EDITORIAL: BEHAVIORISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY 2016

Behaviorists for Social Responsibility (BFSR) is a special interest group (SIG) of the Association for Behavior Analysis: International (ABAI). The mission of BFSR is to act to expand applications of behavior analysis and behavioral systems analysis (cultural analysis) addressing social issues, particularly those with social justice, human rights, and environmental implications. BFSR, started in 1978 as Behaviorists for Social Action, is the oldest special interest group in ABAI. As it the case for other SIGs, BFSR SIG activity has ebbed and flowed over the past 37 years, and the issues of most interest to members have also naturally evolved. In this brief introduction, we offer a summary of the SIG structure and current and emerging activities that may be of interest to other behavior analysts. In addition to what is discussed here, we are actively soliciting ideas for other ways to involve BFSR members—as well as other ABAI members—in projects contributing to our mission.

Beginning at the BFSR annual meeting at the ABAI convention in 2015, we reorganized using a Board of Planners structure (drawing on the structure of the Walden Two community in Skinner’s book of the same name). SIG decisions are made by this board, currently Kendra Combs, Tara Grant, Roberta Lemos, Molli Luke, Mark Mattaini, Richard Rakos, and Jomella Watson-Thompson. A considerable number of other active members are involved in the BFSR activities discussed below. The Planner structure, the easy availability of digital communications, and the resulting increased level of mutual accountability are now producing a substantially higher level of activity than has been true for some years. The following material summarizes some of those activities.

Behavior and Social Issues: The Journal

Behavior and Social Issues (BSI—this journal) has long been the flagship project of the SIG. BSI (as Behaviorists for Social Action Journal) began in 1978, essentially concurrent with the origins of BFSR, and was retitled Behavior Analysis and Social Action in 1986. The journal operated independently with all volunteer effort until 1990, when the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies took on editorial and publishing responsibilities. In 2001, the Cambridge Center determined that it could no longer sustain the journal, and it returned to BFSR. This editorial closes out the 24th volume of the journal since it took the name Behavior and Social Issues. In this volume, the largest in recent years, readers will find articles dealing with food quality, behavioral medicine, technology and ethics, abortion policy, racial bias, the news media and American culture, corruption, sustainability, metacontingencies, and analytic methodologies. New members of the editorial board include Traci Cihon, Jeff Weatherly, Angela Sanguinetti, Jomella Watson-Thompson, and Holly Seniuk. We are always interested in adding qualified scholars to the editorial board, and nominations are encourage. As the current editor and associate editor have been with the journal for a considerable period, the Board of Planners will soon need to begin exploring succession plans.
Recognizing the importance of social media in the current context, BFSR has for several years hoped to achieve a meaningful social media presence. Under the energetic leadership of planner Kendra Combs, our presence on Facebook and Twitter has substantially expanded, and the quality and consistency of postings has greatly improved. Of particular importance for a group wishing to be truly international, the number of followers from outside the US (particularly from Brazil) for both media now exceeds those from the United States. Expansion into other media (including YouTube) is being actively explored and pursued, and volunteers to assist in that work are encouraged to contact BFSR.

International Initiatives

Like ABAI, the mission of BFSR is global in scope, although until recently nearly all our work has been US based. Consistent with our intention to expand efforts internationally, BFSR is now shaping a proposal for an international conference on Behavior Analysis, Large-Scale Social Change and Social Policy—tentatively for Brazil in 2017. Roberta Lemos of Brazil, with assistance from Tara Grant and Jomella Thompson-Watson, is leading this effort. The hope is to bring extensive work in social and policy change occurring in Brazil to the attention of those elsewhere, as well as to bring researchers from the US, Europe, and elsewhere to share their work linking social policy and behavior analytic science. Funding support for this effort is needed. Other possibilities for international initiatives, including online options, will also be explored, and suggestions are encouraged.

Sustainability Initiatives

Sustainability is among the most important societal issues that fall within the mission of BFSR. As a beginning effort, in early 2016 BFSR will begin offering webinars to better inform behavior analysts and other interested parties of what behavior analysis and behavioral systems science may be able to contribute to sustainability, climate change, and related challenges. (Information will be available on our Facebook page and Twitter feed). If these webinars are well received, BFSR will take the steps needed to offer continuing education credits for participation. The Planners are also in early discussions with university-based scholars about and other ABAI special interest groups about possible think-tank meetings and conferences to expand the impact of behavior science in these global challenges.

The Matrix Project

In our editorial in Volume 23 (Mattaini & Luke, 2014), we introduced the Matrix Project, in which BFSR is exploring practical approaches for expanding attention within behavior analysis to societal and global issues, and the behavioral systems science necessary to address them, and for expanding opportunities for behavior analysts to bring their science to the table in advocacy and policy arenas. The Planners and several other BFSR members are currently fleshing out a behavioral systems analysis of practical steps that might be taken across more than a dozen sectors within the discipline and outside it, as well as developing an advocacy plan to encourage first steps during 2016. Our progress on the Matrix Project will be reported at the 2016 ABAI convention in Chicago.
EDITORIAL: “SAVING THE WORLD” WITH A MATRIX

The ABAI Convention

BFSR will hold our annual business meeting jointly with the Editorial Board of *Behavior and Social Issues* at the ABAI Convention at 6 p.m. on May 30th (the room is Vevey 3 & 4 at the Swissotel); all interested convention attendees are welcome to participate. We will also be represented at the convention EXPO, and will offer a panel and a poster presenting the early results of the Matrix Project. Attendees who are interested in joining work groups we will be forming related to major social and environmental issues should feel free to contact us at any of these venues.

Board of Planners

*Behaviorists for Social Responsibility*

Reference