






## Think Tanks on Cultural Studies: Tribute to João Claudio Todorov

*Think Tank de Estudos Culturais: Tributo a João Claudio Todorov*

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### Resumo

Este ensaio é dedicado a João Claudio Todorov (1941-2021) e se concentra na história dos *Think Tank de Estudos Culturais*, a partir de uma perspectiva da ciência culturo-comportamental. Todorov primeiro concebeu a ideia de criar um Think Tank de Estudos Culturais (TTEC). Ele organizou o primeiro com Maria Malott em 2005 em Campinas, São Paulo. O XIV Encontro Brasileiro de Psicologia e Medicina do Comportamento, ocorreu simultaneamente e teve um número significativo de apresentações de pesquisas com foco na seleção cultural. O Think Tank focou no conceito de metacontingência e suas implicações para a pesquisa. O evento contou com a presença de ex-editores do Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior. Think Tank 1 (TTCS1) inspirou a organização de seis Think Tanks adicionais, nos quais Todorov sempre teve um papel central. Além disso, Todorov promoveu a coordenação com pesquisadores de diferentes instituições de ensino superior, resultando em apresentações em congressos científicos nacionais e internacionais e publicações conjuntas. O mais recente Think Tank (TTCS7) ocorreu em 2021, em modo online devido às limitações impostas pela pandemia global de Covid-19, quando o Professor João Claudio Todorov teve sua última participação em evento internacional.

Palavras-chave: Think Tank de Estudos Culturais, Metacontingência, Macrocontingência, João Claudio Todorov.

### Abstract

This essay is dedicated to João Claudio Todorov (1941-2021). It focuses on the history of the Think Tanks on cultural studies from a culturo-behavioral science perspective. Todorov first conceived the idea of creating a Think Tank on Cultural Studies (TTCS). He organized the first one with Maria Malott in 2005 in Campinas, São Paulo. Occurring simultaneously with the XIV Brazilian Meeting of Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, there was a significant number of research presentations focused on cultural selection. The think tank focused on the concept of metacontingency, and its implications for research. The event counted on the presence of former editors of the Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior. Think Tank 1 (TTCS1) inspired the organization of six additional think tanks, where Todorov always played a key role. Moreover, Todorov promoted the coordination with researchers from different higher education institutions, resulting in presentations at national and international scientific conferences, and joint publications. The most recent think tank, (TTCS7) took place in 2021 online due to the limitations from the Covid-19 pandemic, when Professor João Claudio Todorov attended for the last time.

Keywords: Think Tank on Cultural Studies, Metacontingency, Macrocontingency, João Claudio Todorov.

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In the 1960s, upon completing his undergraduate degree in Psychology at the University of São Paulo, João Claudio Todorov was invited by Carolina Martuscelli Bori to join a team of researchers in the *Laboratório de Análise Experimental do Comportamento* [Experimental Behavior Analysis Laboratory] at the University of Brasília. Dean Darcy Ribeiro charged the researchers to create a Psychology program at the new, revolutionary and modern university (Vasconcelos, Hanna, Souza, Abreu-Rodrigues, Feitosa & Oliveira-Castro, 2021). João Claudio was assigned the translation of the book *Science and Human Behavior* (Skinner, 1953), with Rodolpho Azzi's revision. In his book, based on principles of behavior derived from basic research, Skinner discussed a number of social phenomena and cultural practices (see Andery, Micheleto & Sério, 2005; Skinner, 1953, 1971, 1987, 1989). In 1967, the first Brazilian edition of *Ciência e Comportamento Humano* was published.

Three decades after Skinner's seminal book, which included the study of cultural practices, an important conceptual innovation emerged in the work of Sigrid Glenn and colleagues (Glenn 1986, 1988, 2004; Glenn & Malagodi, 1991; Glenn & Malott, 2004; Glenn et al., 2016). Glenn introduced the concept of metacontingency as a model of cultural selection that operates at a different level than operant selection. Already in the 1980s, Todorov (1987) brought a culturo-behavioral perspective to the 558 parliamentarians who were drafting - for 20 months - the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, enacted in 1988. His warning was as follows:

Any law worth its salt always prescribes some consequence for some kind of behavior (Todorov, 1987, p. 9) ... Metacontingencies of the cultural-technological process expand the scope and effectiveness of the behavior that alters the environment toward ensuring the individual's and the society's survival and satisfaction. On the other hand, ceremonial contingencies prevent the appearance of new behaviors, maintain social control as it is, and are harmful, in the long term, when the survival of all depends on the occurrence of changes. In the event of conflict between technological and ceremonial metacontingencies, all the initial advantage is with the latter. ... The gap between long-term goal and the expected behavior is currently filled by verbal behavior, specifically by rules of conduct to be followed. When changes are proposed in the cultural-technological process involving the establishment of a metacontingency, there follows an effort to set specific rules, provide immediate consequences for commitment with these rules, and evaluate these rules and the consequences (p. 12).

