

Matt Cicoria ([00:00](#)):

Hey, everyone. Welcome to session 135 of the Behavioral Observations podcast, and this is also number five in the inside JABA Series. The most recent issue of JABA that just is hitting the shelves right now as we speak, it starts off in the editorial by the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior's board in which the board issued a statement of concern or expression of concern for the controversial paper titled "Behavioral treatment of deviant sex-role behaviors in a male child". This paper described a case study conducted by George Rekers and Ivar Lovaas and was published in the pages of JABA in 1974.

Matt Cicoria ([00:40](#)):

To get right to the point, let me read the editorial's abstract: "In an early study in JABA, Rekers and Lovaas evaluated the behavioral treatment of deviant sex-role behaviors in a male child. They investigated the use of reinforcement and punishment to target non-gender conforming behaviors of a 5-year-old male child. This study was considered by some to be controversial and concerning, even near the time of publication." And I'm deviating from the actual abstract here because they go on to cite a few articles, namely Nordyke et al. 1977 and Winkler, 1977. The abstract continues, "The concerns focused on the ethicality of selecting non-gender-conforming behavior as a target response and the use of punishment for this type of response, particularly at the behest of parents when the young child was not seemingly distressed. The study has subsequently been used as empirical support for conversion therapy creating concerns about misrepresentation of the original article and harm to the LGBTQ+ community. This editorial reviews the concerns originally presented by Nordyke et al. and Winkler and issues an official expression of concern about the various harms that have been associated with this paper." And that's the conclusion of the abstract.

Matt Cicoria ([02:00](#)):

I first heard about this paper many, many years ago, but it was brought to my attention again at the 2019 New Hampshire ABA conference and at that event, Dr. [Sarah Campo 00:02:10] did a great job reviewing the paper along with cataloging the devastating effects the study had on the participant later on in his life. So, in this episode of the podcast, doctors Linda Leblanc and Henry Roane discuss the rationale behind this expression of concern. In doing so, they talk about why this statement was written now versus earlier in the history of JABA and what exactly a statement or expression of concern is and why issuing the statement was the specific action taken instead of other options, such as retracting the paper altogether. We also get into the shortcomings of the study itself, particularly in the light of the ethical and moral standards of modern times. Linda and Hank close the podcast by giving some advice for practitioners on how to respond to concerns of State closures if or when they bring up this or other studies that are not consistent with more modern ethics and values.

Matt Cicoria ([03:04](#)):

I should also note that our Zoom connection was spotty here and there. And I apologize if it interferes with the audio quality that you've come to expect from the show. And that said, I don't think the poor connection detracted from the substance of the conversation, but I just wanted to mention that.

Matt Cicoria ([03:20](#)):

I also want to mention that Dr. Roane is a new voice to the Inside JABA Series. So, by way of introduction, Hank is the Gregory S. Liptak MD Professor of child development in the Department of Pediatrics at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York. In his capacity, he serves as the Chief of the Division of Development, Behavior, and Genetics where he directs medical and behavior analysis

clinics that provide treatment services for children affected by autism or related disorders. Hank is also the chair of the behavior analysis studies programs in the College of Health Professions at Upstate. As we mentioned during the conversation, Hank is also the Treasurer of SEAB.

Matt Cicoria ([04:02](#)):

So, in keeping with previous Inside JABA Series podcasts, there are no ads or sponsors on this episode. However, this episode is eligible for BACB continuing education. We also felt that the conversation touched on many code elements in the PECC, and as such it can be counted as an ethics CEU. Lastly, 50% of the proceeds from sales of the Inside JABA Series CEUs are donated to SEAB. So, for more information on the Inside JABA Series CEUs or any other CEUs that are available through Behavioral Observations, just go to [behavioralobservations.com](http://behavioralobservations.com).

