[Book Review of] Legal Challenges to Behavior Modification: Trends in Schools, Corrections and Mental Health, by Reed Martin

George J. Annas

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orthodox Roman Catholic posi-
tion, the party line of orthodox
intellectual abortionism. He de-
clares that moral attitudes to-
ward abortion of the medical pro-
fession and other leading sections
of established society in England
and most parts of the U.S.A. have
undergone almost complete re-
versal in one or two generations
without stating the basis for his
generalizations. His suggestion
that those who would protect the
lives of the genetically-defective
unborn are less aware of the social
impact of such abnormal mem-
biers is trite.

Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion can be a useful
book but the effect of such a book on a generation of medical stu-
dents and doctors trained in
medicine without an ethic could
be disastrous for an unsuspecting
society.

M. F. Jefferson, M.D.
President, National
Right-to-Life
Committee

Legal Challenges to Behavior
Modification: Trends in Schools,
Corrections and Mental Health

Reed Martin

Behavior modification has come
under considerable legal attack in
settings ranging from prisons to
schools, and techniques ranging
from psychosurgery to token
economies. The issues are diffi-
cult and varied, and the disputes
they have occasioned are not like-
ly to be easily resolved. Books
which attempt to summarize legal
developments in this area for “the
practitioners of behavior change
and the administrators of such
programs in public
institutions” are therefore to be welcomed. The
danger in any such book, how-
ever, is that complex issues will
be made to appear simple, and
that general statements of the
“law” will sometimes be more
misleading than informative.

While much of this book is in-
sightful and of high quality, it is
marred by its conceptual ap-
proach, its uncertain organiza-
tion, its uneven organization, and
its uneven documentation.

The major difficulty arises from
the attempt to treat behavior
modification problems generically,
dealing with programs in
“schools, corrections, and mental
health” as if the legal issues in-
volved did not vary significantly,
depending upon the program’s
setting. This problem is especially
troubling in the chapters on con-
sent and records. What children,
prisoners, and mental patients
can consent to varies widely from
state to state, yet this fact is not
mentioned. The chapter on rec-
ords raises some important issues, such as what data should be kept, how it should be stored and when it should be purged, but does not adequately discuss the issue of the subject (be it child, prisoner or mental patient) having direct access to his or her record and his ability to challenge and correct data therein. In the chapters that deal primarily with medical/psychological concepts strong statements are likely to be backed up by weak references. For example, a statement alleging that "extensive research" had been done is supported by a news item in the Kansas City Times, and the periodical most frequently cited by the author is Psychology Today.

All this is not to say that this could not be a helpful book for the intended audience. It does provide a useful starting point for considering issues of due process protections that should be built into any program of behavior modification, and the questions at the end of each chapter help to sharpen the issues. The author explores many issues of importance to practitioners of behavior modification. He emphasizes the need for treatment and criticizes the present practices of custodial care and punishment. He raises important questions concerning when the use of behavior modification techniques are appropriate, and the need to protect the subjects of these techniques. His overall approach demonstrates a genuine concern for the humane treatment of prisoners, students and the mentally ill.

Readers must, however, be warned that much of the legal analysis in the book is oversimplified, and that it should be used only as a basic introduction to the complex problems of the legal aspects of behavior modification.

George J. Annas, J.D., M.P.H.
Boston University Law School

Poverty and Health: A Sociological Analysis
John Kosa and Irving K. Zola, editors

Harvard Univ. Press, 79 Garden St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. 1975, XV + 456 p., $15.00

This book was first published in 1969, was refurbished, amended and pruned, in the production of a second edition, published in 1975. It is a multi-authored book which nevertheless comes across almost as if it were written by one person; the editors have succeeded in presenting a coherent, thorough and detailed exposition and analysis of the nature of poverty and its relationship to health and health care.

Social aspects of physical and