... Let us now look at the Constitution as a metacontingency. ... Metacontingencies may be predominantly ceremonial, and we will be frustrating the expectations of the population, and shattering the broad political agreement that underpins transition to democracy. Or they will be predominantly technological, defining the possible social transformations, without disrupting the organized social life. In this second case, of a Constitution specifying technological metacontingencies, the wording should not be in purely abstract terms, such as "education is a right of all and a duty of the State." However broad the consensus on such a general goal, such breadth is the very reason why if we remain at this level of abstraction we will not be pointing the paths for the Brazilian education. ... If there is no other national effort targeted to guarantee democracy, defining objectives and the ways to achieve them, we run the risk of having a Constitution that will result from the pressures of the different and pre-articulated lobbying efforts. We will then have a patchwork quilt, certainly short-lived." (p. 13)

In 2004, the ABPMC - Associação Brasileira de Psicoterapia e Medicina Comportamental [Brazilian Association of Psychotherapy and Behavioral Medicine] and the ABAI Association for Behavior Analysis International, organized an international conference in Campinas Brazil. This constituted the second ABAI International Conference. The conference was organized by Hélio José Guilhardi (ABPMC) and Maria Malott (ABAI), with the support and encouragement of Joao Todorov, Martha Hubner, Maria Amelia Matos, and Carolina Bori. The conference included 325 presentations in addition to posters. It had nearly 2,200 participants. Registrants came from all over the world to Campinas and witnessed the growth of Behavior Analysis in the country (See the program in this link <https://www.abainternational.org/events/program-details/summary.aspx?intConvId=33&a=r>).

João Claudio also meaningfully contributed to establishing reciprocal benefits between TTCSs and scientific societies in Brazil. In 2005, the ABPMC brought to Brazil former presidents of the ABAI concurrently with the launch of the first edition of the Think Tank on Cultural Studies (TTCS1). The latter gathered national and international researchers, such as former editors of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*. This is the starting point of the story that we will tell of the Think Tank on Cultural Studies, and its impacts on the development of national and international networks of theoretical, basic, applied research, as well as translational research.

*Translational behavior analysis seeks behavioral process, principles, and procedures that apply in the long term and beyond the individual case; ultimately, it is hoped that findings from translational behavior analysis lead fairly*

*readily to application* (McIlvane, Dube, Serna, DeNolf, Barros & Galvão, 2011, p. 176). Translational research<sup>1</sup> is a bridge between basic (strategic research - Guimarães, 2013) and applied research (McIlvane et al., 2011).

In 2005, TTCS1, Brazilian scientists were already doing research on metacontingencies. The 13th ABPMC Meeting under the Presidency of Hélio José Guilhardi displayed a wide range of themes, including sessions with research on selection of cultural practices. In the program<sup>2</sup>, we can observe the diversity of areas of research considered by behavior analysts in Brazil. The variety of works could be classified in (1) application settings and interventions, (2) neurodiversity and health problems, (3) laboratory, interpretation and review studies, and (4) conceptual analysis in cultural phenomena.

In this meeting João Claudio presented a study describing changes in cultural practices that have had lasting social impact in the city of Brasília (Sénéchal-Machado & Todorov, 2008, 2017). Between 1995 and 1996, Brazil's capital city had the highest rate of pedestrian casualties in the country. Cultural changes included pedestrian macrobehavior of crossing only in crosswalks and driver macrobehavior of stopping at crosswalks where pedestrians stood. These cultural changes began with the University of Brasília's organization of the Permanent Forum for Peace on Traffic, which brought together representatives of multiple agencies including the traffic department of the federal government, traffic police, radio and television stations and churches, for the planning and city-wide implementation. Each agency had specific roles to play in the culturo-behavioral intervention, which resulted in significant reduction of traffic pedestrian casualties. Sénéchal-Machado and Todorov (2008, 2017) analysed the process of change in terms of macrocontingencies, metacontingencies and operant contingencies.