Matt Cicoria ([04:42](#)):

I've also said this set up this thing called a link tree across all my social media platforms and it's basically you click on the profile of my Instagram account or Twitter or LinkedIn, you'll get a list of links that can direct you to any and all places in the kind of, I guess, Behavioral Observations universe, if you will. So, that can take you right to the CE's page. You can get all the podcast related links at your fingertips. So, I think that is it for opening remarks. So, without any further delay, let's get right to this conversation with Linda and Hank.

Speaker 2 ([05:18](#)):

Welcome to the Behavioral Observations podcast, stimulating talk for today's behavior analysts. Now, here's your host, Matt Cicoria.

Matt Cicoria ([05:38](#)):

Right. Doctors Linda Lablanc and Hank Roane. Thanks for joining me today on the Behavioral Observations podcast, yet another addition of the Inside JABA Series. We have a really special episode today. And so Linda I'd like to start with you. The SEAB board has written a special editorial for the issue of JABA that's just coming out either right about now or very shortly. It's a statement of concern regarding a study from 1974 by Rekers and Lovaas. Before we get to the statement of concern itself, I'd like to talk about the study for a few minutes. And for those who aren't familiar with the study, I'd like you to kind of tell us a little bit about it and what the implications were. We'll get to the implications later on, but if you can kind of cover the study in its kind of basic steps. And I know before that you kind of wanted to talk about the distinction between the editorial board and SEAB and things like that. So, I'll let you kind of take this from here and get us off to a great start.

Linda Leblanc ([06:45](#)):

Thank you, Matt. Let me say one more time how grateful all of SEAB is that you are so willing to host this special series of your podcast. You do us a service and you do a service to the field. And when I say SEAB, I mean the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior. This is the non-profit, scientific board that publishes both JABA and JEAB. So, the Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior was the first journal published. The second about 10 years later started was the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. And this board, in recent partnership with Wiley Publications, publishes our journal, has always elected our editors, and actually has a... it's about a 15-person board right now that serves to direct the society. And my co-presenter today, Hank Roane, serves as treasurer on that board, so he's one of the officers.

I'm not on the board right now, but I have been for eight years. And now I'm in my role of editor-in-chief of JABA.

Linda Leblanc (08:08):

And we'll talk about the study and what the board and I jointly decided to do that resulted in this editorial. The original study was published in 1974, and I had never read the study before, believe it or not. I haven't read every single article in JABA, and the majority of the ones I've read are after about 1995 once I was a grad student and professional. But this early study demonstrated reinforcement control over feminine behaviors in a male child. And that child had been psychologically evaluated as manifesting what the DSM at that time called childhood cross-gender identity. There have been other terms in the DSM called gender identity disorder. And this basically was a time when homosexuality and gender-inconsistent behavior was considered part of our kind of infrastructure and taxonomy of pathology. And these behaviors were not acceptable to the family, and they sought treatment. And they sought treatment at a clinic that was actually a federally grant-funded treatment program. So, the US government was funding this kind of treatment in the early '70s.

Linda Leblanc (09:53):

This child, he was a child, was treated both in the clinic and in the home environment with his mother trained to be his therapist. And his mother was taught to reinforce what were termed masculine behaviors and then to extinguish feminine behaviors using social reinforcement and a token economy. And what they found was not when you exert contingencies on behaviors, you see change. And what they found was that the feminine-type behaviors decreased, masculine-type behaviors increased, and they targeted several different behaviors to kind of produce more generalized effects in both clinic and home. So, the authors suggested that these findings could serve as a preliminary step towards correcting what they called pathological sex-role development in boys and that it might provide a basis for prevention of adult transsexualism or other sexual deviations.

Linda Leblanc (11:12):

So, the issue is that society has evolved significantly. And many differences in identity and sexual preference, these are not considered pathological. However, this article from a time when these things were considered pathological, still exists and actually is sometimes misused. And our purpose as a board and an editor was to address this evolution in society to present science as an evolving and self-correcting mechanism and to educate people about some of the negative impacts that they may encounter as a result of the fact that this study, from 50 years ago exists, in our history. So, that's really what the editorial is about and that's what the entire board and I really spent significant time exploring.

