

Behaviorism: An essential survival tool for practitioners in autism

James M. Johnston, Ph.D., BCBA-D

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What we're going to do today

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2. Consider why you need to know this stuff

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5. Learn about some key positions of RB

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2. Consider why you need to know this stuff
3. List topics ABA practitioners need to know
4. Overcome about barriers to understanding RB
5. Learn about some key positions of RB
6. Start you down the path

What we're *not* going to do today

1. Cover all of the conceptual issues you need to understand

What we're *not* going to do today

1. Cover all of the conceptual issues you need to know about
2. Teach you enough about any of them

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3. Convince you to buy into all features of radical behaviorism

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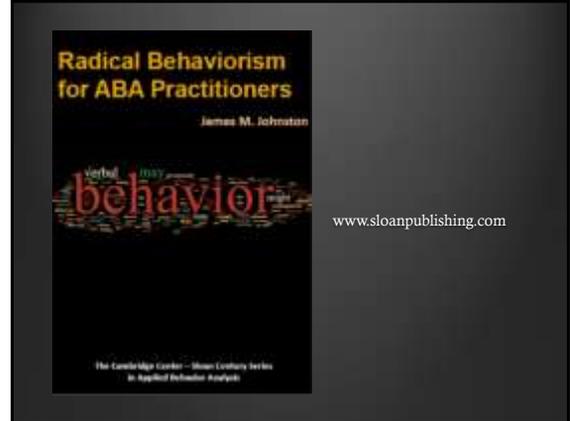
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6. **Answer all your questions**



How we're going to do this

1. **I'll talk a lot**

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2. **While I'm talking, you think real hard**

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4. **Raise your hand so I can see, but just ask**

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9. Rather have more discussion & not finish slides

Things to talk about

1. Not understanding what I'm trying to get across

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2. Not buying what I'm selling

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7. Wanting to know when we're going to take a break

Questions?

OK. I've got one for you...

What training do you have on radical behaviorism and related conceptual issues?

1. Full graduate course solely on this topic
2. Partially covered in a graduate course
3. Occasionally touched on in graduate courses
4. Mainly through conference presentations
5. Only through reading on my own
6. Not any, really, but I'm ready to learn!

What does it mean to be a behavior analyst?