The development of behavior analysis in Brazil has a long history that began in the 1960s upon the contribution of Fred S. Keller to the University of São Paulo and the University of Brasília. Brazil has stood, and continues to stand out as one of the most advanced countries in the world in Behavior Analysis (Todorov, 2016; Todorov & Hanna, 2010; Strapasson, Magalhães & Custódio, 2013; Zamignani, Banaco & Wang, 2016). The 2,200 participants at the 13th ABPMC Meeting in 2004 evidence the expansion of the behavior analyst community. The ABPMC started to gather the largest number of behavior analysts every year. Moreover, Brazil today also has two other scientific associations: The *Associação Brasileira de Análise do Comportamento* (ACBr) [*The Brazilian Association of Behavior Analysis*] and the *Associação Brasileira para Ciência Comportamental Contextual* (ACBS Brasil) [*Brazilian Association for Contextual Behavioral Science*].

From the 1980s to 2000s the advancement of the concepts of metacontingency and macrocontingency is noticeable. In addition to the approach of behavioral systems with a 40-year history in Behavior Analysis it also allows the analysis of complex cultural systems by using a selectionist perspective of Behavior Analysis (cf. Baia & Sampaio, 2019; Bento, Tagliabue, & Sandaker, 2020; Brethower, 2000; Couto & Sandaker, 2016; Glenn et al. 2016; Krapfl & Gasparotto, 1982; Krispin, 2019; Malott, 2022, 2003; Mattaini, 2020; McGee & Crowley-Koch, 2022). A wide range of single subject-based research designs have contributed to key parameters and relationships to explain macrobehaviors and culturo-behavioral lineages. Interfaces with Marvin Harris' anthropology, Norbert Elias' sociology illustrate the benefits of studying culture in the behavioral-analytic light supported by interdisciplinary dialogues in the fields of social and

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<sup>1</sup>Guimarães (2013) presents the story how translational research came into being along with the National Institute of Health (NIH), by promoting interdisciplinary research and hastening the 2-way exchange between basic and clinical science, from the laboratory to applied settings with patients and the population. This is followed by remarkable events, such as the creation of the USA *National Cancer Institute* (NIH-NCI) and its expansion in the first decade of the 21st century into health fields (e.g., Science Translational Medicine, American Journal of Epidemiology, Journal of Translational Surgery). The movement headed to translation involved the building a long-term policy by NIH, the creation of a funding line (Clinical and Translational Science Awards, CTSA Programs) with Clinical and Translational Research through 2012, followed by the establishment of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). The story of translating basic science findings into clinical trials shows the importance of political-institutional mobilization, and financial-organizational incentives. It involves the strengthening of a nation's science, technology, and innovation sector-oriented policy.

<sup>2</sup>ABPMC 2004 Program: <https://abpmc.org.br/boletim-contexto.php?inf=6>;

XIII Encontro ABPMC 2004 – Program August 12th, 2004: <https://abmpc.org.br/arquivos/publicações/14051138874e6d94ed.pdf>

XIII Encontro ABPMC 2004 – Program August 13th, 2004: <https://abmpc.org.br/arquivos/publicações/1405113958507948072.pdf>

XIII Encontro ABPMC 2004 – Program August 14th, 2004: <https://abmpc.org.br/arquivos/publicações/1405114041744e7241b.pdf>

XIII Encontro ABPMC 2004 – Program August 15th, 2004: <https://abmpc.org.br/arquivos/publicações/140511411421ed802a.pdf>

biological sciences (cf. Andery & Sérgio, 2003; Borba, 2019; Glenn, 1989; Malott & Glenn, 2019; Sandaker, 2006; Tourinho & Vichi, 2012; Vasconcelos, 2013; Vasconcelos & Lemos, 2018; Vasconcelos et al., 2018; Vasconcelos et al., submitted).

