



## **Exploring the Intersection of Comparative and Clinical Psychology: An Introduction**

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This article serves as the introduction to the special issues of the *International Journal of Comparative Psychology* on the intersection of comparative and clinical psychology. These two fields have a shared history going back to the beginnings of each. Prominent names throughout psychology have work that crosses over between these two fields. Freud referenced Darwin's work throughout his work and Skinner's research was almost exclusively comparative psychology research. For much of the first half of the last century there was a clear collaboration between the two fields that was fueled by motivation to find the best ways of understanding psychological processes. That collaboration has slowed considerably in the past several decades and this has coincided with increased specialization and compartmentalization throughout psychology. It is hoped that the important articles included in this special issue will help spark further discussion of how these two fields can again collaborate for mutual professional benefit and for the benefit for the general public.

This special issue of the *International Journal of Comparative Psychology* addresses the intersection of clinical and comparative psychology. "Intersection" is an effective term to use here as it specifically refers to the ways these two separate fields relate to each other. Material in this issue shows how there is considerable overlap between the two fields that can serve to make each other stronger. It is hoped that this special issue triggers more dialogue about the ways that these two areas can help each other in growth and address even more important issues in the future.

Although they are quite different fields, comparative psychology and clinical psychology have a shared history. Even from the early days of both fields there was quite a lot of crossover. Sigmund Freud, for example, incorporated a great deal of material into his work related to animal behavior, prominently referencing the work of Charles Darwin and other scientists, including work related to the structure of early human social organizations (Smith, 2016). As it turns out, Freud misinterpreted much of what Darwin and his contemporaries wrote. It was clear from his work, however, that he saw the importance of studying animal behavior as a way to understand the development of humans. Even without an advanced knowledge of comparative psychology Freud considered the similarities between animals and humans critical to his understanding of humans.

B. F. Skinner, another famous name throughout psychology, worked almost exclusively with animals. One of the founders of behaviorism, Skinner's theories addressed behaviors not just of humans but also of nonhuman animals. "Behavior" in most of his work was a global term, referring to both human and nonhuman animals. His bibliography, ranging from a book titled "Science and Human Behavior" (Skinner, 1953) to a paper entitled "How To Teach Animals" (Skinner, 1999) shows the range of how he covered topics related

both to clinical and comparative psychology. There was also much overlap in his work with the work of prominent comparative psychologists of his day. A recent article on the collaboration between Skinner, who was Harvard in the United States, and Takashi Ogawa, who was at Keio University in Japan, on their shared development of an operant conditioning pigeon chamber illustrates the degree of this overlap (Sakagami & Lattal, 2016).

There are many other famous names throughout psychology whose work impacted both clinical and comparative psychology (Marston & Maple, 2016). These are names familiar to any undergraduate taking an Introductory to Psychology or Overview of Psychology course. Pavlov's and Tolman's works are seminal in understanding learning in humans and animals. Problem-solving of human and nonhuman animals was advanced considerably by the work of Thorndike and Kohler. And there would be very little knowledge about emotional attachment without the work of Harlow and Lorenz. These were all famous psychology researchers and authors whose theories and empirical work crossed into both clinical and comparative psychology realms.

Despite this shared history, there has not been a collaboration between the two fields in recent decades. Although the reason for this divide is not clear, it likely has much to do with increased specialization throughout psychology over the last 40 years (Moghaddam, 1989). This specialization and subsequent divide between the comparative and clinical fields is unfortunate because a more collaborative relationship between the two fields could help to address some of the difficulties both face.

As clinical psychology and related fields, such as counseling psychology, have become more prominent in recent decades this field has also become much more simplified and mechanistic. Much of the field's focus has transitioned to manualized treatment and, as one author put it, other "paint by numbers" treatment approaches (Silverman, 1996). There has been a move away from understanding psychological conditions and with practitioners instead addressing steps, often outlined in manuals, without truly understanding different aspects of conditions (Herschell, Kolko, Baumann, & Davis, 2010).

Understanding psychological processes underlying effective treatment and psychological condition could be advanced greatly with increased incorporation of comparative psychology research. When it comes to advancing evidence-based clinical practice, comparative psychology has a great deal to offer in the area of "case conceptualization". This is the process by which therapists translate research findings into clinical practice (Christon, McLeod, & Jensen-Doss, 2014) and also the process by which the therapist develops hypotheses about client factors maintaining problems (Cronin, Lawrence, Taylor, Norton, & Kazantis, 2015). It is considered one of the most essential parts of evidence-based practice (Kuyken, Padesky, & Dudley, 2008).

Therapists and counselors are typically expected to have an understanding of the research available for understanding problems. Using manuals tends to limit this critical thinking as there is not as much emphasis on understanding conditions as there is on understanding specific steps for treating problems. But when there is an emphasis on understanding research, comparative psychology has, in many ways, offered the "gold standard" in understanding behaviors. Studying animals allows for more scientific rigor than could ever be the case when studying humans. It is much more of a "pure science" than any of the human research fields. Skinner and his colleagues recognized this in the early days of clinical psychology and it is something clinical psychology fields continue to need in the present day.

Clinical psychology's prominence throughout the university system is one way that clinical psychology could benefit comparative psychology. Clinical psychology is the most popular, in terms of sheer numbers, areas of focus among psychology undergraduates while comparative psychology is less popular.

There even was one recent comparative psychology article where the author dubbed the situation “A crisis in comparative psychology” when asking “Where have all the undergraduates gone?” (Abramson, 2015). Students may start off with an interest in comparative psychology but then move on to different fields during their undergraduate studies (Dewsbury, 1992). There also is a lack of understanding among college and university students about the contributions made by comparative psychologists in understanding behaviors. In a review of eight leading introductory psychology textbooks, Domjan and Purdy (1995) found that major findings from animal research were often presented as if they had been obtained from studying humans. Addressing the extensive collaboration between these two fields can help increase the interest and appreciation that large numbers of students in clinical programs have for comparative psychology research.

In this special issue there are four very important articles that address the contemporary intersection of clinical psychology and comparative psychology. Maple and Segura present an insightful and informative article addressing the many ways that comparative psychology research helps provide a more informed and comprehensive understanding of clinical psychopathology. Latzman, Green, and Fernandes add to this discussion with an article specifically addressing how chimpanzee personality research advances the understanding of human psychological conditions. Köksal, Kumru, and Domjan present an empirical study addressing resistance to extinction in Japanese quail and discussing how this type of research greatly benefits understanding psychological processes associated with clinical disorders. And then Carr provides a very informative critique on what animal models offer in understanding human bipolar disorder and the treatment of this disorder.

Each of these articles sets the stage for advancing a greater recognition of comparative psychology’s contribution for understanding clinical conditions and clinical psychology’s contribution for understanding comparative research’s importance. I sincerely hope that this special issue helps advance discussion of how two of psychology’s most important fields can work together to benefit from each other and advance our profession.

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