

ACTion! News

The Newsletter of the International Association for Applied Control Theory

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IAACT News in Brief

By Colin Dietch, Editor

IAACT Conducts Two-Day *Carolina Connection* Workshop in Winston-Salem, NC

The International Association for Applied Control Theory, in conjunction with Unlimited Success (A Division of Partnership for a Drug-Free, NC, Inc.) and the Stokes County Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative conducted the *Carolina Connection* workshop in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This two-day seminar demonstrated how the ideas of perceptual control theory are being successfully applied in schools, juvenile justice, and drug prevention programs. Over 160 teachers, counselors, and specialists attended. Several school groups and individuals, including teachers and students, presented their implementations of control theory. IAACT Faculty members demonstrated role-playing and connection activities.

Barnes Boffey Rocks at *The Carolina Connection*

By Fred Good

“Expectations are premeditated resentments.” Carolina Connection keynote speaker, Barnes Boffey was quoting a friend. His speech focused on how sometimes expectations can lead us down the wrong road. As parents and educators, we are often told to have and communicate high expectations for our children and students. But if we become too rigid about those expectations, they can go south on us, adversely affecting us and those we care about.

Expectations are more than just desires or wants. They are desires or wants to which we become attached. Rather than serving as goals or ideals to which we aspire for ourselves and others, they become wants or beliefs we think *should* happen. We then tend to close off new information and are at risk of serious “error” or conflict. We loose balance.

Barnes’ talk was filled with poignant stories to illustrate how in relationships, by maintaining “balance between holding appropriate expectations and going with the flow,” we are more likely to be able to “go visualize an outcome without demanding it.” We are able to allow others to solve their own issues without constraining them

to our way of doing or thinking about how to do it. We are better able to help others help themselves meet their goals, or as we say in PCT, their reference perceptions.

By clarifying expectations in ones relationships, we are able to understand how powerless we really are to manifest the expectations we have of those around us in all kinds of different situations. How familiar are we when we practice role playing with the need we all have to give advice? Rather than focusing on clarifying the goals of others, we want to solve their problems our way because we think we have the answer.

By cherishing our powerlessness to control the perceptions of others, we are more able to listen and to question. By so doing, we keep on the other person's agenda rather than forcing our own agenda on others. We are then able to develop more realistic expectations because we allow others to have input into those expectations. As Barnes put it: "It's our expectations of others that they have never agreed to that cause most of our issues."

When it comes to expectations others have of us, the same process of clarification is important. A relationship which starts with such clarification is more likely to endure. We can discuss whether we think another's expectations of us are reasonable before conflicts arise. So, Boffey concludes that "(1) it is not my job to live up to your expectations unless I have had some say in creating them, and (2) it is not my job to adjust my truth to your satisfaction; it is simply my job to speak my truth."

IT!: Integrating Theory

By Lloyd Klinedinst

Hello again! I hope this third column's a charm. Your emails to me are noticeable by their near absence. I did receive an email from Mike Michalicek whose songbook based on what he knows about control theory was featured in the local Waterloo newspaper. My characteristically long line, "The value of increasing and improving our knowing the theory is like a musician's improvement in playing music, expressing richer and richer musical manifestations based on the fullness of understanding and communicating in the context of musical theory, history and practice.", made good sense to Mike. May the melody of our "living IT" linger* on!

In my first two columns I discussed among other things some possible, desirable prerequisites for understanding and using PCT; and some basics of PCT, especially the terms, behavior and action. I said I would talk about perception next. I "flip-flopped"! Or am I just varying my actions (writing these columns) to maintain a constant behavioral goal of highlighting basic and key issues in PCT? Another example of how PCT can provide insight into the complexity of human behavior: how we can't know what a person is doing (behavior) by just seeing (hearing, reading) what he or she is doing (actions).

So, instead of talking about perception (I'm thinking it will be in next column), I want to talk about *control*. I find the source for my change in my earlier remark in last column: "...the ABCs of PCT become the BCPs..." I focused on *action* and *behavior* last time; this time I focus on control. So I'm presenting ABCs of PCT in literal sequence. THE "BASIC" THESIS of PCT is: "behavior is the control of perception" (page xi, *Behavior: The Control of Perception*, hereafter referred to as *BCP*). In reference to this I think of Keats's famous closing lines of "Ode On A Grecian Urn":

When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Behavior is control (though not all control is behavior). And while it is not all we need to know, it just about “says it all” in defining the behavior of all living things. In the glossary of *BCP*, p. 283, Bill Powers defines control:

CONTROL: Achievement and maintenance of a preselected perceptual state in the controlling system, through actions on the environment that also cancel the effects of disturbances.

