Behavior Analysis and Public Policy

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The Task Force on Public Policy was created to examine ways for behavior analysts to be more functional citizen scientists in the policymaking arena. This report informs readers about the contexts and processes of policymaking; and it outlines issues regarding the roles of behavior analysts in creating policy-relevant conceptual analyses, generating research data, and communicating policy-relevant information. We also discuss a possible role for the professional association in enhancing analysis, research, and advocacy on policies relevant to the public interest.
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Public policy has begun to capture the attention of many psychologists (Task Force on Psychology and Public Policy, 1986), particularly as it relates to specific interests of the discipline (e.g., Carpenter, 1983) and populations of traditional focus (see, e.g., Maccoby, Kahn, & Everett, 1983). Behavior analysts have also contributed to public policy through conceptual analyses of the policymaking process (Seekins & Fawcett, 1986), policy research studies (e.g., Seekins, Maynard-Moody, & Fawcett, 1987), and experimental evaluations of the effects of policy studies on legislative behavior (Jason & Rose, 1984).

Behavior-analytic evaluations have contributed to knowledge about the effects of public policies created at the local (e.g., Agras, Jacob, & Lebedeck, 1980; Stokes & Fawcett, 1977) and state levels (e.g., Seekins, Fawcett, Cohen, Elder, Jason, Schnelle, & Winett, in press). In addition, behavior analysts have contributed to policy advocacy through reports about creating policy-relevant information (e.g., Fawcett, Seekins, & Jason, 1987), experimental research on advocacy behavior (e.g., Seekins, Fawcett, & Mathews, 1987), reports of policy information networks (e.g., Jones, Czyzewski, Otis, & Hannah, 1983), and consumer guidelines for influencing public policy (e.g., Ternes, Czyzewski, Otis, Ulicny, & Jones, 1984). This work is, at best, only suggestive of the potential contributions behavior analysts can make to knowledge about and influence of public policymaking.

The Task Force on Public Policy was established by the Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA) to examine ways to encourage members to contribute to policymaking relevant to the public interest. Members discussed issues pertinent to this activity and provided recommendations designed to stimulate further discussion about the roles of members and of the Association in policy research and advocacy.

This report describes a) the policymaking process, b) contexts of public policymaking, c) the behavior analyst's role in creating policy-relevant conceptual analyses, d) the behavior analyst's role in

creating policy-relevant research information, e) the advocate's role in communicating policy-relevant information, and f) ABA's potential role in maximizing the effectiveness of analysis, research, and advocacy.

THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS[1]

Public policymaking involves a set of contingencies maintained by the government in which policymaking involves reciprocal relationships among lawmakers, the governed, and public officials (Seekins & Fawcett, 1986; Skinner, 1953, p. 339). Lawmakers create and enforce laws and public policies that regulate and distribute resources. The governed provide differential contingencies on lawmaking by, among other things, complying with laws or not, and campaigning and voting for elected officials and referenda, and contributing to political campaigns. Public officials, in turn, provide differential consequences for this support by creating and enforcing laws and policies that produce further consequences for the governed.

The policymaking process typically involves the interaction among lawmakers, the governed, and public officials in a sequence of four stages: (1) agenda formation, (2) policy adoption, (3) policy implementation, and (4) policy review (Cochran, Mayer, Carr, & Cayer, 1982; Palumbo, Fawcett, & Wright, 1981). In what follows, we describe the major characteristics of these stages as they might occur in various units of these arenas— the legislative, executive, judicial, bureaucratic and regulatory institutions, and in public referendum.

1. Agenda Formation

Policymaking typically occurs when a large number of the governed experience a common problem, such as the lack of adequate and affordable health care (e.g., Gerston, 1983). As the problem is discussed, various goals and alternatives for its resolution emerge. These alternatives are gradually formulated into organized

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[1] This section was adapted from Seekins & Fawcett (1986).

problem statements and related policy options, each option constituting a potential issue for an agenda.

Public officials—such as chief executives, legislators, and judges—as well as the media, interest groups, and bureaucrats disseminate information and publicize issues. As an issue's scope and intensity increase, formal consideration of one or more options by policymaking institutions becomes more probable (Cobb & Elder, 1972). For example, mental health reforms were propelled onto the national public agenda in the 1950s and 1960s by the emergence of public information about the prevalence of psychiatric disorders experienced by military recruits for World War II, deteriorating conditions in psychiatric facilities, and research findings about promising social and pharmacological treatments (Levine, 1981).

2. Policy Adoption

Once an issue is on the public agenda, two types of outcome are possible—substantive and/or symbolic action (Gerston, 1983). Substantive action involves reallocating public resources, often in the form of taxes or reprioritized expenditures. Substantive actions within Medicare, for instance, might include increasing the hospital deductible for patients or reducing covered hospital days. These actions have significant financial consequences for many people.

