

Lecture 1a: Baer, Wolf, & Risley (JABA, 1968)

“Some Current Dimensions of Applied Behavior Analysis”

Published in 1st issue of JABA by 1st three editors
Defined ABA and proposed criteria for evaluation of ABA research
Most frequently cited article in the field of ABA

“A society willing to consider a technology of its own behavior apparently is likely to support that application when it deals with socially important behaviors” (p. 91)

- Is society willing to consider a technology of behavior?

Definition of Applied Behavior Analysis

- Application of learning principles to improve behavior, combined with
- Evaluation of whether observed changes are a function of (attributable to) the procedures applied

- How are basic and applied research similar and different?

- What is the value of a demonstration of how behavior “worsens?”

- Why is a “non-experimental analysis a contradiction in terms?”

Seven Dimensions of Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied: Focus is on behaviors having social significance

Behavioral: Focus is on observable events

Analytical: Emphasis is on demonstration of functional relationships

Technological: All procedures are identified and clearly described

Conceptually systematic: Procedures are related to basic principles from which they are derived

Effective: Intervention results in socially significant behavior change

Generality: Extension of behavior change across time, setting, or other behaviors

Applied: ABA focuses on behaviors having social importance

- Arbitrary response in a clinical subject?

- Behavior in nonhuman subject?

Behavioral: ABA focuses on direct measurement of the behavior of interest

“Saying” versus “doing”

- Verbal descriptions of behavior may be unreliable and inaccurate, but
- Verbal behavior may be important in its own right

Observer reliability

- Human observer prone to more errors than machine
- Human observer’s behavior subject to varying sources of control

Changes in experimenter behavior

- Staff imposes penalty (time limit) for not dressing
- Teacher moves student away from friends (to front of class)

Analytic: ABA focuses on demonstrations of functional relations

The analysis of a behavior . . . Requires a believable demonstration of the events that can be responsible for the occurrence or non-occurrence of that behavior. . . . By common laboratory standards, that has meant an ability to turn the behavior on and or, or up and down, at will. (p. 94)

Two experimental designs for demonstrating functional relations, reversal and multiple baseline, to be covered in Ch. 3

Technological: All procedures are identified and clearly described

“Rule of thumb”: Can a typically trained reader replicate the procedures and results?

Contingencies described for: (a) R, (b) Not R, (c) Alt R

Conceptually Systematic: Procedures are tied to their underlying principles

Outcome of research on unrelated procedures: Unwieldy collection of tricks

Outcome of conceptually systematic research: Organized technology (science) of behavior change

Effectiveness: Interventions produce socially important change

Statistical significance: Size of change unlikely due to chance

Clinical significance: Size of change meaningful to client

Is there clinical value in small changes?

Generality: Interventions produce generalized behavior change

Durability over time

Effects transfer across situations

Effects spread to other behaviors