As a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) under Dr. James Rowlett, my work is focused on factors that influence substance abuse. Our lab’s specific emphasis is on benzodiazepines (BZs; e.g., Xanax, Valium) and how to increase their therapeutic utility as anxiolytics while decreasing their unwanted side effects such as abuse liability, motor impairment, and sedation. To do this we use animal models such as self-administration and behavioral observation to respectively determine whether new compounds and drug combinations function as reinforcers and what other effects they have on a broad range of behaviors. Ideally, we hope to identify compounds that have potential for clinical use but do not function as reinforcers and thus, are unlikely to be abused.

Through collaboration with other substance abuse researchers at UMMC, we also investigate other aspects of substance abuse. For those diagnosed with substance abuse disorders, their habits are often maintained on unpredictable (i.e., variable) schedules, and they often experience multiple cycles of abuse, treatment, and relapse. This differs from the fixed schedules of drug delivery and single cycles of treatment and relapse most often studied using animal models with between-subjects designs. I am currently investigating the impact of repeated cycles of treatment and relapse on drug-maintained behavior within-subject, how BZs may be used as a pharmacotherapy to facilitate the treatment of drug-maintained behavior and prevent its resurgence, as well as the behavioral, neurobiological, and genetic impact of drugs delivered on fixed or variable schedules of reinforcement. By better understanding these impacts, we hope to develop better treatments for substance abuse disorders.

ABA DAY AT THE CAPITOL EVENT

BAAMS will be hosting an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Day at the Capitol on January 16, 2017. The Day at the Capitol event is a way for BAAMS and other stakeholders to promote ABA and allows for ABA providers to network with statewide legislators and other elected officials. It gives us a great opportunity to share information about the current state of behavior analytic services in Mississippi as well as engage in discussions with our legislators to help our profession grow. Save the dates will be going out soon and you will be hearing more information from BAAMS in the coming months!

Mississippi State Capitol (Jackson, MS)
400 High Street, Jackson, Mississippi 39201
BAAMS CONFERENCE 2018

BAAMS will be hosting its 2nd annual conference at the Hollywood Casino in Bay St. Louis, MS. Please mark your calendars for an exciting two-day event. Workshops will be available on Day 1 and Day 2 will include all the conference events. Please keep an eye out for updates in the upcoming months.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

SB 2001 was approved in June 2017. This bill went to the floor, following some revisions from the January session without the knowledge of the Mississippi Autism Board (MAB) and BAAMS. The bill outlines that the MAB will be assigned to the Board of Psychology for administrative and ministerial purposes beginning in July 1, 2018.
BEHAVIOR ANALYST SPOTLIGHT

SHARON BOUDREAUX, M.A.T, BCBA, LBA

Sharon D. Boudreaux, M.A.T., BCBA, LBA, helped to found the Autism Center of North Mississippi, has previously served as the Executive Director from 2009-2013, and is currently a consultant for ACNM. She has a Master of Arts in Teaching in the field of special education with a concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis with a focus on educating children with Autism and other forms of developmental delay. Sharon has been trained in Discrete Trial Training, the TEACCH model, Natural Environment Teaching, and Verbal Behavior. Sharon is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Additionally, Sharon has completed an intensive 2-week training at Carbone Clinic to gain further expertise in teaching and promoting verbal behavior. Sharon has experience working in and consulting with school systems, providing home-based therapy, and providing A.B.A. instruction in the clinical setting. Sharon has worked at the pre-school, elementary, and middle school levels providing academic instruction, community-based instruction and life skills training. Sharon created an early intervention program based upon the principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis and TEACCH. Sharon has presented research findings and topics at the Council for Exceptional Children’s Annual Conference at the state and national level. Within the school system, her class was recognized as a model for structured teaching, behavior modification, and use of technology in the classroom. Sharon continues assisting families by providing training, establishing a community support group, developing summer social skills programs, and within the clinic, one-on-one instructional and behavioral interventions. She is committed to providing effective instruction and behavioral supports that will increase the individual’s quality of life.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello BAAMS,

2017 is flying by! As we get closer to 2018, we have a few exciting things coming up. We are going to be hosting two events (ABA Day at the Capitol and BAAMS 2nd Annual Conference) in the first quarter of the next year and plans are underway for both.

I had the privilege to be a part of some interesting conversations on the growth of ABA in Mississippi recently. I will share this information with you in the upcoming newsletters as I get more information!

I would like to urge you all to participate in the forum on the BAAMS website. This is a good opportunity to collaborate, get feedback, ask questions with regards to practice related questions.

Thank you,

Neelima Duncan

Neelima Duncan, Ph.D., BCBA-D
President – BAAMS
UNIVERSITY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY – ACCESS PROGRAM

The MSU ACCESS program offers a plan to promote the successful transition of students with intellectual disabilities into higher education. These students have a desire to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction to prepare for gainful employment. The program requires students with intellectual disabilities to participate with nondisabled students in (1) regular enrollment in credit-bearing courses, (2) auditing or participating in courses for which the student does not receive regular academic credit, (3) enrollment in noncredit-bearing, non-degree courses, or (4) participation in internships or work-based training.

ACCESS: http://www.sss.msstate.edu/access/ to find out more!

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY – AUTISM LIASION SERVICES

The Autism Liaison Services at Mississippi State University offer services and support to degree seeking students on the Autism Spectrum to facilitate their success at Mississippi State. Liaisons can meet a wide range of individual student needs including:

What do Autism Liaisons Do?

- Meet with students weekly, biweekly, and/or monthly depending upon the individual needs of the student
- Train faculty on how to recognize students with ASD and offer strategies on how to accommodate these individuals
- Work with students on the Spectrum to improve academic performance, organizational skills, and autonomy
- Assist students in acquiring and utilizing appropriate social skills
- Coach students on how to improve interview skills and professional behavior
- Create and distribute monthly newsletters that include extra reminders about upcoming dates/events/etc.

Organize Monthly Students

Students who are interested in services provided by Autism Liaisons must be enrolled at Mississippi State University, have a diagnosis consistent with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and must be registered with Student Support Services.

* Services are Free of charge for those registered through SSS.

Autism Liaison Services: http://www.sss.msstate.edu/autism/
Behavioral-based treatment for pediatric feeding concerns is most often treated by use of escape-extinction (EE) procedures (Addison et al., 2012). Additionally, the use of non-contingent access (NCA) to reinforcement has also been used to reduce disruptive mealtime behaviors (Reed et al., 2004). However, few studies have explored the additive effects of combining the two procedures compared to EE alone. That is, does adding NCA procedures to EE produce supplement treatment outcomes when compared to EE alone procedures? Recently, two Mississippi State University School Psychology doctoral students (Hallie Smith and Hailey Ripple) explored this very question and had their answers published in a recent edition of Behavior Analysis: Research and Practice (i.e., Smith et al., 2017). The study involved a pre-school aged child diagnosed with autism and presented with feeding concerns (e.g., food refusal and disruptive mealtime behaviors). A single subject withdrawal design (ABAB) was used to compare the two conditions (EE vs. EE plus NCA). In general, results indicated marked increase in the rate of drink acceptance and a decrease in disruptive behaviors when EE plus NCA was implemented relative to EE alone.

References:
