

Editorial on Behavior Analytic Licensure: General historical issues of why people oppose licensing and the common replies

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Abstract

A recent survey by the new PIBA SIG suggests strong support for licensure among behavior analysts. This editorial will explore some of the common arguments against licensure and present some factual information to support or counter those arguments. The four common arguments are (1) licensure will hurt the science of behavior analysis (2) licensure protects the profession but fails to protect the public, (3) master level people do not receive sufficient training to function independently and (4) regulatory concerns. Finally, we will look at the history of licensing and counter history of calls to exclude professions from licensing.

Keywords: Defining behavior analysis, origins of behavior analysis, licensing of behavior analysis, impact of licensing, history, & common criticisms

The Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABA:I) has started a special interest group for practitioners' issues (PIBA).¹ Under the interim chair, who is also the first author of this paper, this group continues to form on a list serve sponsored by the Behavior Analyst Online special interest group. The list is the behavior analysis and public policy list. On Nov 22, 2007, this list sponsored a survey of its 120 members to decide the SIG's direction. Of the 120 members about 25% chose to participate in the survey. One survey question asked was particularly important: "Should the new ABA:I PIBA Special Interest Group (SIG) write a formal letter endorsing licensure to be made available for any chapter pursuing licensing?" 93% of the respondents answered "yes" to this question. From these numbers, it seems clear that the PIBA SIG will strongly endorse licensing². Licensing has its benefits and costs and this paper will explore some of the history around mental health licensing and reoccurring questions. But first, we will briefly discuss the pros of licensure.

The benefits of licensure are many. Through the combination of both authors' careers (spanning more than 30 years), we have never heard a person say "Wow, I am sorry that I got my license." Indeed, we have heard many people profess "I cannot wait to license." We have even heard people say in passing "I would not do that. I could lose my license for that." Why? Some of the major benefits to licensing are more freedom to practice, career advancement³, and state support of practice. The last one is critical because it allows the behavior analyst to function primarily with his or her focus on issues related to the clients' right to effective treatment (Van Houten, et al. 1989), instead of concerns from other disciplines being primary (see Cautilli, & Weinberg, 2007b for discussion of this issue). Behavior analysts are unique in their focus on a right to data driven procedures, even American Psychological Association (APA) places greater emphasis on clinical "wisdom" over data (APA, 2005). Increasingly, over the years, we have come to believe that consumers have a right to treatment shown to work and that this is not

¹ This is not to say that ABAI has not always been a practitioner organization. Kangas & Vaidya (2007) observed the convention trend since 1980 and found that consistently applied presentations tripled the number of basic and conceptual presentations. It is now that ABA:I has started to take the management of the future of the profession seriously.

² One important point is that we see each state's choice to license to complete independent to what is occurring in other states. For example, Ohio may choose to seek licensing to protect it from APA's model act for Psychologists, while New York facing the same threat may seek to get an exemption from the psychologist licensing laws.

³ Currently, many agencies, clinics, and increasingly even federal government positions will only offer administrative positions like clinical director to people who possess a license. Every year the number of agencies that fall into this category seems to rise. Thus, to not possess a license could lead to a foreshortened career.

equivalent to a therapist belief that a treatment will work. Science based versus faith based practice should be an option that consumers have a legitimate right to choose in a free market. Licensure allows for a level playing field so that this choice can occur. Other reasons include: greater public recognition, more students attracted to the field, eligibility for third party payments, and greater public protections. The benefits do not limit themselves to the practitioners. With licensure, comes increased student numbers and with increased student numbers comes increased faculty positions. The greater number of faculty positions means a greater amount of research as young faculty pursues tenure. These factors have driven many professions to seek licensure.

Historically, psychology received its first certification in Virginia in 1946 and the profession of psychology first was licensed in 1945 in the state of Connecticut. The second psychologist licensure bill to pass was in 1951 in Georgia. The progression is not always certification first then licensing. For example, 1976 Virginia became the first state to license professional counselors (Pope, 1997); however, national certification for counselors mostly occurred in the mid 1980s and licensing occurred in most states in the mid to late 1990s. The enthusiasm of licensure has carried across mental health professions and now seems to have reached behavior analysis.