While expressed perhaps too tediously for popular interest, this statement declares in general scientific terms (each to be further specified and even expressed in mathematically exacting language, a favorite language of science) what the behavior of living beings is and how it works. What else is living but behaving, which means controlling! Bill Powers explores just such a daring thesis in his article:

The origins of purpose: the first metasystem transitions

William T. Powers

The Control Systems Group

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in: *World Futures* vol. 45 (special issue on The Quantum of Evolution, Heylighen F., Joslyn C. & Turchin V. (eds.)), p. 125-138 (1995)

I want to share with you right here the abstract of this article:

This speculative essay concerns the origins of purposive behavior and proposes that this is identically the origin of life. Negative feedback and control offer a self-selecting mechanism that accounts for the long-term stability of replication of the genome, and a related concept of reorganization offers a rationale for the progress of evolved forms into those which exert greater and greater control over the local environment. A picture emerges in which the basic principle of control runs like a unifying thread from the first living molecules to modern complex organisms.

Exciting! Isn't it? You can read the entire article by going to Bill's website (http://www.brainstorm-media.com/users/powers_w/), clicking on the link, Evolutionary origins of purpose (ftp://ftp.vub.ac.be/pub/projects/Principia_Cybernetica/WF-issue/Powers.txt).

Another quite different approach (one you can usually expect from me) to getting a handle on what control means is to look at a word's origins, its etymology. I looked at over thirty pages from the OED detailing the various occurrences and meanings of control and its roots. The short of it is that first control as a verb, then as a noun appeared first in French, then English. The meaning of the word in its first usages was: “To check or verify, and hence to regulate (payments, receipts, or accounts generally): orig. by comparison with a ‘counter-roll’ or duplicate register.” The word corresponds to the medieval Latin, *contrrotulus*, f. *contr* against, counter (cf. CONTRA- 3) + *rotulus* ROLL. The roll, or Latin *rotulus*, was: “A piece of parchment, paper, or the like, which is written upon or intended to contain writing, etc., and is rolled up for convenience of handling or carrying; a scroll.” Now match this etymology with any imagined scene we might draw on from ancient or medieval times when an accountant with a scroll of parchment containing all the items which he expected to find in a shipment, or storage vault would check the physical items against the reference scroll of items that ‘should’ be there. Here we have it: comparison, control, regulation of a process.

Now let's jump to when Bill Powers used the term and some of the basics of control theory as it was used in the 40s and 50s to get machines and equipment to self-regulate. He took the theory that humans were using to get machines to self-regulate like humans and hypothesized: may this not be the way humans, indeed, all living beings function. And we gratefully now have PCT! Voilà! (With much work in between!)

I have shared only the sketchiest of paths from the fact of control in living beings to PCT. There are so many topics and issues to look at, enjoy, and learn from in more detail. Perhaps you may wish to pursue one or the

other of them. Email me at lloydk@klinedinst.com if you would like me to talk about one of them in more detail.

I conclude this issue's column by emphasizing that when we think, or talk, or work with others about behavior, we always 'keep the big picture' in mind. Living and behavior are control. We are short-sighted or partially-blinded (and we'll get into trouble as a result) if we only talk about action or perception or error or any of the individual components of the whole control process. I personally believe we can live most fully and effectively from bringing to our always already daily living the added value of an integrated PCT.

*I find several playful and instructive insights in my using PCT, BCP, and ABC, key TLAs (three letter acronyms), as organizing devices for the order of my opening columns. Using a language learning device of backward buildup and following grammatical principles of precedence, I consider the T of PCT as the prime word, only then modified by the C which is in turn modified by the P. So, first theory, second control, third perception. This name for our theory is consistent with the title of Bill's seminal work, *Behavior: The Control Of Perception*, 1973, and my ABCs for this column. Having started with the barest introduction to *theory*, in the second column I featured *behavior* and *action*, the latter synecdochic part too often being mistaken for its referential whole, *behavior*. Now comes our consideration of *control*.

Lloyd Klinedinst, IAACT Science Advisor, is a regular contributor to this newsletter. He may be contacted via e-mail at lloydk@klinedinst.com. Visit his website at <http://www.klinedinst.com/>.



The Oasis Within

By Shelley Brierley

Starting a Private Practice

In the past several years, I have been asked on numerous occasions "how does one begin a private practice as a therapist or counselor?" As someone who has been in the field for over twenty years, I have some experience with this! I have also had the pleasure of mentoring and supervising several people in starting a private practice.

Here are a few tips I would suggest:

- Make sure you have credentials to legally counsel in your province/state/country.
- Get malpractice insurance!
- When starting out, have a part-time job with an agency that pays you a salary to cover your basic costs; it will act as your bread and butter, and address the survival needs. It takes the stress off until you get rolling, so you'll do better work.
- Start up in a location where you plan to live for a long time, so you can build referrals over the long run.
- Make your "office" "home-like" to make the experience less sterile. Create different areas for counseling and payment.
- Get out to do mini-talks about yourself and your approach wherever you can.
- Plan to work as many hours cultivating your business as you do in counseling.

