

# **Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism Treatment: Accurate and Effective Dissemination of Information**

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## Introduction

I would like to start my talk by thanking Drs. David Celiberti and Bridget Taylor for their collaboration with me over the past year as we framed some of the issues I will discuss today. Their support, guidance, and feedback have been invaluable to me. I would also like to thank Kent Johnson and the Association for Behavior Analysis Conference Committee for their gracious invitation to speak to you today.

For years, we have known ours was a science of behavior that could benefit the larger world. We could help make job places safer, help understand the interaction between pharmaceuticals and performance, help people learn more in less time, and improve the lives of people with a wide range of disability types and levels. As Judy Favell (1998) so eloquently pointed out, “We can teach where others cannot.”

Over the course of these years, much has changed in behavior analytic services for persons with autism. We have instituted a system for certifying professionals in our field. Systems of instruction for children with disabilities have been developed and disseminated through the continuing efforts of many of our best researchers. We have seen the formation of two<sup>1</sup> national level parent groups committed to advocating for the use of data-based interventions for their children with autism. Those two groups are Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT) and the Association for Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT). Through the seemingly unending grassroots efforts of dedicated parent consumers such as Kathy Mannion and Marissa Bennet, these organizations have taught other parents about Behavior Analysis and the ways it could improve the quality of their children’s lives. FEAT and ASAT have worked relentlessly to explain to school districts why changes in practice are so sorely needed; they have worked closely with the medical and behavioral professional communities to foster relationships and help bridge gaps between research and practice. These organizations have helped create contingencies whereby seeking the involvement of behavior analysts is reinforcing to a much wider range of people. All behavior analysts owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

Along with the formation of FEAT and ASAT, a wider range of consumers has begun to listen more closely to what we have to say. In particular, parents of children with autism have sought us out. They have requested our services in public and private forums, they have joined our on-line discussions of issues through our ListServes, and they have attended our professional conferences in increasing numbers<sup>2</sup>. Parents have traveled to hear us speak, and have begun

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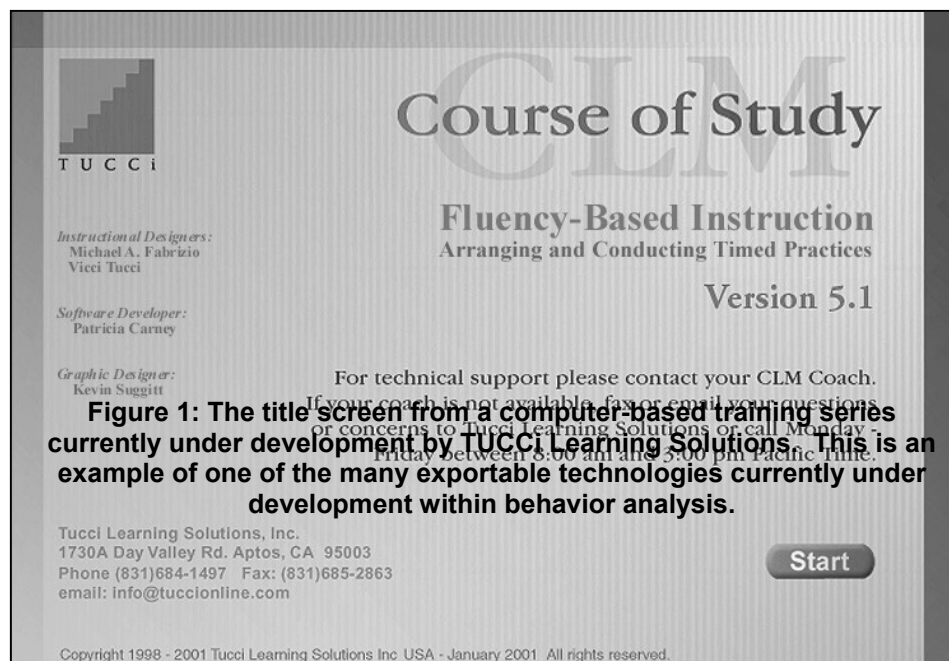
<sup>1</sup> Between when I originally wrote this paper and November 2002 (six months), a third national organization was formed that is committed to the discovery and dissemination of empirically validated intervention options for children with autism—the Organization for Autism Research.

