

# *The Benefits of Group Supervision and a Recommended Structure for Implementation*

**Amber L. Valentino, Linda A. LeBlanc &  
Tyra P. Sellers**

## **Behavior Analysis in Practice**

ISSN 1998-1929

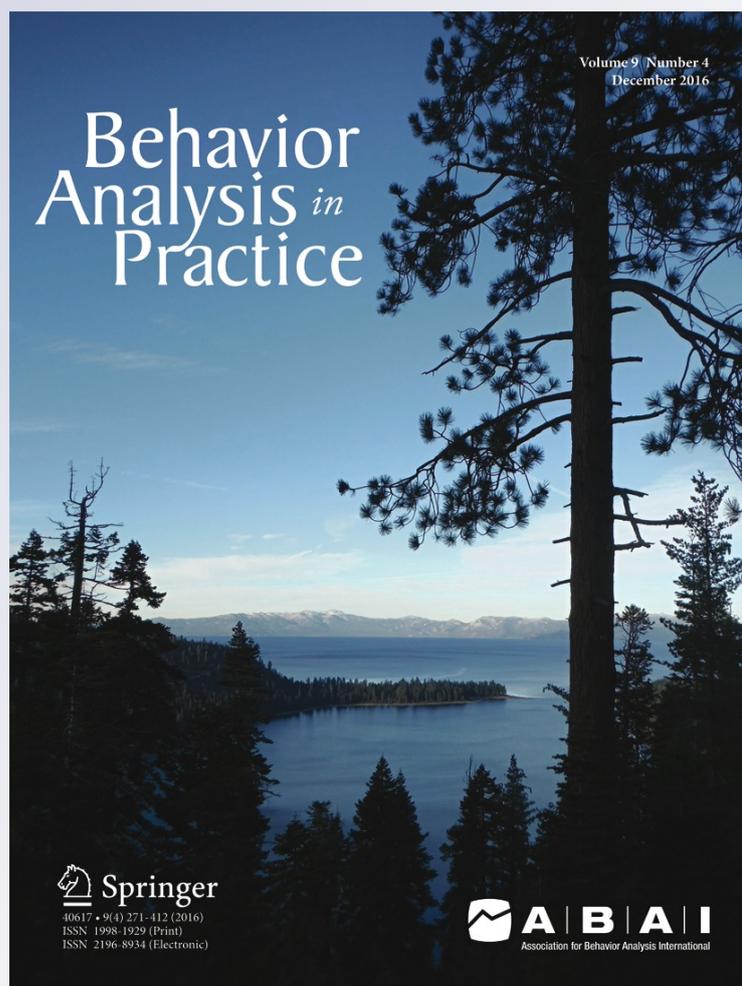
Volume 9

Number 4

Behav Analysis Practice (2016)

9:320-328

DOI 10.1007/s40617-016-0138-8



**Your article is protected by copyright and all rights are held exclusively by Association for Behavior Analysis International. This e-offprint is for personal use only and shall not be self-archived in electronic repositories. If you wish to self-archive your article, please use the accepted manuscript version for posting on your own website. You may further deposit the accepted manuscript version in any repository, provided it is only made publicly available 12 months after official publication or later and provided acknowledgement is given to the original source of publication and a link is inserted to the published article on Springer's website. The link must be accompanied by the following text: "The final publication is available at [link.springer.com](http://link.springer.com)".**

# The Benefits of Group Supervision and a Recommended Structure for Implementation

Amber L. Valentino<sup>1</sup> · Linda A. LeBlanc<sup>1</sup> · Tyra P. Sellers<sup>2</sup>

Published online: 12 October 2016

© Association for Behavior Analysis International 2016

**Abstract** Effective supervision practices can facilitate the professional development of the supervisee, the continued growth of the supervisor, and the overall development of our field and its practice. In addition to individual supervision, many aspiring certificants also participate in group supervision experiences either as part of their academic practicum or as part of a supervised independent fieldwork experience. Group supervision can provide unique opportunities to establish critical professional repertoires such as peer feedback skills and public speaking skills. However, the quality of the group supervision experience is impacted by the supervisor's arrangement of the components of the experience in order to maximize the effectiveness of these learning opportunities. This paper focuses on those critical supervision characteristics and suggests ways behavior analysts can optimize the group learning experience.