By contrast, symbolic action involves the formal recognition of a social problem without reallocating sufficient resources to produce effective change. Symbolic actions are often taken in order to address narrow or weak constituent groups (e.g., abused children), problems for which there are no immediately obvious solutions (e.g., crime), or subtle and complicated issues (e.g., international human-rights policies). Study committees and special observances, such as a week commemorating the rights of citizens with disabilities, are common symbolic actions.

3. Policy Implementation

Once policy has been established, it must be translated into action in order to achieve its aim. Such implementation involves the creation of new policies, or the reinterpretation of old ones, by bureaucratic and regulatory authorities. Policy implementation then commonly follows a sequence of executive delegation of responsibility to an agency, agency development of implementation guidelines, coordination within and between agencies, and execution of tasks.

At any point in this sequence, a new policy and its implied practices may be accepted, rejected, modified, or resisted. Public policies that are most likely to be accepted and to achieve their goals are typically those that are well-funded, that contain explicit contingencies for receipt of resources, that limit the number of agencies involved, and that execute oversight. Policies are less likely to be adequately implemented if they lack sufficient funding, permit excessive bureaucratic discretion, contain multiple goals, and do not include monitoring (see Gerston, 1983). These policy implementation characteristics are critically important for effective enactment and maintenance. They require more explicit examination if behavior analysts are to influence public policy more effectively.

4. Policy Review

Policy review involves both empirical and normative judgments of the public's view of and satisfaction with the substantive and symbolic consequences of policy implementation (see Cochran et al., 1982). Review may occur, for example, in the contexts of administrative evaluation, legislative oversight, and public debate. The results of review may include policy maintenance, modification, or cancellation. At this stage, as at the previous stages, public support, as well as public demands for change, are important ingredients to the outcome.

These four stages of policymaking—agenda formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy review—occur at all levels of government, and hence provide many opportunities for involvement of behavior analysts. Considering the executive, legislative, and judicial branches within federal, state, and

major metropolitan governments, over 600 major institutional bases for public policymaking exist in the United States (Greenwald, 1977). Moreover, these may be the best arenas to focus attention because they are where most social goals are set and performance standards established (Keefe & Ogul, 1985). By influencing decision making in these settings, behavior analysts can affect public policy in meaningful and legitimate ways.

CONTEXTS OF PUBLIC POLICYMAKING[2]

If behavior analysts are to influence the content and direction of social policy, they must understand the legislative and executive contexts in which the policymaking processes occurs, particularly at state and federal levels (DeLeon, O'Keefe, VanDenBos, & Kraut, 1982; LaVor, 1976). This section outlines how state-level policymaking processes operate. Although procedures vary from state to state, this overview describes the general process and identifies those points at which behavior analysts might become involved. Table 1 provides a general overview of how a bill becomes law.

Policy proposals are introduced to the legislature from a variety of sources. First, individual members of any legislature may introduce a bill alone or in conjunction with others. Second, proposals may originate in legislative committees that analyze issues and introduce bills that incorporate their findings. A third source of proposals lies in the executive branch. Governors or executive agency administrators may request that the legislature draft a bill to address a particular need (National Health Council, 1983) or they may make policy themselves. In the following section, we discuss policy formation within the legislative context, after which we turn to the executive process. In both cases, we describe how behavior

analysts might become involved in the policymaking process.

The Legislative Process

The legislative process establishes laws that determine governmental policies and programs and that allocate funds for policy implementation and program operation. Each year, state legislatures review thousands of bills to be considered for enactment into law.

Any member of a legislature may introduce a bill, often on behalf of special interest groups or individual citizens. In this context, behavior analysts can work with individual legislators to promote specific bills or issues. Moreover, they can contact legislators directly to present material or discuss issues informally at any stage of the legislative process (LaVor, 1976; Marlowe, 1978).

Before making these contacts, however, behavior analysts interested in shaping social policy should first analyze legislators' track records to identify those whose past voting practices indicate support and receptivity to specific policy goals (Goyke, 1982; Jones, 1976). Once supportive legislators have been identified, contact needs to be established and maintained (LaVor, 1976), for which several suggestions can be offered. First, legislators are most receptive to suggestions from voting members of their own district (Marlowe, 1978). Second, behavior analysts should arrange to meet with legislators in advance to discuss issues of concern. Third, behavior analysts can work on or contribute to a legislator's campaign and, as a consequence, help establish rapport and provide opportunities to invite legislators to speak at meetings or functions on identified issues and concerns. Once a legislator's participation is established, it needs to be maintained. In all of this, coalitions must be built to effect such changes, for actions by individuals alone are often ineffective.