Is behavior analysis a separate discipline? Historically, the practice of behavior analysis is a hybrid discipline born from a rather unique relationship between psychology, education, special education, speech-language pathology, and to a more limited extent criminal justice and other professions with ties to core disciplines in health care.⁴ While it is true that the experimental analysis of behavior emerged from psychology (and in some respects Pavlov in physiology),⁵ the practice of behavior analysis has been conducted and researched by school psychologists, educational psychologists, social workers, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, regular educators, and special educators. Recently, we have seen the move to interdepartmental behavior analysis programs (such as the one at Temple University) and free standing behavior analysis programs (such as the one at the University of North Texas). Several examples of this point are important, first the discipline of Applied Behavior Analysis, was founded by group of faculty at the University of Kansas in the Family Life Department (which was in home economics) as was the behavioral development model it follows (see affiliations Bijou & Baer, 1961). Indeed, students from the Kansas program were not eligible for licensing as psychologists. In addition, work on respondent conditioning interventions emerged from medicine (see Wolpe, 1958). Behavioral interventions for spinal injury including operant based biofeedback, started in counseling departments (see affiliations Ince, Brucker & Alba, 1977) and then moved to physical therapy departments (see affiliations' Brucker & Bulaeva, 1996). Applied verbal behavior research has consistently been done in communication disorders departments (see affiliations Greer & Ross, 2004). The list continues with special education departments, as well as school psychology departments conducting the vast majority of research on functional analysis, curriculum based measurement, Direct Instruction and counseling departments focusing the major portion of research on community reinforcement approach for addictions (see affiliations Kirby et al. 1999). Behavior analysis has its own journals (IJBCT, JABA, BAT, AVB, JEIBI, SPL-ABA, etc.), which have all published for many years. In addition, it has its own organizations Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABA:I), which started because behavior analysts could not publish work in psychology journals. ABA:I has its own conferences and its own award ceremonies. Currently, behavior analysis has its own ethical standards, it regulates entrance into the profession (see ABA:I's membership application or the behavior analysis certification boards standards for certification), and certification process. In short, it meets all the criterion

⁴ Some would argue that psychology abandoned and disowned its behavior analytic child in 1983, when it published in the monitor that Behavior Modification was dead (see Dorsey and Weinberg, in preparation).

⁵ Indeed, in many ways saying that psychology owns behavior analysis is akin to saying that biology as a field own medicine.

of recognized profession defined in *Ford v. Philadelphia Housing Authority*, 789, A. 2d 360 (Pa. Cmwlth, 2001).

As a profession, behavior analysis has values that are unique when compared to any of its progenitor disciplines, such as its position papers calling for the Right to Effective Treatment and a Right to Effective Education. The common focus and unifying theme of behavior analytic practitioners has been the focus on a strong commitment to empiricism, behavioral theory, behavioral case conceptualization based on functional assessment and analysis and on principles of operant and respondent conditioning as well as other factors to emerge from basic experimental analysis of behavior research, and behavioral intervention techniques, which are conceptually systematic with basic research.

The concept of licensing behavior analysts is not a new one (Bailey, 1991), especially in Florida where it has been proposed and rejected by the legislature many times. Part of the reason of the rejection of the Florida bill has been the failure of the bill to make behavior analysis comparable to other professions, which Florida does license- like counseling. The fervor of licensing was hinted at in a piece by Rosenwasser and Axelrod (2002), which suggested that the time was coming. Six years later, many believe that the time has arrived. Many on the policy list have worked during the course of the summer of 2007 to create of a behavior analysis model-licensing act (BAMLA) (<http://www.abapracticesig.org/pr03.htm>). One of our chief concerns in creating the bill was to set realistic standards that achieve parity with other master level licensed professions such as clinical social work, marriage and family therapy, and professional counseling.