Focus on behavior

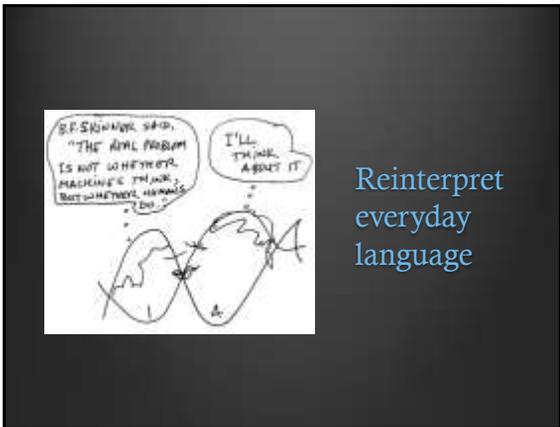
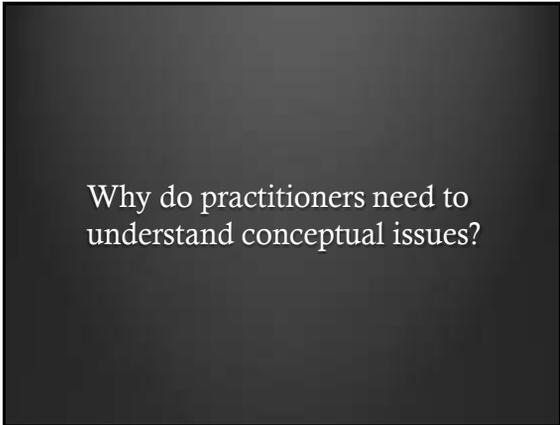
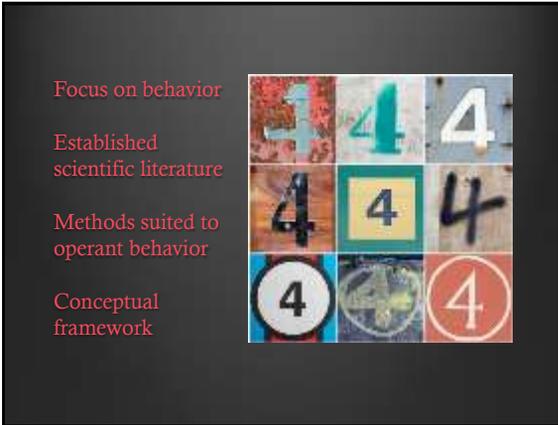
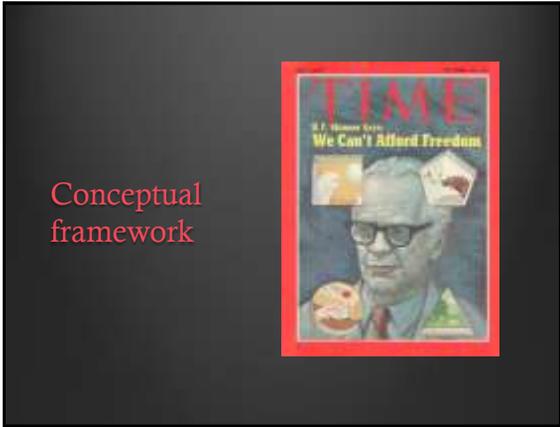
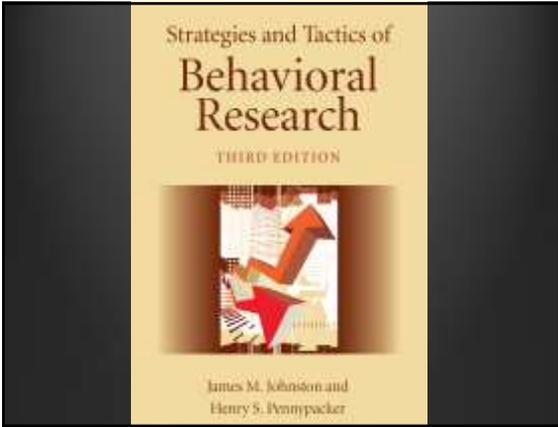


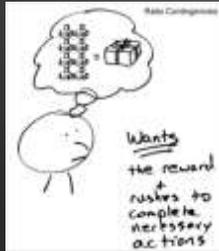
Established scientific literature



Methods suited to operant behavior







Avoid
pitfalls of
mentalism

Are You A Back-Slider
Who's Sick Of
Back-
Sliding?



Avoid
backsliding



Maintain
consistency
with
science

Not really an option



Task standards...

Content Area 2: Definition and characteristics

Explain and behave in accordance with the philosophical assumptions of behavior analysis...

Distinguish between mentalistic and environmental explanations of behavior...

Describe and explain behavior, including private events, in behavior analytic (non-mentalistic) terms...

Not just about rules

It's about...

What we choose as target behavior

How we define and measure it

How we evaluate its functions

How we decide on intervention objectives

How we interpret results

How we communicate with others



Acquisition

Goal: Enjoying selected activity

Target: Trying to learn

Reinforce: Making a good effort

Measure: Number of tries

Interpret: Encouraging learner's interest



Reduction

Goal: Teach to handle not getting his way

Target: Acting out

Assessment: Due to frustration

Consequence: Explain desired behavior; redirect to desired activity

Measure: Number of episodes

Interpret: Learned how to handle frustration



Mentalism in practice

Accommodates vernacular implications of behavior

Encourages focus on non-behavioral targets

Leads to assessment in terms of mental "events"

Tempts misdirected measurement & intervention procedures

Prompts attribution of change to mental causes



So what does a practitioner need to know?



Not just a vocabulary...



But a new dialect

Are we free to choose?



It's just verbal behavior...



And it's all learned

So...

Response classes?

Meaning?

Grammar?

Using words?

Reference?

Speaker as listener?



And what about opinions, convictions, and beliefs?

Is making up your mind
like making up your bed?