Although approaching legislators appears to be the most obvious and direct route to shaping policy, the actual power lies with the legislative research staff (Marlowe, 1978). Legislative aides re-

TABLE 1

Generic overview of how a bill becomes a law

Steps	Description
1. Introduction	Once a bill is drafted, it is introduced in its originating chamber (e.g., house of representatives or senate). A similar bill may be introduced in both chambers simultaneously by different sponsors.
2. Referral	After a bill is first read, it is referred to an appropriate standing committee for consideration. The bill may then be referred to a subcommittee or a special committee depending on the nature of its content.
3. Hearings	Hearings are conducted when the respective committee is ready to act on a bill. It is at these hearings that human service professionals can make written and/or oral presentations to offer recommendations about proposed legislation.
4. Mark-up	Once the hearings are completed, the committee "marks-up" or amends the bill. It is during this phase that words are added to or deleted from the proposal.
5. Floor action	After all amendments have been made by the full commiittee, the bill is placed on the legislative calendar for consideration by the entire legislature. The presiding officer determines the order in which bills appear on the calendar. This is a pivotal task. Although presiding officers cannot guarantee the success or failure of a bill, they can greatly influence the likelihood of its success or failure. For example, officers can place a bill so far down on the calendar that it may never be heard, or they may hold the bill until sufficient support is generated.
	Once on the calendar, a bill is presented for debate or vote. During a floor debate, amendments can be made at any time. After the debate, the bill is voted upon by the membership-at-large. In many states, over half the full membership must vote in favor of the bill for it to be submitted to the other chamber. Then, in that chamber, the entire process is repeated.
6. Governor	The last stop a bill makes is at the governor's desk. The governor may sign a bill into law or veto it. If vetoed, a legislature can, with a two-thirds vote, override a governor's veto. The veto override, however, does not occur frequently.

search most issues and often prepare the legislator's supporting or contradicting information on an issue. In addition, research staffs may prepare menus of policy options from which a legislator chooses. These legislative research staff members are the individuals with whom special interest groups and others need to meet and work. The Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy's (AABT's) Committee on Legislative Affairs, for instance, has disseminated numerous findings from behavioral research to legislative staff members.

Given the enormous number of bills placed before legislators each year, committees have become the heart and soul of the legislative process. Legislative committees allow "a relatively orderly division of the workload and a detailed consideration of each piece of legislation" (Marlowe, 1978, p. 26).

The most common legislative committee is the standing committee. Each state has different names for its perma-

nent standing committees, but their functions are similar—to review and amend legislative proposals. They can request additional research on an issue or they can hold hearings to permit interested parties to debate the merits of a particular bill (Ternes et al., 1984). Standing committees are generally of two sorts—authorizing committees and appropriations committees. Authorizing committees evaluate the legislative intent of bills and initiate legislative proposals; appropriations committees specify how much funding will be allocated to an administrative agency or program to enact a law. A list of the titles and memberships of the committees that address a topic of concern may be obtained by contacting respective state directors of legislative and administrative services.

When a particular issue requires more time and research than a standing committee can effectively provide, the legislature can establish a special committee. Two such committees are oversight and

interim study committees. Oversight committees evaluate the execution and effectiveness of legislation. Interim study committees are appointed when issues come before the legislature that are either highly complex or insufficiently informed, and hence in need of further study. These committees also may serve as a dumping-ground for controversial issues. Generally, interim study committees meet between legislative sessions to analyze issues and, when the sessions resume, they present their findings and make recommendations.

These and other committee proceedings offer behavior analysts interested in public policy many opportunities to shape decisions. Most committee meetings and hearings are open to the general public, during which time interested parties can prepare and submit written testimony, "white" papers, issue papers, or oral testimony.

The Executive Process

The executive branch of government establishes policy by introducing bills to be reviewed and debated by the legislature, by establishing regulations, and by issuing executive orders through state department officials. Because the introduction of bills was discussed in the material describing the legislative process, this section will focus primarily on the role of the executive branch in establishing regulations and in issuing executive orders.

A regulation is a policy statement issued by a state agency through the executive authority granted to it by the legislature (National Health Council, 1979). For example, the procedures for allocating funding for community mental health programs are described in the regulations developed by state agencies.

The process of establishing regulations is typically initiated by one of two events: the legislature passes a law that requires an executive agency to develop regulations to meet the law's mandate or the agency itself determines the need to update, clarify, or rescind existing regulations. Proposed regulations generally must be published in the state register, after which state agencies allow a period of public review and comment. Behavior analysts could present relevant information and advice to the agency staff at these times. As with the legislative process, the earlier that involvement is begun, the more likely it will succeed in shaping outcome (Hannah, Czyzewski & Boudreau, 1988).