**Keywords** Certification · Fieldwork experience · Group supervision · Mentorship · Professional repertoires

Professionals in the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA) may be in a position to lead, organize, and provide supervision to aspiring certificants using a group format, in addition to ongoing individual supervision. Group supervision provides an efficient way to support multiple candidates' progress toward the experience requirements as set forth by the Behavior

Analyst Certification Board (BACB®). Although group supervision is not required, it is allowed under certain conditions (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2016a, b). Incorporating group supervision activities can increase the total number of experience hours that count within each period. In addition, well-structured group supervision sessions can expand the scope of training experiences, providing several unique opportunities for mentoring that are not available during individual supervision activities. Whereas this paper focuses on providing group supervision to individuals seeking certification, the strategies and recommendations described herein apply to group supervision that might be provided post-certification as well.

There are many potential training and mentoring benefits of the group supervision format if the experience is well-designed. In fact, some authors suggest that group supervision may be one of the only forums to cultivate professional repertoires needed to be successful with certain clinical populations, such as individuals with autism (Bernstein & Dotson, 2010). Bernstein and Dotson discuss the advanced professional repertoires required for behavior analysts working with individuals with autism, urging academics to consider that the successful professional's repertoire extends well beyond knowledge of the research and conceptual understanding. The effective professional requires a high level of intellectual and interpersonal skills, and accordingly, these authors encourage frequent peer and supervisor feedback. A group supervision format represents an excellent forum for this type of feedback and the development of these advanced skill sets that cannot be accomplished in the individual supervision format alone because the supervisor cannot observe interactions with colleagues.

Although behavior analytic research on group supervision is sparse, other disciplines (e.g., social work, counseling) have studied the topic extensively and found many advantages. For

---

✉ Amber L. Valentino  
avalentino@tbh.com

<sup>1</sup> Trumpet Behavioral Health, 1401 Parkmoor Ave. Suite 208, San Jose, CA 95126, USA

<sup>2</sup> Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322, USA

example, Agnew, Vaught, Getz, and Fortune (2000) found that their peer group supervision model increased confidence in school counselors in training, while Reynolds (2004) suggests group formats provide an excellent opportunity for shaping ethical repertoires. Reynolds hypothesizes that these results are due to the opportunity for individuals to have active dialogue about ethical issues with multiple listeners, which cannot be accomplished in individual supervision. However, if the group supervision experience is poorly designed or mismanaged, there could be many missed opportunities for active engagement, practicing professionalism and developing professional social skills that would lead to non-optimal professional repertoires. Thus, professionals should view and manage group supervision as a unique and valuable teaching and mentoring experience, rather than simply as individual supervision with more people in a room.

A recent article by DiGennero and Henley (2015) surveyed individuals with the BCaBA, BCBA, or BCBA-D credential, and individuals seeking certification, about their supervisory experiences. The survey revealed that the majority (75 %) of respondents are responsible for supervising others, but never received formal training about how to be a supervisor. Thus, it is unlikely that individuals providing group supervision have had much formal training on how to provide an optimal group supervision experience. The field of applied behavior analysis is beginning to put more emphasis on building supervisory repertoires as evidenced by the BACB Supervision Task Force, and the heightened eligibility requirements for BCBAs to provide supervision to others. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a useful guide for practitioners to design and implement effective group supervision practices. To accomplish this goal, the paper describes the primary characteristics of a group supervision arrangement that are distinctive and discusses how to plan and conduct group supervision. The paper provides resources, specific strategies, and an overall structure for implementation. This structure may prove useful for the professional planning to begin providing group supervision or wishing to revamp an existing group supervision experience.

### **Characteristics and Benefits**

There are a number of unique characteristics associated with learning experiences that occur in a group setting. These characteristics offer certain benefits that cannot be obtained through individual supervision alone. These characteristics and associated benefits include peer feedback, social networking, having multiple listeners for the same event, observational learning, developing empathy, modeling and rehearsing positive and productive discussion, practicing public speaking

and presenting, and developing professional repertoires. These characteristics will be discussed in more detail below.