<sup>2</sup> I asked ABA for data on the number of parents attending this national conference over the past several years in preparation for today’s presentation, but , unfortunately, ABA does not code the nature of the affiliation of conference

reading some of the materials we publish (this seems especially true for materials targeting a broader audience than the research community). They have started requesting our profession by name for one of the first times in our history. Parents are now saying, “I want my child to receive Behavior Analysis services.” This is a new thing! I remember clearly a day in November 2000 when for the first time I heard a parent request behavior analysis by name for her child with autism. She did so by questioning the expertise of the behavioral “expert” proffered by her child’s local school district. She (the parent), leaned across the IEP table, and asked, “Is she (the district’s expert) a Board Certified Behavior Analyst?” I was very proud our field had taken the steps needed, through certification of Behavior Analysts, to help consumers identify persons that may or may not be qualified to design and supervise behavior analytic services for their children with autism.

In parents of children with autism, we have an audience that does not need convincing. They are convinced. They are committed to the application of procedures and principles derived from behavior analysis for the noblest of purposes—the improvement of the lives of their children.

This call to increased action from consumers of our services has prompted many of us to either develop or expedite the development of exportable technologies that teach our principles and procedures effectively and efficiently. Figure 1 shows an example of a computer mediated instructional series under development as we speak by TUCCi Learning Solutions. The series will teach basic skills involved in the delivery of Fluency-Based Instruction to children with autism, and will be ready for initial release in December of 2002.



**Figure 1: The title screen from a computer-based training series currently under development by TUCCi Learning Solutions. This is an example of one of the many exportable technologies currently under development within behavior analysis.**

attendees (e.g., university, private business, school, consumer). Perhaps we should consider collecting such data in the future.

As a field, we approach the point where we are developing what Pennypacker and Hench (1997) described as true technologies.

“We have begun to see the emergence...of subspecialties [within Applied Behavior Analysis] such as the treatment of autism, industrial safety training, direct instruction, and precision teaching that rely on standardized materials and procedures. These subspecialties are well on the way to creating transferable technologies.” (Pennypacker & Hench, 1997)”

The synchronous combination of these elements (rise in consumer demand, certification of behavior analysts, and expedited development of distributable practices) presents a unique opportunity for behavior analysts working with children with autism. That opportunity, however, also presents some challenges and many responsibilities. Consumers are seeking us out. They invite us to work with their children (what an honor to be asked to work with someone’s child!). They invite us to speak to them and teach them what we can. We must recognize and respect the responsibility that comes with such honors and offers. In particular, we must ensure that as we disseminate information about behavior analysis and the role it can play in children’s lives, we are as accurate and effective as possible.

## **Being Accurate**

If we seek to promote the accurate dissemination of information about behavior analysis in the lives of children with autism, we must behave in very specific ways. Before we consider those ways of behaving, however, let us ask ourselves a more basic question: should we even be concerned with how accurately we disseminate information to consumers? Are we responsible for what participants in a workshop “take away” from that workshop? Yes, we are. Our science is a functional analysis of behavior. This means our analysis considers quite heavily the consequences of actions under given conditions. When consumers walk away from interactions with us, we are at least partially culpable for changes in their behavior brought about as a function of those interactions. As behavior analytic teachers, we recognize and embrace the responsibility we have in producing changes in our students’ performance irrespective of whether those students are children with disabilities or their parents. I am no less responsible for what people learn from me in a five-hour workshop on fluency-based instruction and Precision Teaching than I am when I teach under any other circumstances. Regardless of the specifics of the situation, we are behavior analytic teachers. As such, we control many of the contingencies operating on our students’ behavior while they are with us. We must recognize that the responsibility for what our students do and do not learn rests with us.

Once we accept responsibility for our actions as teachers, we may then turn our attention to some things we can do to help ensure accuracy in dissemination of behavior analytic information.