- Join networking clubs in your area to get yourself known and learn about available referral agencies.
- Volunteer on committees, especially where your client populations are involved. You better their causes, learn a lot about their realities, and make good contacts!
- Know what you are good at...Ask your clients for input as to what they perceive you being good at.
- Market yourself to clients who have issues you are good at dealing with and people to whom you enjoy being connected.
- In identifying the client population you wish to approach, identify the common problems they might have, what you can do for them, and consider what financial resources they have to pay for the service. If your chosen client population doesn't have resources, you may have to learn to write grants.
- In writing your brochure, think from the clients' perspective. What are they looking for? Do not simply list your credentials.
- Offer a free one-half hour consultation.
- Use endorsements of clients who are pleased with your service.
- Have someone else write your biography! They will promote you better than you can promote yourself.
- In setting fees, a rule of thumb in many self-employment courses is that, to be comparable to your employment income, your fees would need to be double your hourly salary if you are a sole proprietor with minimal overhead costs. If instead you have a business with support staff, equipment, space, etc., your fees would need to be triple your hourly salary. This rule of thumb seems to be fairly accurate for counselors. At this stage of my career, I need to bill three times what I hope to be able to take out of my company myself.
- Start with a fee that you can draw and that you can live with too. You can raise it later, but it is better to have clients to work with and help than to fret. My clients have taught me an enormous amount about human behavior, dignity, and courage! An, yes, it is always a two-way street, so I trust that I have taught them a few things as well!
- Return phone calls within 24 hours.
- Follow up with your clients a couple of times, even after they are finished with their work. Sometimes they come back in when things aren't working out, and, if not, it is encouraging and good for our souls to hear how well they are doing.
- Continue training in mini workshops yourself to stay abreast of what's new in the field.
- Build a network to refer to when a) it is not something you are good, b) your issues are too close to the clients, or c) it is something over your head. People will come back to you if they are dissatisfied with the other counselor and if you have been honest and fair with them about this.
- Build a network of like counselor-types for emotional support and coverage of clients when you are away or off, and a network of unlike, non-counselor types for referral sources.
- Create a sideline; teaching, supervising, giving workshops, etc. When one is rising, the other is often waning (sometimes, this correlates to the seasons).
- Plan for droughts and deluges! When clients seem to be "out", use the time to self-evaluate (are you doing good work?), to do all the things you need to do and won't have the time for when they return. Check your own energy... "What are you sending out?"
- Add up all the one-time yearly costs, divide by ten, and put that much aside each month in a miscellaneous account for memberships, brochures, business cards, etc. You need July off, as clients are often slower, and you'll want the break. This takes out the "big surprise hits" that often get forgotten until the bill comes.
- Put something in the bank for the holiday you'll need.
- Match holidays with conferences in wonderful places so you can write off the travel and workshop expenses legally – but pay for the extra days you add on to play!
- Get a good accountant so they can tell you where you are making your money, and help you learn about the write-offs to which you are entitled and deserve! (After all, many of us do not count numbers among our strong points!)
- Do some therapy yourself! You will be amazed at how helpful it can be and what you'll learn about "more and less" effective counseling (being an experiential learner myself.)

- Learn to leave your clients the right to their problems. Take your own home with you each night to work on instead.
- The best marketing strategy is good work – so treat your people well and they will refer back to you over and over (I have some people who have referred three generations of their family!) The brochures and other marketing devices are just for them to hand on to friends and family once you get going.
- Practice what you teach, send out great energy, and think positively about the kind of person and counselor you want to be! Self-evaluate to it daily!
- It's a wonderful lifestyle once you get the balance (financial and emotional) figured out!

Books to consider: *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael E. Gerber.

So, now, having read this, you probably know you will not get rich being a counselor or therapist! If you aren't enthusiastic about what you are doing as a counselor, it's time to change fields. For those of you who are enthusiastically getting started, very best wishes to you! It's not as daunting as it first seems.

Shelley Brierley is the author of the upcoming book The Circle of Strength, and can be reached via e-mail at info@thecircleofstrength.com. Visit her website at <http://www.thecircleofstrength.com>.

Bill Powers to Conduct Method of Levels Workshop Before Control Systems Group Conference

Bill Powers will be conducting a pre-conference MOL (Method of Levels) Workshop beginning Sunday evening, July 17 after dinner and ending with lunch on Wednesday, July 20. Participants will learn how to conduct the MOL sessions. The CSG Conference will begin with dinner on Wednesday, July 20 and end with breakfast on Sunday, July 24.

Call for Contributions and Suggestions

The new IAACT Newsletter will contain both regular features and special articles submitted by IAACT members. We invite all IAACT members to send us their observations, insights, news, and announcements. Submitted articles should be reasonably brief. Please understand that due to formatting constraints and the editorial process, articles may be edited and/or truncated as necessary. In general, if articles are truncated to appear in the hard copy of the newsletter, they will be reproduced in full in the online version at <http://www.iaact.com>.

We prefer submissions by e-mail. Electronically submitted articles can be typed directly into the body of the e-mail, or they should be in an easily readable format such as plain text (.txt), HTML, Microsoft Word (.doc), or Rich Text (.rtf). Newsletter submission should be sent to colin@iaact.com. Thank you for your cooperation and we look forward to receiving many responses.