Matt Cicoria (12:26):

Okay. I want to get to the specifics of the statement of concern in just a minute. But getting back to the original article itself, clearly when you look at it 45, 50 years later it is just unacceptable on so many levels or at least certainly conflicts with today's values and what we understand today as a kind of accepting and tolerant society. And kind of digging into this and just kind of looking at some of the reference sections to the Rekers and Lovaas article and some of the others around the same time is that this was clearly something that was being examined experimentally at the time. I don't think common is perhaps the correct word, but it was not uncommon, I would say. And so in contrast to today's sensibilities it looks as it does, I guess, right?

Matt Cicoria ([13:33](#)):

I went to a talk at New Hampshire ABA about this particular study, and I know that for the participant in the original study it led to some very long-term, extremely unfortunate outcomes for the participant. At the same time, even back in the '70s, despite those kind of cultural currents that were around at that particular moment, there were also some strong responses in the pages of JABA. And so I think if you have a moment to comment on I think it's Nordyke et al. and Winkler both from 1977. They had some really strong responses to this original study. I think that would probably put the statement of concern that you guys wrote in some better context here.

Linda Leblanc ([14:27](#)):

Yes, happy to do so. And you're right, as part of behavior therapy, there were multiple studies published in multiple journals where behavior therapists did do counter conditioning work, typically with adult men who were distressed by their own homosexual preferences and that they were consenting and seeking these services. And so there was no conversion therapy term at that time. That's a later colloquial evolved term. At that time, this was considered behavior therapy in the area of sexuality and sexual dysfunction. And this article was somewhat different on some important areas, and those differences really did produce the strong responses by Nordyke et al. and Winkler et al.

Linda Leblanc ([15:38](#)):

So, some of the things that were different was this child was not requesting the services, was not presenting as distressed with his own behavior the way that the adults in other studies were presenting with distress over their own status. Instead, the parents were seeking the services. Another important difference is that rather than experimental delivered counter conditioning experiences, this study involved the parents delivering contingencies, both reinforcement-based contingencies but also apparently spankings and at a much higher intensity than we might ever want a child to experience based on the exposé that was done many, many decades later. It's entirely possible that the authors never knew about the intensity of the spankings and it was not wildly against the norm in the early '70s for parents to spank children.

Linda Leblanc ([16:56](#)):

But this is a little different than some of those other behavior therapy studies. What Nordyke and Winkler et al. really had concern with was this issue: the fact that the parents were wanting this stuff changed when the child did not seem to be experiencing any clinical distress. And they talk about the fact that functionally, the authors of the study were serving as agents of the parent rather than potentially clearly engaging in the best intentions and towards the best effort for the child. Now, many decades later, we have a variety of protective services and IRB structures that require assent and consent, but none of those protections were in place in 1974. But this was an early indicator of like, "Wait a minute. We have to be careful about what we allow parents to ask us to do and change about their children that we're willing to do."

Linda Leblanc ([18:18](#)):

The other issue was really at this time in the '70s it also was a time of societal change, I think much like we're experiencing a lot of societal change now. And the authors of these response papers talked about the fact that they perceived Rekers and Lovaas as describing these masculine and feminine behaviors in ways that were highly stereotyped and were really becoming somewhat out of line with the social changes that were occurring even at that time, that this notion that, "Well, these are feminine

behaviors," rather than caring behaviors or behaviors that are consistent with perspective-taking or certain kinds of interests rather than behaviors that were considered strong and equated with masculine. They took objection to that, as perhaps well they should. And certainly we have some broader definitions of what is appropriate masculine or feminine, and now we even have the term gender binary, or non-binary, I beg your pardon. And so it's not only the case that our views have evolved now, but they were evolving then. And this paper felt inconsistent with the times to those authors and it felt concerning with respect to the case that this was a child, even though no one knew that there were intense spankings being delivered.