1. Be careful in how we name.

First, we should be careful about how we name what it is we do. Too often, we use language likely to lead to confusion and misinterpretation. We must be vigilant to ensure the language we use is effective—that it has the intended effect on the listener. In particular, when naming we must be careful to discriminate between systems of analysis, outcomes of intervention, and procedures. We must also use terms carefully and correctly, and use names that describe principles rather than proponents.

1a. Discriminate between systems of analysis, outcomes of intervention, and procedures used to achieve those outcomes

Webster's online dictionary defines a system of analysis as an organized and coordinated method for tracing constituent elements of a larger whole to their source and resolving knowledge about those elements into original principles. For example, Verbal Behavior is a behavioral framework through which we may analyze the contingencies governing both vocal and nonvocal language. It is a functional rather than structural analysis of language based on and consistent with the laws of behavior. When engaged in clinical practice, one does not "do verbal behavior." One may employ procedures based on a verbal behavior analysis.

Now let us contrast systems of analyses with outcomes. An outcome is an end result or consequence. One does not "do" outcomes. One arranges contingencies to make outcomes more or less likely. As an example of language misuse in the area of behavior analytic instruction for children with autism, consider the word "fluency." Fluency is an outcome. It refers to a level of skill mastery and describes a state of behavior in which a response or set of responses is so well practiced that it or they may be emitted at high rates, be extremely accurate under highly distracting stimulus conditions, be readily applied under new conditions, etc.. Fluency-Based Instruction is a collection of procedures each rooted in behavior analysis and a way of organizing skill development procedures such that fluent responding is the likely outcome. One cannot "do fluency." One can do Fluency-Based Instruction.

A procedure is a process or series of acts especially of a practical nature involved in a particular form of work. Functional communication training is a procedure based on a verbal behavior analysis of language. Fluency-based instruction refers to a set of procedures arranged to increase the likelihood that skills will develop to the point of fluency (a desired outcome of instruction). Fluency-based instruction is based upon a free operant system of analysis.

Too often I hear systems of analyses and outcomes referred to as instructional procedures. This is important. When we describe systems and

outcomes as procedures, we run the risk of inaccurately teaching our consumers that there is only one way to apply the system to intervention with children with autism. For example, a verbal behavior analysis is a theoretical framework. It is certainly not a single set of procedures.

## 2. Use terms carefully and correctly

As we continue to increase our contact with a broader range of consumers, we must address the problem of misapplication of technical terms. Our consumers are not experts on our field; if they were, they would not seek our assistance. When presenting terms to consumers we must describe terms completely and accurately. For example, recently the term “errorless learning” has been used with increased frequency by parents and other consumers. I have heard things like, “We use errorless learning with my son,” or, “My daughter has an errorless program.”

When I first began hearing parents describe their children’s programs as “errorless,” I was quite impressed! Arranging and implementing errorless learning programs is a complex task requiring a solid foundation in behavior analysis and instructional design. It asks that skills and skill sequences be broken down into small components and that we teach each component before teaching composite skills relying on them. Above all else, errorless learning procedures mandate that student performance data be used to make changes in instructional sequences and procedures on an ongoing basis (Sidman, 1985).<sup>3</sup>

As I began to ask parents more about what they meant by errorless learning, I quickly realized they were describing an error correction protocol whereby student errors were followed by giving the correct answers (something more appropriately referred to as a Mathematics error correction originating from the early work of Tom Gilbert). They were not using errorless learning to refer to a set of instructional procedures. They used the term to refer to a way of correcting student errors. When I asked where they (the parents) learned about errorless learning, they referred to workshops they attended where a behavior analyst taught them about it. No doubt this learning of a misrule (that errorless learning was a way of correcting student errors) was unintentional on the part of the workshop leaders. Still it occurred.

