IN RESPONSE

CONCERNING MICHAEL'S CONCERNS

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I disagree with Michael (1980) about a few crucial points in his "Flight from Behavior Analysis," though I think most of the details of his argument are right on the mark. On the one hand, he considers it to be good news that our field has grown so rapidly, both in terms of participants and areas of application. I agree. On the other hand, he bemoans the "fact" that the majority of our current participants are not the rigorous behaviorists of yesteryears. I do not. Instead I consider this "bad news" to be a normal and healthy outcome of Michael's good news.

As our technology becomes more and more diffused throughout the culture, the number of only moderately trained behavior analysts who use it should increase at a more rapid rate than the number of highly trained scientists and theoreticians who develop it. Every practitioner who sets up a token economy in a center for the developmentally disabled should not have to be a hot-shot theoretical analyst, anymore than everyone who drives a car should have to be an automotive engineer. Our technology must be sufficiently robust that it will be effective in the hands of the sort of people who are working in the field; it must not be so fragile that it can survive only in the rarefied atmosphere of the university, with three or four doctoral candidates checking it out every day.

And in the academic area, as more and more people publish in *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior* (JEAB), there will undoubtedly be more and more slippage from the straight and narrow, with mentalism, math models, and

statistics raising their non-orthodox heads. But the first few issues of *JEAB* were pretty small compared to what comes out nowadays, so I am not convinced that the absolute number of hard-core behavior-analytic papers has decreased.

The same thing applies to paper presentations. We had over 300 presentations last year at the Association for Behavior Analysis alone; and I think there was an impressive hard core of hard-core behaviorism there, not to mention Division 25 of the American Psychological Association and Eastern Psychological Association and maybe even the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy.

Besides, I do not think we would dare to dig too deeply into the core of hard-core behaviorism of the 50's and 60's because we were looking at it with much less jaundiced eyes at the time. Scratch many of those old-line behavior analysts and you will find methodological behaviorists at best, not the radical behaviorists Michael advocates today. Furthermore, a large number of the old-timers did talk about fixed-interval scallops in procrastination and fixed-interval pay schedules in the work place. And they almost all talked as if delayed outcomes could be effective behavioral consequences. In addition, none of them had even heard of rule-governed behavior.

Concerning the quality of graduates today versus the good old days, I was at Columbia University around the era that Michael recalls so fondly; and I am not that impressed. First of all, the number of behavior analysts Columbia produced was not great. Second, the number who stayed in the field was considerably less. And third, I am much more impressed

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with the caliber of the behavior analysts coming out of programs like Western Michigan University's now, than came out of Columbia then, in spite of the fact that most of our students do not enter our program with the well-developed, east coast, preparatory school, high Graduate Record Examination repertoire that Columbia could command.

I think there are two factors that allow us to do a better job:

1. The field of behavior analysis is much more advanced now than it was then, so that we have much more to teach.

2. Because of some of these advances in behavior analysis, our instructional technology is much more effective than anything they ever dreamed of in the good old days.

Michael describes a doctoral program with more or less equal emphasis on the experimental, applied, and theoretical analysis of behavior with lip service paid to non-behavioral topics he facetiously considers "essential" for success in applied behavior analysis, topics like systems analysis, grant writing, and staff training. I agree with him that such a program would be an excellent one for the training of academic behavior analysts; the people who should most advance our field. And I think that is very important, and I support it. But I would not be too inclined to hire one of its graduates to run

a human service setting, because I think Michael is just engaging in magic thinking when he argues that all of those essential topics can be so conveniently boiled down into a few instantaneous programs, thus leaving more time for the topics in which he is really interested. I think those "essential" topics are essential. And I think they are hard to teach. And I think we need to spend more time on them, not less. But I also think we should have the small, elite program that Michael advocates as well.

In summary:

1. I do not think the good old days were. Instead I think Michael is projecting his own highly skilled repertoire on his colleagues of that era.

2. I do not think the current generation has gone to the dogs. Instead I think Michael is being unduly influenced by the fact that he is making contact with many behavior modifiers who are not among the *avant-garde* of our field.

3. I do not think Michael's rigorous doctoral program will cure our non-ills, rewarding though it may be to cast our students in our own image. Instead I think Michael's doctoral program would be a very valuable option.

REFERENCE

- Michael, J. L. Flight from behavior analysis. *The Behavior Analyst*, 1980, 3, 1-21.