

Correspondence

To the Editor:

An examination of some trends in child behavior therapy. *Behavioural Psychotherapy*, 1984, 12, 203–212.

In this article, Forehand, Middlebrook, Steffe and Rogers examined the archival reports of child behavior therapy research and analysed for trends over a 12 year period. Four journals were used as data sources and the published reports were coded according to the behaviors treated (14 categories) and the treatment used (12 categories). Data documented that acting out was the behavior category most frequently treated with no substantial trends over the 12 years. The use of positive consequences to increase behavior was the most common treatment used, again with few compelling trends. Forehand *et al.* proceeded to provide suggestions regarding future directions, including (a) a focus on the development of desired behaviors, (b) modification of mood, (c) changing child and adult expectations and (d) the roles of peers and the family. While I concur in general with most of the assessed needs and could not agree more with the author's remark "The continued demonstration that what we already know works will not be sufficient to keep the field alive" (p. 210) (see Kendall, 1984), my concerns are with (a) methodology and (b) substance.

Methodologically, I would argue that the results are severely biased from the outset by the limited number of journals that were chosen. They do represent quality behavioral journals, but they are not sufficiently diverse to allow for an analysis of child behavior therapy in various contexts. One would need to include journals that deal with special populations (e.g., both generally, *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, and specifically, such as *Mental Retardation*) and special settings (e.g., *School Psychology*; *Pediatric Psychology*) in order to discover trends not forcibly bounded by the mainstream.

Substantively, I was quite surprised to note the absence of comment regarding cognitive behavior therapy with children. Several recent texts (Ellis and Bernard, 1984; Meyers and Craighead, 1984; Kendall and Braswell, 1985), special issues of journals, and chapters and research papers too numerous to mention are more than sufficient documentation of a visible trend. Perhaps it will require a more contemporary appraisal of the archival data to document the activity surrounding cognitive-behavioral procedures with children.

An ancillary substantive concern regards what I think to be a somewhat misleading commentary about “mood” and the roles of peers and the family. In each case, it is this author’s opinion that much work has already been done and that while each should not be seen as an area with completed and closed conclusions, so to, it should not be seen as a truly future direction. Much work has been done to modify childhood emotions, such as anxiety (see Morris and Kratochwill, 1983), and we have a sophisticated prototype for the analysis of the role of families in the work of Patterson (Patterson, 1979). I do not wish to appear overly critical, however, for I do recognize that predicting the future is indeed more difficult than we mortals would like to believe.

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