While currently little or no opposition seems to exist within the behavioral community,⁶ looking historically at such moves (from inside and outside the profession) toward licensure, one can only expect it will soon form. Opposition to licensing from other mental health professionals is not new either. It seems to be the rule in mental health for mental health practitioner groups (psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, counselors, etc) to oppose each other's moves to become independent. For example, Cummings (1979) reported efforts to terminate all licenses including psychologists in mental health who were not medical doctors. In 1980, South Dakota did sunset the psychology license but then it was re-enacted in 1981. While we will discuss common arguments to licensure by comparing them to the BAMLA, it is recognized that each state will individualize its solutions and licensing bills to problems, which exist in that state.⁷

Licensure will hurt the Science of Behavior Analysis

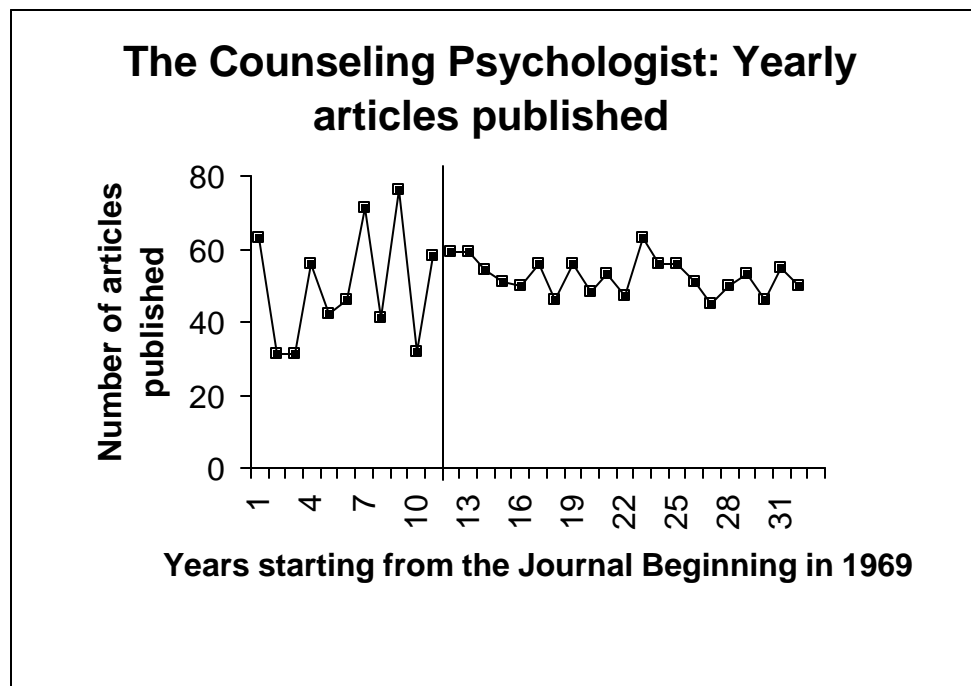
One of the most basic issues of why people say that they would oppose licensing behavior analysis is that they believe it will damage the science. It is argued that behavior analysis will be less productive scholarly as they try to meet other academic demands. This is not a new argument however, surprisingly, not much research exists either way on the topic.

To test this hypothesis, we decided to look at a parallel profession to see if evidence existed. We analyzed its primary journal for evidence of less scholarly productivity. The parallel profession was counseling and we looked at the journal: *The Counseling Psychologist*- since the field of counseling went through a similar process of licensing professionals. We went to the online archive and coded the number of articles for each issue for every year. In 1981, the first issue of the year led with several articles on the newly developed certification process for counselors and the issue had several articles about including

⁶ In addition to the survey, this is the third article that the second author has done on the subject and none of the articles have received any formal or informal replies against. The first two have received several pro-responses.

⁷ It should be similarly noted that great variation in acts from state to state decrease the public's confidence that licensing can be a minimal standard for competence (see Bernstein & Lecomte, 1981; Hogan, 1979).

counseling into the psychologist license. Since none of the previous issues mentioned either licensing or certification, we choose this as the logical starting point for the break in our analysis. Both authors separately coded each issue and compared the coding scores. Inter-observer agreement was 100%. In memories, book reviews, and awards were not counted. Articles, research papers, editorials, replies, and division reports were counted as evidence of academic productivity.



