

PSYC 531

Article Critique 3: Descriptive and Experimental Analysis of Variables Maintaining Self-Injurious Behavior

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Both functional and descriptive analyses have shortages in behavioral assessment. The experimental analyses have their superiority in “identifying casual relationship”, while not all of the variables can be manipulated in the experiment (Dorothea & Brian, 1993, p. 294).

Descriptive analyses are irreplaceable because it involves direct observation, and it considers relevant environment events as a factor (p.294). Three kinds of descriptive analyses are discussed in the article. However, it has insufficiency in objectiveness and it may mask the relevant variables (p. 295). The study examines if the independent descriptive and experimental analyses can conclude a consistent behavioral function assessment for individuals who exhibited SIB (p.295-296).

The study proves the essentiality of both assessment methods and indicates their limitations. Using the result of experimental analyses as standard to compare, the researchers found that the descriptive analyses can identify the SIB is generated in social or non-social contingency while lack of ability to “distinguish between positive and negative reinforcement” (p.293). The function of “escape” and “attention” mixed in some participants. The research emphasized that behavior analysts can not make their conclusion of behavioral function based on any one kind of assessment analysis. Future studies can work further on other challenge behaviors.

The study arose my further thinking. The process of defining one challenge behavior is not as straightforward as I assumed. Inaccurate assessment may lead to wasting treatment time and even get the challenge behaviors worse. We first need to complete both descriptive and experimental analyses, then compare the result. ABA provides us a lot of useful techniques to

assess the function, we should be familiar with at least most of them and use them wisely and flexibly.

Reference

Lerman, D. C., & Iwata, B. A. (1993). Descriptive and experimental analyses of variables maintaining self-injurious behavior. *Journal of applied behavior analysis*, 26(3), 293–319. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1993.26-293