### **Peer Feedback**

Agnew et al. (2000) describe one component of a clinical supervision training program for counselors in which students were assigned to peer groups of four, such that each counselor received peer feedback from each of their three peers over the course of a year. A structured feedback form was created consisting of strengths of the supervisee, comments about the case, suggestions for improvement, strategies, and recommended directions. A qualitative analysis of interviews was conducted and these authors found that participants noted peer feedback and support as the most cited strength and suggested that this component of their training increased their self awareness and their professional validation and decreased their feelings of isolation. Behavior analysts can glean much useful information from the results of this study. Specifically, a group setting allows the opportunity for individuals to practice professional repertoires (e.g., public speaking, case conceptualization) and for those repertoires to be shaped by a larger community than just the individual supervisor. For example, if a member of a group has a difficult time understanding a peer's message, he or she may recommend clarification until the peer describes the idea in a way the listener can understand. The speaker's behavior can change as a result of the consequences provided by the group. Furthermore, supervisees can practice how to provide effective feedback. That is, if a member of the group provides feedback in a way that is punitive or does not result in behavior change of his peer, his behavior can also be shaped by members of his peer group. The group leader has the opportunity to model appropriate and positive feedback and provide reinforcement for the attendees' appropriate and professional peer feedback skills.

### **Social Networking**

When supervisees have the opportunity for shared learning experiences in a group setting, the network of the supervisee naturally increases. As a result of supervisees spending part of their supervision experiences together, they will come to understand each other's learning repertoires and this understanding may increase the likelihood of future collaboration and networking once formal supervision is complete. Much like the formal graduate school experience, a cohort of individuals in group supervision may contact each other years later to share resources, job opportunities, professional development opportunities, or support when ethical dilemmas arise. When an individual experiences only supervision in a 1:1 format, these relationships do not develop, lessening the network on which the supervisee can rely in the future. Sellers, Valentino, and LeBlanc (2016) recommend five practices for optimal

individual supervision. One of these five recommended practices is that the supervisor continues the professional relationship with her supervisee post-certification. These authors suggest that by doing so, the supervisor can serve as an ongoing source of support for the supervisee even though the nature and frequency of contact and support changes. Group supervision can have the same long-term effect, in that participants can maintain relationships and serve as ongoing sources of support for one another. This is beneficial to both the supervisee and to our field as a whole, as our science and practice benefit from collaborative development efforts.

### **Having Multiple Listeners for the Same Event**

As supervisors prepare materials to teach their supervisees, it is quite possible that a group of individuals are in need of the same information. This benefit from group supervision of addressing a topic of need with multiple supervisees is likely the most obvious for supervisors; however, there are at least three other advantages that may not be as readily apparent. First, when the supervisor delivers a message to more than one person simultaneously, he or she can often determine the clarity and impact of the message on different listeners (e.g., one supervisee nods indicating understanding, another has a confused expression). As the supervisor contacts the impact of the material on different listeners, he or she can revise and refine the message as time goes on to increase the likelihood of clarity across larger groups of individuals. This refinement and improvement can make the message more impactful, positively influencing future groups of supervisees. Second, as a supervisor delivers a message, supervisees will likely ask questions. The members of the group hear the questions posed about a particular topic, and even more importantly, have a model for how the supervisor answers those questions. Group supervisees can use this model to answer questions of their future supervisees, and/or further understand the material being taught. A final advantage to having multiple listeners for the same event is that learners have the opportunity to teach one another. That is, as the supervisor introduces a topic, discussion is likely to occur, giving supervisees the opportunity to add pieces of information and examples into the discussion. This behavior can then be shaped by their peers as peers provide contingencies for contributions.

### **Observational Learning and Developing Empathy**

Throughout this group supervision process, it is important to acknowledge the opportunities for observational learning and development of empathy that are naturally embedded into a group experience. Observational learning is the learning of new responses that occurs as a result of observing the responding of a model and the consequences that responding produces (Catania, 1998). Observational learning provides

participants with opportunities to learn numerous skills, such as empathy. Empathy can be operationally defined as a contextually appropriate response to a display of affect (Schrandt, Townsend, & Poulson, 2009). As a product of interacting continuously in a group setting and experiencing the effects of their own behavior on more than one party, group supervisees are likely to develop heightened empathy skills. For example, perhaps a member of the group presents a case to the rest of the group for feedback about his or her conceptualization. It may be the case that a member of the group provides harsh feedback to the presenter, which then results in the presenter exhibiting more behaviors that suggest lack of confidence, and perhaps even some emotional responding. The consequences of emotional responding and less confidence from the presenter may be enough to change the behavior of the individual that gave the harsh feedback, in that it may have a punitive effect. Other contingencies may be that the feedback giver receives verbal or nonverbal feedback from her peers or supervisor punishing the manner in which she gave the feedback. The group supervision experience allows individuals to be in a situation to engage in various professional behaviors and experience contingencies provided from multiple listeners for their behavior. Likewise, a member of the group could provide constructive feedback in a way that is positive and supportive, receiving positive praise and acknowledgement (i.e., reinforcement) from her peers and supervisors, making it more likely she will give feedback in this way again. Individual supervision simply does not allow for these opportunities.