Linda Leblanc ([20:08](#)):

The other thing that is now concerning but was not mentioned at the time is that since all of those articles were published, the Rekers and Lovaas paper has been used as evidence for the term conversion therapy or changing of sexual preferences by administering contingent punishers, contingent with the presence of certain stimuli and certain behaviors. That is, if someone is homosexual, you could convert them to be heterosexual. And so the subsequent use of the paper is highly problematic. That is, the term conversion therapy is actually a pseudoscience term. This article has nothing to do with changing sexual preference. That was not the behaviors that was targeted and there subsequently hasn't been any evidence to support conversion therapy as an evidence-based practice. So, when people erroneously use a scientific study as evidence for something that it does not support, we have a responsibility as a scientific community to correct those mistaken characterizations. And let me assure you, SEAB has always been an opponent of pseudoscience in all of its forms. And the notion that a paper published by us could be so wildly misconstrued and used to support pseudoscientific efforts is appalling and was part of why we have taken the efforts that we have.

Matt Cicoria ([22:14](#)):

Okay. One more kind of line of questioning, I suppose, before we get to the actual statement of concern where I'd certainly like to hear you expand on SEAB's point of view on this is that with regard to the Reker's and Lovaas paper, presumably went through - I don't know; I'm not an academic, so I'm just going to use kind of air quotes when I say this - conventional editorial review processes. And we've talked about the review process in earlier episodes. Obviously, the review process in 2020 is probably a little different than it was in the early '70s. That notwithstanding, do you have a sense as to why the concerns noted in Nordyke et al. and Winkler were not addressed through the typical journal review mechanism? In terms of why, I would imagine that if an article came through the JABA doorways these days that was perhaps problematic on some number of levels that it might have gotten caught at that stage as opposed to going through the review and eventually publication process. So, as an editor, we don't have a time machine here, but if you can try to address that just given what you know about the system as a whole, that would be great.

Linda Leblanc ([23:42](#)):

Oh, yeah. I wish I had that time machine for multiple reasons.

Matt Cicoria ([23:48](#)):

Of course, right?

Linda Leblanc ([23:50](#)):

[crosstalk 00:23:50] to go back to right before this editorial decision and say, "No, Todd Risley! Stop!" We can't say exactly what happened. And I will say this, it's wacky, but we no longer have records of all editorial processes for papers from the early '70s. That was not only pre-ScholarOne portal, it may even have been pre-computer. They literally may have been typing the correspondence on typewriters at that time if you think about the fact that this was 50 years ago. So, it's possible that one or more of the authors of the response papers were actually reviewers on the original paper and expressed their concern and that was taken as part of the overall editorial process, or it's also entirely possible that they didn't happen to be reviewers on the paper and they didn't even know about it until they came out in JABA or until they saw the author present on the topic at a conference and then decided to offer an alternative viewpoint. So, we honestly don't know what role or why things happened. One thing I will say is that the Nordyke et al. and Winkler articles were in '77, which seems like a long time after the original publication in '74, but sometimes there's a little bit of a backlog and it takes a while. That doesn't mean that they didn't think it was a problem for a few years. It may be-

Matt Cicoria ([25:42](#)):

I'm so glad you mentioned that because I think that's important for the listeners to know that because, again, I'm not an academic, but my understanding is that three years is like a nanosecond in the world of academic publishing and it proceeds in what might be a [inaudible 00:26:02] glacial place at times.

Linda Leblanc ([26:04](#)):

That's exactly right, especially when you're mailing everything and typing everything on typewriters. And Rekers, not Lovaas, but Rekers solely responded to Nordyke and Winkler. And so what that means is Nordyke and Winkler wrote their responses, they went through the editorial process. When it was determined they were going to be published, they were sent to Rekers. He had a chance to create his response. And all of that just took time. And so when they were all ready to gather, they came out in an issue.

Linda Leblanc ([26:47](#)):

I don't know what to tell you about why this decision was made. I certainly know a paper like this wouldn't be published in today's social context or as part of our editorial process. It's possible that this paper was... When you're looking for, "Who should I get to be reviewers on this paper?" it may well have been sent to some of the other researchers doing behavioral treatment of sexual dysfunctions and disorders because this was really just considered a federally grant-funded innovation in a new area of behavior therapy. Those are good things, and let's find the other researchers doing that work. And those researchers maybe did not have appreciation for the concerns that we now find today.