What to do about mentalism?



What's really inside?



What about thinking?



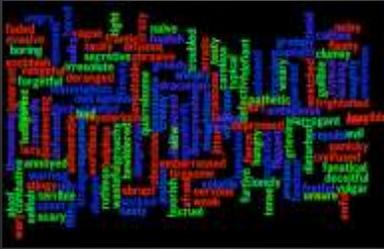
And emotions and feelings?



Learning to respond to private events



Traits, attitudes, moods,
and all that other stuff



How do you
learn to talk
about
yourself?



Who do you
think you are?



Perception,
awareness, and
consciousness



The behavior
of sensing



Seeing that
you are seeing



Self control



And...

Knowing, problem solving and reasoning

Creativity, credit, and blame

Culture and behavior analysis

And just a little bit of history

Yes, ABA practitioners should know all of this stuff

Now let's get started...

(by cutting of avenues of intellectual escape in order to prepare you to fully consider everything else)

1. Two competing assumptions about the origin of behavior
2. Nature of verbal behavior

Free will vs. Determinism

Free will: the notion that our ability to control our behavior is entirely our own and is at least in part not susceptible to other influences

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Determinism: the notion that our behavior is fully controlled by hereditary and environmental factors

Free will vs. Determinism

* Raised with a bit of both

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* Mental activity preceding behavior

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- * Inside vs. outside implication
- * Notion of choice integral to free will view
- * Admit environmental influences but hold out for free choice too
- * Appealing because don't have to revise views

Free will vs. Determinism

Implications of free will position

- * Can control our own behavior
- * Can make free choices
- * Not controlled by hereditary/environmental
- * Capricious, random, without explanation
- * Researchers cannot identify causes
- * Practitioners cannot control behavior
- * Accommodates mentalism

Free will vs. Determinism

Implications of determinism position

- * No exceptions
- * Respected view in science; behavior is a physical event
- * Position doesn't require identification of all causal variables
- * Loss of idea of free choice
- * Loss of idea of autonomy – helpless, passive

Free will vs. Determinism

Only an assumption

- * Cannot prove either way
- * Proving free will requires showing behavior can occur without hereditary/environmental factors
- * Proving determinism requires showing physical causes of any behavior
- * Consequences for practitioners of assuming one or the other?

Free will vs. Determinism

A few related issues

- * Non-physical causation

Free will vs. Determinism

A few related issues

- * Non-physical causation
- * Responsibility

Free will vs. Determinism

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- * Choice

Free will vs. Determinism

So, where are you on this?

Free will vs. Determinism

Yes, your assumption is itself determined!

The nature of verbal behavior

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- 8 Your convictions are "just verbal behavior."

The nature of verbal behavior

What's your score?

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Some fun facts about verbal behavior

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Some fun facts about verbal behavior

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- * Operant learning and imitation are largely at work.
 - * < 1 month – crying
 - * ~ 4-16 weeks – particular sounds; crying varies some
 - * ~ 20 weeks – babbling
 - * ~ 6-9 months – imitative sounds
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- * Learning VB requires extensive experience with a verbal community.
- * An *extensive* history of particular response/consequence contingencies (& imitation) key to explaining self-description, relational concepts, syntax/grammar, argument/reasoning, etc.

The nature of verbal behavior

Reconsidering conventional concepts

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- * Meaning
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 - ~ How to discover the meaning of a word

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 - ~ Learned patterns of responding

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- * Convictions/beliefs
 - ~ Tacting VB over time; just verbal behavior
- * Translation trap
 - ~ Good exercise, but avoid assumption that all vernacular terms deserve it

Now where are you?

Do you agree...

That all behavior is determined by heredity and environment?

That VB is entirely learned and must be explained only in terms of such influences?

Is something missing?

Does it seem as if these views ignore much of what we view as human nature?

If so, hang in there – we're not done yet.

Can't lose what we never had.

Never mind...



Never mind

Mentalism – Tendency to look for causes of behavior in a mental universe that has no physical dimensions

Fully implicit – often explicit – in vernacular dialect

Mental causation “obvious” in daily life

Never mind

Causes and gaps

Never mind

Causes and gaps

Mind-body problem

Never mind

Causes and gaps

Mind-body problem

Do mental explanations explain?

