

EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (JEAB)* to appear with the first two digits of the year as "2-0." Although the digits per se mean little in the conduct of a science of behavior (other, perhaps, than changing data sheets or computer software), they should be recognized as a marker in the history of the journal, as was the completion of the editorship of Richard L. Shull with the November, 1999 issue. We all are indebted to Rick for his good stewardship during the publication of Volumes 65 through 72. Volume 1 Number 1 of *JEAB* appeared in January, 1958. In the intervening 42 years between then and this present issue much about our discipline has changed, but the foundations of the discipline and this journal have remained constant. The end and beginning of both an editor's term and a millennium invite pause to examine some of these changes and constancies, to discuss their relation to scientific practice and to the editorial policies of *JEAB*.

The defining features of *JEAB* are the substantive scholarly work described in its pages and the methods used to generate that work. The single-subject research designs and methods of data analysis largely pioneered in this journal are surprisingly uncontroversial. They continue to provide the foundation for empirical analyses of behavior. When the definition of methods is expanded beyond the above, however, to include the ways in which data are organized and conceptualized, the viewpoints become more diverse and often spark controversy among the readership. For example, Zeiler (1984) criticized what he viewed as a dominant, narrow, empirical approach to reinforcement schedules that undermined their potential usefulness in both basic research and application; Staddon (1993) proposed an alternative view of the interplay of data and theory to that conventionally held by many readers of this journal; and Ferster (1978) asked, "Is operant conditioning getting bored with behavior?" Tellingly, but not surprisingly, all of these critiques have appeared in the pages of *JEAB*.

The empirical research, which is the core of the journal, has been limited only by the

interests and focus of those who publish here. The first issue of *JEAB* contained articles on the topics of acquisition of behavior, response maintenance by reinforcement schedules, psychophysics, stimulus control, psychophysiology, grooming responses of animals, and behavioral pharmacology. The range of subjects also was broad: children, chimpanzees, rhesus monkeys, rats, and pigeons. The present issue contains an equally diverse range of topics studied in a variety of subjects. A remarkable feature of our discipline, reflected in this journal in each of the last 72 volumes, is the seemingly unlimited range of empirical and theoretical problems to which single-subject methods can be, and have been, applied. Such applications have resulted in an exciting expansion of the scope of the experimental analysis of behavior.

This scope also has been expanded by the interpretations made of the empirical findings by *JEAB* authors. The limits of what falls within a behavior-analytic interpretation are not established. Individual investigators and reviewers have clearly articulated points of view of this matter, as noted above. The journal has supported a range of behavior-analytic interpretations, and this practice will continue. The trick, of course, is in defining the limits of behavior-analytic interpretation. Throughout *JEAB*'s history, the definition has been empirical, not rule governed; rather, it has been contingency shaped by the seasoned and scientifically sophisticated editorial board members and action editors. This is as it should be.

The adaptation of methods to a range of problems, the expansion of those methods both within the field of behavior analysis proper and in other areas of psychology, and the expectation that problems of importance will be addressed both empirically and conceptually through an environmentally based approach to the study of behavior have brought the experimental analysis of behavior to the present. With the growth over the last 42 years has come a maturing of both method and interpretation, along with significant increases in variation in these arenas. Such variation is as important to the survival

of scientific cultures as it is to species. The fuel for scientific growth is controversy over substantive issues. As a result, the intellectual controversies that arise in the discipline and that are reflected in this journal are welcome indeed as a positive index of the viability of our scientific enterprise.

Arriving at this threshold of the 21st century, two questions arise. One is for the discipline of the experimental analysis of behavior and the other is for its journal—this journal. For the discipline, the question is “where do we go from here?” Although opinions and predictions are interesting exercises (e.g., Lattal & Harzem, 1984), the answer most likely will be forthcoming only with the passing of time. Nonetheless, it is impossible to imagine that much of the research that graces this and forthcoming issues of *JEAB* will not be expansions of problems first articulated in previous issues of the journal. Although this is the necessary stuff of which normal science is made, it is not enough. Growth limited to linear extrapolation of the present will best serve neither the discipline nor the journal.

For the experimental analysis of behavior to thrive in the coming millennium, there must be a renewing influx of new investigators. New investigators bring novel histories that lead to new research areas and to interactions with both basic and applied scientists who work outside our immediate research areas. It is tempting to look to other areas of psychology for new areas of study. Indeed, single-subject research methods have been adapted for the study of problems originating in many other content areas of psychology. Such adaptations may bring with them expansions in theory and in the conceptual foundations of behavior analysis. We cannot, however, rely on the rest of psychology too strongly. Whatever new directions that the experimental analysis of behavior takes will be the outcome of natural contingencies arising from the scientific enterprise itself, a lesson classically exemplified by Skinner’s (1956) case history in scientific method.

The second question posed above is a more operational one of the process by which research is selected for and disseminated in this journal. Many aspects of the editorial policies and processes of *JEAB* have been fine-tuned by my distinguished predecessors. The suc-

cess of their efforts argues strongly for the continuation of these practices, which include a commitment to timely review and publication of manuscripts, thorough and constructive editorial review, invited participation in editorial activities of those who use *JEAB*, a sensitivity to the educational functions of the journal, and a constant search to expand the impact of the experimental analysis of behavior through positive editorial actions.

Within the context of the methods and conceptual frameworks already discussed, the main criterion for acceptance for publication is the scientific merit of the work. Experimental work must demonstrate convincingly that the effects are reliable and unconfounded by the operation of extraneous variables. Manuscripts should demonstrate the significance of the work to problems of empirical or theoretical interest to our readers. Whether a series of experiments or a single experiment is needed for the results and interpretation to be convincing must be determined separately for each case. What constitutes appropriate verbal description is open to dialogue between authors and editors, but a general precision of description is expected. Such precision includes the avoidance of jargon and imprecisely defined operations, concepts, and constructs. Integrative research and theoretical articles that synthesize different research areas within behavior analysis, and between behavior analysis and other areas of psychology, are especially welcome.

Finally, consider that the scholarly activities of empirical research, theoretical development, and conceptual analysis represented in the pages of *JEAB* are forms of art. The scholarly activities of *JEAB* authors, which are reflections of unique histories, achieve balance, harmony, and integration through the same behavioral processes as occur in the visual and performing arts. A process of shaping, for example, may end either with an aesthetically satisfying concerto or with an aesthetically satisfying, elegantly crafted experiment or conceptual analysis of an empirical or theoretical problem. As there are venues to celebrate paintings and performances, scientific journals like *JEAB* exist not only to disseminate useful knowledge and stimulate further research and conceptual development but also to celebrate the creative behavior of its

participants. As we move into the 21st century, may the celebration continue.

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Editor

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