To be accurate, we must understand that concepts (facts) such as names attached to instructional procedures cannot be taught with any single instance and that inappropriate juxtapositions of instructions intended to show one model as “bad” and another model as “good” only serve to increase the likelihood that our consumers’ verbal behavior will come under inappropriate stimulus control. Skinner (1957) discussed this when he said that:

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<sup>3</sup> I extend a heartfelt, “thank you” to Jesus Rosales for his gentle but persistent encouragement that I learn more about errorless learning so I could appreciate the features it has in common with fluency-based instruction and Precision Teaching.

“Any property of a stimulus present when a verbal response is reinforced acquires some degree of control over that response and this control continues to be exerted when the property appears in other combinations.”

Just as we engage in well designed and employed discrimination training when teaching new concepts to children whose intervention programs we supervise, we must also be cognizant of its need when teaching consumers about our language, analysis systems, and instructional arrangements. Single instances will never establish appropriate stimulus control in our audiences' verbal behavior, and poorly selected examples will only worsen the situation.

### 3. Use names related to the conceptual framework of behavior analysis, rather than individual proponents.

My next point about being accurate when disseminating information to consumers has to do with naming developments arising from the field of behavior analysis through use of proponents' last names. Calling procedures or allowing them to be called by the name of a proponent of the procedures divorces them from their historical and scientific context and suggests (at least tacitly) that something other than preparation in behavior analysis is necessary for their implementation.

Naming is important. We can too easily become what we are called. (Angelou, 1993). When we allow procedures to become overly associated with their proponents, we increase the likelihood consumers will perceive us as marketers rather than applied scientists. Naming procedures by using a behavior analyst's last name separates the procedure from its history. It stands it alone on the oceans of time without a bit of theoretical or empirical land in sight. That is a very dangerous place to be.

We have already seen some of the consequences associated with the practice of naming for proponents when Discrete Trial Instruction was, for a short time, erroneously referred to as the “Lovaas Method.” As Baer, Wolf, and Risely explained in 1968, applied behavior analysis requires that we explicitly relate procedures to conceptual systems underlying those procedures as a way of promoting generalized responding in the audience. It is in our own and our consumers' best interest that we not only continue our long tradition of naming practices by relating them to our conceptual systems, but also that we be vigilant of inappropriate naming and insistent in our efforts to correct such errors.

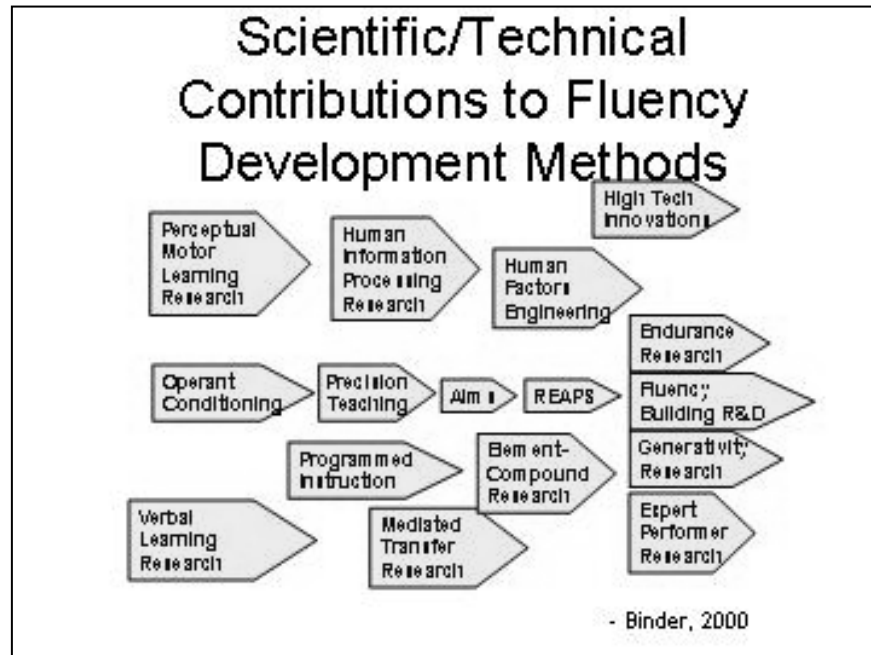
Beyond severing the procedure from its behavior analytic history, naming through use of a particular person's last name suggests, at least tacitly, that something other than preparation as a behavior analyst is most appropriate for implementing the procedure. Behavior analysis demonstrates external validity through replication. So, if we are using the “Smith Method,” is specialized training by Dr. Smith required to replicate the procedures or would board certification as a behavior analyst and extensive supervised clinical experience

