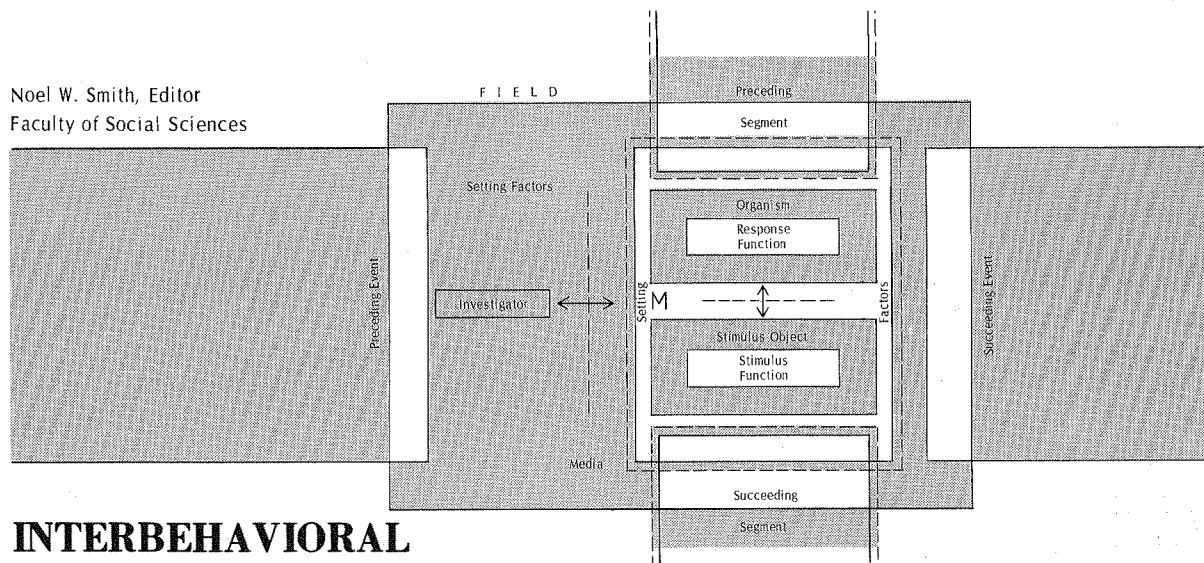


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INTERBEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Volume 2
Number 5
December 1971

State University College of Arts and Science, Plattsburgh, New York

Field: In psychology, field is used to emphasize the complex totality of interdependent influences within which an organism functions, the constellation of interdependent factors that account for a psychological event. See field theory.

Field theory: ...the properties of related phenomena are derived from, or dependent on, the total field of which they are at that time a part. The theory substitutes events for things having fixed properties, and sees events as totalities in which parts of the event are what they are, qualitatively and quantitatively, only in terms of the rest of the event. ...a field theory may hold... that the organism and its surrounds form a unified interacting totality and can only arbitrarily be considered separately.

--English & English: A COMPREHENSIVE
DICTIONARY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND
PSYCHOANALYTIC TERMS (Longmans, Green)

THE AGORA

In this last issue of the Newsletter for 1971 we finish with 176 subscribers. At the end of 1970 we had 145. The number dropped off at the first of the year due to non-renewals and late renewals, but has continued building to the present. In all probability it will again drop at the outset of 1972. We have subscribers from Mexico, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, England, and Tanzania. We are fighting inflation by keeping our rates the same as they were when we started two years ago.

Correction: the last issue was numbered 3

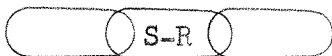
but should have been 4. With the present issue we again have a quinterly. Would it be better to have fewer issues that have more pages?

A translation is in preparation of a 25 page analysis of interbehaviorism in LE BEHAVIORISME ORIGINE ET DEVELOPPEMENT DE LA PSYCHOLOGIE DE REACTION EN AMERIQUE by André Tilquin, Paris: Libraire Philosophique, 1950. The book is available from Blackwell's (Broad Street, Oxford, England OX1 3BQ) for about \$4.00. When the translation is complete we will publish it in the Newsletter if permission can be obtained. There is another section in the book on the

operationism of Tolman, Kantor, and Stevens.

In the August issue (#3) of this year we reported a heavily funded research project that conjectures that each brain hemisphere contains different psychological properties and that one side dominates with the white race and the other with blacks and other subdominant groups. The dominating hemisphere gives rise to corresponding psychological characteristics. The November 22 Behavior Today reports that Jerry Levy of the Biochemistry Department of Oregon State University claims that the left hemisphere is analytic and verbal while the right is synthetic and spatial. At a meeting in San Diego where that was reported, others took issue and advanced their own conjectures; but no one questioned the basic assumptions with all of the attendant contradictions.

The feature article is by a graduate student. An item appeared by her as an undergraduate in issue #3 in 1970. The present article bears directly on the first page design of the Newsletter.



"Im lo achshav, matai" . . . If Not Now, Then When?"
In Defense of the Interbehavioral Position.

Jacqueline Farrington

One cannot help but admire and commend the prolific and valuable contributions of those investigating and practicing psychologists who have left behind the mentalistic concepts of psychic energies and processes which are but circularly and deductively postulated constructs which defy empirical research. However, the seeming oversimplification of the investigation and handling of the psychological event which mirrors the physiological model of reflex conditioning is difficult to accept as representing the complexities of human as well as infra-human behaviors. That such a venture was a necessary step in the evolution of the science of psychology is understandable when one views the historical evidence of animistic and supernatural belief systems which have pervaded mankind for centuries. Yet, in a time when the universe becomes rapidly smaller and the earth more crowded and tumultuous, one wonders if the somewhat narrow and isolated practices of some behavioral scientists are perhaps as unrealistic as the oversimplification of an "act of faith".