### Background of Think Tank on Cultural Studies

TTCSs aim to continue developing the explanatory model of cultural selection, the cultural level selection process proposed by Glenn (cf. 1986, 1988, 2004; Glenn et al., 2016). Basic, applied, and theoretical research are presented, including interfaces with anthropology, sociology, economics, evolutionary psychology and biology. In all the TTCSs, participants prepared for the discussion by reading relevant literature. In addition, for some TTCS, participants were organized in working groups (WGs) based on their interest on specific topics. The discussions of the TTCS lead to presentations in national and international scientific conferences, and to publications in peer-reviewed journals. Historically, the TTCS have constituted a relatively small group to facilitate reflection and extended discussion. From 2005 to 2021, from TTCS1-TTCS7, participants have learned, and mutually enriched each other, and have advanced the conceptual understanding for forthcoming Think Tanks.

TTCS1 was organized by João Claudio Todorov and Maria Malott (Todorov & Malott, 2005) with the aim of discussing the concept of metacontingency. There were three topics of discussions: 1) How should Behavior Analysis interact effectively with the social sciences? (Facilitated by Sigrid Glenn); 2) What are the avenues of effective action? (Facilitated by Marc Branch); and 3) How does one develop empirical studies of cultural change using the concept of metacontingency? (Facilitated by Mark Mattaini).

The coordinators invited former editors of the Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, Marc Branch and Jack Marr, and Deisy das Graças de Souza (Coordinator of National Institute of Science and Technology on Behavior, Cognition and Teaching, INCT-ECCE). In 2004, the TTCS1 was sponsored by The Associação Brasileira de Psicoterapia e Medicina Comportamental (ABPMC, ABA-Brazil) and the *Instituto Brasiliense de Análise do Comportamento* (IBAC) [Brasilia's Institute of Behavior Analysis], with the collaboration of the Catholic University of Goiás and the ABAI (cf. Malott & Glenn, 2006). Table 1 presents the TTCS1 researchers.

Table 1  
*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2004, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil*

TTCS1 (2004)	Institution
João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasília (UnB, Brazil)
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI)
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas (UNT, USA)
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo and Akershus University (HIOA, Norway)
Maria Amália P. A. Andery	Pontifical University of São Paulo (PUC-SP, Brazil)
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada-Reno (UNR, USA)
Mark Alavosius	University of Nevada-Reno
Mark Mattaini	Jane Adams College of Social Work (UIC, USA)
Alexander (Sandy) Hobbs	University of Paisley, Scotland (UWS, UK)
Jorge Mendes de Oliveira Castro	Universidade de Brasília
Jerome D. Ulman	Ball State University, Illinois (USA)

In 2007, TTCS2 included two working groups. The groups discussed basic and applied research at the cultural selection level, using the concepts of metacontingency and macrocontingency. Ingunn Sandaker coordinated TTCS2 with the support of the Oslo Metropolitan University (then Oslo and Akershus University College). Arne Terje Gulbrandsen, Per Holth, Britt Andersen and Gunnar Ree were the guest participants. Table 2 presents the TTCS2 researchers.

Table 2  
*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2007, Oslo, Norway*

TTCS2 (2007)	Institution
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo and Akershus University
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International

João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasília
Maria Amália P. A. Andery	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada
Mark Alavosius	University of Nevada
Mark Mattaini	Jane Adams College of Social Work
Emmanuel Zagury Tourinho	Federal University of Pará (UFPA, Brazil)
Anthony Biglan	Oregon Research Institute (ORI, USA)

After the production of empirical and theoretical research with a large number of graduate students, João Claudio Todorov proposed to 11 senior researchers of the TTCS3 a conceptual discussion of the terms metacontingency, macrobehavior, macrocontingency, culturo-behavioral lineage and cultural cusp (Todorov et al., 2015). Thus, in 2015, under the coordination of João Claudio Todorov and Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti, the TTCS3 was supported<sup>3</sup> by the University of São Paulo, CAPES, FAPESP, SBP and ABPMC. A simultaneous regional 2-day event *Social Contingencies: Individual, Culture, and Society* was scheduled. The event comprised 15 presentations and a panel session. On the third day, TTCS3 members closed the event with considerations on the development of cultural studies from a Behavior Analysis perspective. The TTCS3 guest participants, among others, were Júlio C. C. de Rose (Federal University of São Carlos; Research Director of the INCT-ECCE; CLICS Research Group<sup>4</sup>) and Molli M. Luke representing Mark Mattaini. Table 3 shows the composition of that edition (Glenn et al., 2016).