be sufficient? If consumers wish to explore the possibility of applying the “Smith Method” with their child with autism, should they seek someone trained and certified by Dr. Smith or should they seek out a Board Certified Behavior Analyst? With national certification of behavior analysts as such a new practice, we cannot afford any discussion of separate certifications or endorsements. If we develop procedures that require implementation by one particular clinician, then their utility is very much reduced. One of the goals of applied behavior analysis is to develop procedures that are technological and generalizable (Baer, Wolf & Risley, 1968) and do not require any particular person for implementation.

4. Recognize the historical foundations that form the underpinnings of “new” approaches.

This brings me to my next point: recognizing the historical foundations that form the underpinnings of “new” approaches. As responsible presenters to consumers of behavior analytic information, we must ensure that we help consumers see current developments within a larger framework—the historical context of scientific discovery within our field. I am not suggesting that presenters subject consumers who sign up for a brief workshop providing an overview of a given procedure to a lengthy discourse on the history of behavior analysis. I am suggesting however, that as presenters we do our best to outline concisely the history from which the current procedure they are learning flowed. These earlier developments form the first several chapters of the story they are hearing and, as such, they should be told.

Figure 2 is an example from our colleague Carl Binder. With this slide, Carl outlines some of the major historical events that contributed to the development of fluency-based instruction. This slide comes from an overview presentation about fluency-based instruction designed for presentation to consumers. Carl delivered the presentation for the 2000 Association for Science in Autism Treatment conference held in New York (Binder, 2000). It is one of 36 slides he used in that presentation and serves as a nice example of how approaches unfamiliar to consumers may be quickly and easily situated within a larger, historical scientific context.



**Figure 2: An example from Dr. Carl Binder of how seemingly new procedures may be situated within the framework of the history of scientific discovery that helped produce them.**

One of our strengths as a field is the cohesive and common philosophy of science at the foundation of all we do. That foundation has helped lead to systematic, dynamic, and reciprocal communication between our applied and our basic researchers. Each advance our researchers have made has occurred within a historical context. When appropriate (and it usually is appropriate), we should help our consumers see that seemingly new instances of clinical practice are almost always based on common underlying behavioral operations. How much more effective would we be as teachers if we taught our consumers that procedures such as those incorporated within Incidental Teaching, Functional Communication Training, and the Mand-Model procedures (for example) all involved a common set of underlying critical behavioral operations aimed at manipulating establishing operations, setting the occasion for manding to occur, and arranging contingencies of reinforcement of sufficient strength to likely maintain the responses in the future? Applying principles of good instructional design (such as first teaching common features underlying facts before teaching exceptions) to our presentation and training materials should help improve the accuracy and efficiency of our dissemination efforts and result in enhanced learning for our consumers.

As ambassadors for our field, we have a responsibility to ensure that we explicitly place discussed practices within this historical context. This should be done respectfully, with full acknowledgement that what came before was neither bad nor misdirected. Teaching consumers about new practices by contrasting

the new practice with earlier ones in disparaging ways, we help neither the consumer nor our science. When we seek to convince others by disparaging what has occurred to date (as often seems to occur in disseminating “new” approaches to consumers), we are behaving as brutes and shooting ourselves in the proverbial foot. Let us take our example in this matter from the field of medicine. As the medical profession differentially selects new clinical practices, they find no need to disparage the replaced practices. Medical doctors explain to their patients the reasons for using a newer procedure in their particular case without setting the occasion for the patient to think, “Boy am I lucky I didn’t get here earlier!”