### **Modeling and Rehearsing Positive and Productive Discussion**

As the number of individuals experiencing the same event increases, the verbal behavior of the group naturally does as well, allowing for multiple opportunities to see others engage in discussions and to rehearse engaging in discussions themselves. This important verbal community may be unavailable once supervision is complete, so capitalizing on this benefit while the individual is in training is critical for developing peer professional skills. Many supervisees may move on to work in settings in which they serve as the only behavior analyst, severely limiting this type of experience in their professional career. Group leaders should continuously be aware of the dialogue in the group setting and actively model how to respond to questions, statements, and other group verbal behavior. The supervisor should focus on ensuring that these interactions remain positive and productive (i.e., we are moving toward a common goal and actively working through the problem/discussing the case, etc.), while having a heightened awareness that supervisees are likely to imitate this behavior during their own future professional interactions.

## Practice Public Speaking and Presenting

Friman (2014) suggests that effective public speaking skills (i.e., “the front of the room”) can allow behavior analysts to positively influence people, but many behavior analysts avoid public speaking all together, due to fear. It is also possible that behavior analysts avoid public speaking simply because they have not had much opportunity to engage in it. Perhaps one of the most readily accessible benefits from supervision in a group setting is that supervisees can practice and perfect public speaking and presenting skills. Behavior analysts are frequently called upon to speak in public in some capacity and often to present to groups of various sizes and with diverse audience members. If an individual only has the opportunity to experience individual supervision, she will not obtain ideas from others about how to present, how to word something, or how to express conceptualization of a case or problem. By presenting to a group, the supervisee can experience the way different listeners of the same event respond to his verbal behavior and adapt as the group responds. The group will inevitably be of different skill sets, so the supervisee can become more sophisticated in the way she messages information to individuals with different skills and understanding of content. The group supervisor can actively encourage group members to provide feedback to the presenter about components of her information that were clear, those that were unclear, mannerisms that may distract from the message, PowerPoint™ slides, or other visual aids and materials. Many of the 15 steps to mastering “the front of the room” outlined by Friman (2014) such as standing up straight, smiling, and telling stories can be practiced to fluency during group supervision.

## Development of Professional Repertoires

The group supervision experience can help establish very specific professional repertoires that can only be accomplished in a group setting, such as actively listening to others, refraining from engaging in competing activities (e.g., checking one’s phone or computer), and contributing in a way that keeps the group moving along in a positive and productive manner. A group supervisor can manage dynamics and over/under participation, assess for the development of cliques, and shape professional behavior as group sessions occur.

## Structuring the Group Supervision Experience to Maximize Benefits

The benefits to the group setting are plentiful. However, simply being aware of the aforementioned benefits will not maximize the group supervision experience. It is important that behavior analysts responsible for group supervision also

structure the experience in a way that will maximize these characteristics and the potential benefits. Below, we outline a potential structure that behavior analysts may adopt to facilitate better group supervision experiences and benefits. We discuss specific behaviors the supervisor can engage in to optimize benefits. Table 1 summarizes these behaviors the group supervisor can engage in, discusses benefits of these behaviors, acknowledges potential barriers for engaging in them, and offers solutions to those barriers.

### Create a Schedule and Standardized Format

To begin, the supervisor must create a schedule for group supervision and a format for each supervisory experience. Creating this set structure for each group supervision session prompts the supervisor to thoughtfully plan for activities that capitalize on aspects of the group dynamic. For example, the supervisor may create small group assignments to increase cooperation and teamwork among supervisees, may establish a format for a reading group (Parsons & Reid, 2011), or may match individuals with complementary skills sets to deliver a training so that they can learn from and teach each other. These activities allow the supervisor to maximize the group benefits from social networking, observational learning, and developing empathy. Appendix A contains an example for how to structure the actual group supervision meetings. These examples can be used as a starting point for creating one’s own structure for group supervision or can be used in its current form with minor individualized modifications. The resulting structure should include a thoughtful consideration of each of the benefits of group supervision and how each planned activity will increase the likelihood that supervisees will experience that benefit. This thoughtful consideration will enable the supervisor to ensure the overall supervision experience (i.e., timing, ratio of group to individual), as well as ensure that each group supervision session maximizes the learning of the supervisee.

