

Invited Presenter

SCI;

Plotting a New Course: A Presidential Address Fantasy

Chair: Derek D. Reed (The University of Kansas)

STUART A. VYSE (Independent Scholar)



Stuart Vyse received BA and MA degrees in English Literature at Southern Illinois University, and MA and Ph.D. degrees in psychology from the University of Rhode Island. He was a visiting scholar at Harvard University, where he worked in the pigeon laboratory, then under the supervision of Richard Herrnstein. The majority of his teaching career was spent at Connecticut College, where he was Joanne Toor Cummings' Professor of Psychology. He is author of *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition* (2014/1997), which won the William James Book Award of the American Psychological Association, and

Going Broke: Why Americans Can't Hold on to Their Money (2nd edition forthcoming in 2018). His research interests are in decision-making, behavioral economics, philosophy, and belief in the paranormal. His essays and opinion pieces have appeared in the Observer, Medium, The Atlantic, Huffington Post, and Tablet. As an expert on superstition and irrational behavior, he has been quoted in many news outlets, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, New Statesman, Vox, and the Los Angeles Times, and he has appeared on CBS Sunday Morning (twice), CNN International, the PBS NewsHour, and NPR's Science Friday. He is a Fellow of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, and he writes the "Behavior & Belief" column for *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, where he is a contributing editor.

Abstract: With behavior analytic laboratories closing and many of the second generation of scientists reaching retirement age, basic behavior analysis is at a crossroads. The applied area is strong, because behavioral methods have achieved recognition as the treatment of choice for autism spectrum disorders and because professional certification programs and state regulatory requirements have further solidified applied behavior analysis as an established therapy. But the future of the basic area is unclear. Furthermore, because basic science provides much of the theoretical underpinning for the applied area, the future positioning of the applied area as an academic discipline is also somewhat uncertain. Constructed as an imaginary presidential address, this presentation will offer an assessment of the current status of the wider field of behavioral science and make suggestions for the future role of behavior analysis within that wider field. In "Changing Course," a recent essay in *The Behavior Analyst* (Vyse, 2013), I outlined personal reasons for turning my attentions away from the field of behavior analysis. The current presentation will take a different tack, imagining a new course for basic behavioral analysis (with implications for the applied area) that might help ensure the field's continued contribution to behavioral science. Among the topics considered will be: (a) the role of theory in behavioral science, (b) the limitations of a field so tightly bound to a distinct set of research methodologies, (c) future directions for graduate training, (d) the role of ABAI, and (e) the prospect of behavior analytic contributions in as yet unexplored areas. Basic behavior analysis is not alone in facing existential challenges. The "reproducibility crisis" has had profound effects on psychology and other social and biological sciences. At this moment of flux, there are new opportunities for innovation and collaboration that could strengthen our field.