Good Conference
Not-So-Good Book

Sidney W. Bijou and Emilio Ribes-Inesta (Eds.)

Reviewed by GERALD C. DAVISON

Sidney W. Bijou is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Child Behavior Laboratory at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. A PhD of the University of Iowa, Bijou taught at the University of Washington during 1948-65. He has made many contributions to the literature in child development and behavior modification. His books include two coauthored with D. M. Baer, Child Development: A Systematic and Empirical Theory, Vol. 1, and Child Development: The Universal Stage of Infancy, Vol. 2. Emilio Ribes-Inesta, the second editor, is Professor of Psychology at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City. He has played a key role in introducing behavior modification to Mexico. Ribes-Inesta is coauthor (with F. S. Keller) of Behavior Modification: Application to Education (in press).

Reviewer Gerald C. Davison, a PhD of Stanford University, is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Post-doctoral Program in Behavior Modification, State University of New York at Stony Brook, whose faculty he joined in 1966. During 1969-70, he was Visiting Professor at Stanford. Davison has published widely in behavior therapy and related areas and is President (1973–74) of the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy. He is coauthor of Abnormal Psychology: An Experimental Clinical Approach, and coeditor of Contemporary Readings in Psychopathology.

What happens when you invite outstanding people to a conference in a warm and friendly foreign country, where the hosts are themselves bright and eager both to take from the guests and give new insights in return? Generally speaking, the meeting is lots of fun and exciting to be a part of. Professional–personal contacts are established or renewed, and perhaps one leaves with some new ideas to be developed and even implemented back home. The conference on which the papers in this collection are based convened in January 1971 in Xalapa, Mexico, and must have been stimulating and enriching to those in attendance.

Fine. But what happens when you take the papers—usually written for other purposes and sometimes bearing only a remote resemblance to the lively remarks made at the meeting—and put them together between hard covers, including even some evaluative comments from some of the hosts? What one usually gets—and what, in my opinion, we have in Behavior Modification: Issues and Extensions—is a rehash of ideas and findings presented in better fashion elsewhere and best left that way. This book, then, has a number of solid articles written by first-rate behavior modifiers (e.g., Ayllon, Bijou, Cohen, Ferster, O'Leary, Wahler, Wolf) who have covered the same or similar ground in other papers. Would that conference organizers could be fulfilled in running good meetings without feeling that an edited collection of papers must be published.

But a book, indeed, there is, and I have a few observations on it.

The most striking characteristic of all the papers is their operant bias. One might argue that the patient populations concentrated on in this book—for example, institutionalized delinquents and mental patients, pre-school and elementary school children—are best approached in this vein, but the data are far from in. Nor am I as optimistic as Ayllon and Wright that, "A technology of behavior change is now at hand." Clearly, as many of the papers document, many changes can be effected, at least in the short term, but it seems unnecessary to promise more than has been delivered.

Another difficulty I see—related, no doubt, to the aforementioned operant bias—is the failure to consider seriously the mounting evidence on organic factors in various behavioral disorders. Even while many of the contributors give a passing nod to biological factors—and even when, happily, Wahler affirms the logical truth that the utility of treatment programs is an issue separate from the variables responsible for the development of the problems in question—there is still lacking the attempt to integrate behavior modification into the greater body of theory and data in psychopathology. Particularly in Latin American countries, where, as the South American hosts themselves remind us, serious economic and social constraints abound, behavior modifiers might well take more explicit account of, for example, dietary deficiencies in certain forms of mental retardation. Even the kinds of sophisticated operant analyses found in some of the papers must perform fall short of the mark until such time as behavior analysts become better psychopathologists.

Another neglected area is the extensive research on self-control by such behaviorists as Bandura, Kanfer, Goldfried, and Meichenbaum. One would have hoped for more discussion on this, especially in view of the welcome attention paid to problems of generalization.

To the knowledgeable behavior modifier, the book offers virtually nothing new; the talented contributors have made their points at least as cogently on numerous previous occasions. For the newcomer to behavior therapy, there are fortunately a number of better designed...
introduction sources. Finally, for the Latin American truly interested in what his Northern neighbors have to offer, the Spanish language version of the book is no doubt preferable.

