In Response

The Cultural Mission of Behaviorology

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Organized scientific disciplines generate verbal behavior about science, but although organized in behalf of science, they are essentially social and political rather than scientific operations. Professor Staats (1986) misconstrues the fundamental nature of organizational disciplines in criticizing Fraley and Vargas (1986) for wanting to solve "... through organization . . . what is really a scientific problem, that is, a problem of advancing behaviorism methodologically, conceptually, and empirically to meet the challenge" (p. 236). Organized disciplines, including organized psychology, are networks of political, economic, and social contingencies controlling the professional lives of member practitioners. Jonathan Turner (1985) took authors of books about sociology as a discipline to task:

... for ignoring the fact that academic scholarship is also a political process . . . Such processes need not be conspicuously implemented or particularly Machiavellian, but to ignore them is to miss much of what makes science a sociologically interesting phenomenon. (p.151)

Those seeking to bring change to their disciplines with more powerful scientific and philosophical ideas often gain quick introductions to that political aspect because they are not left alone to practice and teach by those who suffer in the inevitable invidious comparisons.

Traditional psychologists, operating from a basis of cognitive assumptions, have verbal repertoires so different from contemporary behaviorologists that generalization to a behavioral context is difficult. Extensive study of the new science is required, and, as characteristic of any

major professional change, setbacks in economic and professional status are common. Recently, during the last of several departmental meetings to delineate requirements for a doctoral program, a cognitive colleague addressed his own resistance to program arrangements that would render his students behavioral enough to require of him a significant degree of familiarity with the scientific and philosophical repertoires of behaviorology. He simply said, "Look, I don't know that stuff, I'm not comfortable working with it. We're all going to teach what we know, and we're going to direct our students in activities that reflect what we know." Reliance upon the powerful contingencies of an established, organized discipline to maintain the comfortable and familiar science of one's profession is easier and less threatening than the risky prospect of undertaking a fundamental and extensive change of repertoire. Not surprisingly, the quoted colleague and his faction turned away from a proposed scientific resolution to one resolved by political and organizational means.

Because unification within psychology, or any other discipline, is seldom resisted on *purely* scientific and philosophical grounds, a change strategy relying upon demonstrating a superior science within a discipline is not promising. Conservatives easily defend their profession against change when the battle is waged only in terms of demonstrably better science. The goal is not merely to upgrade the scientific beliefs of individuals, but as importantly, it is to change the complex group arrangements by which practitioners countercontrol the contingencies of professional accountability to which they would otherwise be subjected. The group-arranged contingencies of organized disciplines interweave into a low-cost blan-

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ket insurance against the erosion of power that might otherwise be the legacy of uncompetitive scientific products in an open cultural marketplace (see Skinner's 1953 chapter on "Group Control"). Interventions designed to overcome such protectionism must function in the same milieu of contingencies that endow the true nature of protectionism—politics, economics, and social relations. In gaining control of the political infrastructure of an organized profession, skills apart from those of science predominate. Those whose preparedness pertains to scientific skills often find themselves ill-equipped for the kinds of interventions necessary to affect internal change of their discipline, and taking up such political challenges can divert practitioners from the contingencies of their science.

Professor Staats would adopt a strategy of intrinsic change featuring a protracted unification campaign. Such a proposal raises issues of resource economy and feasibility. A cognitive psychologist, or mentalist, must be completely reeducated to become an effective scientist, and the task exceeds the capacity for behavioral control generally available to behavioristic colleagues. Many of the contingencies necessary to such reeducation are more political and economic in nature than scientific, and cannot ordinarily be arranged by peers. The result at best is likely to be some sort of stalemate. During the course of such a protracted unification campaign, future behaviorists would receive training degraded as a result of compromises with cognitivists and would thus be less competent as scientists than the behaviorological mentors whom they would eventually have to replace.

Of greater importance than the unification of science within psychology is the goal of finding solutions to the broad spectrum of behavioral problems existing in *all* facets of our culture. The fact that most psychologists exhibit a weak science and an even weaker philosophy, a point with which Staats apparently agrees as evidenced by his advocacy of paradigmatic behaviorism to challenge the extreme cognitivism of psychologists, is not the most urgent problem confronting the discipline of behaviorology.

