

Besieged by Behavior Analysis for Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Treatise for Comprehensive Educational Approaches

By Eric Shyman

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Beginning with the claim that the field of educating individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder is hyper focused on behavior analytic methodologies, Eric Shyman proffers a polemic in support of comprehensive educational approaches including relationship-based, sensory, and behavioral components. By tracing the history of the development of behavior analysis, interrogating its connection with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and deeply identifying and exploring the strengths and weaknesses of multiple approaches that have been suggested for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Shyman argues that for reasons as vast as best practice and social justice, a comprehensive educational approach is the only methodology that could be suitable for the complex and individualized needs presented by individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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Editorial Review

Review
[This book is a] thoroughly researched and highly informed critical analysis of the principles and practices of applied behaviour analysis (ABA). This is a brave text because it recognises the hegemony of ABA within autism teaching approaches and yet still dares to challenge it. . . .This book makes an important contribution to the developing but still emergent body of work that conceptualises autism as a social construct. . . .As one of the significant texts that is heralding a new era of more enabling ways of thinking about autism, I am sure that the messages of this important work will be widely disseminated. (*Disability & Society*)

Eric Shyman, a former ABA practitioner, encourages educators of autism spectrum disorder to look beyond the narrow confines of strict behavioral therapy in order to embrace the entire and multi-faceted individual. Urging us to discard our positivist tendencies, Shyman lucidly explores and critiques a variety of autism research findings, theories, and therapeutic interventions in order to promote an autistic pedagogy predicated upon understanding, individualization, accommodation, and transformation. He offers a coherently structured and evidence-based approach that is neither rigidly prescriptive, nor universalizing. (Majia Nadesan, Arizona State University)

Many behavioral practitioners claim that ABA is the only effective approach for persons with autism, despite clear evidence to the contrary. In this scholarly and comprehensive work, Eric Shyman presents the most methodical, balanced and well-researched refutation of this claim. This book should be read by educators and therapists who care to think deeply and critically about treatment practices for persons with autism. It is an important contribution in supporting the momentum to create the next generation of treatment approaches that are effective, as well as individualized, person-centered and humanistic. (Barry M. Prizant, Brown University)

About the Author
Eric Shyman is assistant professor of child study at St. Joseph’s College.

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