State agencies also establish policy through executive orders. State department directors and their staffs, for example, prepare policy letters, department policy handbooks, long-range programs, and financial plans. Within this system, human service departments generally welcome information and advice from service providers, consumers, and special interest groups regarding funding, program delivery, and licensing issues. Most state departments have a number of advisory committees that regularly solicit information and recommendations from the public. Examples of such committees are governor's advisory commissions on mental health and retardation, planning councils on developmental disabilities, and citizens and consumer advisory boards for state mental health institutions.

By serving on or contributing to these advisory committees, commissions, councils, and boards, behavior analysts will have formal and informal opportunities to shape policy. Formal opportunities involve preparing committee recommendations regarding state policy as in developing a rehabilitation treatment model for state psychiatric hospitals and community support programs. Other formal opportunities involve directing moneys toward research projects of interest; for instance, some advisory boards are allocated state funds to award in committee-determined priority areas. More informal opportunities come from meeting and having access to the staff of state executive agencies. These contacts enable behavior analysts to learn of policy plans before formal announcements. In general, good working relationships with state staffs facilitate the acceptance and adoption of behavioral programs.

Behavior analysts can contribute to policymaking in several important ways, both in the legislative and executive processes by (a) creating conceptual analyses relevant to policy issues, (b) developing policy-relevant research information, and (c) communicating this information in concert with appropriate advocacy organizations. Each of these contributions is described in more detail in the next three sections.

CREATING POLICY-RELEVANT CONCEPTUAL ANALYSES: THE BEHAVIOR ANALYST'S ROLE

Policy formulation, adoption, and implementation rest, at least partly, on particular conceptualizations of human behavior. Hence, conceptual analyses cut across all aspects of the policymaking process. These analyses are pertinent to questions such as: "How can incentives be used to limit health care expenditures?" "What types of information do consumers need?" "What types of regulations are more likely to increase compliance with safety procedures?" Final policy adoption and related strategies for implementation obviously represent a series of compromises among competing interests in answer to such questions. The questions, the answers, the compromises, and the strategies will be understood best and acted on most effectively if a conceptualization of human behavior is available as a guiding framework for pointing to the boundaries of compromise and the limits of implementation strategies. Just as too many compromises can weaken a policy, so too can faulty conceptualizations of human behavior.

Behavior analysts may find that creating policy-relevant conceptual analyses is uniquely reinforcing. Developing conceptual analyses of social problems and the policy-related solutions is similar to scientific activities in basic and applied research. Thus, activity in the public arena and in the scientific community need not be separate activities. Both focus on human behavior and have much in common, although their audiences are quite different. For example, a conceptual analysis of current policy-controlled incentives and disincentives for cost savings in the health care system may find audiences among state and federal legislators, state and federal agencies (e.g., the National Institutes of Health), and in scientific journals (e.g., the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*). Although behavior analysts must attend to important differences in language and operating procedures, they need not assume vastly disparate roles in meeting the needs of such diverse audiences as long as they are guided by a coherent and consistent conceptualization of human behavior.

Because a behavioral conceptual system is often different from the implicit conceptual system of policymakers, behavior analysts will sometimes reach conclusions and make recommendations that put them potentially in conflict with others. For example, in the consumer policy arena, the guiding conceptualizations of human behavior place a heavy emphasis on hypothetical cognitive processes and structures, especially as the latter interconnect biology, environment, and behavior. These consumer policies focus primarily on information, its processing (e.g., expectancies and attributions), and consumer choice, while giving insufficient consideration to the role played by consumer-environment interactions and the contexts in which they occur that produce related behavior called cognitive in the first place.

Not only may behavior analysts find themselves challenging the conceptualization of public policy at a theoretical level, but also at a pragmatic level. For instance, behavior analysts may point out that nonbehavioral conceptualizations divert attention from controversial matters involving consumer behavior (e.g., the importance of regulating certain forms of advertising) to less useful concerns about nonbehavioral constructs and processes (i.e., consumer purchasing traits and how consumers process information from advertisements). Similarly, behavior analysts are likely to point out that the preservation of certain myths (e.g., the sovereign consumer; Galbraith, 1983) maintains important aspects of the status

quo for those unconcerned about con-
sumers. Thus, by pressing for analyses of
environmental contingencies, behavior
analysts are likely to find themselves
competing with incompatible conceptual
paradigms underlying the policy forma-
tion of others, as well as challenging some
of the policies that emerge from those
conceptualizations (Winett, 1986).

