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INTRODUCTION

Autism and Other Child Developmental Disorders: Early Behavior-Analytic Interventions

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This special issue of *Behavior Development Bulletin* attempts to bring together in an inte- grated way the latest research and advance- ments in the field of child and infant autism and behavior analysis. The issue contains 18 articles that include research, theory, and practice, with an emphasis on early behavioral interventions. The issue begins with the work of [Neimy,](#_bookmark7) [Pelaez, Carrow, Monlux, and Tarbox (2017)](#_bookmark7), which identified the early markers of infants and children at risk of developing autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disor- ders, and reviewed studies that used operant conditioning to shape critical social skills that are typically missing in these children. It con- tinues with [Eby and Greer’s (2017)](#_bookmark2) report of two experiments on the effects of social atten- tion versus token contingencies on the emission of verbal operants by preschoolers, with and without disability diagnoses, as well as [Schmel-](#_bookmark13) [zkopf, Greer, Singer-Dudek, and Du’s (2017)](#_bookmark13) research on two experiments examining the ef- fects of establishing conditioned reinforcers for adult attention on the initiation and continuation of vocal verbal operants by 3- and 4-year-olds. Next, [Olaff, Ona, and Holth (2017)](#_bookmark9) examined the establishment of naming in children with autism through multiple response-exemplar procedures that expanded on previous findings.

*Editor’s Note.* This is an introduction to the special issue of *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, “Autism and Other Child Developmental Disorders: Early Behavior-Analytic Interventions.” Please see the Table of Contents here: [http://](http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/bdb/22/1/) [psycnet.apa.org/journals/bdb/22/1/](http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/bdb/22/1/).—MP

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In this research, the participants had to echo the teacher’s tacts of the sample stimulus during matching-to-sample training before naming probes occurred.

This special issue also includes a review of the research literature supporting the impor- tance of imitation as an effective therapy for children with ASD ([Field, 2017](#_bookmark3)). [Kent, Gavin,](#_bookmark8) [Barnes-Holmes, Murphy, and Barnes-Holmes](#_bookmark8) [(2017)](#_bookmark8), in a series of three studies, investigated specific relational responding repertoires and the importance of sequencing the training in typically developing children and children with autism. Subsequently, [Speckman, Longano, and](#_bookmark17) [Syed (2017)](#_bookmark17) conducted an experimental demon- stration of conditioning three-dimensional ob- jects as reinforcers of imitation and match-to- sample responses of young children with autism. [Cihon et al. (2017)](#_bookmark0) demonstrated that textual prompts and transfer of stimulus control can be effective in establishing intraverbal re- sponses regardless of the inclusion of fluency- based instruction. It continues with a paper by [Bennett, Crocco, Loughrey, and McDowell](#_bookmark12) [(2017)](#_bookmark12) that reports the effects of video prompt- ing without narration on a daily living skill among students with autism, and an experimen- tal manipulation by [Rodriguez and Gutierrez](#_bookmark10) [(2017)](#_bookmark10) to compare operant and respondent pro- cedures to condition social stimuli to function as reinforcers in children with autism.

The issue also includes [Hayes, Stewart, and](#_bookmark4) [McElwee’s (2017)](#_bookmark4) careful examination of the use of the relational evaluation procedure in research considering theoretical approaches including joint stimulus control and relational frame theory. It contains [Ashbaugh, Koegel, and Koegel’s (2017)](#_bookmark11) investigation of specialized programs to assist col- lege students with ASD to succeed, [Commons et](#_bookmark5) [al.’s (2017)](#_bookmark5) report of an instrument to measure developmental outcomes in ASD, [Voulgarakis,](#_bookmark14) [Bendell-Estroff, and Field’s (2017)](#_bookmark14) review of in-

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terventions that reduce risk factors for obesity in children with autism, and [Guðmundsdóttir, Sig-](#_bookmark6) [urðardóttir, and Ala’i-Rosales’s (2017)](#_bookmark6) evaluation of caregivers’ training via telecommunication as a promising alternative for interventions with chil- dren with autism that live in rural areas.

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The last set of papers points the way for possible future ASD research by detailing two studies conducted to test the effects of multiple exemplar instruction using rapidly rotating mand (e.g., requesting) and tact (e.g., pointing or naming) opportunities under relevant moti- vating conditions. [Singer-Dudek, Park, Lee, and](#_bookmark15) [Lo’s (2017)](#_bookmark15) two experiments established the transformation of motivating operations across mands and tacts for sets of adjective– object pairs for preschoolers with developmental de- lays, and explored the possibility that this could be a verbal cusp. In addition, [Bruni and Hixson](#_bookmark1) [(2017)](#_bookmark1) reported on a reading program for indi- viduals with intellectual disabilities, the Edmark Reading Program, and [Williams and Laitinen](#_bookmark16) [(2017)](#_bookmark16) described an effective verbal behavior curriculum and a functional language program based on both Skinnerian and post-Skinnerian accounts on how to teach children with autism or other challenging language and communica- tion disorders.

In summary, this *Behavioral Development Bulletin* special issue on autism and other child developmental disorders culminates my 25 years of editorial work of trying to incorporate behavior analysis into other mainstream devel- opmental approaches in terms of learning prin- ciples and interventions. It is my hope that this volume represents a unique approach in the field of developmental behavior analysis, one that is based in successful experimentation and inter- ventions that help minimize typical problematic behavior of children with ASD.

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