ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Stop Preaching to the Choir, Publish Outside the Box: A Discussion

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Abstract In this article, I comment on Normand's, Vyse's, Friman's, Schlinger's, and Reed's articles on publishing books, journal articles, letters to the editor, and columns outside of behavior analysis, that is, "outside the box," as well as communicating with editors, authors, and journalists. Among the topics I address are the prerequisite repertoires and these authors' guidance (e.g., task analyses), as well as technical terms and language and the many opportunities available to us, yet also caveats about how, whether, and when we should publish outside the box. In the process, I include lessons I have learned from submitting my own manuscripts outside the box and suggestions I have gleaned from my failures and successes. In conclusion, if the field values publishing outside the box, then, it should analyze the necessary repertoires and provide systematic instruction in them.

Keywords Dissemination · Books · Journals · Repertoires

The foregoing articles by Matt Normand (2014), Stuart Vyse (2014), Pat Friman (2014), Hank Schlinger (2014), and Derek Reed (2014) reflect, in sequence and some revision, the presentations they made on the panel discussion—"Stop Preaching to the Choir, Publish Outside

the Box"—conducted at 2014 meeting of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) in Minneapolis, MN. The panel's genesis was an online discussion on the topic I had with some members of the Dissemination of Behavior Analysis and Teaching of Behavior Analysis ListSrvs the preceding fall. I attended the ABAI panel discussion but did not participate in it and am honored that my colleagues invited me, after the fact, to offer some comments. I so admire their many and varied outside-the-box publications and their thoughtful reflections on the pros and cons of publishing them. I have published far less than they have outside the box and been far less reflective, so I learned a lot from them. I am also motivated by them and their passion for making a difference in the field, the discipline, and profession of behavior analysis. In my comments to follow, I address their contributions, offer additional examples, and highlight some points based on my experiences.

Opening Skinner's Box: An Introduction

Matt Normand's (2014) introduction established the right intellectual, scholarly, and professional context for the articles that followed. He addressed the selection by consequences—individual and cultural—of publishing outside the box before the box existed and afterward. The years preceding its existence were between 1930 (e.g., Skinner 1930) and 1958, when the *Journal for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* (JEAB) began publication; between 1936 (e.g., Skinner 1936) and 1968,

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when the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis (JABA)* began publication; and between 1931 (e.g., Skinner 1931) and 1973, when *Behaviorism* (now *Behavior and Philosophy*) began publication. Publishing outside our journals in competition with nonbehavior analytic colleagues sharpened our collective intellectual acumen, scholarly repertoires, and professional style. Moreover, our publications could not be overlooked: We published in mainstream psychological and science journals.

After 1958, our publications *could* be overlooked because we began publishing increasingly in the journals noted above and a myriad of others (e.g., *The Behavior Analyst*, est. 1978). Our submissions now received better-informed editorial critiques, which also sharpened our intellectual acumen, scholarly repertoires, and professional style but not necessarily the same ones. The ones they sharpened competed, in part, with those for publishing outside the box (e.g., in *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Learning and Cognition*; *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*; *Psychological Review*). Thus, prior to 1958–1973, the pioneering behavior analysts had repertoires for publishing both outside and inside the box, while those new to the discipline afterward may have increasingly but one repertoire—one for publishing inside the box. Moreover, even when publishing outside the box today, our articles can be overlooked. For instance, the 25 behavior analytic articles published in the 1992 volume of *American Psychologist* can be overlooked because 24 of them were published in one issue—the November issue in honor of B. F. Skinner—not across the year's other 11 issues.

Normand's article nicely sets up the other four, which provide recommendations, suggestions, and examples for acquiring or engaging repertoires for publishing outside the box and which point out opportunities to practice and be successful, both as individuals and as a cultural practice, in order to increase our recognition, influence, and impact.

Popular Press Books: Exemplars, Practices, and Successes

In "Publishing Outside the Box: Popular Press Books," Vyse (2014) offers guidance for writing books about or informed by behavior analysis (e.g., financial management, superstition; see, e.g., Vyse 2008, 2013) or on behavior analytic topics (e.g., applied behavior analysis;

see Hilts 1974; Maurice 1994). This includes getting an idea and a contract, retaining an agent (or not), and the nature of publishing houses and their services. However, because few behavior analysts publish popular books, Vyse's suggestions are both distant *and* near.

