In Response

“Separate Disciplines” Is Another Name for Survival

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One of the vital functions this journal performs, and the prime function for which it was designed, is to discuss and disseminate matters of professional import to all members of the Association. As the Instructions for Contributors state, “Articles on the past, present, and future of behavior analysis, *as well as its relationships to other fields* [italics mine], are particularly appropriate for the journal.” I construe that psychology is another field. Apparently, so do other readers and editors since we are not writing and reading about the past, present, and future of psychology.

The question immediately arises, what is this field whose past, present, and future we write and read about, and at Association meetings, talk about? We apparently know. We have an Association that promotes it, a Society that supports it, and a Journal—with two others asking formal recognition—that communicates its members’ concerns and findings. We also apparently seem to be interested in letting the public know about us. Hank Pennypacker encourages presenters of papers at our national convention to write précis of their papers for reporters, and Ed Morris initiates a Book Notes section in this journal to include books whose worthiness lies in better educating the public about, as he puts it, “our science.” No shrinking violets here. And to prove how up-front we are with all this activity, we even have a name for it, “behavior analysis,” and since we engage in the analysis of behavior, call ourselves, “behavior analysts.”

That field of inquiry does not concern minds or cognitions. It is not psychology.

We do not call our activity, “psychological analysis,” nor ourselves “psychological analysts.” The focus of our concerns is behavior. We attempt to define it, especially its constituent unity. We arrange to study it, and do so in a variety of settings and with a variety of species. We manipulate it, for experimental, commercial, practical, and humane purposes. We interpret it, doing with a philosophical and conceptual analysis what yet we cannot do with an experimental one, noting what answers our experimental results imply for questions in other fields of inquiry ranging from axiology to zoology. So our name, for our field and our science, with its emphasis on behavior, clearly represents us.

But many think our current name (“behavior analysis”) to be a stop-gap measure. Naming ourselves is a side issue, though not a trivial one. Note the fuss over the proposed names, and how keen we have been to distinguish ourselves from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other cognitive, behavioral, and social sciences by labeling ourselves differently. Larry Fraley and I and others before us, such as the Los Horcones community, suggest the name “behaviorology,” not because it is elegant but because it is the most accurately descriptive. No one calls “physics,” “natural philosophy” anymore. The Los Horcones group lists good reasons why they have used the name “behaviorology” since 1974 (Comunidad Los Horcones, 1986). A science that engages in all the activities enumerated above must represent itself with a more inclusive title than the one we currently use. We do more with behavior than just “analysis,” a point that Barry (1986) also emphasizes.

We have a field of inquiry but no professional discipline. I underline that

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sentence to focus the reader on the issue at hand, the necessity to organize as a separate discipline to keep our field of inquiry alive. But that first sentence somewhat misleads the reader. A more accurate statement would be that we have a quasi-discipline. We are a little bit pregnant, with some not sure whether to abort the entire endeavor, with others sure of a right to our own body of knowledge and the right to the independent life of a discipline that knowledge implies. The metaphor, as metaphors do, allows a short-cut in discussing a complex state of affairs. And that is, if our field of inquiry is to flourish and grow, we should finish the job of professionalizing ourselves.

The Association is engaged in a variety of activities to credential "behavior analysts." Apparently a collection of skills distinguishable from that of any other professional distinguishes the "behavior analyst." How are these skills obtained? Quite differently at the very beginnings of a discipline than at its later stages. Once a defined body of knowledge is established, it can be taught. This calls for teaching facilities, not one-day workshops on the mysteries of verbal behavior or the practicalities of toilet training. Everyone seems agreed on the rigorosity of training required, since fellow professionals in our field are quite haughty about what others know, ranking them by what they say in print and do in practice. Workshops have their place, but I doubt if anyone would agree that a one-day workshop on experimental technique would qualify one to serve as editor on the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*. But teaching facilities are missing. Currently, we piggyback our efforts within other departments, primarily those of psychology, and our current welfare status in psychology departments has ensued for the obvious reasons—all related to the fact that that field was our origin, just as philosophy was the origin of psychology. But it makes about as much professional sense to stay within departments of psychology as it does for psychology to stay within philosophy, computer science within departments of mathematics, business administration

