

COMMENT ON "ADOPTION OF INNOVATIONS
FROM APPLIED BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH:
'DOES ANYBODY CARE?'"

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Dr. Stolz is to be commended for her continuing efforts to link the behavioral technology community to areas it is unfamiliar with but could profitably gain from the interaction.

One of the major variables identified in the communications of innovations literature is cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan individual is one who has knowledge of culture(s) other than his or her own. Through such knowledge she or he has an avenue to distant spheres and can call the local community's attention to different practices of problem solving and expression. Such a role is vital for a community to continue to regenerate itself and prevent provincialism, stagnation, and decay.

Dr. Stolz has performed the function admirably by drawing attention to a field that offers tremendous opportunity for behavior analysts. The knowledge utilization, dissemination, or adoption, or what I prefer to call the communication of innovations field (because it addresses the whole process of sender, message-channel, and receiver) is very ripe for the conceptual and methodological rigor that behavior analysts could supply. The return on such an investment would be very substantial.

Two useful conceptual tools for examining the nonadoption of innovations are the socialization and enculturation of a scholar and the response cost to a potential adopter of an innovation. Amitai Etzioni, the sociologist, noted that the mark of a scholar is someone who learns as much from books as from people (Salasin, 1978). A deadly mistake to make in attempting to communicate an innovation is to forget how few scholars there are.

As Stolz documents, the literature shows that practitioners seek out the interpersonal channel of communication to learn of innovations. The producers of innovations that are research validated are typically R&D PhDs. They are initiated into and live out their professional lives in a world dominated by print media. The very contingencies that control their professional advancement are tied to the productivity of print media. They are also socialized to be innovation seekers. Their professional commitment is to stay abreast of the state of the art and, indeed, to continue to advance it. They, not coincidentally, can be the best informed on technical evaluations of foreign sports cars, stereo equipment, and videotape recorders. This production, and active seeking out, of print media represents a far different culture from that of the service provider and her or his program manager. Although there may have been an introduction to the print culture in their academic training period, the world that greeted them on graduation was vastly different. The structure of the contingencies that maintain their behavior in service settings begins immediately to work against the values of the print world. Time for reading is at a premium. The usual pattern is from valiant attempts to keep up with the technical literature to a steady progression to the popular literature. It is easy to denigrate the service provider for this lack of professionalism but a more revealing behavior analysis would show that if the technical literature were truly reinforcing of his or her reading behavior there would be no problem.

This may sound like stating the obvious but it

is in this analysis that a unique opportunity presents itself to the producers of behavioral innovations. One of the reasons that scholars love print is that it is the ideal medium for the expression of abstract ideas which is their stock and trade. Behavioral interventions are not abstract. They are processes that are tangible, material, and visible. This makes the visual medium ideal for behavioral innovations. As one film school professor of mine stated "You have never seen an idea on the screen in the history of film. All film makers are behavioral psychologists!"

Although few of us are scholars we are all watchers especially when the most rudimentary principles of applied aesthetics are followed. The ubiquity of videoplayers and the rapidly declining price of color videocameras give behavioral innovators an excellent opportunity to communicate their innovations. However, in order to realize this opportunity fully, behavioral innovators must engage in a behavioral analysis of their own behavior with the usual attention to the consequences maintaining behavior.

Here we come to the conflict between the two cultures. Most behavioral innovators are associated with institutions that reward scholarly behavior, i.e., words in print refereed by other certified scholars. Films or videotapes may receive pleasant acknowledgments but never do they produce full professorships. However, there are means available to establish the visual medium on equal footing with the print medium. The concern of scholarly institutions is the documentation of professional productivity. It would be very possible to have films and videotapes (and in the near future videodiscs) refereed in the same way that journals and books are done. Not only would it serve a documentation function, it would also serve a consumer advisement function in that the consumer would be assured of some minimum standards. Also, as more visual media were produced to a minimal level of standards the generally received opinion of the deadliness of edu-

cational films could be combated. Also more producers would appreciate that at least as much hard work, originality, and dedication is needed to produce a good film or tape as is needed to write a good journal article or book.

The tradition of scholarship dictates that the initiate pay a price for the knowledge he or she is about to obtain and the more valuable the knowledge the higher the price. The scholar is dedicated to seeing to it that there is something worth seeking. He or she is concerned with the production of innovations.

In the history of American business a decided turn was taken when there was a movement away from a production orientation to a marketing orientation. The production orientation is best characterized by Henry Ford's dictum that you can have any color you want as long as it's black! A marketing orientation begins with the consumer's needs and wants and designs its products and services and their dissemination around the habits, customs, and preferences of its consumers. Marketeers know that whatever they do that increases the effort of the potential consumer reduces the probability of a purchase. Communicators of innovations must realize that it is a marketing task that they are engaged in and that the tradition of scholarship has to be turned upside down, i.e., do whatever can be done to reduce the response cost to the potential adopter of an innovation.

One means of addressing the issue of response cost is by active versus passive transport systems. In the past the innovator used a passive transport system for communicating his or her innovation by simply publishing its description and validation. The potential adopter was to be the active part of the system by seeking out the innovation. This response cost is much too high for service providers and thus adoption was rare. Translating the language of the innovator to that of the potential adopter is one sure way of reducing his or her response cost. Seeing that this information reaches the service setting is another. Allowing the potential adopter to adopt the innovation partially on a trial basis is an-

other. Supplying abundant feedback, consultation, and emotional support in the early stages is another. The list can go on limited only by the ingenuity of the innovator. The important point is that the innovator who wishes to communicate successfully his or her innovation could constantly be asking the question, "How can I reduce the response cost to the potential adopter of my innovation?"