Distant and Near

His suggestions are distant in that our repertoires are more naturally attuned to the contingencies and exigencies of journal publication, not popular press publication and, even less, publishing books. Publishing books is a far reach for most of us. His suggestions are near, though, in that many of us read popular press books on history, science, technology, philosophy, and human behavior—and wish that behavior analysis was among them. These may include, for example, Bill Bryson's (2003) *A Short History of Nearly Everything*; Jared Diamond's (1997) *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*; Stephen Greenblatt's (2011) *Swerve: How the World Became Modern*; Jenny Uglow's (2002) *The Lunar Men: Five Friends Whose Curiosity Changed the World*; Laura Snyder's (2011) *The Philosophical Breakfast Club: Four Remarkable Friends Who Transformed Science and Changed the World*; Louis Menand's (2001) *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*—pragmatism; Atul Gawande's (2009) *A Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right*; Ian Ayres's (2010) *Carrots and Sticks: Unlock the Power of Incentives to Get Things Done*; and Charles Duhigg's (2012) *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*.

Some of these later books emphasize stimulus control (e.g., Gawande 2009) but are not informed by our science (see, e.g., Urcuioli 2013). Others emphasize reinforcement but are only variously informed by our science. Duhigg (2012), for instance, cites only a *JEAB* article by Dixon and Habib (2012) on the neurobehavioral evidence of the "near miss" effect in gambling and Nate Azrin's work on habit reversal (e.g., Azrin and Peterson 1988). Ayres (2010), in contrast, is more broadly informed, citing B. F. Skinner (e.g., Peterson 2004), basic research on impulse control (e.g., Ainslie and Herrnstein 1981), and applied research on contingency management in drug abstinence (e.g., Higgins et al. 2004; Kirby et al. 1998). More than half of these articles were published outside the box.

Bringing the Distant Near

Vyse's signal contribution is to bring the distant near. He describes the repertoires needed for publishing books and provides task analyses for acquiring them. This includes (a) finding a distinctive idea—we know the gaps in the literature; (b) securing a contract with chapters—we know how to write; (c) hiring an agent (or not)—problems in personnel management; and (d) deciding on a publisher (e.g., price, promotion)—problems in organizational behavior management. His most challenging advice is to write engagingly for a wide audience. This may come to him more easily than others: His first degrees were in English. However, with practice, we can acquire this repertoire too. See Karen Pryor's (1985) *Don't Shoot the Dog* (Pryor 1995). Susan Schneider's (2012) *The Science of Consequences* makes the point more clearly and recently. Her first degree was in engineering. Vyse's guidance about reading good prose, good models, and good books on publishing; talking to experienced authors; reading aloud to judge our vocabulary and style; and interjecting humor, imagery, and drama is all deeply constructive.

Publishing in Journals Outside the Box: Prominence through Relevance

In “Publishing Journal Articles Outside the Box: Attaining Mainstream Prominence Requires Demonstrations of Mainstream Relevance,” Friman (2014) presents engaging and telling examples—pleasant and unpleasant—of publishing in pediatric journals and perspectives he has gleaned from these experiences. The latter include the following: (a) Child provider pediatric care is as mainstream as any cultural practice in America; (b) attaining mainstream prominence in pediatrics requires demonstrations of mainstream relevance; (c) his pediatric colleagues are sometimes bereft of education and training in research design and practice that are taken for granted inside the box; and (d) do not take “No” for editorial decisions based on the lack of education, but instead respond exhaustively, but graciously, with instruction, logic, and detail. Friman closed by noting that mainstream problems of social importance are not necessarily exotic or challenging but often common and mundane and that they are not resistant to routine interventions, many of them simple

and direct. To become mainstream, though, we need to address these problems more frequently and publish in journals other than our own. In Friman's experience, the consequences of publishing outside the box have been more powerful and pleasant than what he experienced by publishing inside the box and have sustained his career-long tendency to publish in pediatric journals.

