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Interesting Times: Practice, Science, and Professional Associations in Behavior Analysis

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Neither practitioners nor scientists appear to be fully satisfied with the world's largest behavior-analytic membership organization. Each community appears to believe that initiatives that serve the other will undermine the association's capacity to serve their own needs. Historical examples suggest that such discord is predicted when practitioners and scientists cohabit the same association. This is true because all professional associations exist to address guild interests, and practice and science are different professions with different guild interests. No association, therefore, can succeed in being all things to all people. The solution is to assure that practice and science communities are well served by separate professional associations. I comment briefly on how this outcome might be promoted.

Key words: practice, science, guild issues, professional associations

There is a Chinese curse which says, "May he live in interesting times." Like it or not, we live in interesting times.[1]

Robert F. Kennedy, June 7, 1966, in a speech given in Cape Town, South Africa

These are interesting times for behavior analysis and its largest membership organization, the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI). It is a matter of public record that some professionals who provide behavior-analytic services believe that ABAI does not properly support their efforts (e.g., Johnston, 2011b) because it is dominated by scholarly interests that do not understand or care sufficiently about practice (e.g., Johnston, 2011a). One consequence of this perception is the recent formation of a splinter[2] organization, the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA), which is devoted exclusively to practitioner interests.

Less widely known is that similar discontent exists among many of ABAI's scientist members. Scientists have, in recent years, quietly lodged a number of complaints with the ABAI Executive Council over matters such as a paucity of organizational strategic initiatives that focus on science and the format and quality-control procedures of the annual convention

Few topics in contemporary behavior analysis elicit such strong emotions as the relationships involving practitioners, scientists, and professional organizations. The guiding perspective of the present essay is that behavior analysts should approach such topics *as behavior analysts*, that is, by considering the behaviors involved and the contexts that give rise to them. This may be the only hope for minimizing intergroup hostilities that have dominated our field's recent history. I hope that any shortcomings of this essay will be seen as reflecting faults in my wisdom and wordsmithing rather than hostility toward any relevant professional community. The views expressed here are my own and do not represent any official of any professional association. I thank Mike Perone for encouraging the development of this article; Linda LeBlanc and Kate Saunders for helpful comments on its draft form; and many people on both sides of the practice–science divide for teaching me much about the relevant issues.

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[1] Although widely known in the Western world, the curse mentioned by Kennedy is not documented in any Chinese source. It is thought to be either apocryphal or perhaps a loose translation of an actual proverb that states, "'It's better to be a dog in a peaceful time than be a man in a chaotic period" (see http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A807374).

[2] When applied to organizations, the term *splinter* can carry unflattering connotations (e.g., in the sense of *militant* or *extremist*) that are not intended here. Throughout the essay I use *splinter* only in the descriptive sense of *breakaway*.

program. Some scientists appear to perceive ABAI as dominated by practitioner interests and thus as incapable of understanding or caring sufficiently about science. As one group of scientists put it in a 2010 letter to the ABAI Executive Council, many scientists have begun to wonder whether "ABAI remains a good investment and a suitable home for behavior analysts with interests and concerns like ours."

Somehow, it seems, ABAI has managed to satisfy neither practitioners nor scientists,[3] with each community regarding the other as a source of its respective unhappiness. Surveying the practice–science divide in ABAI, a person of my generation can only observe that it was not supposed to be like this. Skinner (e.g., 1953) set the early tone for an integrated field of behavior analysis, one in which the boundaries between science and practice were supposed to be porous, and by and large the first practitioners of applied behavior analysis embodied this ideal (e.g., Michael, 1980; Rutherford, 2009). When I entered behavior analysis in the early 1980s, my mentors spoke affectionately of the unifying influence of a standard set of theoretical assumptions, methodological precepts, and fundamental principles. The more I learned about behavior analysis, the more I came to believe that this common conceptual framework would provide behavior analysts of all types, including both practitioners and scientists, with something of shared interest to talk about and a common functional language with which to discuss it. I also learned how, in fields like mainstream psychology, basic science has little in common with applied science, which in turn has little in common with front-line service delivery. The long-standing discord between practice and science in the American Psychological Association (APA) (e.g., McKeachie, 1966; Routh, 1994; West, 2008) seemed an obviously cautionary tale regarding the hazards of conceptual disunity.

A quarter of a century later, behavior analysis remains as good an example as can be identified in the human sciences of conceptual unity from bench to bedside. Compare, for example, the topics and language of discourse in textbooks written for scientists (e.g., Mazur, 2009) and practitioners (e.g., Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Clearly, the shared conceptual, methodological, and principles foundations that were so obvious in my youth remain prominent across all parts of behavior analysis today.

