Honoring the Past and Looking to the Future: Updates on Seminal Behavior Therapy Publications on Current Therapies and Future Directions

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This is the introduction to the second of two special issues in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. The goal of this issue is to pay tribute to prior seminal Behavior Therapy publications on current therapies and future directions, to provide an updated review of important topics covered by these papers, and to make recommendations for the future. Each invited paper in this issue highlights a particular Behavior Therapy publication's contribution to our understanding and also provides an updated review or meta-analysis on the topic of the original paper. The topics covered here include review papers on current therapies such as cognitive and behavioral therapies, youth and family psychotherapy, unified protocols, and third-wave therapies. In addition, we include a review paper on implementation science, and meta-analyses on individualized psychotherapy, and culturally adapted interventions. With the two 50th anniversary issues of Behavior Therapy, we hope to inspire additional research and discussion.

Keywords: third-wave therapies; unified protocol; science-practice gap; personalized therapy; culturally adapted therapy

As noted in the September 2016 issue of Behavior Therapy, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) by highlighting a small subset of some of the seminal publications in Behavior Therapy. In the September special issue we focused on papers related to etiology of anxiety and depression and mechanisms of change with respect to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). In this issue, we provide updated review papers or meta-analyses focused on past important papers related to current therapies including on cognitive therapy and its relationship to behavioral therapy, as well as research on youth and family therapy, unified protocol-based treatments, and third-wave therapies. In terms of the future of CBT, we highlight important past papers on bridging the clinician-researcher gap, personalized psychotherapy, and culturally adapted therapies. Immediately prior to each updated paper, we have republished the seminal paper to which we pay tribute. Below I briefly discuss each of the seminal works as well as the updated review papers that appear in the current issue.

Current Therapies

The first paper on current therapies to which we pay tribute was published in the second issue of Behavior Therapy by Aaron Beck (Beck, 1970). This seminal work describes the foundation and principles of cognitive therapy and its relationship to behavioral therapy. In particular, it outlines convergences and divergences between these two approaches. At the time of its publication, cognitive therapy had received much less recognition and focus than behavioral therapy. Thus, this paper contributed to many additional papers published later that tested cognitive principles and their effects on symptom change. Lorenzo-Luaces, Keefe, and DeRubeis (2016; this issue) provide an updated critical review paper on this topic focusing on studies examining whether cognitive modification is a mechanism of change in cognitive-behavioral therapy. These authors conclude that cognitive modification is an important mechanism of change within CBT, although not the only one.
The next paper that we highlight was focused on parent-training for antisocial behavior by Patterson, Chamberlain, and Reid (1982). These authors compared a parent-training therapy to a waitlist control condition and found that the parent-training therapy was superior in terms of deviant behavior change. This paper highlights one of the innovations by this research group with respect to behavioral augmentation theory and practice with families and youth. Since the time of this publication, the Oregon research group has undergone many changes with respect to their model of therapy toward children and families. To this end, Dishion, Forgatch, Chamberlain, and Pelham (2016; this issue) provide a comprehensive review of the history of the research from this group, including how their child and family-focused therapy models have evolved and the evidence that has accrued to afford this approach such a solid evidence base. In addition, they describe important future directions for the application and sustainability of such interventions.

Another very important and highly cited paper on current therapies was an invited paper published in 2004 by Barlow, Allen, and Choate (2004) on theory and preliminary experience with a unified therapy protocol. As with the other papers to which we pay tribute, this paper triggered a research movement toward examining a more efficient approach to the treatment of emotional disorders. The foundation upon which the unified protocol is based is complementary to the Research Domain Criteria movement, which also suggests that there may be transdiagnostic mechanisms of change that should be targeted. Norton and Paulus (2016; this issue) provide a critical review of studies on this movement as well as future important directions for research on unified protocols.