Consideration of the behavioral and interbehavioral positions in terms of data collection, experimental and clinical observation and reporting of events points to the meaningful and important question of interaction of factors and variables within behavioral events and the fields comprising those events.

The behavioral investigator operates upon the assumption that $R = f(S)$ or that $R \rightarrow S$. Such a formulation appears logical as a description of certain specific events, particularly respondent conditioning. The response of eating may well be a function of learning the maze, particularly if the animal is hungry. Such behavior might better be diagrammed as PD (physiological drive) \rightarrow B (learned behavior) \rightarrow R (response). In terms of some human learning, including the acquisition of skills, the model $R \rightarrow S$ may fit the event, although not the situation.

As well as accommodating respondent procedures, the model fits also operant procedures, but with essential differences. Consider whether the response of blinking the eye can be considered as a function of a tone paired with an airpuff, or even the airpuff alone. In such an event, the formulation of J.R. Kantor (1970), $S \leftrightarrow R$ expanded to $PE = c(k, rf, sf, hi, st, md)$ appears to describe the actual event more incisively and completely. In such instances and in innumerable others of more complexity, the inclusion of the media of contacts

and the behavioral history of the organism are as necessary concomitants of description as are the recording of stimulus and response function. Even more appropriate and objective would be such a formulation in clinical procedures in terms of data collection, specification of treatment procedures, and reporting of outcomes.

Beyond these considerations is that of the interaction of the observer who, whether in the role of experimenter or clinician, must of necessity be considered and included in objective reporting of the events being studied. In fact, one wonders if the observer's data collection is not a function of the psychological event. To eliminate this interaction process is to encourage the distortion of investigative events.

Differentiation between the psychological event and the psychological situation is required for adequate analysis of behavioral events. The function of both the stimulus object (i.e., person or thing) and response observed within a particular behavior segment or event arises from the interactional history of the organism and may well be governed by innumerable setting factors within present and past situations or fields. The situation that the electric burner is hot does not presuppose that the burner will generate either noxious or appetitive stimulus or response functions. In interpersonal situations which are more complex than object-organism situations, consideration must be given to expectancies developed throughout the interactional histories of both organisms; that is, preceding, immediate and post-event segments must be understood by some reliable means before the events observed can be accurately analyzed. The writer is reminded of a situation in which a young child drank a DDT liquid solution. Upon discovering this, the mother hurried to give the child ipecac. While most adults associate ipecac and vomiting behavior, the child had no such expectancy and loudly proclaimed: "More candy, Mommy."

The task of utilizing the interbehavioral model which is both inductive and yet deductive in at least the commutative sense, is not a simple one; in fact, it is most difficult, particularly in the clinical situation which is often fraught with subjectivity of verbal report and semantic difficulties. Yet such an approach is appropriate and tenable, particularly if the science of psychology which includes clinical practice, is to become the discovery and the reporting of "the characteristics of confronted things and events." (Kantor, 1970)

Of major import are the manipulative techniques and tactics aiding such discovery and the philosophical underpinnings of manipulation. Briefly, the philosophy is one of objective search for all variables which abandons mentalistic concepts and concentrates upon investigation of the interactions within a total field of events represented by the aforementioned formula. Manipulative tactics include the consideration of the functioning of the whole organism as a component of the field and as such, cannot be misleading in the use of isolated independent and dependent variables which are in actuality correlative and interdependent.

Multidimensional events, multiplicity of factors and interactional context are appropriate to an interbehavioral position and to be desired more than isolated and unique cause-effect relationships. Such an approach removes the stress of emphasis upon the view that nonhuman experimentation may provide the laws for all psychological behavior including the human. Rather, emphasis may be expanded to attempt to contend with the interrelationships of factors in the origin and occurrence of psychological events including those of imagining, perceiving, feeling, thinking, intercommunication, etc.

As Kantor has so succinctly stated: ". . . experimentation upon complex human behavior involves tremendous difficulties, but there is no merit or profit in avoiding the hardships of urgent necessities." And as the ancient Hebrew Hillel is said to have uttered, "Im lo achshav, matai?" . . . If not now, when?

Reference

Kantor, J.R. An analysis of the experimental analysis of behavior (TEAB), Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 1970, 13, 101-108.



What is found experimentally is that certain vast regions of the central core of the neuraxis are neither sensory nor motor in character, but may be in mutual interdependence with both sensory and motor systems. Moreover, patterns of convergence and divergence within these central regions are not altogether fixed in character but may change with time. Using waking animals with implanted electrodes, observers have found that some of these relatively plastic systems can be altered in accordance with deliberate environmental manipulations. (p. 67-68)

It has long been recongized that when a part of the central nervous system is cut away, the distortion of capacities resulting from ablation is less an expression of what the missing part did than it is an expression of what the remainder of the nervous system can do in the absence of that part. Something qualitatively different may be provided by certain small changes in highly complex transactional mechanisms. This is apparently true of the nervous system of man. (p. 68-70)

Robert B. Livingston: How man looks at his own brain: an adventure shared by psychology and neurophysiology. In S. Koch (Ed.). Psychology: a study of behavior, Vol. 4. McGraw-Hill, 1962.