From the above graph, the average number of publications prior to the report of certification and licensure is 49.7 articles published/year. After the publication, the average is 53.7 articles / year. In addition, only four (out of 11) of the first set of data points (prior to the article on licensure) are higher than the mean in the phase after the report. In addition, the variation is obviously less from year to year post the licensing article. While not indicating a functional relationship, clearly the above lends some support to the idea that licensure will not make behavior analysis less scholarly productive and hint that licensure will make the field more productive.

Licensing could theoretically have an effect of creating more university programs. In Pennsylvania, the estimated growth for behavior analysts if licensure passes, is from roughly 350 BCBAs to over 3,000 licensed behavior analysts four years after licensing board goes into effect (This data takes two years into account to develop the board). It is also estimated that the number of BCBA programs in the state will go from 6 to 20. More programs mean more faculty positions. In addition, in writing research grants faculty will have a way to readily measure who will be impacted by their research (e.g., a behavior analytic researcher could claim that in Pa currently there are three thousand behavior analysts, most of whom are engaged in procedures to develop stimulus control- the basic parameters that lead to stimulus control formation have not been well developed).

In addition, licensure could attract a higher quality of student to the profession. Both authors have been frequently asked by students "What can I do with the degree?" Some students have expressed concerns like "Well, I work with autism now but I am not sure in 10 years, I want to still be working with the same population- what else does this degree makes me eligible to do?" Most students are concerned about job prospects and flexibility of positions, as well as growth potential, learning and ability to expand

their practice. Traditionally, many high quality students have foregone behavior analysis toward social work or counseling because of greater recognition and stability provided by licensure. Higher quality students are better for the profession, ongoing research, and for the consumers and families that we serve.

Licensure Protects the Profession but Fails to Protect the Public

This issue really breaks down into several issues: (1) Does behavior analysis, done well, have anything to offer the public? (2) Does behavior analysis done poorly, harm the public or fail to achieve the benefits outlined in number one? Simply put, the answer to both these questions is “yes”.

In the age of evidenced based practices, behavior analytic procedures are strongly researched and thus competitive to the rest of mental health practices (O'Donohue & Ferguson, 2006; Flora, 2007). Behavior analytic principles of operant and respondent conditioning serve as the core for a host of effective interventions for a diverse array of problems. Meeting the APA guidelines for either a well established or promising practice (O'Donohue & Ferguson, 2006) in areas such as addictions (Milford, Austin, & Smith, 2007; Petry Alessi, Hanson & Sierra, 2007; Smith, Milford, and Meyers, 2004; Schumacher Milby, Wallace, Meehan, Kertesz, Vuchinich, Dunning, Usdan, 2007), autism (Matson & Smith, 2008), chronic pain (Romano, Jensen, Turner, Good & Hops, 2000; Sanders, 2006), depression (Spates, Pagoto, & Kalata, 2006) and sex offenders (Marshall, Jones, Ward, Johnston, & Bambaree, 1991). In the area of crime, behavior analytic procedures have been found to have the largest effective size with cognitive components adding little or nothing to the overall base behavioral interventions to recidivism reduction (Illescas, S.R., Sánchez-Meca, and Genovés, 2001). Both approaches led to the same 15-20% reduction in recidivism and this was higher than other methods from non-behavioral orientations. For example, with children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity, some evidence exists that operant based behavioral procedures can reduce delinquency by half (Satterfield, Satterfield, & Schell, 1987; Satterfield, & Schell, 1997). In another example, Teaching Family Homes have been shown to reduce recidivism while children are in the program and after they leave the program (Kingsley, 2006). Thus, behavior analysts have much to offer to a broad public. And while specific critiques of behavior analysis occur in areas such as behavior analytic theory (Hayes, 2001), the lack of added benefit of functional analysis (Gresham, McIntyre, Olson-Tinker, Dolstra, McLaughlin, & Van, 2004), interventions (O'Donohue W, Fryling, 2007), and restricting range of populations that behavior analysts seem to work (Hayes, 2001; Critchfield, 2002; O'Donohue & Fryling 2007), the practice of behavior analysis remains strong in the development of techniques to improve the human condition. From the above, it is clear that the competent use of behavior analytic principles can help alleviate suffering and enhance individuals functioning. There is also reason to believe that less than competent use can lead to harm.