within departments of economics, and so on. Actually less sense, for erstwhile colleagues in these other areas view their competitors with careful neglect or benign contempt, but the majority of professionals, mostly psychologists, in those departments in which our programs must thrive in order to be effective, view behaviorism, much less any disciplinary expression such as "behavior analysis" or "behaviorology," with outright hostility. There is the same enthusiasm to produce a behaviorist as there would be in a fundamentalist seminary to produce an evolutionist or in most sociology and biology departments to produce a sociobiologist. The effect is beginning to tell in the number of our membership (Graf, 1985). To work inside another professional discipline is to travel down a dead-end street. The statistics confirm the prognosis, and so do our own experiences, such as the recent report on the rise and fall of behavior analysis in the department of psychology at Columbia (Keller, 1986).

But a number of psychologists hold out the hope, and make the argument, that we can change the discipline of psychology from the inside. Skinner claimed that as his ambition fifty years ago. Staats suggests the same path—the safe and sane path, I gather, not the steep and thorny way. If we could ignore the sociological considerations relevant in development and governance of professional disciplines, the unity theme would be plausible if there were agreement in subject matter. (But again consider, how various religious institutions, whose subject matter is God, treat each other.) But obviously one set of professionals studies cognitions and the mind, and the other set, behavior, and those who know enough to come in from out of the rain know it is best to seek resources for the development of one's own field of inquiry. If we behaviorists tell each other horror stories and tales of sad demise, it is because the other party acts rationally. As long as we operate within another intellectual heritage, one dating back to the good old Greeks, and operate within a professional discipline based on that heritage, we will

be given the time of day only at that other professional's sufferance. Of the hundreds of psychology departments, how many of us are chairpersons? When was the last time one of us was elected to president of the American Psychological Association? (Does anyone think that is going to happen within her or his lifetime?) How many of us represent behavioral science on the editorial boards of prestigious scientific publications such as *Science*? How many of us head government committees responsible for dispensing large amounts of money? How many of us sit in important advisory positions to important philanthropic foundations, much less have become president of one (as John Gardner did)? How many of us have received a MacArthur award? And so on. As women, and blacks, browns, and yellows in American society know, such outcomes depend on a network of associations, as well as on individual merit. If we do not have a recognized discipline to protect, promote, and reward the pursuit of our own scientific and intellectual heritage, then as individuals we rarely will get very far up any path. Which means that, collectively, there is a short leash to how far we as a group can go.

Staats (1986) implies that the fault is ours. He charges that we have an inadequate methodology, "atavistic" he calls it, and that we dismiss problems of relevance to others. Staats may have a case, but in his judicial court he seems to blame the victim. Since the problems we consider range from consciousness to consideration, and the methodologies we use support a variety of extensive and successful research endeavors, specificity of the charges would be necessary before we could argue over their validity. He blames our disunity on bad intellectual seed, the philosophy of logical positivism and operationism that dominated the second generation of behaviorists. A charge that in the case of radical behaviorism is inaccurate; Skinner specifically rejected logical positivism (Skinner, 1961, 1979,

1983; Smith, 1986). Staats argues that paradigmatic behaviorism is the answer to our difficulties, and will unify psychologists and behaviorists under a common philosophical umbrella so that behaviorism can flourish in psychology, and psychology can actually become a behavioral science. It may be. We can only wait and see whether as an influence on psychology, Dr. Staats's behaviorism will be received in the future with as much enthusiasm as it has been in the past.

In the essentials, Barry and Staats and I agree. We agree on the importance of a *science of behavior*. We disagree on the program to maintain and augment it. How to "go forward," as Staats urges, is the important point. Whether such a science will be guided, in large part, by a radical behaviorist, interbehaviorist, or paradigmatic behaviorist perspective, is not the immediate issue. But that debate can only have serious outcomes within a standing discipline. Without our own professional infrastructure to sustain our efforts and to increase our numbers, it is hard to see a future other than fewer of us speaking in increasingly shriller or softer tones.

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