A Fine Sketch of a Bold Artist

Richard J. Lowry


Reviewed by RICHARD COAN

Richard J. Lowry, a PhD of Brandeis University, is Associate Professor of Psychology at Vassar College. He is editor of two books of Maslow’s writings, The Journals of A. H. Maslow: 1959–1970 and Dominance, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization: Germinal Papers of A. H. Maslow. Lowry is also author of The Evolution of Psychological Theory: 1650 to the Present, and he is currently writing a book on the psychological roots of anti-Semitism.

Richard Coan, the reviewer, is Professor of Psychology at the University of Arizona. A PhD in clinical psychology of the University of Southern California, Coan’s primary area of teaching is personality theory. He is author of a book, The Optimal Personality, An Empirical and Theoretical Analysis (in press).

In this short, well crafted volume, the author provides a sympathetic but scholarly treatment of Maslow as a theorist. No other book serves quite the same purpose. Frank Goble’s The Third Force provides a more thorough survey of Maslow’s theories with less focus on the theorist. Lowry seeks to offer a brief intellectual portrait, and he succeeds admirably. Like a sumi painting, his book captures the vital details with a minimum of brushstrokes. The reader who expects a detailed biography or a more elaborate coverage of Maslow’s intellectual contributions will be disappointed.

Lowry describes Maslow’s early research in the animal realm and the emergence of more focal interests in social psychology, abnormal psychology, and human personality and motivation. We are also shown the basic evolution of his thinking in each major area of his work—motivation, self-actualization, the peak experience, and human values. We are told of Maslow’s early enthusiasm for Watsonian behaviorism and the subsequent shifts that made him a leading figure in the humanistic movement. Yet Lowry notes that throughout his life, Maslow displayed a mixture of the tough-minded and the tender-minded, of the atheist and the mystic.

The book highlights other persisting qualities as well. Maslow is seen as “a man of great passion and honesty” who always tended to present things as he saw them with force and vigor even when he knew that his views still rested on scanty evidence. He valued breadth over precision and liked to think of himself as a pioneer who would chart the contours of a new territory with a few quick lines and leave it to others to fill in the details. An important strength was his awareness of his failings as a scholar. This is particularly evident in the “Good Human Being” notebook, which appears as an appendix in the volume. In this notebook, Maslow recorded the gradual development of his ideas about self-actualization, and we see there his own doubts about his methods and concepts.

A psychologist more critical of Maslow might point to major failings that Lowry has neglected. Maslow paid insufficient attention to theoretical giants of the past (such as Jung) who had already covered much of the same ground with greater sophistication. Furthermore, in his efforts to paint a global picture, he often betrayed a naiveté that would not have been apparent in a more cautious writer. Thus, his picture of the self-actualizer seems to rest on an oversimplified view of personality structure and development.

Yet, Maslow was a man who never hesitated to ask difficult questions, who maintained his focus on basic and important issues, and who was willing to forego simple but inadequate solutions. He remained an independent thinker throughout his career, and he continued to produce ideas that have impressed a wide circle of readers with their originality. Whatever their other shortcomings, his ideas were never lacking in heuristic value. They will continue to stimulate the work of other psychologists for many years to come.

The Future in the Present

F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist


Reviewed by JULIAN EDNEY

Frederick E. Emery is Senior Research Fellow and Chairman of the International Council for the Quality of Working Life at the Research School of the Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. A PhD of the University of Melbourne (Australia), Emery was Senior Scientist at the Tavistock Institute’s Human Resources Center from 1958 to 1967 and Chairman of the Center during 1968–69. He is also author of Decision, Information and Action; Freedom and Justice Within Walls; and (with R. L. Kekoff) On Purposeful Systems. Eric L. Trist is Professor of Organizational Behavior and Ecology and Chairman of the Management and Behavioral Science Center at Wharton School of Finance, University of Philadelphia. Trist was a Founding Member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in 1946 and Deputy Chairman and then Chairman of the Institute during 1951–66. He was Professor of Organizational Behavior and Ecology at the University of California, Los Angeles, during 1966–69, and has

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