Indeed, the one obstacle that remains to behavior analysis as it matures as a profession, is to ensure that ethical problems and scandals of the past do not replay and lead to a shortened future for the profession (Cautilli & Weinberg, 2007a). Some of the many issues that the public needs to be aware of are: (1) The potential for over reliance and use of punishment and/or other restrictive procedures; (2) Failure to adequately supervise, which creates a situation in which the client is exposed to more restrictive or punishing procedures than necessary (Bassett & Blanchard, 1977); (3) Identifying competent versus incompetent professionals; and (4) Professional issues around aggressive business practices, boundaries and ethics. In short, public protection is the real proving point for our science's humanness and our practice's worthiness.

Bailey and Busch (2005) state the reason for the development of the behavior analysis certification board was the abuses of those professing to be behavior analysts in the past. They focus on the issues of abuse in the field of developmental disabilities. This need for public protection from improper use of behavioral procedures in the criminal justice system was highlighted in Cautilli and

Weinberg's (2007) historical piece on regulation. With such a focus on public protection, it came as a complete surprise to many to find out:

“Please note that the Behavior Analyst Certification Board will not review and decide the complaint until local agencies, including any professional credentialing board, have investigated and ruled on the case. You may wish to wait until these rulings have been made and are available before you send a formal complaint to the BACB.” The Behavior Analysis Certification Board. (n/d.)

We fully understand that the Behavior Analysis Certification Board does not have the resources to investigate every complaint. This is similar to the American Psychiatric Association's difficulty in investigating complaints of psychiatrists performing behavior modification in prisons (see Cautilli & Weinberg, 2007). However, the process of public protection is twofold – a mechanism for selection of those qualified and enforcement for those who do not follow the code. Certification has traditionally been only able to hold to the first mechanism. With no mechanism for enforcement no wonder, Rogers (1980) argued that there were many certified charlatans in the field of counseling and psychotherapy as noncertified charlatans. Licensing would create both a mechanism for selection and for enforcement. Consumers or families would be able to bring their grievance to the licensing board, which will then render a decision and fine or revoke the license. Licensing boards also have the ability to turn more egregious acts over to state law enforcement. In addition, reports issued by licensing boards can be submitted in civil proceedings.

In addition, we recognize that enforcement, by itself, is not the whole solution. Licensing does not take away the personal responsibility of a behavior analyst to be open with his or her clients or consultees about the nature of his or her work, training, experience, or qualifications (Gross, 1977; Hogan, 1979). Nor does licensure take away the responsibility of professional programs and supervisors to ensure that they take in candidates with a strong learning history for “moral” behavior and activity train ethical practice. For example of the former, it is important for behavior analysts to work not just within their scope of practice (the professions areas of competence) but to work within their own scope of competence (their individual area of training). When working outside their scope of competence (say working with discrete trials with children with autism or adults using behavioral activation for depression), they should be supervised by some-one who is well trained in those areas. Licensing does however offer a mechanism of recourse if the practitioner fails to live up to his or her ethical guidelines, state laws, or engages in impaired or otherwise incompetent practice. Some of the most common actions brought before other mental health licensing boards (clinical social work, counseling, etc) are: (1) Title violation (claiming to be licensed without active license, claiming credentials that one does not have); (2) Incompetence or practicing outside the scope of training and ability; (3) Failure to report child/elderly abuse; (4) Inability to practice as result of mental illness, physical illness, drug or alcohol abuse; (5) Failure to meet continuing education requirements; (6) Breach of client confidentiality; (7) Violation of ethics codes (e.g., having dual relationship or sex with clients, dishonesty, violating client rights, failure to adequately supervise, or other professional misconduct); (8) Billing irregularities (e.g., waste, fraud, and/or abuse of public funds); and (9) Obtaining a license fraudulently.

