

Winett R A & Winkler R C. Current behavior modification in the classroom: be still, be quiet, be docile. *J. Appl. Behav. Anal.* 5:499-504, 1972.  
[State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY]

A review of papers on behavior modification in the classroom indicated that inappropriate behavior has been consistently defined as behavior that interferes with order, quiet, and stillness. Rather than being, as claimed, a major source of change in classrooms, behavior modification has supported the status quo of a rigid preoccupation with order and control. Alternative uses of a behavioral approach in traditional classrooms, open classrooms, and other institutions are discussed. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 130 publications since 1972.]

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August 2, 1985

This article grew out of the events of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Richard Winett was a graduate student and Robin Winkler was a visiting professor from Australia at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. A number of us seriously questioned the directions of the field of behavior modification. We particularly questioned how the emergent behavioral technology was being used in schools, prisons, and psychiatric hospitals to keep people "still, quiet, and docile." We felt that behavioral technology was wittingly, or perhaps worse, unwittingly, simply being used to maintain an unsatisfactory status quo in these institu-

tions. Behavior was being modified to fit unsuitably failed settings.

The larger themes of the paper entail the inseparability of values, politics, and science; the need to understand behavior within systems; and the role of behavioral scientists as system designers and innovators. The community psychology movement articulated similar themes.<sup>1</sup>

We think the paper made a large initial impact because we were "insiders" criticizing a sanctified assumption—that behavior modification was a value-free science. We examined the "target behaviors" of the classroom studies published to that point in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*—and those target behaviors (e.g., passively sitting still) spoke for themselves.

A rejoinder to this article graciously done by Dan O'Leary<sup>2</sup> (he was the author of some of the criticized work) provided balance and blunted some reactions to this paper. However, much of the ensuing debate has focused on important but limited issues about the merits of different target behaviors in classroom behavior modification. We do not feel that the larger themes of the paper about values, science, and behavior change were understood. Thus, the paper's impact, despite its high citation rate, has been somewhat disappointing.

The paper's themes were crystallized by the times, personal experience, conviction, and anger. Not surprisingly, the paper was actually written in a few hours, although both of us obviously had been thinking along the same lines for many months.

The themes have remained as anchors to our better work and we continue to work together.<sup>3</sup>

We explored the specific themes of different targets of behavior-modification programs in the classroom in subsequent research on open classrooms (see, for example, reference 4). We have continued to develop more general and more fundamental themes in an endeavor to study behaviors that reflect values other than those of the status quo within the field and within the society at large (see, for example, references 4 and 5).

1. Rappaport J. *Community psychology: values, research, and action*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. 482 p.
2. O'Leary K D, Becker W C, Evans M B & Saudergras R A. A token reinforcement program in a public school: a replication and systematic analysis. *J. Appl. Behav. Anal.* 2:3-13, 1969. (Cited 180 times.)
3. Winkler R C & Winett R A. Behavioral interventions in resource conservation: a systems approach based on behavioral economics. *Amer. Psychol.* 37:421-35, 1982.
4. Winkler R C. New directions for behavior modification in homosexuality, open education and behavioral economics. (Sheehan P W & White K D, eds.) *Behaviour modification in Australia*. Brisbane: Australian Psychological Society, 1976. p. 14-24.
5. Winett R A. *Information and behavior: systems of influence*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. In press.