The challenge for the behavioral community is a large one, but the nature of the problem is not foreign to behavior analysts. As Stolz points out, knowledge utilization has much in common with the process of transfer of training effects or stimulus generalization. Beginning with this as a knowledge base, new research and development could be conducted. This would not only extend the field but in all likelihood challenge existing conceptualizations as well.

If this research is conceived as being concerned with an interrelated process and not isolated examples, great generality of the findings will be possible. It is the process of communicating innovations or utilizing knowledge that must be understood, not how to get one agency to adopt one particular behavioral program. I think Stolz is referring to this when she describes the lack of theory in the field. With a coherent theory and an effective technology this process could be open to any content. Whatever was proven to be effective from whatever theoretical camp or school of thought could be effectively communicated to policymakers and practitioners and ultimately provided as a validated service to the mass audience.

Finally, I want to answer Dr. Stolz's very important questions of "Does anybody care? Does anybody see?" I want to violate all canons of scientific objectivity by answering these questions as impassionately as I can.

I think the metaphor of George Washington and the American Revolution is wonderfully appropriate and accurate. Peering into the vision of a free and powerful nation begging to be born and cared for must have intoxicated the

great general so that it was beyond him to see how others could not quickly support such a great cause.

There are many eminent thinkers who now believe we have technological and psychological solutions to the problems of population, energy, hunger, poverty, infectious and degenerative disease, illiteracy, and almost all of the other material deficiencies of the human condition. However, this group is still a tiny minority and is labeled as visionary, grandiose, and impractical so they can be summarily dismissed. Yet what is needed for these visions to be realized is an effective transport system to move these existing solutions to the source of the problems and see that they are implemented.

This is certainly something worth caring for! It's worth having grants rejected, careers sidetracked, and relationships with cherished peers alienated. Revolutions are not pretty, friendly, or healthy, except for the soul. To get people to see is a prerequisite for getting them to care. D. W. Griffith, the artist who almost single-handedly invented the narrative film as we know it today, gave as his sole purpose for this endeavor "as simply to make people see" (Mast, 1976). This he did and he was acclaimed until he continued to pursue his vision. He was then neglected and not allowed to make films for the final 20 years of his life. He died alone in a hotel room in Hollywood. Getting people to see and to care are dangerous activities as the countless unnamed foot soldiers of the American Revolution, as well as the famed generals, can attest.

Victory is dear, however. If Davis (1971) does not provide the theory needed with the acronym A-VICTORY, he at least is accurate in noting that a battle must be fought.

One consoling thought, however, is how few people it takes to win a revolution. Estimates are that one-third of colonial Americans favored the Revolution, one-third favored loyalty to England, and one-third didn't care.

I think behavior analysts have not cared because they haven't seen and not the other way

around. The lineage of both experimental and applied behavior analysis is revolutionary. Battles fought in faculty meetings and service agencies were strewn with professional blood. Families were uprooted and careers frozen because of ideological fighting. Today, however, there has been accommodation and acceptance and perhaps complacency. Revolutionaries at middle age must accept their quiet domestic life or re-fuel their passion by taking on larger battles. I can think of no more appropriate battleground for the behavioral movement than to take on the challenge of seeing that their well established programs become adopted on a mass scale, and, with their usual rigor, create the understanding of this process as they proceed.

If the challenge is accepted, the first roadblock will be one called political. However, behaviorists recognize adjectives for what they are. It is the verbs that are of interest because they represent behaviors, and behaviors, whatever their color, can be changed.

Concretely, my recommendations are:

1. To encourage those who have been successful in getting their innovations adopted (e.g., Azrin, Phillips, Liberman) to communicate the successful process and to encourage the theoretical analyses of the behaviors involved and methodological concerns in this process.
2. To reserve space in journals for article(s) on communication of innovations such as is done on apparatus innovations in some journals.
3. To reserve time at the national and regional conventions for this topic along with sponsored symposia inviting those most competent to speak.
4. At all conventions, experiential workshops should be presented which actively teach the skills involved in getting an innovation adopted. Attendance for all levels of membership—not just graduate students—should be encouraged by the leadership of the associations.
5. Also at conventions, following the active transport-reduced response cost model, invitations could be extended to reputable print and electronic journalists to attend what could be called translation sessions or interdisciplinary training sessions in which conscientious attempts at understanding one another's professional language, structure, and contingencies could be made. Success in this effort could lead both to better reporting and broader receptivity to behavioral innovations.
6. For those who sit on peer review boards of funding agencies to ask grant applicants to give specific, concrete plans for communication of innovation efforts and seeing to it that these plans represent the most current knowledge and practice in the field.
7. For those who are faculty members to include in the formal curriculum social skills training for their students with as much credit and status afforded this skill as those in computer programming or statistical design.
8. As mentioned early, the origination of a task force to study methods of certifying nonprint media as meeting certain standards of validity and utility.
9. Also in this regard a source book of validated programs and their replications could be started and continually updated. This would serve two purposes. There would be a developing data base on which scholars and researchers could work to do the analysis and synthesis that is needed. Also, it would serve as a greatly needed source of motivation (inspiration?) for service consumers-providers-managers-researchers-developers.

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