It is clear that licensing can improve the quality of service (Moore, 1961), however, licenses are not uniformly effective (Gross, 1978). Different bills often suggest different levels of training, internships, and/or supervision. The greater the diversity in these bills, the less the public is secure with the practice. In addition, licensing laws create a process of selection of candidates “of good moral character,” which usually means no felony arrests within a specified time frame, letter of support from supervisors, and two references from professionals attesting to the persons “character”. For some individuals, this condition may be treated as a mere formality and not taken seriously but this would

constitute an ethical lapse on their part. The process is designed to determine a candidate's character to protect the public. Similarly, Hogan (1979) argued that even licensing of psychologists did not lessen the amount of illegal activity that occurred in practice. Davis (1981) argued that counselor licensing would do more to protect psychologists (what he saw as a self-serving guild) than it did to protect the consumer. Thus, it must be clear as with most law enforcement licensing is far from "foolproof" but certainly better than no enforcement.

One point learned from Gross's (1978) analysis is that written and oral tests are not the best way to predict the efficacy of clinician's actual skills. In short, testing is a very different skill than treatment. The Behavior Analyst Model Licensing Act (BAMLA) therefore relies on additional information with regard to training. This takes the form of internship and postgraduate hours of mentoring. Thus, BAMLA states that a person is a behavior analyst primarily due to their training, use of scientific research data, experience, and orientation to clinical phenomena. This training and experience is not solely based on knowledge obtained in the classroom but shaped in the clinical environment by the internship. BAMLA specifies that the internship is when the fledgling behavior analytic student works under another master or Ph.D. level behavior analyst for a period of one year (750 hours). BAMLA holds that the supervisory requirement during this training period parallels other master level professions at 2 hours/week. After that BAMLA states the behavior analyst must engage in supervised practice under a behavior analyst for a period of another 2 years (2,000 hours). This requirement is not perfect but to some degree ensures that the behavior analyst has had sufficient training time to learn his trade, while being more independent in his practice. Even after the person is licensed, BAMLA calls for continuing education to be completed.

Master Level Professionals Do Not Receive Sufficient Training to Function Independently

As with most arguments, this is not new. Albee (1977) argued that a master degree was not sufficient to produce a clinical psychologist with a scientist practitioner orientation. Unfortunately little research exists on this subject; however, the literature that does exist supports the notion that the training is sufficient. For example, Sloane, Staples, Cristol, Yorkston, & Wipples (1975) found no difference between masters degree level versus doctoral level practitioners.⁸

On the level of practical application, we see that the majority of practitioners are functioning with a master's degree in most states. While many psychologists have Ph.D.s, a strong number of psychologists still remain master prepared professionals since psychology licensed on masters' degree up until 1985. In addition, other licensed professions include, but are not limited to: license professional counselors who license in 49 states (Nevada just passing its licensing law), marriage and family therapists, who license in 26 states and psychoanalysts, who license in one state (NY). All of these states have boards of practice that deal with ethical complaints and no complaint has ever risen to the level where consumers have banded together to say "get these master level people out of here." Indeed, in this age of concern about health care cost, many governors like Pennsylvania's Edward Rendell are calling for greater reliance on master level professional to be allowed to have the freedom to practice in their full scope of practice.

Comparing this to the licensed behavior analyst outlined in BAMLA, we see equivalence in training. BAMLA calls for the person to master behavior analysis. This is demonstrated by achieving a master's degree in behavior analysis or related subject matter. To achieve parity with other master level licensed professions, the BAMLA calls not just for a master's degree but doubling of this level of academic mastery (60 graduate master level credits). After five short years of existence, BAMLA calls for

⁸ In clinical psychology, Goldberg (1965) found that doctor level versus pre-doctoral level clinicians had no differences in accuracy while conducting diagnoses. However, the sample of clinicians was small.

master degree programs to be accredited by the Association for Behavior Analysis International to ensure quality. In short, the process directly parallels other master level licensed professions such as counseling.

To ensure that the above knowledge is active, it calls for the passing of the exam offered by the Behavior Analysis Certification board. The goal of this test is to determine retention. This is a conservative approach to ensuring that an individual possess current knowledge of principles and procedures to intervene, as well as ethics and role and function.