Behavior analysis, as a field, has been
empirical and pragmatic. Thus, behavior
analysts who supply only conceptual
analyses for the development and imple-
mentation of public policy are apt to feel
uncomfortable. In contrast, economists
work with similar concepts, yet their pol-
icy-relevant pronouncements are accept-
ed by peers. The conceptual behavior of
behavior analysts often produces aver-
sive consequences, especially if the pro-
nouncements are not supported by data.
Thus, behavior analysts who engage in
conceptual analyses regarding public pol-
icy should be careful about how they
characterize their recommendations.
Moreover, they should also urge the in-
tegration of both conceptual activity and
pragmatic, research-based action at dif-
ferent levels of policy development,
pointing out that conceptual analyses and
empirical analyses ought not to be sep-
arated in an integrated science.

In summary, the behavior analyst's role
as conceptualizer of public policy lies
within the usual practices of any scientific
analysis. The nature of behavior analysis,
however, with its emphasis on environ-
mental context and empirical validation,
often results in behavior analysts advo-
cating for certain policies and policy im-
plementation strategies. A specific ex-
ample of this interaction between the
conceptual and the practical is provided
in the following example.

An Illustration

Public policy in consumer affairs en-
tails the delineation of effective strategies
for informing and influencing con-
sumers. Behavior analysis is being used
as a framework for conceptualizing con-
sumer problems and for devising solu-
tions to those problems. One particularly

important application of behavior anal-
ysis in this arena is the development of
projects to help consumers shop more
nutritiously and economically (see Wi-
nett & Kramer, 1987). A behavior sys-
tems approach to the issues has been
developed that employs the behavior-
analytic conceptual system, while at the
same time borrowing pragmatic elements
from social-cognitive theory (Bandura,
1986), social marketing research (Man-
off, 1985), and communication princi-
ples (Wright & Huston, 1983)—all across
a multi-level perspective (see Winett,
1986).

This behavior-analytic systems frame-
work differs markedly from the domi-
nant, cognitive perspective on commu-
nication and consumer behavior (see
Engel & Blackwell, 1982), as well as from
the legal and economic theories that fo-
cus on the interaction of information and
behavior (See Beales, Craswell, & Salop,
1981). Instead, this framework has more
in common with recent community
health promotion models (e.g., Solomon
& Maccoby, 1984) that have been used
to develop the content, format, and prin-
ciples of specific information strategies
(e.g., television modeling, feedback) that
have been tested in field experimenta-
tion.

On the basis of the behavior-analytic
conceptual system used in research on
consumer food consumption and expen-
diture, results suggest that the strategies
were effective in helping consumers re-
duce fat intake and increase complex car-
bohydrates, while saving money in the
process. Indeed, consumers can easily
shop nutritiously and for less money in
any store, and can even use some simple
shopping heuristics (e.g., lists) to reduce
costs further. This, in turn, provides sup-
port for the general conceptual frame-
work and advocacy position derived in
what is purported to be a difficult do-
main—dietary change in the general pop-
ulation (e.g., Puska et al., 1985). All these
activities are compatible with current ac-
ademic pursuits and illustrate a good mix
of both scientific conceptualization and
methods for dealing with public policy
issues.

CREATING POLICY-RELEVANT RESEARCH INFORMATION: THE BEHAVIOR ANALYST'S ROLE

Local, state, and federal officials have not been particularly eager to seek out, or even accept, the expertise of behavior analysts or of knowledge derived from behavior-analytic research. Behavior-analytic research is often conducted in isolation from the public policy arena, and behavior analysts are infrequently called upon to publicize their findings or pursue the adoption of practices derived from those findings. Among the many reasons is that the contexts in which research is designed and implemented are not the contexts in which public policy officials operate.

A richer context for behavior-analytic research and development should be developed—one in which public policy officials and community members and organizations are actively involved in research design and implementation. Public policy officials and community organizers are often very effective behavior change agents, because they understand social support systems and know how to mobilize constituencies. Understanding the concepts, principles, and procedures of behavior analysis alone is insufficient in these regards. What is needed is collaboration between behavior analysts and those concerned with public policy. Behavior analysts can supply useful concepts, principles, research methods, and procedures, while policymakers and community members can help behavior analysts become more sensitive to community values and norms. This combination of behavior analysis and community sensitivity could produce culturally-relevant policies that have a greater likelihood of being effectively implemented.

Despite calls for system change at both the community and societal level, too few behavior-analytic interventions go beyond implementation with individuals or small groups. In order to work more successfully within larger social systems, behavior analysts need to collaborate with community-based organizations and public policy officials. In working together to identify social issues and their possible solutions, the capabilities of behavior analysts can augment a community's ability to solve its problems and can strengthen culturally-sanctioned behavior change strategies.