Linda Leblanc ([27:52](#)):

I wish I had that crystal ball or even opportunities to change the past, but all of this is speculative. The world has changed tremendously and the only thing we can change is the current actions and hopefully future actions. And so this paper would never be published today, it would never get through an IRB, it would spark outrage in the editorial process. But the world was different 50 years ago and we have to operate in the world of today, which is what led us to evaluate what we could do and then issue the statement of concern to try to prevent any future harm associated with this paper.

Matt Cicoria ([28:52](#)):



All right. And so in light of that, were there other options? Could you retract it, or would there be other ways to deal with it other than just writing a response to it?

Linda Leblanc ([29:11](#)):

Well, as an editor you almost never encounter this. It's extremely rare for any journal to retract a paper or issue these kinds of statement of concerns. It might happen once or twice in the entire history of any journal. I was the unlucky editor who became aware of this and tackled it. And I was so fortunate to have as a member of our executive board for SEAB Hank Roane, who's the editor of another journal and made me aware and want to [inaudible 00:29:50] the committee on publication ethics guidelines. So, I'd love to have Hank talk to you a little bit about COPE and these categories and what have you.

Henry Roane ([30:01](#)):

Yeah. Thanks. This is something that really came up through some work I was doing at the time with the Journal of Pediatrics. And actually, as part of the reviewer orientation for that journal, I got interested in the Committee for Publication Ethics guidelines and had been looking actually over some documentation of ethics and peer review. And around that same time, Linda had reached out to myself and others on the board about this issue in this journal. And like Linda, I had not heard of this article before, but fortunately had this really nice access to the COPE guidelines. And we looked at a lot of different options of what to do.

Henry Roane ([30:52](#)):

Typically, you reserve a retraction for a study that's been published that you have a reason to doubt the validity of the findings and that there are errors in the methodology or in the conclusions. And so the retraction is a statement to say, "This study is wrong, not in terms of its conclusions but in terms of its actual methods, that there was flawed science going on." So, an example of this, is the Wakefield study on vaccines and autism. And that's a study that has been retracted. When you look at this study, it was federally funded, it was a study that may have been in accord with whatever human subjects protections there were at the time. That's something that you have to go through for NIH funding. But the statement of concern, or expression of concern as it's sometimes called, really was the most appropriate route because as a board member for SEAB, what we're trying to do with that organization is to promote the advancement of the science of the experimental analysis of behavior. And when you have a paper on the docket that is being used to harm people and to hurt people and to hurt our field, then I think we all felt very strongly that that's something that we needed to discuss. And any time someone goes to the article, there needs to be something from our editor and our board saying, "We have an issue with this."

Henry Roane ([32:40](#)):

An expression of concern gave us that ability to say whether the findings are valid or not... I mean, we know principles of reinforcement work to change behavior, but at the societal norms and the expectations and what our journals represent to people we care about in certain communities, that we don't find this kind of research acceptable. And that was really the right way to go about this as opposed to really trying to find a particular reason where we said, "Well, this was an inaccurately conducted study." I mean, there may have been some flaws to the study, but it did pass through a peer review process. And so the expression of concern gives us an avenue to say less about the science and more about the societal implications and the harm that can come from that.

Linda Leblanc (33:34):

Yeah. So, with a retraction, you're really in a position where you need to have legally defensible evidence that data were falsified, that people were harmed, and the procedures that were done were not what were being reported or described. And from 50 years ago, we don't know exactly what they knew or didn't know, and we didn't have the same human subjects protections and standard assent procedures. So, while we didn't have a lot of paper trail that documented scientific misconduct at the time, we definitely know the paper has been used inappropriately and we can stop that.