Regulatory concerns

One issue of regulatory concern is that often discussed in behavior analytic circles is that Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) offers a national license. This is false. BACB is not licensing, nor could the BCBA ever be a national license for behavior analysts. Licensure falls under the states rights or powers. It is the prevue of each state to restrict trade within its borders. *United States v. Lopez*, [514 U.S. 549](#) (1995) held that the federal government only has the right to create laws that effect interstate commerce. Thus, the concept of a national license violates the U.S. constitution. The federal government has the power to decide what goes on in federal facilities but cannot create a licensing process to function within the state.

Since licensing boards are costly, a state limits its willingness to start such boards. As a state right, states are only interested in licensing if there is a need. Often state representatives will ask “Who is seeking this license?” “Does the profession, itself, see the need?” These are not questions to end licensing movements but questions to ascertain if this is a venture that the state needs to impart resources to settle. States find a need for licensing to protect its citizens. In most cases, the state will move to licensing if sufficient information exists to show that a consumer cannot identify the professionals in a given area who are competent for practice versus those who are not competent. Another reason for licensing is if sufficient mechanisms do not exist to protect the public in a given area.

A second issue on regulatory concern is that a behavior analytic license will restrict the practice of other professions who practice behavior analysis. The restrictiveness of a licensing bill is determined by the language of the bill. In general, wording in bills ranges from little or no restrictiveness on the scope of practice to restricting the entire scope of practice. The BAMLA only contains language to restrict the title of “Licensed Behavior Analysts.” It will not prevent psychologists or board certified behavior analysts who choose not to license as behavior analysts from practice. The BAMLA expressly state that the act applies to “those that hold the title of licensed behavior analysts” and if the act desired to restrict practice, by seeking greater limitations, it would state “this act holds to those who represent themselves as licensed behavior analysts or engage in activity within the scope of practice of a licensed behavior analyst.” Our choice in creating the model act was the former and not the latter. Indeed, our bill offers a boon to psychologists who are “Diplomates in Behavioral Psychology” by allowing them to engage in supervision of the post graduate field hours toward licensure.

A third issue of regulatory concern is does the profession need licensure if the field already has certification? While the Behavior Analysis Certification board has done much to get outside agencies to recognize its process, certification falls short on a number of grounds. As already stated, certifying boards have no enforcement power. In addition, certifications are not regulated by law. Any association, any organization, religious group, private business, university, or frankly any person has the right to provide certifications that that group in essence defines. This has really hampered many areas such as biofeedback, in which new certifications are being proposed all the time to identify competence in that area. It is clear that licensure is a stronger process because it evolves from state legislatures, which write laws. These laws are upheld by our legal system and its courts.

Summary

Behavior analysis is a hybrid discipline, which can be distinguished from its parent disciplines on several dimensions. Parent disciplines of behavior analysis encourage theoretical and eclecticism of techniques, while behavior analysts mostly hold that such an eclecticism could be detrimental (Foxy, 2007). In addition, the parent disciplines place a different value on science in informing clinical decisions (see Van Houten et al., 1989 compared to the American Psychological Association's position). The recognition of behavior analysis' uniqueness has led the profession to seek licensure for itself. The benefits of licensure include introducing a more scientifically rigorous practice to consumers, greater independent practice for practitioners, greater public protection and security, greater public recognition, more students attracted to the field, increased numbers of programs, the possibility for more research dollars, and eligibility for third party payments. While little opposition appears to exist in the field at this point to licensing and it is clear that licensing can improve the quality of service, historical battles in the health care system show that the opposition will soon arrive. This paper explored several historical areas of opposition that other groups, and indeed those in the profession, have used to oppose new groups seeking licensing. These areas were: (1) licensure will hurt the science of behavior analysis, (2) licensure protects the profession but fails to protect the public, (3) master level professionals do not receive sufficient training to function independently and (4) regulatory concerns. We explored each of these issues and found that voluntary licensure, which is inclusive and does not exclude behavior analytic services from any practitioner's repertoire, is not only in behavior analysis best interest, but it is also in the best interest of the public.

Conclusion

Licensing legislation exists for states to protect its citizens. While there is much that competently done behavior analytic treatment can do to improve the human condition, there is much need for the protection of poorly offered behavior analytic treatment. The major concerns against licensing have not stood the test of time in other professions and from our analysis above; they will not stand the test of time for behavior analysis.

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