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EDITORIAL

Evolve and Elevate

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The Analysis of Verbal Behavior (TAVB) is alive and well. This 2018 double issue of TAVB is my first as editor and also marks the beginning of a radical transformation of the journal that might be best summarized as both an evolution and an elevation—an evolution because I am broadening the mission of TAVB, and an elevation because I am raising the bar for what defines success for the journal. *History* is important, and particularly with TAVB, because it has served as a direct stream of ideas, data, and retrospectives to B. F. Skinner's text *Verbal Behavior*. At inception, TAVB positioned itself as a niche outlet for a relatively small group of behavior analysts who sought to take the ideas of Skinner and transform them into research. Decades later, it is clear that this mission was accomplished and that the once-small group has grown. There was a parallel history of growth that occurred outside the pages of TAVB, which may have marginalized the overall impact the journal managed to accomplish within and beyond behavior analysis.

In the years that followed the formation of TAVB, and surely because of its success, other behavior-analytic journals became more appreciative and accepting of papers exploring verbal behavior and Skinner's account of language. Once a monopoly on verbal behavior research, TAVB found itself in an increasingly competitive market. Perhaps there is no better metric of success than when other journal outlets begin to embrace work that was previously outside of their typical submissions, but by doing so, authors now had a wider choice of places to send papers. Additional journals also emerged in the marketplace that became even more direct competitors for papers that at one time would have most likely found a home in TAVB. The increased supply of journals resulted in continued dilution of the once-premier home for verbal behavior research from a Skinnerian perspective. Finally, as the Skinnerian tradition continued to produce empirical papers on human language, alternative accounts of language were arriving within the pages of these other journals, which led some behavior analysts to question the overall utility of a purely Skinnerian approach. In summary, over the past 20 years, we have seen TAVB move from having a monopoly position as the outlet for

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a single perspective on human language to finding itself in competition with other similar journals and with alternative approaches to the very same subject matter.

Competitive markets require innovative solutions. In other words, individual contributors to the market must either adapt or die. An evolution of TAVB is necessary for it to emerge once again as the flagship home for research on verbal behavior. However, in order to do so, TAVB will change in many ways under my leadership. First, I am explicitly and formally inviting human language theory and research papers from the currently diverse perspectives that exist within our behavior-analytic community. Debates continue as to which of these approaches is the "best fit" for the behaviorism worldview, and I am not very confident any consensus will arrive when many of the points of fraction are preanalytic. Nonetheless, under my editorship, TAVB will welcome all existing and even new perspectives on how to conceptualize and investigate the phenomena of human language. Second, I am instituting an expedited review process on all Brief Report submissions. This timely modification will push for a 30-day time line from submission to decision for all manuscripts within this paper category, with two peer reviewers assigned per paper. I believe that this TAVB category should be greatly expanded upon, given the extremely high percentage of practicing applied behavior analysts who are working in the field of language training for children with autism. Many of the clinical interventions implemented need only to be slightly altered with an eye toward experimental control to lead to interesting contributions or replications of the primarily novel published full length research articles. Such contributions to TAVB are important in order to both validate prior work and demonstrate efficacy on the front line in the real world. The Brief Report format also will allow for innovative approaches toward research questions to be documented in the published literature, which I hope will continue to fuel subsequent innovation. Finally, I am explicitly stating my interest in seeing papers that move beyond the traditional single-subject design research tradition and instead use between-groups designs. There will always be a place for multiple baselines across three participants, however we are too smart to stop there. If our science and technology of verbal behavior is correct and has the potential to save the world, when shall we begin to start saving it? Single-subject designs play a critical role in our science, but if the outcomes remain just within our science, it seems that we have missed the opportunity to have a much larger impact. Nonetheless, I am encouraging authors to consider if some of these typical single-subject studies could also be conducted in randomized controlled trials, experiments conducted with large between-groups designs, and analyzed using multiple regression models. We must push the nonbehavioral community to start taking our contributions more seriously, and one way to help do this is to present our findings using mainstream terminologies and analyses.

Evolving the mission of TAVB will be met with conflicting opinions from the behavior-analytic community, and I am fully aware of this. Yet I firmly believe the only way to build a successful future is to expand what we do, in order to survive. Furthermore, it is only through this evolution that TAVB will be able to elevate its impact on the field of behavior analysis and, more importantly, beyond our field. Exploring the mechanisms that underlie the acquisition of human language is important, but even more important are the outcomes such work can produce on large-scale levels. We must be very careful that we do not get trapped into the comfort of preaching to our base and not changing the opinions of others beyond the walls of the in-group. To do this, we will think differently about research design, the dependent measures evaluating our treatment effects, and the ways we can

speak to the general population. Success for TAVB, in my opinion, should be measured by citation counts of our papers outside of the behavior-analytic journals, not within. Additionally, an impact factor is desperately needed to motivate many scholars to submit to TAVB, because without it, the contingencies driving promotion and tenure will often result in responding toward impact-factor journals. Finally, in order to raise TAVB to an elevated status within and beyond our field, we will need to publish topics and outcomes that the general public might actually find interesting. To do this, we will need to explore long-term treatment effects of language training, examine effects of medication on verbal skill acquisition, or discover how neuroimaging reveals behavioranalytic processes at work when humans are speaking. If we can only demonstrate our approaches to verbal behavior improve the targets we attempt to improve (e.g., teaching mands to a child who cannot mand), and not produce changes in global functioning indexes such as achievement tests or intelligence, our research and our journal will have a minimal impact on the broad scientific community. In summary, I strongly encourage all verbal behavior researchers to turn their efforts outward rather than inward, as our subtle differences in approaches are so trivial compared to the real challenge we have ahead: external relevance.

When TAVB was born, the behavior-analytic world was a much different place, with no competition for manuscripts and a very small cluster of researchers interested in applying Skinner's theory of language. This antiquated world was also a place without Internet and online access to every journal and brought us a single issue of TAVB in the mail once a year. I recall fondly upon its arrival, opening the package with curiosity to read about the latest advancements in our field. Today, soon after single papers are accepted, they are put online prior to building an actual journal issue. The surprise is all but gone. Writing my editorial on the last day prior to the 2018 TAVB issue going into production was intended to, hopefully, rekindle a little bit of the suspense of days gone by. For almost an entire year, the verbal behavior community has waited with anticipation as to how the next editor will carry TAVB into the future. I will carry the history, but I will also carry change—change that is critical in order to successfully promote a behavior-analytic agenda on the most important of all topics: human language, both within and beyond the community of behavior analysis. This future may be a vision of mine but will be carried out with extensive support from my associate editors. Three outstanding and diverse individuals will pursue this journey with me as we evolve and elevate TAVB over the next three years. Each associate editor has been requested to provide an independent editorial on the future of the journal, and these commentaries follow.

Compliance with Ethical Standards