Henry Roane (34:33):

Yep. And I think it's important to realize, too, when you have something like this, just looking at the ethic guidelines for our fields, the appropriate thing to do is to reach out to the parties and try to resolve the issue. In this case, one of the authors is deceased. The other we attempted to reach out to. Linda tried very hard to find the lead author and was unsuccessful. You do have to weigh the legalities of the situation, but you also have to weigh the human impact. And I think that ultimately let us down this path to say this was the best course of action, certainly in light of the fact that we never heard back from the one author who's still alive.

Matt Cicoria (35:23):

I see. So, if writing a statement of concern is the appropriate course of action, why now? And this is perhaps another time machine question that we can't go back and see, but I'm just curious if you guys have any insight in terms of that. Why wasn't it done in 1975 or 1977 or 1985 or 1997? I mean, I can go on and on, of course. Certainly, the world's not perfect and far from it, but in many respects it's taking less than 45, 50 years for society's views on these matters to evolve to a more compassionate and kind of welcoming point of view. So, I guess, why wasn't this done sooner?

Linda Leblanc (36:20):

Well, as the current editor-in-chief... And the editor-in-chief is the person who would issue a retraction if, in fact, there were a retraction. I didn't know anything about this study. I never read it. I know this sounds like my head's completely been buried in the sand, but I've just been trying to make children with autism's lives better, do my gerontology. I didn't even know this article existed and so readers of our journal made me aware of this article and brought it up as an issue. Now, other editors in the past or board members may or may not have known about it and may or may not have thought about it as something that we could do something about. I was not that knowledgeable about COPE and I became more knowledgeable about COPE as a result of this. And I do think that our ongoing evolution of societal expectations and our ongoing social justice movements, they've made this article seem ever more discrepant and concerning as every decade has passed.

Linda Leblanc (37:41):

There are also some things occurring now that may have well brought it to the attention of the readers who then brought it to my attention. So, at the beginning of 2020, 19 states have passed laws fully banning conversion therapy, particularly for minors who might be forced into these pseudoscientific procedures by their parents. Well, the fact that we may have readers in some of these States who reached out to me to say, "Hey, someone's using this article from '74 right now to try to influence legislation in a way that we might not want." That, I think, was part of the "why exactly now".

Linda Leblanc (38:34):



I will say, the exposé that was done by Anderson Cooper, that was in 2010, so even that was decades later. And the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2016 kind of designated conversion therapy as a pseudoscientific procedure. And the APA, both the American Psychological Association and Psychiatric Association, issued their statement condemning conversion therapy in 2010 and 2012. And the American Medical Association, it was just in 2019. So, I think throughout this past decade and reaching a crux right now, given the way we are seeing legal issues associated with the rights of our LGBTQIA+ community, make this probably something that is important and meaningful and timely. So, I think that if we could have done it sooner, that would have been great, but now is when it came to our awareness. And so we've done the quickest thing we could do with taking a responsible approach to trying to investigate all of the information that we could.

Matt Cicoria ([40:12](#)):

And just so we're clear, so when someone goes to look this up on Google Scholar or something like that, the statement of concern will be automatically attached to the Rekers and Lovaas study. So, they'll be a match set for people trying to perhaps inappropriately use this content for those reasons stated.

Linda Leblanc ([40:36](#)):

Exactly, right.

Matt Cicoria ([40:37](#)):

Excellent

Linda Leblanc ([40:37](#)):

And so if someone goes to that Rekers study, it will be marked saying a statement of concern has been issued about this paper, will be linked to the statement of concern, will be linked to the editorial. So, the statement of concern is issued by Wiley and editor of the journal and then the editorialist author by SEAB and me as the editor. There will also be links to those original Winkler and Nordyke et al. studies to illustrate that this was concerning even back then.

Matt Cicoria ([41:19](#)):

Got it. So, talking about this made me think of perhaps another aspect of just this whole idea of a statement concern and kind of looking into our past at things that certainly haven't stood the test of time. Can you see, down the road, the potential for these types of statements of concern to be more common? Looking back at, say, studies that examine things like aversive procedures, punishment, shock, things along those lines. What do you guys see as the potential for the use of this as a particular type of tool to help guide or shape perhaps the broader public opinion as perhaps kind of non-behavioral stakeholders look towards the literature?