So what went wrong? Why did our shared conceptual foundations not insulate us from the practice–science divide that fractured APA? In this essay I contend that, ideals of unity like those I harbored in my youth notwithstanding, such a divide is fully anticipated once the contingencies that govern practice and science communities are examined. I do not contend that conceptual unity is useless to behavior analysis as a field, only that it is orthogonal to the issues that hold professional associations together. An examination of histori-

[3] Some caveats: First, I do not pretend to know what all practitioners or all scientists think about the issues addressed in this essay, nor to my knowledge are any relevant actuarial data available. I do, however, assume that most readers are familiar (through hearsay and various public meetings and electronic and print communications) with the general problem of the practice–science divide in behavior analysis, especially as it relates to ABAI. Second, due to space constraints and a lack of satisfactory alternative phrasing, I sometimes speak of *practitioner* and *scientist* as if they were homogeneous and mutually exclusive categories. Neither thing is necessarily true (not all practitioners or scientists agree with one another, and a some individuals qualify as both), and I regret any impression of caricature that may be conveyed through the use of this linguistic convenience. Third, I use the label *scientist* generically, that is, to include all types of behavior-analytic scientists, including basic and applied (a point that will be emphasized later).

cal examples and of the contingencies of survival that govern practice and science will suggest that practitioners and scientists are not destined to coexist comfortably within a single association. I will conclude by arguing that the best solution to contemporary rancor between practitioners and scientists is to ensure that each community has a strong, independent association representing its interests.

PROFESSIONAL GUILD ISSUES

Guild is based on an Old Norse word meaning "payment." Contemporary practitioner associations have their roots in organizations of craftsmen, or guilds, that can be traced back at least 2,300 years to Greek-influenced Egypt (guilds also arose in many other parts of the preindustrial world, including India, Europe, China, portions of Africa, and the Middle East). The specific actions of guilds have varied across eras, trades, and political jurisdictions, but in most cases attempts have been made to control the flow of practitioners into a given profession (including by specifying the type of training needed for membership) and to enhance members' ability to compete for work opportunities and favorable compensation (Brentano, 1969). In these ways, craft guilds may be thought of as setting the stage for modern labor unions.

In contemporary psychology and other fields, the phrase *guild issues* has been applied to concerns about credentialing, employment opportunities, and especially systems of compensation (e.g., Hayes & Heiby, 1996; McKeachie, 1966; Routh, 1994). Given the close historical connections between behavior analysis and psychology, many readers will be familiar with the increasingly guild-focused evolution of clinical psychology (McKeachie, 1966; Routh, 1994; West, 2008). Especially since around World War II, professional organizations such as the APA have devoted considerable attention to matters such as accrediting graduate programs, creating licensing standards, and political lobbying in local jurisdictions to ensure that these standards are linked to legal systems that govern payment for services (Routh, 1994). In general, then, guild mechanisms address factors that influence a member of the profession's ability to find work and receive favorable compensation for performing it.

Practice Versus Science

Scientists sometimes assume that guild issues are incompatible with their interests. For example, in the 1960s Arthur Melton wrote to a group of experimental psychologists to express concern about the extent to which APA had begun to emulate the guild model of professional associations that is exemplified by the American Medical Association (AMA):

> It seems to me that … the character of APA has taken a sharp turn toward the AMA-type professional society or guild and away from the scientific and professional society that is concerned with the advancement of a body of knowledge and its technological applications. … The emphasis is ever more on what APA can do for psychologists and less on what it can do to strengthen itself and its technical applications. … Guild-type thinking is the antithesis of what I and many other [scientists] consider as an appropriate or comfortable intellectual home for our scientific interests. (quoted in McKeachie, 1966, p. 372)

The perception that guild issues are antithetical to science is bolstered by a traditional dissociation of clinicians from science. In actuarial terms, it has been argued, clinicians tend not to understand the science that established a field's conceptual foundations, and considerable evidence indicates that research has limited impact on how clinical services are provided (e.g., Barlow, Hayes, & Nelson, 1984; Kazdin, 1994). Yet among psychological scientists, the most vivid evidence that guild issues are incompatible with science comes

from APA's own history. Best known today are events following a 1945 reorganization of APA that was intended to make APA more practitioner focused. Among the outcomes was that practitioners gained majority representation within APA governance and that the annual convention became less friendly to science[4] (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995; West, 2008). More recently, the perception that a guild focus undermines APA's ability to support and represent science has contributed to the well-known formation of several science-focused splinter groups, including the Psychonomic Society in 1959 and the Association for Psychological Science in 1988 (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995; West, 2008). Yet concern over the implications for science of a practitioner focus are almost as old as APA itself, as evidenced by the formation of earlier science-focused splinter groups (including the Experimentalists in 1904, only 12 years after APA's founding, and the Psychological Round Table in 1936), as well as by a failed attempt in 1948 to withdraw Division 3 (Experimental Psychology) from APA (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995).