Table 3

*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2015, São Paulo, Brazil*

TTCS3 (2015)	Institution
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International
João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasília
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo and Akershus University
Maria Amália P. A. Andery	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada
Emmanuel Zagury Tourinho	Federal University of Pará
Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti	University of São Paulo
Laércio Abreu Vasconcelos	University of Brasília

In 2016, the TTCS4, organized by Sigrid Glenn, was supported by the University of North Texas (UNT) and was held in Denton, TX, USA. The group was broadened to include some of the researchers trained in the last decades in different graduate courses in Behavior Analysis in Brazil. The objective was to discuss the research developed over approximately three decades of investigation of cultural selection processes from the perspective of Behavior Analysis with 18 researchers. Angelika Gena (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece) was the guest researcher. Table 4 lists the participants of TTCS4.

Table 4

*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2016, Denton, the United States of America*

TTCS4 (2016)	Institution
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International
João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasília
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo and Akershus University
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada

<sup>3</sup> Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel, Ministry of Education (CAPES); and São Paulo State Research Support Foundation; Brazilian Psychology Society (SBP).

<sup>4</sup> Research group CLICS on Culture, Language and Symbolic Behavior (CLICS) created in 2015 by Júlio C. C. de Rose (Human Behavior Studies Laboratory, UFSCar) and Wiliam Perez (Behavioral Sciences Paradigm Center – Centro Paradigma Ciências do Comportamento).

Mark Alavosius	University of Nevada
Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti	University of São Paulo
Laércia Abreu Vasconcelos	University of Brasília
Felipe Lustosa Leite	University of Fortaleza
Angelo A. S. Sampaio	Federal University of Vale do São Francisco (UNIVASF, Brazil)
Fábio Henrique Baia	University of Rio Verde (UniRV, Brazil)
Aécio Borba V. Neto	Federal University of Pará
Kalliu Couto	Oslo and Akershus University
Lucas Couto de Carvalho	Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar, Brazil)
Thomas Anatol R. Woelz	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Roberta Freitas Lemos	Ministry of Social Development (Brazil)
Marcelo Borges Henriques	Federal University of Goiás (UFG, Brazil)

In 2018, TTCS5 was organized by Sigrid Glenn and supported by UNT in Denton. The WGs developed studies in three areas: (1) Climate Change: Sustainability and resilience. The contributions of the behavioral economist Richard Thaler (Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2017); and analysis of leaderships creating new verbal relations between the current and future state of the organizations; (2) Selection Contingencies: cultural process; individual and cultural consequences; and conditional relations arranged by agency of control (cf. Couto & Sandaker, 2016); and (3) Common Pool Resources (CPR) with interfaces between Behavior Analysis and Ostrom's (1990) Institutional Economics (Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, 2009). Overuse of a common pool resource such as the Açaí fruit macrocontingencies; the National System of Conservation and Mãe Grande de Curuçá – Pará, Brazil; integrating institutional and culturo-behavior analyses to the management of CPR: In-Land Lakes in Michigan; and the behavioral systems approach and an example of adoption of a new technology in Brazilian agriculture. The TTCS5 WG presentations were discussed by 22 researchers. Traci M. Cihon, Daniele Ortu, Shahla A'lai and April Becker from UNT were guests. Table 5 lists the participants of TTCS5.

Table 5

*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2018, Denton, the United States of America*

TTCS5 (2018)	Institution
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International
João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasilia
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo Metropolitan University
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada
Mark Alavosius	University of Nevada
Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti	University of São Paulo
Laércia Abreu Vasconcelos	University of Brasilia
Felipe Lustosa Leite	University of Fortaleza
Angelo A. S. Sampaio	Federal University of the Vale do São Francisco
Fábio Henrique Baia	University of Rio Verde
Aécio Borba V. Neto	Federal University of Pará
Kalliu Couto	Oslo Metropolitan University
Lucas Couto de Carvalho	Federal University of São Carlos
Thomas Anatol R. Woelz	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Roberta Freitas Lemos	Ministry of Social Development
Marcelo Borges Henriques	Federal University of Goiás
Camila Muchon de Melo	State University of Londrina (UEL, Brazil)