### Use Group Supervision for Generalization of Skills from Individual Supervision

Individual supervision provides an excellent opportunity for individualized instruction. Group supervision can be an excellent accompaniment, allowing for generalization and heightened practice of skills learned in that individualized session. For example, perhaps a supervisee and supervisor are practicing the appropriate use of a technical term, such as Motivating Operations. The supervisor may have the supervisee articulate the definition, use applied examples, and identify non exemplars in an individual supervision session. Once the supervisee masters this skill in the smaller setting, the supervisor may ask the supervisee to successfully and independently use the term in the next group supervision session, or explain it to the

**Table 1** Behaviors the group supervisor can engage in to maximize the benefits of group supervision, benefits of these behaviors, potential barriers for engaging in them, and solutions to those barriers

Recommended behaviors for group supervision leader			
Specific supervisor behaviors	Benefits	Barriers	Solutions to barriers
Create schedule (e.g., 3- to 6-month plan)	Prompts supervisor to thoughtfully plan	Time commitment needed to plan far in advance	Create regular timing and structure (e.g., Wednesday from 1 pm to 2 pm) and repeat with each new supervisory group
	Observational learning	Supervision needs may change overtime	Consider dividing the group into smaller group or adjusting schedule based on changes that impact the majority
Give group assignments	Social networking	Difficulty matching group members according to skill sets	Consider dividing the group into smaller groups based on skill set
	Observational learning	Some activities may be better accomplished independently	Utilize individual supervision for tasks better accomplished 1:1
	Developing empathy	Supervisees may end supervision at different times, requiring changing of group assignments	Divide the group or add new members on consistent schedule
Established standard format	Provides structure	Time commitment to establish structure	Create a structure that is universal enough to apply to a wide range of skills and group members. Use it for all groups
	Gives supervisees opportunity to plan	Supervisee needs may change over time	Consider more individual supervision or other opportunities to give supervisees individualized experience
	Observational learning	Resource may get updated requiring deviation from standard format	Plan for regular updating of standardized format to keep up with changes, only make critical changes
Incorporate generalization opportunities	Increases feedback opportunities	Requires thoughtful planning	Create opportunities that are universal enough to apply to a wide range of supervisees and apply them as applicable
	Allows for direct observation of supervisee behavior in different environment and with different people	Supervisees may acquire skills in individual supervision at different paces, requiring individualized generalization opportunities for each group member	Generate enough generalization activities that you have a “bank” to pull from that will apply to a wide range of supervisees
	Allows supervisee to experience consequence from others	Limited control over group members responses so control consequences for supervisee behavior in this setting	Shape supervisee responding
	Allows supervisee to observe impact of behavior on more and diverse listeners	Certain skills may prove difficult to incorporate into group setting	Maximize individual supervision opportunities and tailor only opportunities that are most conducive to a group setting
Peer Feedback			
Modeling and rehearsal			
Increased public speaking opportunities			
Recommended behaviors for group supervision leader			
Specific supervisor behaviors	Benefits	Barriers	Solutions to barriers
Incorporate case presentations	Peer feedback	Supervisees may have different responsibilities for cases (e.g., not directly supervising)	Create hypothetical cases supervisees can use and present
	Multiple listeners for same event	Caseloads may be small and may not be many opportunities to present on different cases	
	Observational learning Developing empathy Modeling and rehearsal	Different skills sets in group may minimize variety in input provided	
Prepare agendas	Observational learning Models planning and time management	Requires time and planning ahead	Create standard agenda that can be used for future supervision groups
	Models professional timeliness	Scheduling constraints	

**Table 1** (continued)

Start and end on time	Observational learning	Unexpected schedule changes	Organize your schedule so that you have extra time before and after the meeting
			Have all materials organized prior to the meeting start to minimize last minute need for getting materials or communicating critical information
Take notes	Supports organized approach to process	Time constraints	Assign a note taker
	Observational learning	Difficult to run meeting while taking detailed notes	
Discourage distractions	Models professional behavior	Supervisees may need to respond to requests from outside parties and thus need access to email or phone	Incorporate a brief break into the session and let supervisees know they can check email and phone during this time
	Enhances engagement in group	Supervisees may rely on technology to engage in group	Ask them to go “offline” and/or turn off email notifications so they only use the technology needed (e.g., typing notes on a word document)
Send notes	Models professional timeliness	Time commitment to write and send notes	Designate a note taker
	Provides prompts for follow up behaviors	Supervisees may not read notes or use them as prompts	Give yourself 15 min after the meeting to focus on finalizing the notes and sending them out Request supervisees respond to your email with the notes confirming they’ve read them. Incorporate questions about the notes into future supervision meetings

