EDITORIAL

Incoming editors are granted the privilege of a public statement about forthcoming plans and policy. Perhaps previous JEAB editors have not taken advantage of this opportunity because publication policy has been relatively stable since the Journal's inception. To borrow from the masthead, the Journal always has been "primarily for the original publication of experiments relevant to the behavior of individual organisms". This policy will be maintained with unabated enthusiasm and conviction. When translated into action, it has no implications for acceptable subject matter, but it does express an unambiguous methodological commitment. Although the basic position is straightforward, questions directed my way since the announcement of my election as Editor suggest that the specifics of the policy may not be entirely self-evident. So, both content and methodology warrant more detailed discussion.

What subject matter belongs in JEAB? An overview of contemporary experimental psychology indicates that previously sharp distinctions between traditions and approaches have become blurred. Where JEAB was founded to provide an outlet for research and theory that was not readily published elsewhere, work stemming from this same tradition now regularly appears in a number of major journals. No longer is it the case that "operant conditioning" connotes material necessarily destined for JEAB, nor does it even adequately describe the contents of JEAB itself. The Journal deals with the experimental analysis of individual behavior and not with a particular type of experimentation or subject matter. Actually, the Journal never legislated a particular theoretical or metatheoretical stance; it perhaps is the case, however, that the heterogeneity is more obvious than it might have been in the past. In my view, breadth is beneficial to the Journal and to experimental psychology as a whole, so I will do what I can to further JEAB as a forum representing both the mainstream and the frontier of psychological research and theory.

Content refers to type of articles as well as to their subject matter. Although the publication of experimental reports is the primary function of the Journal, JEAB will continue

to welcome theoretical papers and review articles. Such papers should have specific relevance to ongoing work: JEAB is not the appropriate forum for the discussion of more general philosophical issues. Book reviews will continue to be invited, and suggestions about appropriate books (and reviewers) are welcome. One shift in content over the years has involved technical notes. With the advent of a journal devoted entirely to instrumentation, JEAB has become less open to the publication of apparatus notes, unless they also contain substantive behavioral data. This policy continues.

The methodological criteria stem directly from JEAB's total commitment to individual behavior. The basic rule of thumb is simple: each experimental report must provide data for individual subjects, and conclusions must stem from these data. If the paper is to be acceptable for publication, individual data must appear. Even if certain problems and experimental designs seem to dictate inferential statistics, the reader must be able to discern the behavior of individual subjects and to see the regularities at that level.

We all know that the grouping of the data of different individuals can yield a measure of central tendency that does not correspond with the behavior of the individuals. What may be less widely recognized is that grouping of data for a single subject can also obscure the characteristic behavior of that individual. Just as the mean for a group composed of widely differing individuals may not be representative of any group member, data averaged or cumulated over one or more sessions may not represent the details of the performance. Particular problems or trends in theory may dictate an interest in behavior integrated over long time periods, thereby making it appropriate to report average response rates, responses summed over one or more sessions, or some other summary measure. In a particular experiment, such measures may provide a proper level of analysis. Yet the reader is left uncertain about the details of the performances that make up the overall measure.

The information provided by a concise summary is inseparable from the question of variability, whether the summary involves the

same or different subjects. If performance is not variable within or between subjects, a statistic describing central tendency is adequate, but less uniform performance means that central tendency is an insufficient description. In short, measures of central tendency in individual subjects, as with groups, *must* be supplemented by a description of variability or stability.

These considerations are not intended to legislate the amount of behavior entering into theoretical analyses. Authors may consider data at whatever level appears orderly while, at the same time, they allow the reader to appreciate how a summary was achieved.

Having said all of this, it may seem strange for me to close with the assertion that publication policy represents a relatively minor feature of the overall picture. Any journal depends far more heavily on its contributors than it does on its editors. My recently discovered interest in the writings of incoming editors led to a literature search encompassing a number of different journals. The review dis-

closed an observation made with such frequency as to approximate a law of editorial perception, and my own view provides another replication. Editors do not determine the type or quality of research, at least to any very meaningful extent. The material published can only reflect the best of ongoing research and theory. A journal puts on public display the standards of the researchers who submit papers and who, in turn, referee the submissions of others. No editor controls what papers are submitted; ultimately, all that those involved in the editorial process can do is screen manuscripts to make available the work considered best by experts in the field. It is my hope that the work published in JEAB over the next three years is interesting and exciting, and may even represent major breakthroughs in our understanding of behavior. Whether that hope will be fulfilled rests with you.

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