Advisors and Antecedents

As Friman related, the variables that most influenced his publishing outside the box were the consequences of doing so, but we should not forget their antecedents, either as discriminative stimuli or motivational operations. Friman cited one: Ed Christophersen's advice not to publish inside the box in *JABA*, but instead, to publish in *Pediatrics* (see Friman et al. 1986). Christophersen is, today, well published and positioned in developmental and behavioral pediatrics and widely published outside the box (e.g., Christophersen and Mortweet 2001; see Allen and Pohaha 2003). For most readers of *The Behavior Analyst*, Christophersen's advice is Friman's advice that we publish more often outside the box. For prospective graduate students who seek to make a direct difference in the mainstream, his advice is to seek graduate training with advisors who already publish outside the box. Good advice.

Colloquialized Learning Theory

Friman also addresses the perennial problem of how to speak about behavior analysis inside and outside the box, the latter of which includes our nonbehavior analytic colleagues and consumers. For Friman, these are parents, pediatricians, and pediatric psychologists. For them, he speaks the language of a “colloquialized version of learning theory.” This version, though, is barely recognizable as the principles and processes of behavior analysis as we know them (Catania 2013; Skinner 1938). The arguments for being multilingual are persuasive (see Bailey 1991; Hayes 1991; Lindsley 1991), but the ultimate arbiter should be empirical data: What version of colloquialized principles and procedures will be the most effective and for whom? To date, the data are scant. Jarmolowicz et al. (2008) have shown that caregivers' implementation of interventions is more accurate when written in “conversational language” than

that in technical language. However, what counts as “conversational” language varies across individuals and groups—and caregivers are not the only group. The effectiveness of Friman’s colloquialization is not doubted, but the problem of colloquialization should prompt us to develop programs of research on the most effective verbal behavior for publishing and communicating outside the box.

Publishing Outside the Box: Talking to Strangers

In “Publishing Outside the Box: Talking to Strangers,” Schlinger (2014) describes publishing articles, letters to editors, and columns, and corresponding with scientists. Vyse (2014) described publishing popular press books. I would include publishing chapters in books edited by colleagues who are not behavior analysts (e.g., Altus and Morris 2008; Morris 2003). Friman (2014) recommended a range of peer-refereed pediatric journals.

Publications

Among Schlinger’s contributions is to recommend a fuller range of journals, for instance, *Consciousness and Cognition* (e.g., Schlinger 2009) and *Journal of Mind and Behavior* (e.g., Moore 2013; see also *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology*, e.g., Critchfield and Twyman *in press*). Another contribution is to recommend publications outside of journals, for example, (a) in-house publications of professional associations (e.g., the Association for Psychological Science’s *Observer*; see Morris et al. 2005a, b); (b) general science publications (e.g., *American Scientist*; see Schlinger 2004); (c) publications in service to professions (e.g., *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; see Schlinger 2005); and (d) general interest and specialized magazines (e.g., *Atlantic Monthly*; see Staddon 1995; *The Skeptical Inquirer*; see Normand and Dallery 2007). They accept submissions that more likely lie in the range of our repertoires (e.g., letters to the editor, columns), as we hone our repertoires for publishing journal articles, chapters, and books outside the box.

Editorial correspondence

Schlinger also noted that we can advance behavior analysis not only through publications but also by communicating directly with colleagues outside the

box. Some of this lies in correspondence with editors. Their acceptance of our submissions is evidence of successful communication. Their rejection is more difficult to analyze. It may be due to poor communication or disagreement, but not necessarily. It may be due to their missions and audiences and our timeliness. For instance, Morris et al.’s (2004) review of whether, when, and why Skinner published on biological participation was rejected by five journals because their missions were boarder or different; because their audiences would not be familiar with the issues; and because the misunderstandings were no longer timely (see Morris et al. 2005a, b). Thus, although we may lament the rejection by the journal, *Language*, of Kenneth MacCorquodale’s (1970) response to Chomsky’s (1959) review of Skinner’s (1957) book, *Verbal Behavior*, his response was submitted a decade later. Editors of behavior analytic journals might also find a decade’s lapse untimely, even as MacCorquodale’s response is timeless.