Social change is an ongoing process, but change is not always quickly forthcoming. Even the active promotion of social change through collaborative efforts can span several years. Efficient and effective change, though, is only likely to come about through lobbying efforts by advocacy groups and other influential consortiums of concerned citizens. Hence, it is incumbent upon behavior analysts to align themselves with groups having similar political or social objectives, such as highway safety organizations, consumer groups, or disability and welfare rights coalitions. Such collaborative efforts on broader scales of analysis may produce effective means for using behavior change techniques to combat abuses of power, whether political, economic, or social; helping disenfranchised groups gain access to resources; and assisting communities to realize their potential for change and improvement. A specific illustration of an interactive framework for conducting policy research follows.

An Illustration

A variety of regulatory policies specify the consequences for noncompliance with established standards for health and safety, as illustrated by state laws that promote child passenger safety through public information about using approved safety devices and fines for noncompliance. Introduction of child passenger safety legislation in Kansas, and later introduction of a similar bill in Illinois, provided an opportunity for researchers to develop and communicate relevant research information (Fawcett et al., 1987).

Coleman's (1972) framework for conducting policy research studies was used to develop the information. The researchers first identified parties interested in policy outcomes. In Kansas, these

included the bill's sponsor, the medical lobby, and a highway safety advocacy organization. Next, the researchers visited with these parties to determine their interests and information needs. In Kansas, the bill's sponsor was particularly interested in information about prevalence of the problem and whether constituents would be willing to support government intervention in this area. Thus, direct observations were made of the prevalence of appropriate and inappropriate seating of children under 5 years of age in several locations in the state before deliberations on the bill. A random digit dialing survey was conducted to obtain information about the social significance of child passenger safety and the acceptability of state laws requiring use of approved car seats.

The results showed very low usage rates and moderate support for legislation in both states. In Kansas, the researchers presented the findings in a crucial committee hearing. In Illinois, a letter was sent to randomly selected senators as part of a controlled experiment. Anecdotal evidence in Kansas and experimental evidence in Illinois (Jason & Rose, 1984) suggested that the information helped influence legislator support for the respective bills.

These policy research projects, especially the choice of behavioral measures and rating questions, were guided by contacts with interested parties. For example, in Illinois, the researchers worked closely with the Illinois Child Passenger Safety Association which was formed for the purpose of advocating this legislation. Interest in the policy research was heightened by communicating with interested parties before, during, and after the research study.

COMMUNICATING POLICY-RELEVANT INFORMATION: THE ADVOCATE'S ROLE

When behavior analysts find themselves in the role of advocating a public policy and communicating policy-relevant information, they need to be sensitive to several issues. First, when attempting empirically-based social interventions, behavior analysts need to attend to the orientations, roles, and skills of others involved in the process of social change. To bring about effective change, behavior analysts should not work alone. Instead, they should seek out natural allies among community groups, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties.

Second, when becoming involved in these activities, behavior analysts should examine the style in which they interact with others, especially those who are not behavior analysts. As professionals, behavior analysts are naturally drawn to their technical and conceptual vocabulary, and hence speak more abstractly than is the norm. To communicate effectively in the public arena, though, behavior analysts need to speak in common everyday language.

Third, behavior analysts should realize that program evaluation data often must be collected and analyzed quickly. The lead time before such data are required can be quite short. The luxury of spending months in designing, analyzing, and interpreting research results is rarely possible in a political context; issues often arise quickly and data are needed as soon as possible.

Fourth, behavior analysts should expect opposition from those who disagree with the alternatives suggested by a study's conclusions. A common strategy for reducing support for a bill is to criticize the investigators or studies supporting the bill. Interchanges between legislators and researchers often occur during hearings; moreover, subsequent inquiries directed at an investigator's administrative superiors may be expected (see, for example, Fawcett et al., 1987). The same case of child passenger safety legislations is used to illustrate issues involved in collaborating with advocacy groups to communicate research relevant to particular legislation.

An Illustration

Somewhat different communication and advocacy strategies were used in

Kansas and Illinois. In Kansas, the lobbyist for the Kansas Medical Society arranged for the researchers to speak at a public hearing before the House Committee on Public Health and Welfare. In Illinois, the Child Passenger Safety Association (ICPSA) was formed to work for passage of the bill. The researchers in both states worked closely with the respective advocacy organizations. The texts of the presentation and letter were critiqued by nonresearchers, and descriptive language was substituted for identified jargon and technical terms.

The data had to be gathered quickly if they were to be used at all. In Kansas, for example, only two weeks elapsed between the initial conversation with the bill's sponsor and a crucial committee hearing in which data were to be presented. However, committee members opposed to the bill denounced the involvement of the investigators (employees of a state university) and attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to convince university officials that such research constituted improper scholarly activity. In Illinois, data were well received by policymakers, and requested by the governor's office before the bill was signed.