group. The supervisor can then take note of the supervisee’s behavior and give feedback during the subsequent individual session. The supervisor will have ample opportunity to pre-plan the feedback provided in the individual supervision meeting, such that the supervisee can optimally benefit from the feedback (Hulse & Robert, 2014). The group supervisory experience allows the supervisor to specifically contrive the previously described scenario, as opposed to hoping the supervisee has the opportunity to use what was learned in individual supervision meeting at an unspecified later date and without control over the setting and audience. Group supervision experiences likely occur many times over the course of a long period of time, allowing for continued practice of a skill with feedback to fluency. This flow from individual to group supervision, and back to individual, allows supervisors to capture the unique benefits of a group setting including peer feedback, having multiple listeners for the same event, modeling and rehearsing positive and productive discussion, and practice public speaking. We recommend creating a list of supervision activities and how those activities map up to the most current BACB Tasklist.

**Incorporate Public Presentation Opportunities**

Presenting a case to a group can be a very different experience than presenting to an individual peer or supervisor. Supervisors should incorporate multiple opportunities for supervisees to present cases to their peers in a group setting. Doing so enables the supervisor to allow their supervisees to

benefit from peer feedback, having multiple listeners for the same event, observational learning, developing empathy, and modeling and rehearsing positive and productive discussion. The supervisor can provide structure to case presentations to prompt supervisees to conceptualize their case appropriately. This structure may include how to identify a case in need of group feedback and consultation (e.g., consumers currently experiencing non-optimal progress; consumers who have presented with a concern with which you have little prior experience; consumers for whom interface with providers has proven problematic; any consumer for whom there is currently a restrictive procedure in place, training, and performance management issues, data collection issues, ethical concerns) and the specific information to prepare to get the most out of the groups feedback (e.g., basic demographics, target areas of concern, operational definitions, data, assessments, graphs, specific questions for the group). Group case reviews allow supervisors to capitalize on virtually all of the group format benefits including peer feedback, having multiple listeners for the same event, developing empathy, rehearsing positive and productive discussion, and practicing public speaking and presenting.

**Plan for Specific Behaviors to Ensure Productivity and Positivity**

Once the main structure of a group supervision experience is in place (e.g., overall schedule of supervision, structure for each session, planned activities), it is critical that the

supervisor consider specific antecedents, behaviors, and consequences that will ensure the supervisees experience the benefits of joint supervision and that the overall experience remains productive and positive. We recommend planning for the following: (1) have a clear objective for each meeting, (2) prepare an agenda and send it ahead of time, (3) start and end on time, (4) observe body language during the group and make adjustments as necessary, (5) take notes during the supervision or designate a note taker, (6) discourage distractions, (7) end the meeting on time, and (8) send notes out shortly after the session is complete.

These recommendations may seem simple, but a critical analysis of each one allows one to consider the contingencies and conceptual importance of effectively managing the various dynamics of the group supervision experience. Here, we provide a conceptual analysis for some of these recommendations. For example, there are many benefits to preparing an agenda and managing the meeting according to that agenda. If the leader does not have an agenda, supervisees may not benefit from the group experience. If the leader arrives at the group supervision session without an agenda and relies on the group to generate content for the meeting, she is setting the example that as a leader, it is unimportant to plan and direct the activities. This lack of planning could suggest to the group that the time is open to discuss anything and may introduce an opportunity for members to gossip, engage in unrelated behaviors, and do so without regard to time, goals, or the importance of their training experience. Sending agendas ahead of time provides a model for how to plan for upcoming activities, manage your time well, and can also serve as a prompt for group members to know what things they should do ahead of time to prepare for the meeting. The supervisor has the opportunity to model structure, how to professionally redirect off topic conversation and how to manage the time well. Group members may imitate the leader's behavior, resulting in unproductive and unfocused meetings without accomplishments. Unfortunately, if all of the members of your group leave the supervisory experience without a model of appropriate planning and on task behavior and all of their future meetings are conducted in the same way, the impact on productivity, appropriate training, and even client care will be negative. Undoubtedly, meetings can be derailed for other reasons, such as a member who engages in high rates of attention-maintained behavior. In such a case, the supervisor might employ subtle strategies during the meeting, such as breaking eye contact and remaining silent for a few seconds following instances of the attention-maintained behavior, as well as directly discussing the issue with the individual supervisee. However, if the meetings are consistently off-task due to

the supervisor engaging in poor planning and management, the productivity of the group suffer, and supervisee and client outcomes might be negatively impacted. In fact, if the supervisees conduct future meetings in a similar way, the negative impacts many only multiply overtime.

