



The Insider

Life Span Institute at Parsons

July, 2007

Pat White, Editor

Awards/Honors

Dean Williams was elected as a Fellow of Division 25 of the American Psychological Association in May.

Kate Saunders has agreed to be the Associate Editor of *The Behavior Analyst* for the next 3 years. She was also asked to serve another term for the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, but she turned it down.

Presentations

Alligood, C. A., Anderson, K. G., & Williams, D. C. (2007, May). *Professional development series: Postdoctoral fellowships*. Panel discussion presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Alligood, C. A., Bloom, S. E., Hackenberg, T. D., Shafto, D. L., Malott, R. W., Brewer, A. T., Madden, G. J., Dubuque, E. M., & Ghezzi, P. M. (2007, May). *Professional development series: Applying to graduate school in behavior analysis*. Panel discussion presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Brewer, A. T., Johnson, P. S., McCusker, M., Phszczynski, A., Madden, G. J., & Williams, D. C. (2007, May). *Delay discounting as a predictor of pre-ratio pauses following rich-to-lean transitions*. Poster presentation at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Brewer, A. T., Saunders, K., Madden, G. J., & Williams, D. C. (2007, May). *Maladaptive behaviors following rich-to-lean transitions on multiple schedules*. Poster presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Foreman, A. M., Brewer, A. T., & Perone, M. (2007, May). *Pausing in the transition from rich to lean schedules: Fixed versus variable ratios*. Poster presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Jacobs, E. A., Pietras, C. J., Anderson, K. G., Lawrence, P. S., & Williams, D. C. (2007, May). *SEABA – Applied or basic: It's the science*. ABA Expo presentation at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Madden, G. J., Johnson, P. S., Smith, N. G., & Brewer, A. T. (2007, May). Behavioral

economics, impulsivity, and empirical findings from an animal model of gambling. In C. M. Galuska (Chair), *Recent advances in behavioral economics and delay discounting*. Symposium conducted at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Sack, S. (2007, May). Beginning with the end in mind: Sustaining assistive technology reutilization programs. Presentation to the Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Conference, Denver, CO.

Sack, S. (2007, May). Return on investment (R01): Initial considerations for measuring cost-savings/cost-benefit of device reutilization. Presentation to the Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Conference, Denver, CO.

Sack, S. (2007, May). Working with Medicaid and Third Party Payers to provide assistive technology devices and services. Presentation to the National Pass It On Conference, Denver, CO.

Sack, S. (2007, May). Facilitating Telework: A review of research-based findings. Presentation to the National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership Telework Forum, Denver, CO.

Sack, S. (2007, May). Operating an alternative finance loan program for purchasing assistive technology: After 7 years what does the data tell us? Presentation to the National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership Alternative Finance Forum, Denver, CO.

Sack, S. (2007, May). Working with publicly funded agencies to increase the acquisition of assistive technology. Presentation to the Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Conference, Denver, CO.

Sack, S., & Simmons, S. (2007, May). Information to capture as you track your assistive technology equipment inventory. Presentation to the National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance. Webinar, RESNA, Washington, DC.

Saunders, K., McIlvane, W. J., & Branch, M. N. (2007, May). *Increasing your funding odds: Interpreting grant reviews and revising proposals*. Panel discussion presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis International 33rd Annual Convention, San Diego, CA.

Publications

Saunders, R. R., Saunders, M. D., Struve, B., Munce, A. L., Olswang, L. B., Dowden, P. A., & Klasner, E. R. (2007). Discovering indices of contingency awareness in adults with multiple profound disabilities. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 112, 246-260.

Turnbull, A. P., Summers, J. A., Turnbull, R., Brotherson, M. J., Winton, P., Roberts, R., Snyder, P., McWilliam, R., Chandler, L., Schrandt, S., Stowe, M., Bruder, M. B., Divenere, N., Epley, P., Hornback, M., Huff, B., Miksch, P., Mitchell, L., Sharp, L., & Stroup-Rentier, V.

(2007). Family supports and services in early intervention: A bold vision. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 29, 187-206.

Williams, D. C., Saunders, K. J., & Perone, M. (2007). Extended pausing in human subjects on multiple fixed-ratio schedules with varied reinforcer magnitude and response requirements. Accepted pending revision in the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*.