Personal correspondence

Other communication with colleagues lies in personal correspondence about misunderstandings, commonalities, and complementarities of their work with respect to ours. Among my constructive correspondents have been David Barash (2005; see Morris et al. 2005a, b), Tony Chemero (2009; see Morris 2009), Harry Heft (2001; see Morris 2009), David Hull (1988; see Morris 1990), Gregory Kimball (1995; see Morris 1995a, b), and Susan Oyama (1985; see Midgley and Morris 1992). Occasionally, telling correspondence arises: While writing a review of Heft’s (2001) *Ecological Psychology in Context*, I e-mailed an ecological psychologist about his understanding of Gibson’s (1979) concept of affordances: “How like a radical behaviorist” (see Costall 1984). He replied with something like, “I know, but I can’t tell my colleagues.” He could not tell them, presumably, because he would be viewed with suspicion by them. We should remember that science is the behavior of scientists, subject not only to their success with its subject matters but also subject to social contingencies between scientists and cultural contingencies across them (Kantor 1963; 1969).

Publishing outside the box is a means of changing the contingencies.

Determining How, When, and Whether to Publish Outside the Box

In “Determining How, Whether, and When You Should Publish Outside the Box: Sober Advice for Early Career Behavior Analysts,” Reed (2014) advises us that publishing outside the box depends on (a) *how* we frame what we have to say (e.g., how we craft and articulate its terms and tone); (b) *whether* we represent the field fairly (e.g., whether our submissions are accurate and well-crafted in content and quality); and (c) *when* or at what point in our careers we should publish, given our time, resources, and repertoires. Among his recommendations are that we begin by publishing inside the box and learn the terms and styles of writing outside the box, but first seek critical feedback from our behavior analytic colleagues. Reed’s points are well-taken. I extend them and add others that are autobiographical enough to be uncomfortable.

Case Studies

In graduate school, my first publications were outside the box in developmental psychology journals (e.g., Morris and Redd 1975), but then, I *was* in developmental psychology. One person’s outside-the-box can be another’s inside-the-box. When I became an assistant professor, I lost the daily support of my mentors, Sid Bijou and Bill Redd. As a result, I published in lesser journals (e.g., Morris et al. 1979) and then, on rejection, inside the box (e.g., Morris and Smith 1980). Apparently, I did not know what I did not know about publishing in what was becoming outside the box. I should have sought mentors who did know, which I did, but perhaps too late (e.g., Morris et al. 1982). In addition, sciences outside the box change, sometimes making publishing in them more difficult (e.g., psychology’s putative cognitive revolution). As such, we should stay current with the content of the sciences outside the box, not just their terms. Of course, persistence sometimes pays off (e.g., Morris 1988) but do not count on it. Maintain research programs inside the box.

This last point is germane to Reed’s recommendation to develop, first, a presence inside the box. This will not only strengthen what you have to say outside the box

but may promote other repertoires that facilitate publishing outside the box. For instance, in developing a program of research in the experimental analysis of human behavior (e.g., Wagner and Morris 1987; see Morris et al. 1988), my students and I were able to publish outside the box (e.g., Higgins and Morris 1984). In developing a program of research on the field’s history (e.g., Morris et al. 1990a, b), I was invited to publish outside the box (e.g., on B. F. Skinner in education; see Morris 2003). In contrast, by not sufficiently developing a program of research inside the box on Skinner’s concept of “third variables” (e.g., contextual variables; see Morris 1995a, b), I did not become expert enough to publish reviews of it outside the box. A manuscript was rejected. Publish outside the box to the strengths you have acquired inside the box.

Repertoires

Publishing outside the box requires complex repertoires, whose acquisition requires prior knowledge, further development, and opportunity. Some advice follows. First, enrich your knowledge of research outside the box by reading it (e.g., Heft 2001; Mills 1998; Oyama 1985); communicate that knowledge inside the box (e.g., at conferences; see, e.g., Morris 1995b); and establish your expertise in it by publishing substantive reviews of its books in behavior analytic venues (e.g., Midgley and Morris 1992; Morris 2002, 2009).