SCIENCE IS A PROFESSION, TOO

An interesting contemporary development is the linguistic conflation of the terms *professional* and *practitioner*. As psychology has become more guild focused, guild issues have increasingly been seen as defining a *professional* psychologist. The same thinking now pervades behavior analysis: Shook (1993) has described certification of practitioners as the "*professional* [italics added] credential" (p. 87) in behavior analysis, and when an association of behavior-analytic practitioners was founded in 2006 to address guild issues, it was called the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts.

Largely overlooked, by both practitioners and scientists, is the fact that science also is a profession (Snyder, 2011). A *profession* is simply "any vocation or business" (http://www.dictionary.com), and practice and science both are ways of making a living. It is difficult to forget the role of practice as a vocation because one measure of success in practice involves billable hours, which can come and go in real time depending on a host of factors. The role of science as a vocation can be overlooked because it often is tied to salaried government (e.g., university) positions and extramural grant support, both of which were available in reasonably adequate supply during much of the past 70 years or so. But this was not always the case (e.g., Stokes, 1997). In Francis Bacon's time, only the independently wealthy, or those lucky enough to find a generous private patron, could count on having adequate time and resources to pursue science full time. In *The New Atlantis*, Bacon (1627/2010) famously imagined a world in which science was a socially valued way of making a living. This world finally began to emerge some 200 years later (Snyder, 2011), but it took both the Industrial Revolution and the unresolved politics of a highly technological global war to create the reliable employment opportunities for scientists that today are taken for granted (e.g., Stokes, 1997).

As a profession, science must confront its own guild issues, and some historical roots of modern "science guild" issues can be identified. As early as around 1200, some of the first European universities arose from guilds of students and teachers (Rushdall, 1895), although it should be noted that universities of

[4] Among the early convention complaints were that too little time was allotted to scientific presentations, that sessions were not organized in a way that best supported scientific discourse, and even, for a time, that the use of slides was prohibited (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995).

the time were not yet centers of scientific research. In the 1700s and 1800s, some of the first modern scientific societies were founded (Snyder, 2011), yet in many cases these predated the emergence of regular employment for scientists; thus, for some time the connections between guild issues and scientist associations were tenuous. Indeed, the term *scientist* was coined only in 1833, and was not in common use until many years afterward (Snyder, 2011).

Professional associations became involved in the guild issues of science by the early- to mid-1800s, as the opportunity to share theory and data with other scientists became integral, not just to scientific progress, but also to the professional advancement of individual scientists. Scientific associations in many cases provided relevant opportunities through publishing journals and hosting annual meetings. Scientific associations also began to lobby government officials to secure funding for research, and in some cases to offer grants and prizes to support and recognize research (Snyder, 2011). In 1915, with employment for scientists concentrating in universities, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was founded, and within a few years it began to function explicitly as a guild or union (e.g., by protecting the self-regulation of academic work and principles of academic freedom; Menand, 2001).

Scientists, then, are professionals who, like all professionals, must be concerned with gaining and maintaining profitable employment. This has many implications,[5] but for present purposes the point to be emphasized is that, just like practitioners, scientists confront guild issues regularly.

[5] Including that "Association of *Professional* Behavior Analysts" is a bit of a misnomer; a somewhat more fitting term might be "Association of *Practitioner* Behavior Analysts."

WHY THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE PROFESSIONS DO NOT COEXIST COMFORTABLY IN THE SAME ASSOCIATION

It can be argued that professionals congregate in associations at least in part to address shared contingencies of survival. This case is easiest to make for the service-delivery professions, whose fee-for-service contingencies share much with those of the earliest guilds, and whose professional associations have so transparently addressed the flow of new professionals into a field (through credentialing) and the means by which practicing professionals are compensated. Clinical psychology's evolution since the 1940s is a paradigm case, as illustrated by APA's growing guild focus, but further examples are easy to identify. In many service-delivery fields, professional associations are perhaps best known for their successes in pursuing guild issues. Consider, for instance, medicine (American Medical Association), speech and language pathology (American Speech and Hearing Association), social work (National Association of Social Workers), and school psychology (National Association of School Psychologists).