As illustrated here, behavior analysts can work closely with relevant advocacy organizations in communicating their research findings in a clear and timely fashion. They should expect, however, that those opposed to positions supported by their findings—whether advocacy organizations or policymakers—will both publicly and privately criticize the research and the researchers. Thus, sources of professional support for conducting policy analysis, research, and advocacy is thereby needed, which is the topic of the following and final section of the Task Force Report.

MAXIMIZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANALYSIS, RESEARCH, AND ADVOCACY: A POTENTIAL ROLE FOR ABA

Discussion so far has focused on ways in which behavior analysts—acting as individuals—can assist in the formation and adoption of public policy. It is clear that timely and well-received input can be effective in a given situation; nevertheless, consistent and long-term success may be more likely when effort is coordinated through a functionally-organized unit. ABA, the primary association representing both the scientific and professional fields of behavior analysis, can potentiate the impact of its members in the policymaking arena. In fact, to the extent that public policy regulates important behaviors within the culture (i.e., behaviors that can have beneficial or detrimental results for the culture at large as well as specific groups or individuals), ABA has the institutional opportunity to organize expertise uniquely suited to developing humane and effective contingency systems. In the short run, active participation by ABA might significantly influence the outcome of policymaking at any of the four stages outlined earlier. In the long run, it may contribute greatly toward "behavioralizing the culture" (Michael, 1980).

Recently, ABA has initiated activities that may eventually affect public policy, such as providing testimony of behavior analysts during state legislative hearings and by formally recognizing the accomplishments of elected officials. A number of additional initiatives are possible at the organizational level, and well-developed models already exist within other professional associations. For example, in the area of human services, both the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association devote considerable resources toward the solution of problems ranging from guild issues to laws affecting recipients of services. It is unlikely that ABA will develop a system analogous to those found in AMA or APA in the foreseeable future; still, relevant examples can be found. The Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy (AABT), an organization whose size and general goals are similar to those of ABA, has developed several mechanisms for facilitating behavioral representation on policy matters relevant to the public interest. A description of AABT's public policy functions is per-

tinent to a discussion of the potential role that ABA might play in the areas of policy analysis, research and advocacy.

An Illustration

The AABT Committee on Legislative Affairs (COLA) is designed to provide information to policymakers on matters related to behavior therapy and to facilitate appropriate use and growth of behavior analysis (Jones et al., 1983). Key components of COLA include the Steering Committee, Policy Liaisons (PLs), AABT Experts, and Legislative and Executive Policymakers. The Steering Committee functions as the contact between AABT members who generate analysis and research information and policymakers. Information requests, however, are initially prompted by PLs. The basic information provision process is as follows: (1) PL contacts key policymakers to determine information needs; (2) PL refers specific information requests to the Steering Committee; (3) the Steering Committee solicits research information from AABT experts; (4) the Steering Committee reviews information from experts and sends it directly to policymakers; and (5) PL contacts policy makers to evaluate the information's usefulness and impact on policy.

COLA actively recruits AABT members to serve on the committee. The committee is dependent upon volunteers who act as steering committee members, PLs, AABT experts, and special consultants on selected issues and projects. Efforts are made to enlist membership support in a variety of ways. The recruitment process includes informing members through convention workshops and symposia about policy issues, the policy development process, and ways to contribute pertinent information on legislative and executive policy issues. Also, *The Behavior Therapist* regularly publishes a "Call for Action" to solicit membership participation as PLs and experts. COLA also encourages student involvement in policy analysis, research, and advocacy.

The process for interacting with policymakers includes PLs prompting poli-

cymakers and their staffs for the information needs policymakers may have regarding issues under discussion. PLs also are responsible for monitoring interim study sessions, special task forces, subcommittee assignments, bills, and the media to identify and track policy initiatives. Ideally, PLs work together in teams within a state to reduce time expenditures for individuals and to extend opportunities for involvement.

When a request for information is received by the Steering Committee, AABT experts are asked to submit information in a variety of formats, including issue papers, research bibliographies, and reviews. AABT experts have provided information on such topics as behavior management procedures, including seclusion, restraint, time-out, and aversive control; legal issues involving the insanity defense, informed consent, and confidentiality privileges; treatment issues for a variety of problems, including alcohol and drug abuse, adolescent sex offenses, adolescent suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder; and social policy issues involving Medicaid/Medicare reimbursement for behavior therapy, effects of preschool education, day programs for persons with chronic mental illness, and teacher competency testing.

COLA members also assess how information provided to policymakers affects policy outcomes. The final policy is compared with the content of the information provided in order to assess impact. Policymakers are also asked to evaluate the usefulness of AABT's information. The incorporation of information into research reports, rules and regulations, and published testimony have been the most salient outcome. ABA members might benefit from collaborating with COLA members in such attempts to influence public policy.

