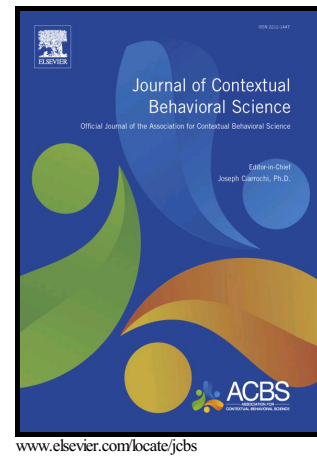


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A Contextual Behavioral Approach to the Study of (Persecutory) Delusions[☆]

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Abstract

Throughout the past century the topic of delusions has mainly been studied by researchers operating at the mental level of analysis. According to this perspective, delusional beliefs, as well as their emergence and persistence, stem from an interplay between (dysfunctional) mental representations and processes. Our paper aims to provide a starting point for researchers and clinicians interested in examining the topic of delusions from a functional-analytic perspective. We begin with a brief review of the research literature with a particular focus on persecutory delusions. Thereafter we introduce Contextual Behavioral Science (CBS), Relational Frame Theory (RFT) and a behavioral phenomenon known as arbitrarily applicable relational responding (AARR). Drawing upon AARR, and recent empirical developments within CBS, we argue that (persecutory) delusions may be conceptualized, studied and influenced using a functional-analytic approach. We consider future directions for research in this area as well as clinical interventions aimed at influencing delusions and their expression.

Keywords

Persecutory delusions; Contextual Behavioral Science; Relational Frame Theory; arbitrarily applicable relational responding; rule-governed behavior; coherence

While of much interest in clinical, cognitive, and neuropsychology, delusions have yet to be systematically explored within Contextual Behavioral Science (CBS). In Part I we

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