Less obvious is the role of guild issues in scientific associations, an assertion that bears elaboration. As a point of departure, consider that guild actions generally are of two types, consisting either of attempts to control contingencies of professional survival (as per the original craft guilds) or attempts to help members of the guild meet contingencies that are not under the guild's control. In general, the most prominent guild actions of practitioner associations have involved controlling contingencies of survival. For instance, in clinical psychology in the United States, practitioner-focused state psychological associations are mainly responsible for the legislative lobbying that supports licensure and the

institutionalization of various fee-for-service arrangements. By contrast, with a few possible exceptions (e.g., AAUP) associations that serve scientists have not succeeded in dictating the terms of professional survival; hence, they tend not to focus on political lobbying aimed at credentialing and fee-for-service arrangements.

The most prominent guild actions of science associations tend to involve helping scientists to meet preexisting contingencies, in particular those that govern who is hired, retained, and promoted in science positions. These contingencies often hinge on the professional status and influence that scientists accrue through professional presentations and publications. By convening influential scientific meetings and by publishing scientific journals, scientific associations provide some of the means by which members can negotiate these contingencies of survival. The more prestigious an association's convention and journals, the better it helps members who contribute to them meet contingencies of professional survival. It is noteworthy that when the Psychonomic Society was formed as the first science group to break away from APA after the 1945 reorganization, its charter specified only two organizational functions: to host annual meetings and to publish psychological science journals (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995). These two functions promote the general progress of science, to be sure, but they also address major guild issues that confront individual scientists, who must demonstrate their productivity and influence in order to gain promotion, job security, and extramural funding.

Thus, science and practice both are professions, but they are different professions with different concerns (e.g., Rider, 1991). This observation is not unique to the present era or to fields with human-services components as they are conceived of today. For example, Bud and Roberts (1984) explain how in 19th century Great Britain, an increasing demand for chemists in applied settings and attendant legislation intended to regulate professional competence of individuals who perform public health functions (e.g., food safety evaluations) created a crisis in the field of chemistry:

> Were the academics, or the practitioners, the "true" professionals? How were they to be trained? Chemists repeated the discussions about pure and applied science. … Did the principles of science or intimate experience constitute expert knowledge? The academics, while recognizing the essential role of practical experience for complete training, nonetheless asserted the primacy of academic knowledge. Because of their primacy in pure science they saw themselves as the guardians of practising chemistry. Practitioners, by contrast, relegated pure science to the category of interesting background knowledge, which gave a bit of polish, but was hardly essential. (p. 158)

During this era in chemistry, considerable friction arose between "pure" and "practicing" chemists. Within universities, debate raged about whether curricula should emphasize "pure" chemistry or the teaching of specific technologies. Within professional associations, debate focused on how to verify the competence of the growing community of applied chemists who were finding positions in industry and government. The friction was not easily resolved. Attempts were launched to create separate credentials (as early as 1874) and professional associations (as early as 1881) for "practicing" chemists.

Today, of course, "pure" chemists and chemical engineers complete different courses of education and, most pertinent to the present discussion, have separate professional associations (e.g., in the United States, the American Chemical Society and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, respectively). Although it may be risky to generalize too liberally across eras and disciplines,

it is telling that chemistry and chemical engineering apparently could not coexist within a single association despite the fact that they shared a common conceptual system and canon of fundamental principles. Also telling is that the separation of chemistry and chemical engineering into different professional communities was quite rancorous, which shows that the painful struggle between science and practice in APA is not peculiar to psychology.

Previously, I explained how scientists have long been dissatisfied with APA because of its perceived overemphasis on practice. It is important to show, however, that where the practice–science divide is concerned, discomfort runs both ways. In 1896 (only 4 years after APA's founding), psychologists who worked in practical settings were dismayed that Lightner Witmer's Presidential Address on the prospects for a profession of clinical psychology was largely ignored (Routh, 1994). Practitioner dissatisfaction grew to an extent that in 1917 a splinter group, the American Association of Clinical Psychologists (AACP), was organized in part to address the perception that APA was unconcerned with the proper training and credentialing of practitioners.[6] AACP lasted only 2 years, but attempts to reassert practitioner influence on APA continued, including through the formation in 1921 of the Association of Consulting Psychologists and in 1937 of the American Association for Applied Psychology, whose members ultimately helped to engineer APA's reorganization as a more practice-focused association (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995).

