

PSYC 531

Article Critique 9: BEHAVIORAL CUSPS: A DEVELOPMENTAL AND PRAGMATIC CONCEPT
FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

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The article introduces the concept of “behavioral cusp.” Behavioral cusp is that “any behavior change that brings the organism’s behavior into contact with new contingencies that have even more far-reaching consequences (p.533)”, such as crawling or “fluent reading” (p.535). When an individual with developmental disabilities knows how to crawl, he or she will be able to reach preference items (i.e., toys) and family members; when one knows how to read fluently, he or she will be able to gain knowledge or having fun. Other than the conventional cusp, generalized imitation, and self-regulation are also cusps (p.535).

Cusp can be large or small. The article also discussed the importance of cusp is evaluated by: “a) the extent of the behavior changes they systematically enable, b) whether they systematically expose behavior to new cusp, and c) the audience’s view of whether these changes are important for the organism(p.537).” Some of the cusps that are essential for one probably are not crucial to another individual.

As behavior analysts, we should prioritize the cusp that can immediately improve an individual with developmental debilities life quality and “will eventually produce a long list of organism-environment interactions (p.541).”

Reference

Rosales-Ruiz, J., & Baer, D. M. (1997). Behavioral Cusps: A Developmental And Pragmatic Concept For Behavior Analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 30(3), 533–544. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1997.30-533