

## 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 integrated way the latest research and advancements 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, Pelaez, Carrow, Monlux, and Tarbox (2017), which identified the early markers of infants and children at risk of developing autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disorders, and reviewed studies that used operant conditioning to shape critical social skills that are typically missing in these children. It continues with Eby and Greer's (2017) report of two experiments on the effects of social attention versus token contingencies on the emission of verbal operants by preschoolers, with and without disability diagnoses, as well as Schmelzkopf, Greer, Singer-Dudek, and Du's (2017) research on two experiments examining the effects 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) examined the establishment of naming in children with autism through multiple response-exemplar procedures that expanded on previous findings.

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 importance of imitation as an effective therapy for children with ASD (Field, 2017). Kent, Gavin, Barnes-Holmes, Murphy, and Barnes-Holmes (2017), 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 Syed (2017) conducted an experimental demonstration of conditioning three-dimensional objects as reinforcers of imitation and match-to-sample responses of young children with autism. Cihon et al. (2017) demonstrated that textual prompts and transfer of stimulus control can be effective in establishing intraverbal responses regardless of the inclusion of fluency-based instruction. It continues with a paper by Bennett, Crocco, Loughrey, and McDowell (2017) that reports the effects of video prompting without narration on a daily living skill among students with autism, and an experimental manipulation by Rodriguez and Gutierrez (2017) to compare operant and respondent procedures to condition social stimuli to function as reinforcers in children with autism.

The issue also includes Hayes, Stewart, and McElwee's (2017) 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) investigation of specialized programs to assist college students with ASD to succeed, Commons et al.'s (2017) report of an instrument to measure developmental outcomes in ASD, Voulgarakis, Bendell-Estroff, and Field's (2017) review of in-

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*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://psycnet.apa.org/journals/dbb/22/1/>.—MP

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terventions that reduce risk factors for obesity in children with autism, and Guðmundsdóttir, Sigurðardóttir, and Ala'i-Rosales's (2017) evaluation of caregivers' training via telecommunication as a promising alternative for interventions with children with autism that live in rural areas.

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 motivating conditions. Singer-Dudek, Park, Lee, and Lo's (2017) two experiments established the transformation of motivating operations across mands and tacts for sets of adjective-object pairs for preschoolers with developmental delays, and explored the possibility that this could be a verbal cusp. In addition, Bruni and Hixson (2017) reported on a reading program for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the Edmark Reading Program, and Williams and Laitinen (2017) 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 communication 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 developmental approaches in terms of learning principles 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 interventions that help minimize typical problematic behavior of children with ASD.

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