The examples of chemistry and psychology raise the question of why practitioners and scientists apparently have difficulty cohabiting a single professional association. I believe that the answer is inherent in the raison d'etre of professional associations: to address contingencies of professional survival. Because scientists and practitioners face different survival contingencies, they want different things from their associations. Scientists and practitioners may coexist within an association to the extent that it can address both sets of needs, but all associations, even large ones, have finite resources, whereas the needs identified by member constituencies are, for all practical purposes, infinite.

Consider, for instance, the goal of practitioners to influence legislation that governs licensure (e.g., Shook, 1993). Legislation of this sort is specific to individual jurisdictions (in the United States, each of the 50 states plus additional jurisdictions such as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), meaning that many parallel lobbying efforts are needed. Even if legislative battles are won, constant vigilance is needed, because rights awarded through today's legislation can be compromised by tomorrow's, and every law that enfranchises one set of service providers will disenfranchise others, who may seek to exert legislative countercontrol. Continued lobbying may be needed to preserve guild protections. For this, more resources always are required. Similarly, scientists might want an association to lobby the federal government to provide increased support for research; to

[6] AACP's founding caused quite a stir. As Wallin (1961) reports, "The decision … to form a new association spread rapidly and became the topic of consuming conversation in cloakrooms and corridors." A sort of town hall meeting was convened at APA to discuss the new development, and "the meeting was characterized by a rather acrimonious debate, the majority of the speakers being bitterly opposed to the formation of another association, which they regarded as separatist in nature and a threat to the parent association" (p. 257). This instance is informative in two ways. First, it suggests that when practitioners and scientists cohabit a single association, any action taken by one community to better its situation may be seen as hostile by the other community. Second, it shows that recent events relevant to ABAI (Johnston, 2011b) have precedent in other fields.

award its own research grants; and to orchestrate ever-better journals and conventions. None of these jobs is ever quite finished, and more resources always are required.

Because practitioners and scientists face different survival contingencies, successes that serve one community of professionals accomplish little for the other community. Advances in credentialing legislation do not help scientists make a living. Great scientific conventions do not help practitioners make a living. Yet every guild-related accomplishment of one community consumes resources that might otherwise be applied to the initiatives of the other community.

When scientists and practitioners clash within an association, therefore, it is because they place different demands on the association's limited resources. Because resources are limited, the most efficient way for a community of professionals, either scientists or practitioners, to meet professional contingencies is to gain control over association governance, thereby allowing the lion's share of resources to be devoted to the group's needs. Acrimony is understandable in such a zero-sum game, because the consequences of failure may be severe. The group that fails to gain control has but two unpleasant short-term alternatives: to accept what it may regard as inadequate investment by the existing association in meeting its needs, or to retreat to an alternative organization with a more favorable focus. The latter may be the less attractive option, because in most cases the alternative organization must be built from the ground up. This process requires considerable time and effort and has uncertain ends, because splinter groups do not always prosper (in psychology, recall AACP). It should not be surprising that when scientists and practitioners disagree about an association's mission, they are more likely to stand and fight than to quietly go their separate ways.

It might be argued that by emphasizing guild issues I have adopted the most cynical possible perspective on professional association membership.[7] Surely people join associations for other reasons as well; most obviously, perhaps they hope to become better at what they do by consuming the association's publications and convention presentations. I don't doubt that this is true, but even self-improvement has guild implications. Let us assume that the professional marketplace rewards competence; in other words, one's capacity to gain and hold satisfying employment correlates with level of expertise. In this sense, the self-improvement opportunities offered by professional associations help individuals to meet existing professional contingencies.

Note, however, that practitioners and scientists, who tend to compete for work in different marketplaces, need different things in order to develop competence. For example, practitioners and scientists may prefer different types of publications and convention sessions. Because associations have limited resources to devote to publications and convention sessions, the potential exists for friction between practitioner and scientist communities in dictating how those resources will be allocated. A self-improvement view of association membership thus complements, rather than challenges, the present analysis.

To summarize thus far, individuals with strong intellectual connections, such as today's behavior-analytic practitioners and scientists, can easily find themselves at odds within a professional association. To be sure, we should celebrate the common

[7] Here I may be lumped with the functionalist political scientist Mayhew (1974), who suggested that members of the United States Congress be understood, not as principled idealists or as devoted public servants, but rather as "single-minded seekers of re-election" (pp. 5–6).

conceptual framework that unites behavior-analytic practitioners and scientists; this is the foundation of intellectual discussions that stimulate innovation in both science and practice (e.g., Mace, 1994; Mace & Critchfield, 2010). Yet intellectual connections of value in the world outside the associations will not obviate the roles that scientists and practitioners play within these associations. People join associations to address contingencies of survival, and people who speak the same behavioral language can, and do, occupy very different professional niches. They therefore require different things of their professional associations.