Linda Leblanc ([42:13](#)):

You want to take this, Hank? Or you want me to?

Henry Roane ([42:15](#)):

Yeah. Sure. I think that part of this is that a lot of the work that we publish in JABA, in particular, involves vulnerable populations. And so I think when you have vulnerable populations, you have a constant societal shift toward trying to protect those vulnerable populations, such that anything we do now,

anything we've done in the past might be considered different by current or future standards. A great example of this, there's terms used to describe people with intellectual developmental disabilities. In the past, we've used terms like mentally retarded or imbecile or terms that we would never use now and terms that aren't used nationally. And we change over time. And I think that's the important thing about science is that science is influenced by society and society should be influenced by science. Certainly, as our society and it's focus on inclusive and bias-free language evolved, I think our terminology has evolved and what's acceptable at some point may not be acceptable anymore.

Henry Roane ([43:30](#)):

When you look at early studies in JABA that look at aversive consequences like shock, yeah, those things are different now. And I think you have to view them through where that's let us in terms of the advancement of our therapeutic techniques to come up with less aversive and least intrusive intervention. So, it's possible that could happen. I think that the better way to frame it is to look for the editors and the researchers and the consumers of the technology to shape their behavior in response to the questions that they're asking over time and to learn from our society and the advancements in our sciences to where we move away from addressing things like punishment, seclusion, restraint, and effective behavior treatments that are more acceptable. I think that's really the self-correcting course that is more likely to occur.

Linda Leblanc ([44:38](#)):

Yeah. I think this particular topic is one where unlike something like prior use of punishment, there have now been multiple position statement by our professional associations. And those professional associations like ABAI or APBA, they are the right people to issue those position statements. SEAB publishes journals, that's our job. The BACB credentials professionals. But professional associations who speak on behalf of the professionals... We do have position statements on the right to effective treatment, we have guidance papers on seclusion, restraint, et cetera, but we don't have those things in this area. And while SEAB isn't necessarily the right organization to create those position statements, we can do what we can do within the boundaries of our role as a scientific organization that publishes journals, to make a statement that we hope leads people to recognize the danger of harm and to know what to do to try to prevent or minimize that harm.

Matt Cicoria ([46:00](#)):

I see. I suppose one way to perhaps kind of put a bow on this kind of, for me, very interesting and frankly educational conversation, because a lot of this stuff is new to me in terms of how these things work, when we're talking about kind of controversial either papers themselves or things like that or procedures more generally, how would you advise the BCBA to respond when [stakeholders 00:46:39], just learning about ABA, bring up something like Rekers and Lovaas or perhaps a study that used punishment or something else? For example, Google's a wonderful thing, but it can also lead people down some inaccurate or misleading rabbit holes despite the best of intentions. So, what advice would you provide to that behavior analyst who's in that situation?

Linda Leblanc ([47:12](#)):

Well, Google is a source of a whole lot and it really felt like I spent more time than I ever imagined going down some dark rabbit holes trying to investigate this whole situation fully. And it's just as easy for anyone else out there to go get that information and to think that this is representative of our field. So, I would say every behavior analyst should be aware that people may have encountered a very mistaken

impression of our field based on their exposure to this paper or the exposé or someone's colloquial use of some of these terms.

Linda Leblanc ([47:59](#)):

And people also often think of our field as directly and solely linked only to autism and might not realize the full scope of what we do, who we do it with, and the good that's been done in the world. And so I would say that as a behavioral analyst, we have to be sensitive to any concerns that are presented and recognize that people are going to have encountered information that doesn't present us in a positive light and that we are [adversaries 00:48:36] of our field. We have to recognize that risk and do two things. First, behave in a way that would discount these negative impressions; behave in a way that represents our field with dignity, integrity, compassion; behave in away that's consistent with human rights; and then be willing to have these discussions in a way that respects the fact that it may be quite reasonable for someone to have this concern and educate them about a variety of the other things that we do, our emphasis on teaching procedures and reinforcement, and don't be defensive about it because this stuff's out there and this stuff was in JABA, in our journal.