Never mind

Causes and gaps

Mind-body problem

Do mental explanations explain?

Inventing inside “causes”

Never mind

Causes and gaps

Mind-body problem

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Correlation or causation?

Never mind

Causes and gaps

Mind-body problem

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Correlation or causation?

You and your homunculus

Never mind

Public vs. private

Never mind

Public vs. private

What about thinking?

Never mind

Public vs. private

What about thinking?

Emotions and feelings

Never mind

Public vs. private

What about thinking?

Emotions and feelings

Learning to respond to private events

Never mind

Public vs. private

What about thinking?

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Traits, attitudes, moods, and all that other stuff

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What about your dog?



Never mind

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What about your dog?

And what to do about mentalism?

Seeing yourself

Who do you think you are?

Seeing yourself

Who do you think you are?

Perception, awareness, attention, & consciousness

Seeing yourself

Who do you think you are?

Perception, awareness, attention, & consciousness

The behavior of sensing

Seeing yourself

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Perception, awareness, attention, & consciousness

The behavior of sensing

Seeing that you are seeing

Seeing yourself

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Perception, awareness, attention, & consciousness

The behavior of sensing

Seeing that you are seeing

Seeing everything but nothing

Seeing yourself

Who do you think you are?

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Self-control

Misdirection of everyday dialect

Knowledge & understanding

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Knowledge & understanding

Purpose, intention, and goals

Misdirection of everyday dialect

Knowledge & understanding

Purpose, intention, and goals

Planning on going somewhere?

Misdirection of everyday dialect

Knowledge & understanding

Purpose, intention, and goals

Planning on going somewhere?

Problem solving

Misdirection of everyday dialect

Knowledge & understanding

Purpose, intention, and goals

Planning on going somewhere?

Problem solving

Rules, advice, & instructions

Misdirection of everyday dialect

Knowledge & understanding

Purpose, intention, and goals

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Problem solving

Rules, advice, & instructions

Memory & remembering

Behavioral responsibility

Creativity

Behavioral responsibility

Creativity

Credit & blame

Behavioral responsibility

Creativity

Credit & blame

Intent

Behavioral responsibility

Creativity
 Credit & blame
 Intent
 Responsibility

Behavioral responsibility

Creativity
 Credit & blame
 Intent
 Responsibility
 When behavior just happens

Behavioral responsibility

Creativity
 Credit & blame
 Intent
 Responsibility
 When behavior just happens
 Conscience

Stuff we're not going to get to

Rights & values
 Reasoning
 Religious behavior
 Culture
 And more...

Radical behaviorism

"...the philosophy of a science of behavior treated as a subject matter in its own right apart of internal explanations, mental or physiological"
 - B.F. Skinner 1989

Radical behaviorism

Approaches verbal behavior – including that of scientists themselves – no differently than any other kind of behavior
 Intolerance for mentalism in any form
 Holds that behavior cannot be fully explained by physiology

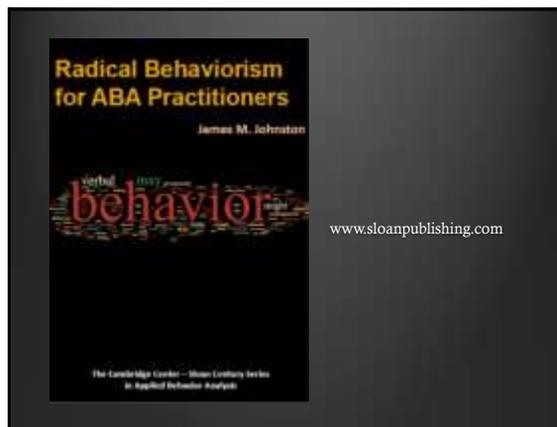
Radical behaviorism

A matter of opinion?

Selling radical behaviorism

Maintaining two repertoires

Part of the foundation of your clinical skills



www.sloanpublishing.com

talkingaboutbehavior.co