As a general rule we should expect, in fields that have evolved both scientific and practitioner wings, to see scientists and practitioners either supporting separate professional associations or sharing a single primary association only uncomfortably. Where science and practice coexist within one primary association, we should expect to encounter heated debate about the association's mission and to see each community regarding the other's initiatives as relatively unimportant or counterproductive. These things should be true regardless of whether scientists and practitioners are bound by a common conceptual framework, as in behavior analysis.

Here is a challenge to the reader: Identify, in any field, an association that supports practice and science equally. I do not believe that such an association exists. When behavior-analytic scientists seek to exemplify the dangers to science of a guild-focused association, they often mention APA, but ironically APA represents one of the better scenarios of which I am aware. For instance, APA publishes high-quality scholarly books and a large number of influential scientific journals. It has also lobbied the U.S. government on science issues that include the allocation of research funding and the creation of reasonable standards governing animal research. Yet these successes on behalf of science have not stemmed the flow of scientists out of APA, or changed the fact that scientists have too little influence in APA governance and little presence at APA's conventions, among other issues. The general maxim remains true: Many associations are devoted primarily to science *or* practice, and among those with a dual focus there appears to always exist a dominant community.

From the preceding we may extrapolate that the coexistence of practitioners and scientists within one primary professional association is an unstable state. Associations are, at the core, decision-making bodies, and in most membership organizations decisions reflect something approximating a democratic process in which there exist, by definition, winners and losers. In APA, for example, practitioners tended to be the losers prior to the 1940s and scientists thereafter. At no time during APA's long history, apparently, have scientists and practitioners felt equally well served by that association. Members of the weaker constituency have either fought to gain control of the association's decision-making machinery or, on sensing futility in this effort, separated to form their own groups (e.g., Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995; West, 2008).

SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ABAI

Some Consequences of Practice–Science Friction

ABAI is currently in an unstable state. Historically, academic scientists were the dominant community. I am aware of no confirming historical records, but presumably the smaller practitioner community always felt underserved (e.g., Johnston, 2011b). As employment opportunities have

improved, practitioners have grown more numerous, and therefore better able to express their collective expectations for ABAI. Not surprisingly, practitioners have questioned ABAI's commitment to practitioner interests (e.g., Johnston, 2011a, 2011b), and the organization's scholarly accomplishments appear to have done little to dampen their dissatisfaction. Simultaneously, casual observation suggests that, reminiscent of Arthur Melton's assertions about APA half a century ago, many scientists view initiatives proposed by practitioners as a threat to ABAI's status as a scholarly association. In short, ABAI is recapitulating the practice–science divide that has plagued many fields and their professional associations (e.g., see Rider, 1991).

What should be done about the divide is something about which intelligent people are bound to disagree. Given the long-standing assumption, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, that a shared conceptual framework guarantees professional unity, some readers may be inclined to hold out for a harmonious reconciliation between practitioners and scientists. Historical examples from other disciplines, however, suggest that no association can be all things to all people. Associations work best when they are efficient, and they are most efficient with relatively homogeneous membership.

Across many years now, ABAI's efforts to integrate practitioners and scientists have failed to satisfy its members (Friman, 2010; Members of the Executive Council, 2011). As discord between practitioners and scientists has grown, it has consumed more and more of the time and attention of ABAI's leaders. On the surface this is a good thing, because leaders are chosen expressly to represent the association's members, but in my opinion the practice–science divide creates two unfortunate side effects for leadership. The first is a sort of attention overload. During each of my three terms on the ABAI Executive Council (1986–1989, 2002–2005, and 2005–2008), that body spent considerable time responding to groups of both practitioners and scientists who expressed concern over the association's values and direction. At times the concerns were expressed quite emotionally, which only lengthened the time necessary to address them. I sometimes felt that the Executive Council had too little time left over to perform its regular oversight of ongoing operations.