Matt Cicoria ([49:37](#)):

I'm glad you mentioned the defensive piece.

Henry Roane ([49:39](#)):

[crosstalk 00:49:39].

Matt Cicoria ([49:39](#)):

Oh, I'm sorry Hank. Go right ahead.

Henry Roane ([49:40](#)):

I was just going to say you have to own the fact that it is in this journal, that is the [flagship 00:49:48] journal of applied behavior analysis, and that we have to realize that the value of hindsight is that we learn something about the morals and the ethics of what was published in the late '70s. And 50 years later, we can be more sympathetic to perhaps things that we weren't even recognizing 50 years ago. And by recognizing those differences, recognizing the harm that can come from this, it prepares us to do better research, better clinical practice, and better training for our future clinicians so that we all can learn from this and we can move the field forward in that regard. I think that's just a really important outcome to come out of something like this.

Matt Cicoria ([50:41](#)):

Great. Great. One of the things I wanted to comment on, Linda, you said don't be defensive. And that is something that I'm glad you mentioned because if you think of the effort and energy that every BCBA puts into the work that they do in the field, all the work that they did studying and becoming a BCBA, maintain the credential, and things like that, I find it to be... I'll just speak for myself. I won't speak for anyone else, but when people start talking about ABA in negative terms, I have to really, really check myself before I launch into defensive mode because it's a profession that I care so much about. It's given me so many positive things in my life. I've seen it do so many positive things for other people. And that just kind of builds up this well of momentum, so at least for me, it's easy to get going down that defensive route and say, "Well, yeah, but..." and things like that. And from both of you guys, those are

some great points to end on. Any final thoughts before we wrap up this Inside JABA series? What are we at, number five, I think? Would we be up to five by now?

Linda Leblanc ([52:04](#)):

I think so. Yeah. They're racking up. And I hope it continues for a long time, but just on a different topic than this one. For all of us, for the board, for me, for, I think, our field, this was a hard thing to face and address, so we got to do it. But I think my final wrap up words are science is a self-correcting process and we took full responsibility for investigating what actions were available to us and for taking the ones that we thought would produce the greatest good for the field and society. And honestly, that's what behavior analysts should be doing every day. So, in many ways, I'm glad we had the opportunity to address this issue, even though it has not been easy or in any way enjoyable. Maybe good comes from it.

Henry Roane ([53:19](#)):

Matt, I would just say that it really is a credit to Linda's leadership of JABA and stewardship in that regard of all of us on the board and the executive committee of the board. She really picked this up and really, I think, took it upon herself to learn a lot about the COPE guidelines and to inform our board about it. And sometimes it wasn't pretty. People had some serious questions, as well as dealing with consumers of JABA and some of the questions. And so Linda was really a champion of pushing this through and continue it. And she just deserves a lot of the claim for championing this and trying to fix this problem. So, thank you, Linda.

Linda Leblanc ([54:14](#)):

Thank you, Hank. You were a good, professional partner to me on this and a support when I was finding out dark information about our past.

Henry Roane ([54:26](#)):

Well, there's a lot out...

Matt Cicoria ([54:31](#)):

All right. Well, doctors Leblanc and Roane, thanks for joining me on this fifth edition of the Inside JABA series.

Henry Roane ([54:40](#)):

All right. Thanks for having me.

Linda Leblanc ([54:41](#)):

Thanks for having us.

Speaker 2 ([54:43](#)):

Thank you for listening to the Behavioral Observations podcast with Matt Cicoria. You can find Matt's notes on this episode at [www.behavioralobservations.com](http://www.behavioralobservations.com). We also invite you to stay connected with us on Facebook at [facebook.com/behavioralobservations](https://facebook.com/behavioralobservations) and on Twitter @behaviorpodcast.