The mission of behaviorology is to bring an effective science of behavior to the culture at large—to its multitude of agencies and applied behavioral fields—and that must be accomplished in the most expeditious way consistent with conserving the limited human resources of our behavioristic community. This requires the political step of separating ourselves from the mass of psychologists. The diversion of our limited resources to remaking psychology instead of organizing to bring useful foundations to the rest of our culture would be an error in setting priorities. The slow debilitating struggle necessary to transform mentalistic psychologists into behavioristic psychologists would concentrate our efforts in only one of the many areas where proper training is needed, unfortunately the area of greatest self-protecting resistance, thereby leaving us unable to provide training for practitioners in all other fields. Furthermore, a successfully retrained cognitivist is only prepared to do what a behaviorist can do. New behaviorists are more economically produced from unbiased, nonresisting human resources.

The entire culture is in jeopardy of collapse for lack of adequate scientific foundations relevant to human behavior. During the past 75 years, every applied behavioral field in our culture has searched in the discipline of psychology for technical foundations upon which to build its technology. The failure of psychology to provide such foundations is nearly universal, and ironically has occurred on a scale too vast to be easily noticed. The repudiation of psychology by the applied behavioral disciplines is nearly complete. Except in those few career options controlled by organized psychology, students entering applied behavioral disciplines face no formal requirements for the study of psychology. Educators in the fields of public administration, occupational health and safety engineering, social work, English, law, journalism, industrial and labor relations, nursing, behavioral geography, management, pharmacy, women's studies, parks and recreation management, and sociology, just to name a few found

at our own institution, neither risk their own credibility nor waste the time of their students by insisting that psychology be studied as a worthwhile foundation. Although the practitioners in these fields cannot afford to operate in ignorance of human behavior and how it functions in relation to the controlling environment, they have long ago abandoned any technical dependency on the science of psychology, merely giving lip service to its efficacy when it seems fashionable. In the field of education, which made the early mistake of formalizing its allegiance to traditional psychology, three things have happened: (1) traditional mentalistic psychology has failed to provide a foundation upon which educators can build effective technologies of teaching and administering; (2) faculties of the various educational specializations have tended to follow the lead of those in other fields by eliminating or minimizing formal, educational psychology requirements, even when provided within their own academic units; and (3) the general public has become so aware that traditionally trained educators cannot produce acceptable products that many state legislatures have begun efforts to credential teachers on the basis of subject matter expertise alone.

The probing of traditional psychology by practitioners in dozens of applied fields is essentially finished. Those fields now drift in scientific limbo, while the behavioral problems that they were supposed to solve become increasingly complex and threatening to the social fabric. They cannot wait until something useful is made of psychology, nor is that necessary. They require behaviorology—a science and philosophy that is available now—and the only reason that they do not enjoy immediate access to it is that political contingencies, not scientific ones, are blocking the way.

One rationale given for the unification of behaviorology and cognitive psychology is that cognitive psychologists have looked more closely at certain phenomena than behaviorologists, and that, for those phenomena, cognitive methods of investigation are superior. The effective contributions produced by cognitive people have occurred, however, as a re-

sult of their responding under the same natural contingencies that similarly affect behaviorologists or any other ideological type. Any scholar who spends long periods of time in direct contact with some phenomena of concern can be expected to make effective responses to it. That occurs more in spite of any acquired cognitive verbal repertoire than because of it, but such effective responding is not the variable in scientific operations that defines or measures the quality of any science concurrently being practiced.

The different basic assumptions between behaviorism and cognitivism give rise to different kinds of questions, but weak science will often lead to questions that are ill-framed, or lacking in significance or priority. The general merit of cognitively-inspired questions is overrated, but, insofar as novel stimuli evoke novel responses occasionally consisting of interesting questions, behaviorologists can pursue those questions in their usual effective way without retaining a disciplinary union with cognitivists.

Finally, our position on the need for a separate organized discipline should not be equated with Epstein's (1984) position. Epstein, although proposing a new name, maintains a strong unification position based largely on accepting and tolerating philosophical diversity. In contrast, we have reviewed and analyzed the prevailing contingencies in psychology and the scope of the cultural problems to be solved, and have concluded that "unification," implying compromises in science, philosophy, advocacy, and opportunity, detract prohibitively from promoting effective behavioral science as a viable foundation for cultural change.

Few behaviorists exist—the results of various shaping accidents. Adequate academic organizational arrangements do not exist to replace these behaviorists, yet theirs is the only discipline that can bring effective behavioral science to the culture. Each behaviorist represents a limited professional resource, and each has but one professional life commitment to make. Psychology was a revolution based on experimental methodology; behaviorology is one based on a science of philosophy. Today's behaviorologists have

more valuable contributions to make to the culture than rehabilitating psychology. The early psychologists did not waste their time trying to reform the discipline of philosophy from which they emerged. Behaviorists should now move forward, similarly unburdened, toward the fulfillment of their own cultural destiny and adapt an effective behavioral science to the varied institutions and agencies of our culture.

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