The second side effect might be called strategic drift. The ABAI Executive Council is supposed to follow a strategic planning process in which, every 5 years, it reviews and updates the association's goals. In the interim, new initiatives by the association are to be evaluated partly in terms of their compatibility with the strategic plan. This allows the leadership's productivity, and the association's progress, to be objectively assessed at regular intervals. During each of my terms on the Executive Council, I saw strategic planning disrupted by pressure from one disgruntled community or another. Without exception, the Executive Council representatives with whom I've been fortunate to serve were talented, organized, and even visionary people, but the fear that one community or another might withdraw from the association was a powerful motivator. Especially during my last term, we enacted a hodgepodge of initiatives that, in my opinion, showed too little strategic coherence. I believe that by attempting to address the guild issues of both practitioners and scientists, we caused the whole to be less than the sum of its parts, and we strayed from the path of leadership accountability, because when there is disagreement about an organization's goals, it is impossible to measure progress toward meeting them (e.g., Daniels & Daniels, 2004).

A Way Forward

For all of the reasons mentioned here, it may be time to abandon the notion that ABAI can be all things to all people and strive for an association with a more restricted set of goals.[8] Perhaps the only basis on which ABAI should continue its efforts to integrate practitioner and scientist communities is on the model of other associations that have served practice and science equally well, but I suggested earlier that such examples are difficult to identify. It makes sense, therefore, to work toward a future in which behavior analysis is represented by separate major associations for practitioners and scientists.

The unanswered question concerns what specifically ABAI will become, and how we are to get from our current contentious state to a future in which strong, separate associations represent practitioners and scientists. In the abstract, ABAI could evolve gradually into either a practitioner association or a scientist association, according to the wishes of its members. As APA's turbulent history shows, however, this type of emergent solution cannot be expected to arise swiftly or without destructive rancor. As long as ABAI's membership is mixed, constituencies that function under different survival contingencies will compete for control of the organizational machinery.

Given the demographics of current membership, if a vote determined the association's direction today, ABAI likely would become a practitioner-focused organization. This would represent a significant departure from ABAI's historical mission of "developing, enhancing, and supporting the growth and vitality of the science of behavior analysis through research, education, and practice" (http://www.abainternational.org/aba/mission.asp). Notice that the mission as currently defined does not ignore practice, but rather addresses it as a means of advancing the science of behavior. This mission has little to do with practitioner guild issues such as (a) to represent the interests of BACB[9]-credentialed professional behavior analysts; (b) to provide support and resources to BACB-credentialed professional behavior analysts; (c) to work with federal, state, governmental, and third party entities to enhance recognition of BACB-credentialed professional behavior analysts; (d) to work with federal, state, governmental, and third party entities to support the needs of BACB-credentialed professional behavior analysts; and (e) to bring professionals, consumers, and vendors together at national and regional meetings. Fortunately, an organization already exists with an explicit focus on these practitioner guild issues: APBA (the preceding list is excerpted from APBA's Web site; see http://www.apbahome.net/about.php). A major argument against a practitioner-focused ABAI, therefore, is the illogic of duplicating APBA's efforts. Informative in this regard was the somewhat perplexed response of

[8] Perhaps a change is not timely but long overdue. Long ago, Marr (1991) wondered, "Why not split up the Association for Behavior Analysis into separate organizations with separate meetings, journals, etc.? Why not also modify the curricula and other aspects of academic training programs so that students don't waste their time on all that basic science or applied stuff they don't need? Why not set up applied programs equivalent to the California 'professional' schools of clinical psychology? What's more, why not do these things now, and avoid all that internecine struggle … that has made the American Psychological Association look ridiculous?" (pp. 185–186). Although these comments were tendered as a sort of Swiftian modest proposal (M. J. Marr, personal communication, June 9, 2011) and should not be digested out of context of the article in which they appeared, some aspects of Marr's hypothetical future might be perceived in our present circumstances. More to the point of the present discussion, had Marr's suggestion about professional associations been embraced 20 years ago, considerable strife within the field might have been avoided.

[9] Behavior Analyst Certification Board®.

many practitioners to ABAI's recent attempts to serve practitioners (e.g., through release of a model licensing act; see Miltenberger, 2010). Why, asked a number of practitioners with whom I am acquainted, was ABAI interfering with issues that clearly "belong" to APBA? In an interesting counterfactual[10] essay, Johnston (2011a) imagined ways in which the ABAI of the past might have taken the lead on key practitioner guild issues. With APBA's founding, however, the opportunity for ABAI to fulfill such a role may have ended.

Another argument against a practitioner-focused ABAI is the uncertainty of what would become of the science community. Unlike practitioners, behavior-analytic scientists have no viable alternative to ABAI. Some existing organizations that are friendly to science serve only a limited geographic region (e.g., Southeastern Association for Behavior Analysis, European Association for Behavior Analysis). Others are truly international in scope but address a limited aspect of behavior science. For example, the Society for Quantitative Analysis of Behavior showcases analytical methods of interest to only a subset of behavioral scientists.

