

## **Clinton L. Williams, DMA, MM**

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Since my first undergraduate course in educational psychology in 1998, I have been a follower and investigator into the "why" of human behavior. It was during this time period that I began realizing that we as humans share *extremely* similar thoughts, reactions, passions, aversions, needs, wants, desires, ambitions, and emotions. Upon this realization, I was able to communicate with my students through a more empathetic lens and develop the trust needed to relate with their frame of mind and provide a tailored approach to learning. By using behavioral and cognitive strategies, I have guided and shaped thousands of students to attain national and international recognition for their work. This system stems from the idea that development involves a minimalist simplicity necessary to break down problems into the smallest of elements, helping to create a clear, elegant, and parsimonious path to achievement or growth.

I began serious contemplation of transitioning to the area of behavioral science in 2018. Most recently, the quarantine from March 2020 to September 2021 was a wake-up call for me to make the transition. During those 17 months, countless children and adults began suffering from anxiety and depression. These things were all too relatable to me from my childhood and early adulthood. How can I make a difference? How can I help? What really are the functions and management processes for guilt, regret, anxiety, and expectation? Answers to many of my questions reside in further study at the graduate level, which led me to earn a degree in Applied Behavior Analysis. During these studies, I have gained a wealth of knowledge about observing, measuring, categorizing, and describing the function, form, and motivations behind observable and private human behavior. Behavior analytic principles and techniques have shaped how I observe the effects, responses, and setting events in the environment through direct and indirect methods, collection and measurement for clinical functional behavior assessments, response to intervention procedures, experimental frameworks, and designing behavioral intervention plans.

Aside from my behavior analytic endeavors, I am a certified affiliate provider of The Academy of Neurologic Music Therapy. The academy is under the auspices of the University of Toronto and promotes research and education of the most scientifically studied neurologically-based interventions for persons who face developmental and cognitive challenges. The program is based on a neurologic foundation that addresses a myriad of specific cognitive, sensorimotor, and speech/communication disorders. After completing the required assessments and training for certification, and serving as a behavioral therapist in an autism clinic in my community of Las Vegas, I did decide to "hang up" my marching band and concert band director days and become a full-time music therapist in the public school system of Las Vegas. I currently work at one of our district's four exclusive special needs schools that serve students aged 6 to 23 years of age. This work has given me more insight into neurodevelopmental diagnosis with a myriad of comorbid permutations. Aspects of the population include ASD, ADHD, ODD, schizophrenia, bipolar, Down syndrome, Rett syndrome, Williams, Fragile X, Angelman, and many other disorders. In addition to providing music therapy to all 140 students in our school weekly, I have become well-versed in the formulation of functional behavior assessments, experimental functional analysis, behavior intervention plans, and individualized education plans. Our students are all classified as moderate to severe within their respective diagnosis, but at our exclusive school, they are thriving due to a wonderful, fully-staffed institute that provides for their specific needs. This continues to be a great experience, and I hope to continue serving as a music therapist for a few more years before my next appointment in behavioral health.

In addition to understanding the therapeutic nature of behavioral science, I have a rich interest in research and am taking a step to formulate a technology and vocabulary for analyzing the mechanics of music

performance and behavior. Due to the limited research in music-related performance enhancement, the majority of replicated research in music stems from the fields of general psychology, language, and sports/athletic psychology (which is a named subspecialty within behavior analysis, and music is not). Research exists that may show a strong correlation in the neural processes of musicians regarding language, mathematics, and memory, but extremely limited trials related to performance enhancement have been investigated. Many of these topics are pragmatic in nature and may generalize to audiences of all stages of development in the performance field (e.g., acting, athletics, music, oration, et al.). Though I am transitioning into the behavioral sciences as a full-time career, I plan to conduct small scale research projects in the field of music.

We learn in educative mentoring that inclusivity, efficacious practice, being personable, sympathetic, and genuinely invested in helping others to become successful, grow, and be confident in the choices that can enhance their lives. I have always said to my students that it does not matter what they look like, how much money they have, or what their parents do for a living; I am only interested in what they can show me and their personal growth. I believe unbiased objectivity is one of the elements necessary for people to build trust and confidence. Like a teacher, a therapist needs confidence from their client that they will solve problems and be abreast of the latest innovations that benefit the human condition. Additionally, I have lived long enough (45+ years) to experience joy, sorrow, happiness, and defeat. Now that my checklist of overcoming seminal professional milestones has been achieved in music education, an ever-present nudging mental reminder tells me now is the time for a change.

As one door closes, another will open. I am beginning to near my last personal journey as a student in academia. I have recently been admitted to a Doctor of Education for Mental Health Counseling and a Doctor of Psychology program. Both degrees work in tandem with coursework and will be completed in two years time. In addition to my Education Specialist degree in Applied Behavior Analysis, I do believe I will have a strong foundation to address many issues of human growth and development. I experienced many challenges in my personal life that would not be considered a healthy and productive environment, but these experiences have helped me to shape and empathize with the students in my classroom and clinical settings. Seeing thousands of successful students who come from lower socioeconomic and diverse backgrounds attain personal and professional success while overcoming great odds trumps any national or international performance or award I have occasioned. As a professional educator, I take my own personal learning experiences with serious consideration. Transitioning into fields of clinical therapy, research, and theoretical principles of learning have my utmost attention. This, coupled with a history of overcoming challenges, may quite possibly provide a wealth of knowledge to help others navigate the same obstacles.

Sincerely,



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