Project Highlight

Communication of People with Mental Retardation: A Program Project 2007-2012

This Program Project was first funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in 1964, one year after NICHD was established. Recently, the LSI received notice that the Program Project would again be funded, this time for years 38-42. Led by Richard Saunders, the project has 19 investigators and advisors from 6 Universities.

The investigators summarized their project as follows: “Clearly, our interest is in human communication. Our concern is its delayed or precluded development. Our hypothesis is that communication problems are best studied at several key points in its potential development. Our intent is to apply approaches to intervention at those points that are both innovative and promising, but also informed by recent data. Thus, our overarching purpose is to improve our understanding of communicative development with novel demonstrations of problem remediation in people with or at risk of severe or profound mental retardation.”

Development in general can be seen as a seemingly cohesive sequence of changes. Some, but not all, of the later changes cannot take place until certain earlier changes have become stable and efficient; the earlier changes are prerequisites for the later ones. Of those prerequisites, some are necessary for only a few subsequent changes; others, by contrast, are necessary for many subsequent changes. The latter are referred to here as “cusps.”

Cusps are attainments with two characteristics: (1) Once mastered, they open the way to the sudden and widespread development of many other important attainments; (2) If not mastered, those important subsequent attainments will not be achieved. A familiar example is reading skill: Once achieved and made fluent, a huge world of knowledge and skills is available to the reader for quick, efficient access. Absent reading skill, that same knowledge would be acquired only slowly and inefficiently, if at all.

The proposed research is aimed at expanding our knowledge about and our ability to affect developmental cusps related to the development of communication. Generally, this application focuses on communicative development in individuals with severe or profound mental retardation or those at risk of such significant disability. The cusps proposed for study in this application usually arise early in development and are those that typically developing children traverse so rapidly that we hardly notice them as significant. They are those involved in the ability to gain another’s attention for the possible purposes of requesting assistance, interaction, continuation of an interaction, or control over objects.

Although these cusps ordinarily are encountered early in normal development, the populations to be studied reflect a wide range of ages and have, or may develop, severe disabilities. The plan is to study these cusps across infants with moderate to severe motor disabilities (University of Washington; Lesley Olswang, Patricia Dowden and Gay Lloyd Pinder, Investigators), young children with severe language delays (University of Kansas; Nancy Brady, Kathy Thiemann, and Steve Warren Investigators), and adults with profound multiple impairments (University of Kansas; Richard Saunders, Muriel Saunders, and James Sherman, Investigators). All of the projects will share screening tools in order to determine if there are important similarities in the projects' populations, despite differences in age and presumed abilities.

The initial aims of Olswang et al. are to document the efficacy of a treatment designed to teach young children with moderate to severe motor impairments to use triadic eye gaze (looking back and forth between an adult and object) as a communication signal with adults and to determine the relationship between child characteristics and the pattern of acquisition of triadic eye gaze as a communication signal with adults.

Brady et al., have two primary aims. Aim 1 is to determine the extent to which children's extant skills in expressive and receptive communication, at first observation, predicts growth in communication success, rate of communication, voice-output-communication-aid (VOCA) vocabulary, and speech vocabulary. Aim 2 is to determine the extent to which environmental variables, including augmented input, parental responsiveness, and instructional variables contribute to growth in communication success, rate of communication, VOCA vocabulary and speech development.

Saunders et al.'s initial aims are to determine whether their participants can learn to close an adaptive switch to signal for assistance during probes in which access to a preferred source of stimulation is briefly interrupted and to determine what variables predict success in learning and signaling for assistance with adaptive switches.

Janet Marquis and Kandace Fleming will aggregate data from all the projects and conduct statistical analyses to identify participant variables that predict success in crossing the particular cusps each project is studying.

Overall management of the Program Project will be based in Parsons, deriving support from Pat White, Tammy Schoenhofer, Laura Hanigan, and Sandy Hill.

Staff News

Sara Major started online coursework towards her BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) certification on July 1. Katie Hine will be supervising her for her supervised experience component.

Kelly Perry will be retiring and there will be a farewell gathering July 27 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the KU Media Studio. She will be missed.

Due to the Child Care Focus grant ending Jeanne Fiscus and Melissa Peak have taken other early childhood positions in southeast Kansas. Linda Folks has changed positions and is now working on data entry with grants under the direction of Chris Smith and Dave Lindeman.