the paper describes reactive procedures and programs that could be integrated with various components of those already presented. The material in this section is organized along a continuum ranging from formal responses that might be made by professional associations, to informal responses that might be made by individuals. Again, the effectiveness of these programs remains an empirical question.

Formal Responses

At the most formal level, a PIO office could collect reports about behavior analysis and then respond to them. For those reports that were accurate and well-written (e.g., Wilson, 1983), the office could send letters of support and supply additional information to the author and publisher; this is especially important for maintaining good working relationships with the media. For those reports that are inaccurate and pejorative, the office could work in a variety of ways. The office could be empowered to speak for an entire association, or could contact well-known and respected members of the behavior-analytic community (or of its media referral service) and have them respond directly to the publishers and contributing authors. Within AABT, for example, the Media Watch Subcommittee sends published material on behavior therapy to the chair of the Public Education Committee, who looks it over for that which might need an informed response. In other cases, the Public Education Committee offers to provide the media with various information services of the association.

Another means of reactive dissemination, which might arguably also be proactive, would be to offer annual awards for outstanding media contribu-

tions to the understanding of behavior analysis. APA has run a similar program for many years. Five \$1,000 prizes, citations, and all-expense-paid trips to its convention are awarded annually to those who make outstanding media presentations in the following areas: newspaper reporting, television and film, magazine articles, radio programs, and books and monographs. The 1983 magazine award, for instance, and unfortunately, went to a writer for an article entitled, "Teaching the Brain New Tricks" (Welles, 1983). Behavior-analytic associations could give similar awards, and perhaps add a new category for well-written (even accurate) presentations of behavior analysis in psychology textbooks. An association could even go so far as to offer awards for the worst treatments of behavior analysis and perhaps "ceremoniously" present them at annual conventions. In either case, if properly conducted, these awards might engender useful news coverage, and might make textbook authors, their publishers, and members of the media more sensitive to their presentations of behavior analysis.

Prepared Statements

Another general approach for answering inaccurate media representation would be to develop prepared statements. Some misunderstandings about behavior analysis seem to be so common that brief, specially prepared statements could be developed to "set the record straight" (Hineline, personal communication, October 11, 1983). Many statements could deal with a variety of specific misunderstandings, for instance, that behavior analysts routinely modify behavior with shock treatment and drugs, that they typically bribe children with M & M's, and that they routinely torture non-human subjects. Other statements might approach more general problems such as assertions that behavior analysis is dead. "Setting the record straight" could explain why a particular view was wrong, present an accurate view, provide pertinent and useful references, and possibly list the names of behavior-analytic ex-

perts who could respond more fully. These statements could be prepared by a PIO office or by individuals acting on their own, and could be disseminated to the media and among colleagues through newsletters and journals or through informal networks of interested individuals. Another related and less effortful means to this end might be to develop a file of accurate and well-written published articles, the relevant ones of which could simply be sent to uninformed parties upon commission of an error.

Informal Responses

At the very least, individual behavior analysts, or informal groups thereof, could write letters directly to publishers, editors, authors, and journalists to express dissatisfaction with inaccurate or prejudiced coverage of behavior analysis. This could be encouraged in behavior-analytic newsletters by mentioning the need for such efforts and by providing directions on how such a letter might be written (or by providing a sample letter). One outcome of a "Textbook Meeting" held at the 1984 ABA convention for those concerned with presentations of behavior analysis in educational materials was the development of a small, informal letter-writing support group whose members agreed to prepare responses in answer to misrepresentations and inaccuracies about behavior analysis, to distribute these responses for comment among one another, and then to send the responses to those in need of the informed response.

Several related points were also brought up at that meeting. Specifically, behavior analysts might be just as effective in communicating with authors through the latter's publishers as directly. Publishers can take action with respect to authors who err in their professional practices, especially when future editions of a text are planned. Publishers should also be reminded that behavior analysts constitute part of their audience. In addition to writing letters, behavior analysts should also complete the forms sent by publishers that ask for feedback on their texts

and for why texts were adopted or not. A negative response might also be more powerful if the book were returned with the card. Publishers probably receive very few of these feedback forms, hence consistent responding by even a small group of interested behavior analysts might make publishers take notice.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned earlier, the assessment of what problems public information should address, and the content and means of dissemination, deserve careful consideration. Now that some dissemination procedures and programs have been described, two other issues need to be touched on. These are related to how behavior analysts, themselves, may be in part responsible for current inaccuracies and misrepresentations, and how behavior analysts might best work with the media.

Behavior-Analytic Contributions to Misunderstandings

Behavior analysts should not forget to look to themselves as sources of inaccuracy and misunderstanding. The behavior of "understanding behavior analysis" is a function of the interaction between behavior analysts who disseminate behavior-analytic material and those who consume that material. Thus, some of the current misunderstandings of behavior analysis may stem from the insensitivity of behavior analysts to the prevailing values and concerns (read: reinforcers) of the culture, as well as from speaking in different tongues. For instance, the misunderstanding of behavior analysis as environmentalistic, mechanistic, and solely methodological may stem not only from contra-prepared consumers, but also from inadequate attempts to educate students and to disseminate a very complex subject matter to a wide variety of people (see Michael, 1980, pp. 11, 16-17).