Another recommendation for ensuring productivity and positivity is to start and end the meeting on time. This creates an expectation for professional timeliness and to shape the professional repertoires of the supervisees. If meetings do not consistently start on time, this may reinforce arriving late and model that it is acceptable to allow tardiness to negatively impact the experience of multiple people. This tardiness could even generalize to other deadlines for task completion or be imitated in the future role as supervisor of others. Also, consider the response to a supervisee who arrives late as these contingencies can affect behavior significantly. For example, if the group leader consistently repeats the material from beginning of the meeting for latecomers and do not address the tardiness directly, the supervisee may continue to come to the meeting late as any mildly aversive natural consequences have been eliminated. By not repeating the initial information one increases the response effort for supervisees to obtain missed information is increased when they are late. Directly address the tardiness with a brief discussion of the importance of timeliness and by providing rules and other contingencies for repeat offenders. For example, a supervisee may need direct feedback and a goal (e.g., he will not be more than 2 min late for all group supervision meetings during a 1-month time frame and this behavior will be graphed and reviewed regularly).

A third recommendation for ensuring productivity and positivity is to discourage distractions. We recommend doing this by providing rules and contingencies for following the rules. For example, the group leader may start by greeting everyone and then quickly letting them know that they do not need their laptops or phones for the meeting and can finish up their work in the next 30 s and shut down. If someone begins to check email or use their cellular phone during the meeting, the group leader can stop the supervision meeting, ask the individual to step outside if it is an emergency and return when they are finished engaging in the other activity. The group leader may even engage in more subtle prompts, for example by stopping talking if someone checks email and waiting until they finish. Of course, it is also critical that supervisors refrain from engaging in these competing activities as well and model engagement in the experience by making eye contact, actively listening, and giving the group one's undivided attention. Again, the impact of modeling distracted behavior is that supervisees may imitate it and attend other meetings without being fully engaged.

## Manage Interpersonal Dynamics

During the group, it is important to monitor group behavior for subtle behavioral indicators of negative interpersonal dynamics (e.g., avoiding eye contact, not including a member of the group in social interactions) among the attendees and address any situations that arise. For example, it may become evident that when a certain member of the group begins to speak, the other members of the group orient their body away from the speaker and avoid eye contact. The supervisor should gather more data by observing other interactions or asking one of the most responsible and mature members of the group about the reaction to the peer. If further observation suggests that this particular peer frequently dominates conversations and participation opportunities, the supervisor might address the issue with feedback and/or implement a differential reinforcement of low rates (DRL) of behavior program. The supervisor might have a direct conversation with that group member, discussing that he or she is dominating the group meeting and should monitor participation in conversations with a goal of limiting them to a certain number per group experience. The supervisor may also be able to engage in an agreed upon subtle visible behavior if the group member exceeds the targeted number of contributions for the session to serve as a prompt.

## Summary and Conclusions

This paper summarizes the unique opportunities to establish critical professional repertoires uniquely afforded by the group supervision experience. These unique opportunities consist of peer feedback, social networking, having multiple listeners for the same event, observational learning, developing empathy, modeling and rehearsing positive and productive discussion, practicing public speaking and presenting, and developing professional repertoires. This paper also provides structure and a framework for optimizing those benefits. The proposed structure suggests how to set up contingencies and well-designed activities to ensure supervisees benefit from the group. Hopefully, the resources provided here encourage behavior analysts to think differently about the group supervision experience and consider the implications of not arranging it appropriately. Following this structure may allow group supervisees to reap the benefits of the group supervision experience and help shape the next generation of behavior analysts to be thoughtful, engaged, timely, and professional.

