

## Editorial

Eighteen years ago I agreed to edit a newsletter for the Verbal Behavior Special Interest Group (VBSIG) of the Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA). The suggestion to start a newsletter was first made at the 3rd Annual Midwestern Association for Behavior Analysis (MABA) Convention (1977) in a meeting titled "Teachers teaching courses using B. F. Skinner's book *Verbal Behavior* (Or, those who would like to)." This meeting was chaired by W. Scott Wood and Jack Michael and ultimately led to the formation of the VBSIG. The audience was large and many well known behavior analysts participated in the discussion, including B. F. Skinner, Willard Day, James Holland, Terry Knapp, and Ernest Vargas. These individuals, as well as other audience members, described their successes and failures at teaching courses using Skinner's (1957) book *Verbal Behavior*.

Most professors, including Skinner, agreed that it was difficult to teach from the book. Issues were raised concerning the lack of supporting empirical research, the complexity of the topics covered in the book, and the high level of analysis required to understand the book. Also, several of the participants pointed out that better instructional materials, and more refined applications, would make it easier to teach from *Verbal Behavior*. The consensus of the group was that every effort should be made to improve the instructional technology, foster the exchange of materials, and promote research in the verbal behavior area.

The SIG continued to meet each year at the annual ABA convention, and a number of improvements in the teaching materials and types of research projects began to occur. Copies of Skinner's *William James Lectures* (1947/1979), and the lecture notes from a course Skinner

taught on verbal behavior (Hefferline, 1947/1979), as well as Jack Michael's (1979) detailed teaching objectives for each chapter of Skinner's book, were made available. Norm Peterson's book *An Introduction to Verbal Behavior* (1978), and Steven Winoker's book *A Primer of Verbal Behavior: An Operant Analysis* (1976) served as ways for behavior analysts to acquire the basic concepts of *Verbal Behavior*. In addition, the Annual ABA Convention provided a forum for the presentation of research based on *Verbal Behavior*. By the late 1970s, an increase in verbal behavior research began to occur (Eshleman, 1991), and it soon became apparent that a newsletter would be helpful for keeping VBSIG members up to date with developments in the verbal behavior area.

The first volume of the VBSIG newsletter, *VB NEWS*, was published in 1982. Kent Johnson and I served as Editors for this volume. James W. Partington and I served as Editors for Volume 2 of *VB NEWS*. The newsletter had a limit of four pages for authors, but the submissions were becoming much longer, and it soon became apparent that a journal was needed. In 1984 it was decided by the members of the VBSIG that a formal journal be established. Hence, beginning with Volume 3 (1985) the name of the VBSIG publication was changed from *VB News* to *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior* (TAVB). The page restriction was removed, submission guidelines were established, and an ISSN number was obtained. In addition, the cover of the publication was changed to a format and font that matched the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* (JEAB) and the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (JABA), and a brown cover was selected to match the color of the original edition of Skinner's book. Joseph Spradlin and I served as

Editors for this volume of TAVB. During the next several years the journal flourished and research in verbal behavior increased at a celeration rate of  $\times 3$  (Eshleman, 1991). This upward trend has continued through the 1990s.

B. F. Skinner made several financial contributions to the journal during its early years, as did the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (the publisher of JEAB and JABA), the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis, ABA, and nine individuals who each paid at least \$250 to become Life Members of the VBSIG (Don Baer, John Douglas, Philip Drash, Terry Knapp, Jack Michael, Ed Morris, Joe Morrow, Robin Rumph, and Jerry Shook). Substantial contributions to the journal were also made by the nearly 100 individuals who became sustaining and supporting members of the VBSIG through the years, some members paid these higher dues nearly every year (e.g., Jane Howard, George Lawton, M. Carmen Luciano, John Mabry, Werner Matthys, H. Mac Parsons, Leo Reyna, and Murray Sidman). The bulk of the financial support for the journal, however, came from the annual dues of the nearly 400 full and student members of the VBSIG. More recently, the journal has greatly benefited from Jack Michael's donation of the net income from the sale of his book *Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis* (1993). Thus far, Michael's donation has provided \$8,595 for the journal.

One hundred and twenty-six conceptual and empirical papers have been published in the 14 Volumes of TAVB. The topics of these papers vary substantially, but they all share the common theme of Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior. Among the suggestions to authors on the inside cover of each issue of TAVB there was a request that papers sent to the journal be directly relevant to the behavioral analysis of verbal behavior. The list of topics suggested to authors on this page came primarily from the outline of the book *Verbal Behavior*, but the list also contained potential applications of the analysis

(Table 1). I am pleased to look back and see that all of these topics have been addressed in the journal, some quite extensively. In addition, several other topics and thematic lines of research have been published in the journal (Table 2).

Table 1

*Topics suggested to authors on the inside cover of each issue of TAVB.*

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The elementary verbal operants (mands, tacts, intraverbals, etc.)
Autoclitics
Multiple control
Private events
Rule-governed behavior
Epistemology
Scientific verbal behavior
Language assessment and training
Second languages
Pedagogy
The verbal behavior of non-humans

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There have been several major advances in the verbal behavior area since that first meeting of the teachers of *Verbal Behavior*. Empirical research is probably at an all time high, applications have occurred in a variety of areas, teaching materials have become more readily available, and more behavior analysts are using the concepts from *Verbal Behavior* in their publications and convention presentations.

However, while much has been accomplished in the 40 years since the publication of *Verbal Behavior*, there are still several major challenges that face behavior analysts if *Verbal Behavior* is to have the impact that Skinner felt it should (e.g., Skinner, 1978, p. 122). Several of these challenges will be presented in the next issue of TAVB in a special section organized by the journal's new Editor, Hank Schlinger, tentatively titled "Current Status and Future Directions of an Operant Analysis of Verbal Behavior."

Table 2

*Other topics and thematic lines of  
research published in TAVB.*

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Establishing operations
Stimulus equivalence
Selection-based and topography-based verbal behavior
Automatic reinforcement and automatic punishment
Facilitated communication
Artificial intelligence
The behavior of the listener
The analysis of on-going verbal behavior
Behavioral pharmacology and verbal behavior
Autism
Traumatic brain injury

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I am comforted by the fact that ABA will be publishing TAVB, and that Hank Schlinger will be the next Editor. Hank has a long history of being active in the verbal behavior area, and has made many contributions to this field. He also did an excellent job during his five years as the Associate Editor. I am confident that he

will carry on the mission of the journal as established by Skinner and the other members of the Verbal Behavior Special Interest Group. In closing out my role as Editor of TAVB, I would like to thank my wife, Cindy Sundberg, for her role as Assistant Editor, and Jack Michael for his role as the guiding force behind the journal.

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