#### 4. Present information that is clear and complete

My third point related to accurately disseminating behavior analytic information related to intervention with children with autism is concerned with the thoroughness of the job we do as speakers to primarily consumer populated audiences. In order to be accurate, we must present information that is both clear (easily understood) and complete (of sufficient detail).

Too often, we present techniques without specifying either the parameters across which they have been evaluated and found effective or the limitations about what we know regarding their likely effectiveness. Wherever possible, our goal should be to describe functional relationships for our consumers. As Julie Vargas (1977) states, “Functional relationships hold only within certain limits... [Even] general statements of functional relationships, such as the laws of science, have limits too. It is only when certain conditions are met that a particular functional relationship applies.” (Vargas, 1977). Clearly describing functional relationships as they relate to clinical practices may help our consumers better understand the critical features of the conditions that should occasion certain responses or response classes from them (i.e., selection of a given practice). Incomplete descriptions of functional relationships regarding behavior analytic clinical intervention for children with autism tend to lead to the development of misrules. Misrules in turn lead to incomplete application of procedures or complete application under inappropriate conditions. Neither is a good thing and both then understandably contribute to decreased effectiveness of the procedure, and concomitant increases in verbal behavior from consumers typifying a less than satisfied response class such as, “Yeah, I tried that reinforcement stuff, but it didn’t work.”

As an example of consumer misconception, there seems to be a wave of interest in running mixed trial presentation formats at the beginning of an intervention program. This has been advocated for even children who have virtually no learning history, children who are naïve to intervention, to what it means to “be a student.” Research from the 1970’s and 1980’s has been presented as supporting this approach, yet that research was conducted on adults who were more heterogeneous with respect to diagnosis and skill level and who all had at least some previous experience with instruction. As our diagnosticians get better and better at discriminating early behavioral indicators

of autism, our client population gets younger. We must present research conducted with adult populations (who were usually institutionalized) with some caution. Overgeneralization of these and other research findings to application with toddlers with autism is dangerous. Here again, complete descriptions of parameters and functional relationships is necessary.

When we fail to describe fully the functional relationships that govern our procedures, we also risk being perceived as broader than we are. Here is an example from the Oregon Speech and Hearing Association's web page.

"I recently attended a seminar given by ... a proponent of 'verbal behavior' training. What [the proponent] described as the most effective and efficient means of correcting speech disorders in children with autism looked to me to be very similar to articulation approaches used since the 1970's (complete with food rewards). Indeed, the Skinnerian assertions so passionately presented to the crowd, as "leading edge" were notions I studied in Behavior Mod. 101. The speaker guided the audience through a generic articulation assessment to determine whether or not to teach specific speech sounds based solely on developmental articulation models." (Goodwin-Craine, 2002)

Allyson Goodwin-Craine, a well-respected Speech Language Pathologist in private practice in Oregon, wrote this. Our concern here should not be whether Ms. Goodwin-Craine agrees with behavior analysis, but rather with what contingencies were in effect leading to this bit of codic behavior that we as behavior analysts could have influenced. She left this training experience with several significant misconceptions. First, she mislearned that verbal behavior analyses are highly effective at correcting articulation problems. The shaping of speech production happens to be a clinical interest area of mine. Any of us who do this type of work (and I hope we are all working closely with certified Speech Language Pathologists when we do) knows that the shaping of speech requires a primarily structural or topographic analysis. Verbal behavior analyses are functional in nature. Functional and structural analyses are quite different things.

Second, Ms. Goodwin-Craine mislearned that the procedures employed by behavior analysts to shape speech production have ignored the wealth of research conducted over the past 30-years in the area of articulation. Finally, she mislearned that behavior analysts employ developmental sequences to identify the order in which skills should be taught. Developmental sequences are descriptions of how skills tended to be acquired across groups of individuals. They are, at best, correlational analyses organized by some factor such as age (usually) or series of events (such as college attendance), where the interaction between factors is often the main interest of the description. Developmental sequences can give us some very good information. They can describe normative responding and, by doing so, may help us with activities such as assessment of children with developmental disabilities.