Second, shape your repertoire through successive approximations. You might start with conversations with family, friends, colleagues, and even with strangers. One of the most recognizable forms of these is brief 30- to 60-s “elevator speeches” (Kwok 2013), which can also be useful at dinners, meetings, poster sessions, and job interviews. To be useful, though, they must be written down and practiced with yourself and others (O’Leary 2008). In addition, giving them in classroom competitions might be useful exercises in courses that address professional development, as might writing press releases (see, e.g., *Behavior Analysis Digest*; <http://aboutbehavior.webs.com/badinewsletter.htm>). At the same time, consider writing letters to the editors that compliment or correct local and regional publications, among them, dailies and periodicals. These include college and university newspapers, city and county newspapers, alumni publications, and local magazines (e.g., the *University Daily Kansan*, *Lawrence Journal World*). Next, write letters to the editors of

national publications, again dailies and periodicals (e.g., *New York Times*, *Time*), but also specialty publications (e.g., *American Scientist*, *Skeptic*; see, e.g., Schlinger 2004), and scientific and clinical journals outside the box (e.g., *American Psychologist*; see, e.g., Morris 1990). After that, write columns, reviews, and articles for local and regional publications (e.g., the *Arroyo Monthly*), specialty publications (e.g., *Skeptical Inquirer*; see, e.g., Lamal 2014), general interest publications (e.g., *Atlantic Monthly*; see, e.g., Staddon 1995), and then scientific and clinical journals (e.g., *New England Journal of Medicine*; see, e.g., Moore et al. 2007). Eventually, you might write books outside the box, both scholarly (Christophersen and Mortweet 2001) and trade (e.g., Schneider 2012; Vyse 2008). Like Reed, though, not all my approximations have been successful (see Morris et al. 2005a, b). Repertoires are works in progress.

Third, create opportunities for publishing outside the box by joining organizations and attending conferences outside behavior analysis (e.g., Cheiron: The International Society for the Behavioral and Social Sciences). This can result in presentations and posters at their conferences (e.g., Morris 1995a, b), service on committees (e.g., Best Article in *History of Psychology* Committee), election to leadership positions (e.g., Cheiron's Review Committee), invitations to write chapters (e.g., Morris 2012), selection for fellow status (e.g., the Society for the History of Psychology), and requests to host their conferences (e.g., Cheiron's 2015 meeting will be at the University of Kansas).

Instruction

In acquiring these repertoires, we can begin to teach them to students and colleagues. We can teach rudimentary repertoires through course requirements, as well as in research and clinical meetings (e.g., preparing elevator speeches, writing letters to editors). More sophisticated repertoires can be taught in advanced courses and research meetings (e.g., responding to articles in scientific and popular press venues, writing articles). Finally, we can teach cutting-edge repertoires by coauthoring articles, chapters, and books with colleagues for publications outside the box. The possibilities for successive approximations are boundless but do not begin with the terminal responses—submissions to peer-reviewed

journals or publishing houses. Start small—small is beautiful. Start from the beginning.

Conclusion

The articles by Normand (2014), Vyse (2014), Friman (2014), Schlinger (2014), and Reed (2014) are wise and insightful. They are the place to begin when considering publishing outside the box. Their recommendations and mine, though, do not begin to exhaust their suggestions. Here are a few more: Attend conference presentations outside of the box (e.g., the B. F. Skinner Lectures at the meetings of the Association for Behavior Analysis International); send reprints to scientists and scholars outside the box who you cite favorably in your research and scholarship; become involved in the Teaching of Behavior Analysis and the Dissemination of Behavior Analysis SIGs and Listservs (and the latter's B. F. Skinner Journalism Award; see Morris 1985); read everything that Paul Chance writes (e.g., Chance 1992; 1993); understand that "the organism is always right," including editors, reviewers, and authors outside of behavior analysis, whose "errors" we may begin to remedy by publishing outside the box; and finally, secure federal and private grant funding for your research and scholarship (Neumger 2011). This is among the ultimate indicators that you can publish outside the box, will be able to in the future, and will be able to influence the world outside of behavior analysis.

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