Department Spotlight: Katie Brown

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Katie Brown comes to the Utah State University Department of Psychology after receiving her doctoral degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, where she provided behavior analytic services in the Severe Behavior Program and the Autism and Severe Behavior Diagnostic Clinics. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire before moving to Nebraska and completing her master’s degree. Brown is the newest faculty member to join USU’s behavior analysis PhD program.

What drew you to USU?

I admire the collaborative and supportive environment where researchers and clinicians across specialties work together to address issues of clinical relevance. Additionally, I appreciate an approach to patient care that is comprehensive and multi-disciplinary. I found that these values aligned well with the purpose and mission of the USU Psychology Department and Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence.

What would you like the public/potential students to know about your research?

In many ways, my research is patient-driven. I seek to ask questions and examine problems that are clinically significant for the patients and families we serve. I have worked in clinical settings with individuals who engage in severe forms of problem behavior for over five years. Through my experiences, I have seen the positive impact of applying the science of behavior to improve the lives of patients and families. However, we need more research to further our technology of behavior change and ensure that the effective treatments we develop and implement in clinical settings generalize outside those settings and can be maintained over extended periods.

My research aims to advance the assessment and treatment of severe problem behavior. Current areas of interest include (1) examining variables that impact treatment adherence and integrity of implementation, (2) examining the generality of treatment effects to clinically relevant settings, and (3) assessing the longevity and maintenance of treatment across time and settings.

What is your favorite part of your job?

I’m not sure I could pick just one area of my job that is a favorite. I love having a job that requires me to wear many different hats—practitioner, researcher, and mentor. Having this variability makes each day a new adventure and is what makes my job so unique and enjoyable.

What is your mentorship philosophy?

Every student has different academic and professional goals, so I try to adapt my mentorship approach accordingly to help each student succeed and reach his or her goals. My goal is for my students to be scientist-practitioners. As such, I encourage my students to learn the principles of learning and behavior, consistently consume and contribute to behavioral research and evidence-based practices, and translate research and understanding into their practice.

I would like my lab to be a place that provides excellent clinical services and where research questions of clinical importance are developed and assessed. I hope that students who spend time in my clinic find this experience rewarding and that it helps further their educational and professional goals as scientist-practitioners.

What advice do you have for students pursuing a PhD?

Know what academic and professional goals you are working towards. Although those goals may evolve and change as you progress in your educational journey, building a habit of identifying and tracking progress towards short- and long-term goals will help you achieve those goals. Also, be sure to schedule time for self-care and maintain a healthy work-life balance.