Currently, there is not a sufficient experimental literature in behavior analysis to provide support for these benefits and structure, but future research might be conducted to further evaluate the recommendations and many other strategies for enhancing group supervision experiences. For example, an assessment of various professional behaviors could be

conducted at the beginning of the group supervision experience, throughout, and at the end to begin to determine the effects of group supervision on some suggested benefits such as the development of professional repertoires and developing empathy. In addition, a more extended behavior analytic evaluation of supervisor behavior is warranted. Future researchers may wish to propose a model for assessing the efficacy of their own supervisory behavior and how to make changes according to the environment and behavior of supervisees.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Funding** No funding was received for this project

**Conflict of Interest** All three authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to this project

**Ethical Approval** This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

## Appendix A: Sample Group Supervision Structure

**Technical Term of the Day (“TTOD”)** Note to supervisor: Use the BACB Tasklist to choose terminology that may be more difficult for supervisees and/or that they will need to use frequently during future discussions with peers, consumers, or other stakeholders. The supervisor may wish to outline the terms for a certain period of time (e.g., 6 months), to ensure ample opportunity for practice. The supervisor can provide the schedule of terms to supervisees in advance so they can prepare. Begin each session with a review of the term, and make rules that each supervisee must use the term at least once, correctly, and differently than his peers.

**Discussion of Task List Item(s) Assigned from Designated Competencies** Note to supervisor: Have a structured system that includes objective and measurable target skills (i.e., competencies). The supervisor may wish to outline the competencies for a certain period of time (e.g., 6 months), to ensure supervisees have time to prepare to take (and ultimately pass) the competency.

**Team Presentation** Note to supervisor: Match supervisees and assign topics for presentation. Outline a plan for a certain period of time and review the schedule at each supervision meeting. Establish rules for providing feedback to teams when they present and for presentation style. Establish consistency in the format of presentations so that supervisees are equipped to deliver professional presentations in the future.

**Case Review** Note to supervisor: Establish the expectation that cases are actively reviewed during group supervision. We recommend assigning a person to present a case, else supervisees may not volunteer and if they do, they may not be prepared to get the most out of the experience. Set parameters for how cases are presented (e.g., background information), how to keep focused on key questions, and articulate the needs of the case in a way that is productive and allows novel listeners to understand well enough to provide suggestions and support.

**New Assignments/Plan for Next Meeting** Note to supervisor: Spend the last 10 min of the meeting discussing the plans for the

upcoming group supervision session including the following: technical terms, team presentation assignments, upcoming competencies, and supervisee responsible for case review. We recommend reviewing the month's schedule in advance at the end of each session to provide closure to the group and teach participants to prepare for their assigned activities well ahead of schedule.

## References

- Agnew, T., Vaught, C., Getz, H., & Fortune, J. (2000). Peer group clinical supervision program fosters confidence and professionalism. *Professional School Counseling, 4*, 6–12.
- Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (2016). *Experience standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.bacb.com/index.php?page=69>.
- Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (2016a). *Experience standards*. Retrieved from <http://bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/150824-experience-standards-english.pdf>
- Bernstein, D., & Dotson, W. (2010). Promoting teaching excellence in professional education of behavior analysts. *European Journal of Behavior Analysis, 11*, 277–288.
- Catania, A.C. (1998). *Learning*. (Interim 4th ed.). Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY: Sloan.
- DiGennero, F. D., & Henley, A. J. (2015). A survey of staff training and performance management practices: the good, the bad, and the ugly. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 8*, 16–26. doi:10.1007/s40617-015-0044-5.
- Friman, P. C. (2014). Behavior analysts to the front! A 15-step tutorial on public speaking. *The Behavior Analyst, 37*, 109–118. doi:10.1007/s40614-014-0009-y.
- Hulse, D., & Robert, T. (2014). Preplanning for feedback in clinical supervision: enhancing readiness for feedback exchange. *The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision*. doi:10.7729/62.1091.
- Parsons, M. B., & Reid, D. H. (2011). Reading group: a practical means of enhancing professional knowledge among human service practitioners. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 4*, 53–60.
- Reynolds, V. (2013). Centering ethics in group supervision: fostering cultures of critique and safety. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 4*, 1–13.
- Schrandt, J. A., Townsend, D. B., & Poulson, C. L. (2009). Teaching empathy skills to children with autism. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 42*, 17–32. doi:10.1901/jaba.2009.42-17.
- Sellers, T. S., Valentino, A. L., LeBlanc, L. A. (2016). Recommended practices for individual supervision of aspiring behavior analysts. *Behavior Analysis in Practice* (in press).