

From the Editor

Trickle-Down Behavior Analysis

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Trickle-down theory reared its contemporary head under the Ronald Reagan administration when the term Reaganomics was used to describe a series of policies designed to spur economic growth. The trickle-down approach was one where resources were focused at the top of the economic food chain (business owners, large corporations) and through tax breaks or other economic benefits provided by the government to these upper income levels there would be increased opportunities for those on the bottom (frontline workers, lower income homeowners). The concept of trickle-down theory or Reaganomics has been both praised and refuted in the decades that followed. The proof however seems to be in the eye of the beholder.

Regardless if you are a supporter of the approach or vehemently opposed, the idea is interesting. Put the resources at the top and naturally they will trickle down to the lower levels. If we think about the practice of behavior analysis, a similar pattern has emerged. We spend our time and energy developing highly skilled behavior analysts and we send them out into the world to trickle down their knowledge to the front line. We leave it up to the BCBA[®] or other skilled behavioral experts to

dispense their knowledge to exponential numbers of parents, teachers, and caregivers. Does this approach work? Well just like Reaganomics, it's in the eye of the beholder.

This issue of *BAP* illustrates a variety of trickle-down approaches to the front line. We see in the paper by Parsons, Rollyson, and Reid that using a pyramidal approach to teach practitioners desired job skills can enhance staff training. Dyer and Karp explain how a staff-training program can be implemented to increase vocal requests in children with autism. Anderson and St. Peter challenge the advice of Hanley (2012) that the best way to move assessment into the school system is by maintaining a rigorous experimental approach. Ahrendt, Houlihan, and Buchanan reveal an interesting attempt at implementing a token economy and how that trickle-down application of well-established behavioral principles yielded surprising results. A series of expert responses follow that are sure to stimulate our notions of what exactly happens when concepts are put into real practice. Finally, Kazemi and Shapiro reveal an interesting comparison between the BCBA credential and other related discipline certifications or licenses.

As a collection, this series of papers showcase both data and conceptualizations of what might be termed, *trickle-down behavior analysis*. The idea is one where educators put their time and effort into developing top level behavioral experts and send them out into the world to change it. It's the idea whereby the behavior analyst spends less time implementing the clinical services but rather moves these skills into the hands of the untrained and unskilled direct workers. And finally it's the abstraction of well-controlled and rigorously controlled experimental procedures we hope will be implemented with fidelity by the masses. Can we pull this all off or does a different approach need to be taken? Would greater success be had by the shift of educating the frontline worker with a standardized credential like the BCBA or something akin to the Certified Nursing Assistant? Should we strip down the complexity of functional assessment to a few question surveys about attention and escape consequential control? Can we expect tokens to sustain behavior of verbally complex humans

like they do for nonverbal persons with disabilities? And when we repackage our techniques into a box of materials for mass dissemination, are the important distinctions that separate our field from others retained? I think the answers to these questions will take time and data to answer. As our field continues to grow, they are answers we will need to seek.

Finally, I want to inform you that this will be the last issue of *BAP* that will be produced exclusively under the ABAI nameplate. Starting in 2014 with our next issue, *BAP* will become a journal that will be under the production team of Springer Publishing. My editorial team is very excited about this technological advancement, which will greatly improve the visibility of our journal in the electronic age. We will immediately have an online submission portal (www.editorialmanager.com/bhap/). A new journal website has been created (www.springer.com/40617) and we will join the Facebook and twitter feeds of Springer.

All these changes are exciting, and will surely accelerate the trickle down of *BAP* to the behavioral community. As I look forward to the future of *BAP*, I see us having a lasting legacy that will probably be a bit less controversial than Reaganomics, but hopefully just as salient.