With respect to education, students should not merely be required to understand and apply the methodology of the

science of behavior, but should also be required to have a thorough grounding in its metatheoretical assumptions (cf. Kantor, 1959; Skinner, 1974), in its basic principles (cf. Catania, 1984), and in its conceptual approach to the interpretation of complex cases and the experimental analysis thereof (e.g., Skinner, 1948, 1953, 1957). Cogniphilia creeps in where behavior analysis fears to tread.

With respect to the dissemination of behavior analysis to larger and more general audiences, presentations must unfortunately be constrained, which sometimes alters language use and overlooks the extensiveness and complexity of the subject matter, and hence which may mislead sometimes more than inform. Omission for purposes of simplification, however, is no justification for sins of commission, which are all too common anyway (see Hayes, 1984b). Behavior analysts should also be sensitive to material that is needlessly inflammatory. For instance, McConnell's (1970) *Psychology Today* article, entitled "Criminals Can Be Brainwashed—Now," argued for the use of behavior modification with criminals, but could not have done other than mislead the public through its content, style, and tone. Unfortunately, retractions and clarifications of such material do not make as interesting news, and hence are often published in professional outlets that are less likely to contact public opinion (e.g., Cooke & Cooke, 1974; McConnell, 1974).

In summary, the mere release of accurate press release material may be insufficient to counteract current misunderstandings if behavior analysts also produce material that is insensitive to the prevailing contingencies of the culture, that ignores the contra-preparedness of many of the culture's members to understand behavior analysis, and that is, in addition, misleading.

Relations with the Media

A second important consideration is that behavior analysts should be sensitive to the needs of and pressures placed on the media. Although members of the

media may sensationalize or misconstrue essential aspects of a piece of research, their behavior is a function of the same principles as that of anyone else, a fact behavior analysts should not overlook when contemplating harsh reactive treatment for those who offend them. Behavior analysts should seek to understand the variables that shape and maintain the behavior of the media. Moreover, they should not suffer in relative silence or be noncooperative, neither of which is effective (Rubin, 1980)—the behavior of the media is already controlled by multiple sources. The media will present its views on behavior-analytic research, application, and theory with or without the cooperation of behavior analysts, hence behavior analysts can only assist their science by extending a cooperative hand (but see Risley, 1977).

For the most part, sensationalism and inaccuracy do not characterize well-respected members of the media. By developing press conferences and disseminating press releases to media representatives who are professional and sophisticated, behavior analysts can enter into a system of mutual cooperation with respect to the presentation of their views. The media is in need of education about behavior analysis, and behavior analysts about the media. Such education is best achieved through positive interaction, one means of which might be to include members of the media on media advisory boards and public relations committees. Moreover, doctoral programs in behavior analysis might consider offering courses on, or specialty training in, the media, its structure and function, and its relationship to behavior analysis and the other sciences. Science writers of a behavior-analytic persuasion are sadly lacking.

FINAL COMMENTS

As described in the introduction of this paper, the conduct of science in these times, and probably henceforth, is not independent of public and political support. Moreover, those who support behavior analysis with taxes and votes have

a right to the dissemination of the scientific and technological information and materials that are produced (cf. Miller, 1979). The argument for dissemination is not an issue of mere "public relations" in any pejorative sense, but an argument about what is important for the continued growth of a natural science of behavior and ultimately for the continued evolution of the culture and the world in which the culture exists. Let me elaborate briefly.

At one time, a culture's adoption of a scientific system may have depended in large part on the benefits of the technology derived therefrom. For instance, western cultures did not suddenly adopt new world views simply because of Galileo's and Newton's radical reconceptualizations of the universe. Rather, the pragmatic effects on commerce and shipping, and on the control of the physical world afforded by technologies attendant to those reconceptualizations, probably produced powerful contingencies to shape and change traditional world views. The same argument may be made for the move from vitalism to mechanism and from creationism to evolutionism in biology and medicine. The attendant technologies were probably more powerful than any philosophical debates in shaping the views of most people (but see Skinner, 1978, for an example of a contra-prepared culture).

Although a similar argument can be made that behavior analysis will come to be accepted through the applied behavior analysis that it produces, the analogy may not hold. Cultural views about the nature of behavior may be more inhibiting than cultural views about the rest of the physical universe. Moreover, times have changed. Public information is now more readily and freely available, as it should be, and education is broad and compulsory. As a consequence, inaccuracies, misunderstandings, and prejudiced treatments of behavior analysis can be easily maintained and promoted, and are difficult to counteract solely with the benefits of applied behavior analysis—said benefits not always being seen as such anyway. Thus, the improper treatment of

behavior analysis not only needs to be counteracted through an effective technology, but also with the dissemination of explicit, accurate, and unbiased information to the public, to authors of educational materials, to professional peers, and to government officials.

The dissemination of such information constitutes an important new undertaking for the field of behavior analysis. Indeed, the political and financial exigencies of the 1980's, and beyond, almost demand that a more active and systematic stance be taken. If a scientific community does not arrange for contingencies that assure its survival, then so much the worse for that community, and for the rest of the culture at large.

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