The final paper on current therapies to which we pay tribute is by Hayes (2004) on what have been coined as “third wave” therapies, including acceptance and commitment therapy based on relational frame theory. This paper provides a nice contextual background on the history of the development of cognitive and behavioral therapies and what third-wave therapies add to this tradition. As with the other seminal papers to which we pay tribute, this one also triggered much additional research on third wave interventions. Dimidjian et al. (2016; this issue) provide a nice systematic review paper to pay tribute to and to provide information about the current state of the research on third-wave therapies such as ACT, mindfulness, and behavioral activation.

Future Directions
The next set of papers to which we pay tribute are papers that forecast what are now very important and timely topics that require additional important research such as bridging the gap between science and practice, personalizing psychotherapy, and culturally augmented CBT. In terms of closing the science-practice gap, we focus on a seminal paper by Linda Sobell (1996)—a paper based on her presidential address to the Association for the Advancement of Behavioral Therapies in 1994. In this important paper, Sobell provided guidelines based on knowledge from the business community and from dissemination research. In addition, she presented two efficacious examples from her own work on the study of addictions. This paper laid the groundwork for many practice research network and implementation science studies that have only begun to scratch the surface of helping to understand how best to achieve a bridge. Thus, Wiltsey Stirman, Gutner, Langdon, and Graham (2016; this issue) provide an update on the current science, models for achieving optimal dissemination, and suggestions for future research.

We also acknowledge a paper coauthored by Mark and Linda Sobell, on personalized psychotherapy (Sobell & Sobell, 1973). In this important study, Sobell and Sobell assigned alcoholics to either abstinence or controlled drinking treatments based on a combination of their available social support, their treatment choice, and/or history of ability to drink in a controlled manner. This personalized assignment was compared to treatment as usual. These authors found that both treatment groups achieved the desired goals and were superior to the usual treatment group. We also highlight a prior paper by Brownell and Wadden (1991) on personalized psychotherapy. In this important paper the authors suggest that one treatment may not fit all obese individuals. Brownell and Wadden suggest a 3-stage process of client assignment to treatment including decisions that are based first on classification, next on stepped care considerations, and finally on matching. Even though the idea of personalization has been discussed and sporadically investigated, it is only recently that many researchers have begun to take this idea more seriously. To this end, Cuijpers, Ebert, Acarturk, Andersson, and Cristea (2016; this issue) provide an update on the science of this topic with a meta-analysis on personalized therapies for depression. These authors examined studies that compared two types of therapy and then attempted to identify characteristics that discriminated the efficacy of such treatments. They were successful in determining a few characteristics that predicted superiority of CBT over other types of therapy using population characteristics, including being undergraduate students, older adults, and those with comorbid addictions. However, they conclude that relying on randomized controlled trials may not be the best method to develop personalized treatments.
and make potential recommendations for other avenues to pursue.

The final paper on future directions to which we pay tribute is Forehand and Kotchick (1996). In this landmark publication the authors issued a “wake-up call” on the importance of developing and testing culturally adapted interventions. Although Forehand and Kotchick focused more specifically on parent training, their paper set the stage for many additional studies targeting this idea. To honor this paper, Hall, Ibaraki, Huang, Marti, and Stice (2016; this issue) provide an updated and more inclusive meta-analysis on this topic compared to prior meta-analyses with improved methodology and more recent studies. These authors found that results did in fact favor culturally adapted interventions over other interventions or no treatment. Effect sizes were greater if the treatment targeted anxiety disorders versus other types of psychopathology and active treatment versus prevention. However, they also note the paucity of studies on culturally specific psychopathology and that much more work is necessary.

Therefore, this set of papers honors a small group of the many seminal previous publications in Behavior Therapy and looks to the future by providing recommendations for additional research. The papers in the current issue provide updated reviews and current viewpoints on such topics as cognitive mechanisms of CBT, youth and family psychotherapy, unified protocol treatments, and third-wave therapies. In addition, the final set of papers on future topics examines implementation science, individualized psychotherapy, and culturally adapted interventions. With these two special issues of Behavior Therapy in honor of the 50th Anniversary of ABCT, we hope to inspire additional research on these important topics as well as others.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

References


Received: August 15, 2016
Accepted: August 15, 2016
Available online: 23 August 2016