In 2019 the TTCS6 was organized by João Claudio Todorov and Laércia Abreu Vasconcelos. The Brazilian national event *Psicologia Comportamental e Políticas Públicas*<sup>5</sup> [Behavioral Psychology and Public Policy] was held simultaneously with TTCS6 and was supported<sup>6</sup> by CNPq, FAPDF and FINATEC. The history and future of TTCS were initially discussed by João Claudio and Sigrid Glenn. Next, the WGs presented their thematic productions: (1) The unit of cultural selection; selection of culture, and selection of sociocultural environments (cultural selection in a higher level) (e.g., Baia & Sampaio, 2019; Sandaker, Couto & Carvalho, 2019); (2) Sustainability and Cultural Analyses in Disaster Contexts (e.g., (cf. Hayashi, Woelz & Melo, 2019; Sánchez et al., 2019). Research designs, measures, follow-up, community demands, and ethical-moral aspects of the cultural planning were analyzed (Carrara et al., 2013; Haydu et al., 2019); and (3) Common Pool resources and cultural studies (Malott & Glenn, 2019). The conceptual relationships between the origin of TTCS, Skinner (1981), and Organizational Behavior Management; evolution of non-organism species; and culturo-behavioral lineages that occur rather than evolve, were reviewed. (cf. Borba, 2019; Freitas-Lemos, Favacho, Favilha & Baia, 2019; Malott & Glenn, 2019; Vasconcelos, Nogueira, Vieira & Henz, submitted). TTCS6 considered 53 thematic units with research questions in basic (N=19), applied (N=9), conceptual (N=11), interpretative (N=7), translational (N=2) and dissemination (N=5) areas.

The National Congress of Behavioral Psychology and Public Policy had 23 research presentations in six sessions coordinated by leading researchers in their fields. A total of 28 researchers participated in the event, including six international guests. Public and private managers of high impact in Brazil attended the congress opening session, representing public policy analysis from the Federal Audit Court, Governmental Macro-Evaluation; the President of the *Escola Nacional de Administração Pública* (ENAP) [*National School of Public Administration*] and the President of the *Conselho Empresarial Brasileiro para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável* (CEBDS) [*Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development*]. In the TTCS6, 22 researchers discussed the WGs productions, with Traci M. Cihon, Christian Vichi (UNIVASF) and Dyego Costa (State University of Piauí) as guests. Table 6 shows the participants of TTCS6.

Table 6  
*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2019, Brasília, Brazil*

TTCS6 (2019)	Institution
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International
João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasilia
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo Metropolitan University
Maria Amália P. A. Andery	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada
Mark Alavosius	University of Nevada
Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti	University of São Paulo
Laércia Abreu Vasconcelos	University of Brasilia
Felipe Lustosa Leite	University of Fortaleza
Angelo A. S. Sampaio	Federal University of the Vale do São Francisco
Fábio Henrique Baia	University of Rio Verde
Aécio Borba V. Neto	Federal University of Pará
Kalliu Couto	Oslo Metropolitan University
Lucas Couto de Carvalho	Federal University of São Carlos
Thomas Anatol R. Woelz	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Roberta Freitas Lemos	Ministry of Social Development
Camila Muchon de Melo	State University of Londrina
Verônica Bender Haydu	State University of Londrina

<sup>5</sup> National Congress Behavioral Psychology and Public Policy, Think Tank 6 took place at the University of Brasilia on March 28, 29 and 30, 2019. <http://www.politicaspublicas-ac.com.br/index.php/lateral-1>. On that event web page, one can access a brief account of the history of the Think Tank, the congress program, brief resume of the participants, Event Organizing Committee and Technical-Scientific Committee.

<sup>6</sup> Federal District Research Support Foundation (FAPDF); Foundation of Scientific and Technological Enterprises, University of Brasilia (FINATEC).

In 2021, TTCS7 was organized by Maria Malott and Sigrid Glenn and conducted online June 17 and 18. The event was attended by 27 researchers. Guests included Traci Cihon (UNT), Kyosuke Kazaoka (UNT), Kiam Assemi and Donna West (UNR). Table 7 lists the participants of the TTCS7.

The TTCS7 WGs worked over the course of 2020 and 2021. Members were organized in four study groups. Group 1, led by Sigrid Glenn and Maria Malott focused on cultural lineages. The group identified various type of phenomena (in increasing complexity) the affect lineages of IBCs, and explored how culturo-behavior lineages affect cultural change. Additional members of Group 1 were Camila Muchon, Laércia Vasconcelos, Fábio Baia, and Marcelo Benvenuti.