Developmental sequences do not, however, answer the question of necessity versus sufficiency in instructional programming. Some combination of

events over time with or without consideration of order may tell us what was sufficient to produce a certain skill, but certainly do not tell us what was necessary to produce that skill. Logical analyses of instructional content are not always the most effective. (Skinner, 1968) Children with autism have the right to be taught through instructional sequences that are as efficient as possible. Developing such sequences requires a functional analysis of instruction—the type of analysis in which we as behavior analysts specialize. We should keep the distinction between description and prescription salient in our own behavior, and encourage that discrimination in our consumers' behavior as well.

## **Being Effective**

Being effective in our dissemination efforts with consumers means more than clearly explaining main topics of our presentations. Disseminating to consumers is not the same activity as disseminating to peers. Interacting with consumers requires consideration of different issues. In particular, we must ensure that in all we do as disseminators we support behavior analysis. In particular, we should ensure we call ourselves by our name, help in the ongoing process of defining ourselves, and remain close to our community.

### 1a. Call yourself by your name

“Call yourself by your name,” is a mand to refer to yourselves as behavior analysts. One of the variables responsible for the rise in frequency of this mand within my own repertoire is a state of deprivation characterized by hearing people whom I always assumed were behavior analysts refer to themselves as something else when they interact with consumers. Be proud of the fact that you are a behavior analyst and offer no apologies for it. Adding modifiers to our disciplinary titles is unnecessary and unhelpful to our discipline. We do not need to be Cognitive Behavioral Therapists, Developmental Behavior Analysts, or even Behavioral Psychologists. There is nothing wrong with simply being Behavior Analysts. Be sure that consumers and members of other professions are quite aware that a behavior analyst does the excellent work you are doing with children with autism.

### 1b. Help us continue to define ourselves

Support the certification of behavior analysts. If you are not already certified, become so as soon as possible. For those of us who are already certified, what is the one thing that we can do to most support certification of behavior analysts? Ask. And teach others to ask. Ask whether individuals providing behavior analytic services are Board Certified. Ask your colleagues whether they are Board Certified. Ask job applicants whether they are certified. When consumers and colleagues begin attending to (asking about) the certification status of behavioral professionals, the credential begins to carry

more and more meaning as an increased number of consequences become associated with it.

Beyond inquiring about certification, help support the process by volunteering to speak on the topic. We must continue our dissemination efforts about this critical issue wherever possible. Let us take our cue from some of our colleagues such as Jerry Shook, Shahla Ala'i-Rosales, and Sigrid Glenn who have recently written a wonderful manuscript outlining the need for even more certified professionals to provide quality behavior analysis services to children with autism (Shook, Ala'i-Rosales, & Glenn, 2002). If a group of consumers hires you to come and speak to them about a certain subject, offer to conduct a brief presentation at no charge on certification and what it means for consumers of behavior analytic services. In presentations that you conduct on other topics, draw clear and relevant lines from the topic at hand to the issue of certification.

In addition, help identify new groups of people who need to hear, but have not yet heard, about certification of Behavior Analysts such as insurance companies and legislators. Help support the further development of clearly defined and legally recognized practitioners through efforts to establish at least voluntary licensure standards in your home state. Work closely with consumer groups such as FEAT and ASAT to disseminate information about certification of behavior analysts.

## 2. Remain close to our community

Beyond doing what we can to support the credentialing of behavior analysts, we enhance the effectiveness of dissemination when we remain close to our community. As presenters of behavior analytic information to consumers, we should be aware of some of the contingencies operating on our own behavior when we conduct workshops for consumers and do what we can to guard against drift in our own repertoires away from Behavior Analysis. Consumer audiences provide very high rates of feedback to presenters as we stand in front of them and speak. They laugh when we say something funny or poignant. They nod when we say something with which they agree or which affirms views they hold. This high rate of feedback is quite likely to shape our own behavior. Naturally so. It should. The contingencies operating on our speaking behavior when we stand before consumers are quite different, however, than those in effect when we stand before our colleagues. The selection bias affecting our verbal repertoires is rather different under one set of circumstances than the other. Our colleagues are more likely to reinforce verbal behavior consistent with established and data-driven practices and standards of behavior analysis (e.g., carrying out an investigation with high levels of control regardless of the results of that investigation.) Consumers, by contrast, are often more likely to reinforce statements related to results rather than process.

