*EFFECT OF THE MANUSCRIPT TASK ANALYSIS ON
EVALUATING APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS
RESEARCH: A TECHNICAL REPORT¹*

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The effects of using the Manuscript Task Analysis, a 207-item checklist for assessing the content, methodology, and style of applied research articles, were evaluated using a multiple-baseline design. Sixteen guest reviewers, each of whom evaluated three anonymous manuscripts submitted to the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, were randomly assigned to three groups. In a multiple-baseline across-subjects design, subject-reviewers in all three groups reviewed one article without the Manuscript Task Analysis during the first phase. In the second phase, subjects in Group I reviewed a second article using the Manuscript Task Analysis; subjects in Groups II and III reviewed again without the instrument. In the third phase, subjects in Groups I and II reviewed with the Manuscript Task Analysis; subjects in Group III completed their third reviews as usual. The order in which the subjects received the manuscripts was counterbalanced within and across groups. The effects of the Manuscript Task Analysis were assessed by collecting the self-report data from subject-reviewers and comparing the quality of reviews written without the task analysis with those written when the instrument was available. Self-report data included an evaluation of the completeness, clarity, helpfulness, conciseness, and practicality of the instrument, as well as the time and effort involved in its use. The quality of the reviews was assessed in terms of the number of critical issues mentioned in each review. In addition, authorities in applied behavior analysis rated the quality of each review along seven critical dimensions. Subject-reviewers reported that the Manuscript Task Analysis clearly would be of valuable assistance as an adjunct to the reviewing process, as well as useful in the preparation of manuscripts and supervision of students. The effect of the instrument on the quality of the reviews was generally positively correlated with improvement in reviews. However, the relation did not hold in all cases. Several methodological ambiguities—subject characteristics, type of manuscript, order in which the manuscripts were received—may have contributed to the lack of complete generality. Future research may address itself to the utility of the instrument in training researchers in applied behavior analysis.

DESCRIPTORS: experimental design, training writing skills, applied behavior analysis research, report writing, task analysis, evaluation

Received 8 August 1977.

(Final Acceptance 17 April 1978.)

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