Group 2 led by Ramona Houmanfar focused on the role of verbal behavior in culturo-behavior lineages. It also discussed how operant repertoires with respect to verbal behavior may facilitate or not the adherence to group and cultural practices. Other participants of Group 2 were Mark Alavosius, Angelo Sampaio, and Verônica Haydu.

Group 3, led by Maria Amália Andery, Emmanuel Tourinho focused on relations between controlling agencies and group complexity. The discussion included how complexity is built; how controlling agencies condition complexity; and how conditional relationships shape those processes. Other participants of Group 3 were Felipe Leite, Roberta Lemos, Aécio Borba, and João Claudio Todorov.

Table 7  
*Think Tank on Cultural Studies in 2021, online*

TTCS7 (2021)	Institution
Sigrid S. Glenn	University of North Texas
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis
João Claudio Todorov	University of Brasilia
Ingunn Sandaker	Oslo Metropolitan University
Maria Amália P. A. Andery	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Ramona A. Houmanfar	University of Nevada
Mark Alavosius	University of Nevada
Emmanuel Zagury Tourinho	Federal University of Pará
Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti	University of São Paulo
Laércia Abreu Vasconcelos	University of Brasilia
Angelo A. S. Sampaio	Federal University of the Vale do São Francisco
Fábio Henrique Baia	University of Rio Verde
Aécio Borba V. Neto	Federal University of Pará
Kalliu Couto	Oslo Metropolitan University
Lucas Couto de Carvalho	Federal University of São Carlos
Thomas Anatol R. Woelz	Pontifical University of São Paulo
Roberta Freitas Lemos	Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC
Camila Muchon de Melo	State University of Londrina
Verônica Bender Haydu	State University of Londrina
Christian Vichi	Federal University of the Vale do São Francisco
April Becker	University of North Texas
Rita Olla	University of Nevada
Jonathan Krispin	Valdosta State University (VSU, USA)

Group 4, led by Ingunn Sandaker and Jonathan Krispin, focused on self-organizing dynamics and structure in metacontingencies. They also discussed how structure and processes work within self-organizing systems. Other participants of Group 4 were Kalliu Couto, April Becker, and Christian Vichi.

All members attending had the opportunity to discuss several concepts: (1) “cumulative cultural evolution” (Tomaselo, 1999) of the evolutionary biology was reviewed in relation to the principles of Behavior Analysis and behavioral processes analyzed in dynamic interaction with phylogenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural levels of selection. (2) “cultural milieu” (cf. Sánchez, Houmanfar & Alavosius, 2019) with circumstances that influence the IBCs (e.g., stimuli such as objects, people, policies, rules, communication network that influence metacontingencies). And analyses of opinions and preferences using the Q Method. (3) The unit of analysis at the cultural selection level; culturo-behavioral hypercycles in metacontingency; analyses of positive feedbacks (ratio schedules and punishment) and negative

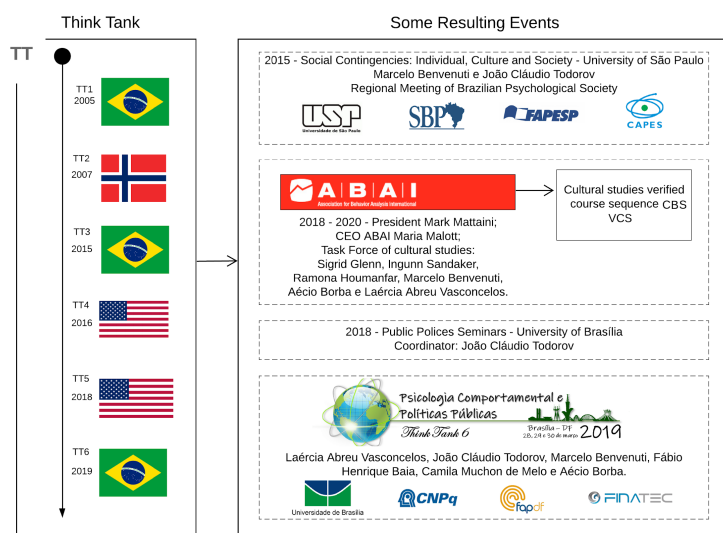


feedbacks (DRL schedules), and the emergence of self-organization. And (4) The complexity of cultural phenomena, an analysis of relative complexity when considering target variables or conditional relations; specialization and variability within the IBCs; sources of complexity external to IBCs such as conflict between individual and cultural consequences; competing contingencies (Tourinho & Vichi, 2012); competing metacontingencies (Almeida, Valderlon & Tourinho, 2020); aggregate products (conservative or transformative metacontingencies) (Todorov, 2013), and cultural selection schemes (Todorov, 2012).