When we tell consumers things (as one of us did recently through a Listserv composed of parents and professionals) such as, "I guarantee you that anyone who is taking [a lot] of data is not doing a very good job teaching," are we engaging in verbal behavior shaped through a history mediated by evidence that

frequent data collection and analysis reduces the quality of teaching? Probably not. It is more likely we are engaging in verbal behavior with a high probability of being reinforced by the audience to whom we are speaking. As Janet Twyman so eloquently reminded us yesterday in her invited address (Twyman, 2002), data collection systems should be pervasive and continuous. Measurement is at the heart of Behavior Analysis. Teaching and learning are enhanced through the collection and ongoing analysis of data, not detracted from.

As an example of the effect audiences play in shaping our behavior, I offer a story told to me by Julie Vargas. When Skinner was traveling around the East Coast and Midwest on the Sigma Chi lecture tour, he observed that over the course of his travels his behavior had been so shaped by his audiences that he was quite displeased with how the content of his message changed from the beginning to the end of the tour. He related that the contingencies mediated by the audiences to whom he had lectured had shaped his performance to the point that he was saying nothing of any real importance<sup>4</sup>. (J.S. Vargas, personal communication, September 4, 2001)

None of this is to say that we should refrain from speaking to consumers. Quite the contrary! I am encouraged by what seems to be a growing awareness in our community of the important role consumers should play in applied behavior analysis and the essentialness of considering social validity in designing, conducting, and evaluating intervention services. We should continue to encourage the dissemination of information. Rather, those of us who engage in a large amount of dissemination work should be cautious to counterbalance what is likely a skewed set of contingencies by speaking to audiences of our peers as well. We should submit to speak, and do so frequently, at state, regional, national, and international behavior analytic conferences. We should volunteer to provide guest lectures to classes taught by our behavioral colleagues in universities and colleges.

### 3. Be nice to each other

Finally, my last bit of advice for being effective as disseminators of behavior analytic information is to be nice to each other. Brutality, in any of its forms, should never be acceptable. Life is too short. There are too few of us in the world as it is and there are too many children desperately in need of the kind of effective services behavior analysis offers for us to be divided as a community. We should recognize that comments reported to us by others (such as workshop attendees) might not, in fact, accurately or completely represent what any particular presenter said. If we have questions about something another behavior analyst may or may not have said during a presentation, we should ask that person directly. As presenters of behavior analytic information, we should

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<sup>4</sup> After my presentation, I had the pleasure of speaking with Julie Vargas about this story. She elaborated on it for me, explaining that Skinner attributed the drift in his verbal behavior during the Sigma Chi lecture tour to his speaking from slides rather than a written paper. Without the benefit of a written paper, the feedback from the audience exerted an undue amount of control over his verbal behavior.

be as open and inviting as possible to inquiry and clarification requests from our peers.

We should also take care to discriminate between changes in our own behavior mandated by consumers as a result of hearing a presenter speak and problems we may have with the content of the presenter's message. It is often difficult to hear consumers request changes in our methods of clinical practice after hearing a colleague speak. We should be careful not to shoot the messenger.

In some ways, the field of Behavior Analysis is quite diverse. Some of us are men, some women. Some are older, and some younger. Some of us are gay, and some straight. Some of us are excellent researchers, while others, marvelous clinicians and teachers. Some of us are talented writers, while others, gifted speakers. There is a place and a need for such diversity in our field. We should do our best to support each other in all of our roles and preferred methods of contribution. We should recognize that the difficulties we currently face because of changes in contingencies resulting from increased consumer demand are a good thing. Minor adjustments in our own repertoires seem a small price to pay for the benefits of increased dissemination of behavior analysis and improved outcomes for parents and children.

Thank you.

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