CLOSING COMMENTARY

A great deal of behavior-analytic research has clear and direct relevance to policy formation and implementation at local, state, and national levels. Thus, behavior analysts become involved in pub-

lic policy issues because the results of the research they pursue for humanitarian and scientific interests have important policy implications. During the course of their professional activity (e.g., presenting and publishing papers), behavior analysts may find that they can inadvertently influence policy, especially if a project is reported by the mass media at a timely point (e.g., if cost-effective results of a prevention program appear during hearings on budget allocations for health promotion).

Moreover, in their selection of research topics, their definitions of the pertinent issues, the intervention methods, and the levels at which they intervene, behavior analysts often evince allegiances to certain values and to intellectual and political positions pertinent to public policy initiatives. These values and positions contribute to the policy agendas even when behavior analysts aspire to scientific neutrality. As behavior analysts become enmeshed in public policy issues in this way, they must beware of losing their scientific objectivity. Members of the discipline must hold to their scientific values during the conduct of research and communication of findings to the mass media and at congressional hearings (Coleman, 1972). More specifically, they should avoid presentation styles (e.g., being flamboyant and failing to qualify outcomes) that remove them from their roles as scientists. A code of ethics for behavior analysts working in the public policy area might help with these concerns.

The typical route into the public policy arena is often indirect, because the pursuit of applied behavior-analytic research is usually the primary concern— its relevance for public policy is not an intended outcome. Another route of behavior-analytic influence in the public policy arena, however, is more direct: behavior analysts may develop research knowledge for the purposes of influencing policy.

To date, though, most behavior analysts are not trained to function effectively in public policy activities. Hence, information is needed about the policy process, including methodologies involving cost-benefit analysis and the assessment of community norms and values. In addition, as nicely illustrated by AABT's Committee on Legislative Affairs, behavior analysts need to educate policy makers about the potential of behavior-analytic research and to educate them about policy issues of interest. This includes gaining specific knowledge about issues, research findings, and implications, as well as general education on the policy process and the application of behavioral principles to policy issues.

To facilitate their participation in the legislative process, behavior analysts should familiarize themselves with the multitude of available "how to" materials. These materials include information and instructions on presenting oral testimony (Jones, 1976; Marlowe, 1978; Takanashi, 1981), writing letters to editors and/or public officials about legislative or other issues (Dorken, 1977, 1981; Johnson, 1982; Seekins, Fawcett, & Mathews, 1987), and preparing a legislative briefing paper (Johnson, 1982; Marlowe, 1978). Although this literature provides what appears to be sound, logical advice and practical protocols, few empirical data have been provided to support the effectiveness of the protocols. Clearly more research is needed in this area.

Behavior analysts who are active in public policy must also be careful not to alienate themselves from their employers (e.g., state supported universities), and must be prepared for the consequences of their policy-related activities. Employers are unlikely to look favorably on employees who take policy stances in conflict with the organization's values or that are generally controversial. This is true regardless of how empirically based a position may be. The negative consequences for taking public positions on policy matters can range from being seen as a "troublemaker" to loss of employment. Conversely, when policy positions are taken that are consistent with an employer's organizational values, cynicism may accrue among others who question the motivation involved.

In summary, behavior analysts will have more influence on cultural practices if they work in the public policy arena than if they work as individual clinicians or applied behavior analysts. For instance, establishing a state's regulations on behavior management in mental health facilities or in facilities for persons with developmental disabilities can have a far broader impact than any individual intervention or research project. Further, groups sympathetic to behavior-analytic applications in specific public policy arenas can provide access to important consequences such as funding or recognition.

More strategically, whether behavior analysts choose to initiate public policy or follow policy initiatives already introduced, the earlier their involvement in the process, the more likely their success. In addition, behavior analysts should collaborate with other organized groups interested in similar policy outcomes. There is strength in numbers, particularly when the numbers represent a block of votes (Harmon, 1976; Johnson, 1982). And finally, influencing public policy should be viewed as a long-term project requiring advance preparation, sustained commitment and energy, and an abundance of patience (DeLeon et al., 1982; Dorken, 1977, 1981; Ginsberg, Kilburg & Buklad, 1983).

Many behavior analysts will invariably find themselves in the policy arena, whether initially driven by policy issues or as a consequence of their specific research interests. Some behavior analysts may pursue research on the very issue of how best to influence public policy. At issue, then, is not whether behavior analysts should become involved in public policy, but rather how we can most effectively and efficiently assist those who enact and implement policies that affect the general welfare. In the end, what behavior analysts can contribute is a more functional model for concerned citizen scientists.

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