An Introduction to the Volume 4, Number 1 of *Behavior Analysis in Practice (BAP)*

Gregory P. Hanley, Western New England University – Editor, *BAP*

B*ehavior Analysis in Practice* is designed to bring behavior analysts articles that will help them be more effective as practitioners. Like other professionals, there is a broad range of competencies that are essential for a practicing behavior analyst. No one issue of *Behavior Analysis in Practice* will touch upon each competency, but each issue, including this one, will touch upon several essential competencies of the practicing behavior analyst. By including different types of articles in each issue such as reviews, empirical analyses, technical articles, and author perspectives, the manner in which relevant topics are addressed will also vary. This current issue has a strong pragmatic focus, which should allow readers to extend their interventions to more challenging conditions and to efficiently learn more about the effects of their behavioral programs and about current research. This issue also contains an article from a parent of a child with autism, which will allow readers to understand the importance applied behavior analysis from her unique perspective.

Making Communication-Based Interventions for Problem Behavior Practical

A large proportion of extraordinary problem behavior that behavior analysts are called upon to address occurs for rather simple reasons such as gaining attention from an adult or avoiding challenging work. Once behavior analysts determine that these sorts of events are partly responsible for problem behaviors like aggression or self-injury, they often try to teach the child alternative and more acceptable behaviors that produce the same events. These treatments, usually referred to as functional communication training or FCT, are quick to eliminate problem behavior, but, as is the challenge for all behavior-change technology, it is often difficult to design these interventions to work in the usual contexts in which the problem behavior is occurring. In our lead article, Louis Hagopian, Eric Boelter, and David Jarmolowicz have reviewed and summarized the empirical literature pertinent to maintaining the effectiveness of FCT interventions under more real-world conditions.

Understanding the Boundaries of Our Interventions for Automatically Reinforced Problem Behavior

It appears that problem behavior sometimes produces its own reinforcement; that this, reinforcement is a direct product of the problem behavior and another person is not necessary to mediate this reinforcement. Behavior analysts usually refer to these behaviors as being automatically reinforced. A common treatment for automatically reinforced problem behavior is response blocking or interruption. Like FCT for socially mediated problem behavior, response interruption has been shown to be effective for automatically reinforced problem behavior under ideal conditions, such as when the interventionist is present, within arm's reach, and available to interrupt each attempt at problem behavior. Megan Kliebert, Jeffrey Tiger, and Karen Toussaint have contributed an empirical analysis that will help readers better understand the conditions under which the positive effects of response interruption will persist or abate, and thus necessitate additional treatment components.

Being Effective Outside of the One-to-One Teaching Context

There are certainly more people who could benefit from behavior analytic services than there are behavior analysts. The extraordinary increase in behavior-analytic training programs in universities, recent legislation requiring behavior-analytic board certification to address particular problems associated with autism, and the expansion of behavior-analytic solutions to different populations and problems are all trends that seem to promise behavior-analytic services for more people. However, behavior analysts' strong commitment to one-on-one teaching, which is apparent in the applied behavior analytic literature of the last 20 years, has the potential to constrain our ability to serve people in greater numbers. Readers should then find it refreshing to read the articles by Erin Richard White, Barbara Hoffmann, Hannah Hoch, and Bridget Taylor who describe an effective model for having a single behavior analyst teach work

skills to pairs of adolescents diagnosed with autism and by Lisa Rafferty, Jenna Arroyo, Shaunna Ginnane, and Kelly Wilczynski who describe self-monitoring procedures that can be used by young students diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder during spelling periods in regular education classrooms.

How Can I Measure That?

Direct measurement of ongoing socially important behavior is a cornerstone of applied behavior analysis. Nevertheless, many important behaviors are difficult to measure with traditional, observer-based procedures. By measuring the products of behavior and by automating aspects of the data collection procedures, behaviors that are not typically the subject of behavioral analyses may be made available for analysis. Sigurdur Oli Sigurdsson, William Aklin, Brandon Ring, Mick Needham, James Boscoe, and Kenneth Silverman, have adopted these same tactics to make routine measurement of disruptive noise levels in a therapeutic workplace possible. This article may prove useful for those providing services in group learning contexts where noise levels are an important consideration.

How Much Measurement Is Enough?

Even when reliable and direct measurement of someone's behavior is quite possible, it is important to understand how much data is necessary to collect in order to detect important behavior change. All data collection has some hidden costs so it is important to understand when to collect data and when to shift your resources elsewhere. This question of how much data to collect is especially relevant in early intervention programs for young children with autism. Some advocate for student performance and amount of type of teacher support (e.g., prompt level) to be recorded on every teaching trial, whereas others have suggested that measurement can be more intermittent (e.g., data collected on the first trial of each teaching session). Dorothea Lerman, Laura Harper Dittlinger, Genevieve Fentress, and Taira Lanagan have contributed a thorough comparative analysis of continuous versus more intermittent data collection during trial-based instruction. Their results will be appreciated by anyone responsible for measuring the impact of early intervention programs with individual learners.

Still Daunting: Keeping Up With the Literature

While acknowledging the daunting task of keeping up with the relevant literature for practicing behavior

analysts, James Carr and Amanda Briggs provided multiple suggestions for doing so in the last issue of this journal. Expanding on one of Carr and Briggs's suggestions, Erick Dubuque contributes a detailed task analysis for automating academic literature searches with RSS feeds and Google Reader™.

Why ABA?

Why is applied behavior analysis important for a child diagnosed with autism? It is a simple question, but simple answers to it, like, "It works" or "It has strong empirical support" are usually not very compelling to those asking the question. I was fortunate enough to hear Mary Beth Walsh, a professor of theology and mother of a 10-year-old child with autism, provide answers to this question during a conference focusing on autism and applied behavior analysis at Caldwell College. I found her answers to be insightful, persuasive, and, at times, provocative. I also appreciated the humor in her message. Last year, I asked if she would be willing to share her top ten reasons why children with autism deserve ABA in this issue's Perspectives section, and I am thankful that she agreed. Readers of this Perspectives piece will be better equipped to talk with caregivers and other stakeholders about the relevance of ABA to children with autism and related disabilities.

Was the Article Not Enough? Would You Like to Learn More? Check Out Our BAPcasts

BAPcast is a monthly podcast that accompanies the journal and can be found at http://www.abainternational.org/journals/bap_podcast.asp. These podcasts contain interviews with authors of articles published in *Behavior Analysis in Practice* and provide additional information relevant to the topics published in the journal. *BAPcasts* were originated by one of the journal's founding associate editors, Stephanie Peterson. I am very grateful that Stephanie is serving as the coordinating editor of *BAPcasts*. I also appreciate the efforts of her Western Michigan University colleagues, Kelli Perry, Kathryn Kestner, and Jonathan Timm, who are currently serving as managing editors with Stephanie. Please visit the journal's website routinely to catch the latest *BAPcast*.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *BAP*, and I look forward to working with this expert editorial board to bring you lucidly written articles on topics that are relevant to you and your practice.