Based on the preceding, a logical conclusion is that ABAI should focus on serving the scientific community. I wish to emphasize that there are many types of science, including basic science, applied science, and what may be termed the "science of practice," which incorporates studies of practice-focused issues like training, implementation, and dissemination. As suggested by ABAI's mission statement, a scientific organization does not have to ignore practice; it simply cannot support science properly and also take up the guild issues that matter to practitioners. By contrast, as explained earlier in this essay, many of the guild issues that matter to scientists are entirely compatible with ABAI's existing mission statement.

In early 2011, ABAI took an important step toward enhancing its focus on science by announcing that it would cease to address certain practitioner guild issues (Members of the Executive Council, 2011). Among ABAI's members, however, remain many practitioners whose interests must be served, and to date ABAI has said little about the importance of a separate practitioner organization like APBA. A logical extension of the recent announcement would be for ABAI to assist its own members in making intelligent choices between ABAI and APBA.

In short, to become a stronger science organization, ABAI might play an active role in its own downsizing by explicitly encouraging interested individuals to join APBA.[11] One can envision a future in which ABAI becomes smaller, APBA becomes larger, and both associations become stronger in serving the specific interests of their members.

[10] Counterfactual writing imagines what might have followed if key historical events had unfolded differently than in the timeline we know.

[11] Not everyone will agree that ABAI should recommend specific practitioner organizations to its members, for two reasons. First, it remains to be seen whether a single organization can adequately address the needs of practitioners in all domains of application (e.g., addiction, autism, public education, and organizational behavior management) or in all legal jurisdictions. Second, in the case of APBA, ABAI's support might imply exclusive endorsement of a single form of professional credential, given that APBA defines its mission as "serving the needs of professional behavior analyst practitioners credentialed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB)" (APBA Web site). I take the position that such issues of potential importance currently are moot because APBA is the only large practitioner organization, and BACB the only widely accepted credentialing body, in behavior analysis today. Should alternatives become available, ABAI could reconsider its position.

For ABAI, the short-term costs of this strategy, in terms of lost member revenue, could be painful, but the long-term benefits to the association should be substantial. As ABAI's membership grows more homogeneous, leadership may spend less time fielding member complaints, which should yield more time for strategic planning on behalf of the remaining members. With increased focus, the association should become more effective in addressing the needs of its remaining members. As a starting point, better conventions and better journals will support behavior-analytic scientists in meeting the survival contingencies that most affect them.

As APBA's membership and resource base grow, so will its capacity to address guild issues that matter to its members. Indeed, APBA may be able to attract a critical mass of practitioners much larger than ABAI ever could. As of this writing, ABAI's Web site (http://www.abainternational.org/chapters.asp) listed combined membership in ABAI affiliate chapters at 13,500, far larger than ABAI's own membership. Most local affiliate groups are practitioner focused, so simple math indicates that many behavior-analytic practitioners are not currently members of ABAI. It is reasonable to assume that ABAI's mixed agenda, including a focus on scientific issues that do not appeal to many practitioners, contributes to this outcome. APBA, with its purity of focus on practitioner issues, may not be limited in the same way.

Two concluding, and optimistic, points will now be advanced. The first point is that the growth, and separation, of one behavior-analytic community should be viewed as a success of the field rather than a failure of a particular professional organization. For an organization like APBA to be warranted, there must exist many practitioners and many opportunities to provide behavior-analytic services. Both of those things have come to pass in recent years, which is good news for behavior analysis overall. Although it is easy to suggest that ABAI's shortcomings gave rise to APBA (e.g., Johnston, 2011a, 2011b), perhaps it is more accurate to say ABAI served as an incubator for a generation of practitioners who went on to accomplish ambitious things that ABAI was never designed to address.

The second point to be advanced is that the greatest beneficiary of achieving separate associations with independent missions will be the field of behavior analysis. Focused associations have a good chance of achieving their respective goals, which means that practitioners and scientists alike should be better off. Just as important, perhaps we can look forward to a future in which conversations between scientists and practitioners do not unfold under a shadow of tumult and political intrigue that has little to do with advancing the integrated field of behavior analysis that Skinner (e.g., 1953) envisioned. Once the struggle for control of ABAI is behind us, there will be more important things to talk about. Practitioners who are interested in science should be welcome in ABAI, and scientists who are interested in practice should be welcome in APBA.[12] In this way, both associations can support the productive intellectual conversations between practitioners and scientists that are so appealing in a field with conceptual coherence.

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[12] This can occur within already-existing membership categories of the two associations.

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