An Introduction to the Volume 3, Number 1 of *Behavior Analysis in Practice (BAP)*

Gregory P. Hanley, Ph.D., BCBA, Western New England College – Editor, *BAP*

With the start of a new Editor for a relatively young journal, it is possible that dramatic changes may occur to the mission of a journal, to the criteria for evaluating articles, or to the group of individuals who serve the journal as Associate Editors or Board members. This will not be the case with *Behavior Analysis in Practice*. The journal is off to a great start, and, as I see it, my primary task as the new Editor is to continue the mission articulated by the journal's first Editor, Dr. Dorothy Lerman. That mission bears repeating, and it is to disseminate science-based information on best practice to those who provide behavior-analytic services. Dr. Lerman took an idea of the Executive Council of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) to publish a journal with high standards and relevance to behavior-analytic practitioners and gave it life by building the proper systems and making decisions that have established the integrity and utility of this journal. She also worked hard and successfully to pull together an influential, experienced, and energetic group to shape the early contributions to this journal. It is an honor to continue working towards this mission, and I thank Dr. Lerman for blazing the trail and lighting the way.

I would like to thank the members of the Editorial Board who have rotated off this year for their hard work and dedicated efforts to achieve the journal's unique mission, and I thank and welcome the new members to the Editorial Board who have committed to continuing this work towards bringing well articulated, properly contextualized, and science-based information on best practice to behavior-analytic practitioners.

A Journal for Practitioners by Many Contributors

Behavior Analysis in Practice (BAP) also is unique and important because any behavior analyst, independent of the hat that they primarily wear on a regular basis, can contribute to this journal. We have been and we will continue to encourage submissions from practitioners as well as from basic researchers, applied researchers, conceptual or interpretive scholars, consultants, administrators, professors, and teachers. The assumption is that all types of behavior analysts and our close colleagues may have something important to share with practitioners. This is not a journal *for practitioners by practitioners*. This is a journal for practitioners by behavior analysts or others who have an important message for behavior analytic practitioners.

A Journal of Varied Contributions

The extent to which we produce a journal that is useful is primarily driven by the quality and relevance of our submissions.

Therefore, I hope behavior analysts will identify important messages that they think should be communicated to behavior-analytic practitioners and then consider submitting those in the form of manuscripts to *BAP* or encouraging their colleagues, within or outside of our discipline, to do so. Empirical relations involving socially important behavior have been routinely published across a number of scientific journals over the past 40 years, and these contributions need to be combined into singular narratives so that more complete technologies are described and bigger pictures are drawn from our field. *BAP* is uniquely positioned to publish these synthesis papers that link each small step taken by empirical studies so that readers can take giant leaps with the people they serve. In addition to recruiting important synthesis papers, we will continue to publish empirical works that meet minimal evidentiary requirements (i.e., demonstrate functional relations) and are especially relevant to practitioners due to the commonality of the problem that is addressed or to the authors' sensitivity to real-world conditions. We also welcome studies that use methods not common in our field's flagship journals for discovering information relevant to behavior-analytic practitioners (e.g., results from questionnaires regarding acceptable and non-preferred features of behavioral consultation in classrooms) and discussion papers that will allow practitioners to be more effective members of interdisciplinary teams or other practice communities. There are certainly additional types of articles that will contribute to the journal's mission; please do not hesitate in contacting me with your ideas for possible submissions (contact me via ghanley@wnec.edu).

Considerations Regarding Alternative Interventions

The articles in the current issue cover a range of topics, but they are all discussion papers that communicate big ideas by bringing together a number of related empirical findings and contributions from fields within and outside of behavior analysis. It is critical for behavior-analytic practitioners to be aware of information generated in other disciplines that has a direct impact on their service provision. It is also important that behavior analysts develop some conversational fluency on topics that are likely to be brought up by parent, teachers, or other members of service teams. This issue contains two papers that provide readers with language on two distinct but highly relevant topics—psychotropic medications and the “MMR causes autism” hypothesis. The first article by Marc Weeden, Kristal Ehrhardt, and Alan Poling provides practitioners with a balanced perspective with respect to psychotropic medications and to various considerations when providing services to persons who are taking psychotropic medications. Many

behavior-analytic practitioners provide services to persons who are taking psychotropic medications. A knee-jerk reaction to such situations is to call for the elimination of the psychotropic medication so that a thoroughgoing behavioral analysis of problem behavior and learning can occur. Marc Weeden and his colleagues argue that such reactions are probably not in anyone's best interest. By learning the brief history of psychotropic drug use to address problems associated with autism and other developmental disorders and by reviewing the important considerations when providing services to persons taking psychotropic medications, both described by Weeden and colleagues, readers should have other, more effective, responses at strength when providing services to people with autism or other developmental disabilities who take psychotropic medications.

The paper in our "Skeptics Corner" contributed by William Ahearn provides the reader with some history and current facts regarding the commonly held belief that the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is responsible for the unique problems associated with autism. This timely article also includes some discussion of related issues such as "leaky gut syndrome" in the context of recent research. This article will provide the reader with some background and language for those inevitable conversations on these important topics.

Closer to Home: Identifying Effective and Preferred Behavioral Programming

Moving from cross-discipline issues to progress within our own field, I authored a paper for this issue describing some of the work my colleagues and I have completed relevant to providing effective *and preferred* behavioral programming. There is an abundance of shared advocacy for involving recipients in decisions regarding behavior-change procedures; such inclusion has been advocated by many different people in many different ways and for quite some time (e.g., right to effective treatment coalition, self-determination movement, positive behavioral support, person-centered planning, a children's rights-based approach). I retell of the importance of allowing recipients of behavior-change procedures to "voice their opinions" regarding the acceptability of our behavioral programming, and I describe relatively simple and objective methods for doing so.

A Model for Choosing Effective Interventions

In addition to an intervention being acceptable, the efficacy of our behavioral programming is paramount, but it is growing increasingly difficult to select from among the hundreds of behavioral interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective. Research incorporating effective functional analysis of problem behavior and descriptions of treatments based

on behavioral function has populated the pages of our best behavioral science journals for over 25 years, and this literature has provided us with perhaps the single-most important factor to consider when designing an intervention—the *function of behavior*. Nevertheless, once the antecedent and consequent variables influencing the occurrence of the behaviors of interest are identified, there are now a number of different function-based interventions from which to choose. Kaneen Geiger,

BAP is uniquely positioned to publish synthesis papers that link each small step taken by empirical studies so that readers can take giant leaps with the people they serve.

James Carr, and Linda LeBlanc have expertly summarized the function-based treatment literature for behaviors maintained by negative reinforcement (i.e., those behaviors established by some aversive event and maintained by escape or avoidance of that event) and provided a decision model for helping readers select particular function-based treatments given the unique strengths of each treatment in light of certain repertoires of the person served and the constraints on their environments.

A Framework for Expanding Behavioral Services to More Children in Need

The paper by Cynthia Anderson and Chris Borgmeier reminds us that not all children require the sorts of intensive interventions described by Geiger and colleagues, but that some level of behavioral intervention is necessary to address their behavioral challenges and to prevent these behavioral challenges from developing into more serious behavioral issues necessitating more costly support. The authors of this paper describe a framework in which these secondary interventions may be considered and provide detailed guidelines for developing, implementing, and maintaining these secondary interventions within schools. Readers should be better equipped to extend their services to different sorts of school-based problem behavior and perhaps even increase the capacity of the schools within which they work to provide more children access to evidence-based intervention.

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.