### Impact of Think Tank on Cultural Studies

Evidence of the impact of TTCS may be observed in the number of publications and student orientations in graduate courses (Albuquerque, Houmanfar, Freitas-Lemos & Vasconcelos, 2021; Luke, Roose, Rakos & Mattaini, 2017). In 2012, a special edition of the *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología* was devoted to research on cultural phenomena, which was also published in *Suma Psicológica* in 2013. Figure 1 shows the impact of TTCS1 (2005) to TTCS6 (2019) on scientific events and strategies for training behavior analysts to the development of research and interventions in the area of cultural phenomena.

Figure 1  
Events driven by the history of TTCSs editions



Note: Presentation at the end of the National Congress of Behavioral Psychology and Public Policy and Think Tank on Cultural Studies TTCS6 in 2019 at University of Brasília.

Maria Malott called a meeting with participants working in universities during TTCS6 in 2018 in North Texas. The objective of the meeting was to explore the interest of faculty of those programs in creating a special curriculum in universities to train students in cultural studies (cf. Malott, 2004). Based on the enthusiastic responses, Mark Mattaini and Maria Malott presented to the ABAI Executive Council a proposal to create an ABAI task force to explore a specialty in cultural studies. The task force was subsequently appointed and its efforts resulted in the ABAI’s Culturo-Behavior Science Verified Course Sequence (CBS VCS). Table 8 presents the Task Force composition whose work began in Chicago on September 5-6, 2019. Seven universities offer now the CBS VCS.

Table 8  
Cultural Studies Task Force ABAI 2018-2019


Researchers	Institutions
Mark A. Mattaini	Association for Behavior Analysis International – ABAI President
Maria E. Malott	Association for Behavior Analysis International – ABAI CEO

Sigrid S. Glenn  
 Ramona A. Houmanfar  
 Ingunn Sandaker  
 Traci M. Cihon  
 Marcelo F. L. Benvenuti  
 Laércia Abreu Vasconcelos  
 Aécio Borba V. Neto

University of North Texas  
 University of Nevada  
 Oslo Metropolitan University  
 University of North Texas  
 University of São Paulo  
 University of Brasília  
 Federal University of Pará

In 2020, the CBS VCS ABAI system was presented at the 46th ABAI Annual Meeting, held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as shown in Figure 2. It was the largest online meeting of behavior analysts held from May 23-25. The pre-convention featured 90 workshops on May 21 and 22. The convention consisted of over 300 oral presentations in 16 Program areas, including over 70 presentations by distinguished guests, 13 concurrent virtual rooms, and three poster sessions with over 650 presentations (ABAI, 2020).

Figure 2  
 Culturo-Behavior Science Verified Course Sequence ABAI




## Verified Course Sequence in Culturo-Behavior Science


Students who complete the CBS VCS coursework and experiential learning are eligible to apply for a certificate of coursework completion from ABAI highlighting this area of study and application of behavior science.

**What types of activities can students complete during experiential learning?**  
 Basic research in a laboratory, assessment and interventions in various settings, literature reviews and discussions, and leadership training.

**Complete experiential learning in the following areas:**  
 Agriculture, education, health/ social care, management, energy industry, government, corporations, not-for-profits, and more!

**Start your VCS CBS experience at any of these six institutions!**  
 Oslo Metropolitan University (Norway)  
 Universidade de Brasília (Brazil)  
 Universidade Federal Do Pará (Brazil)  
 University of North Texas (USA)  
 University of Nevada, Reno (USA)  
 Universidade de São Paulo (Brazil)





**Content Areas - First Edition**

1. Course: Basic Principles of Behavior Analysis
2. Course: Behavioral Systems Analysis
3. Experiential Learning (300 hours) in Applying Cultural Analysis on Multiple Levels of Organized Complexity
  - I. The Detection of Micro-Cultural Discrepancies of Saying and Doing
  - II. Subcultures and Sub-Optimization
  - III. Cultural Architecture and Systems Engineering
  - IV. Cross Sector and Multidisciplinary Approaches to Complex Societal Challenges

**Website**  
[abainternational.org/VCS](http://abainternational.org/VCS)

ABAI Verified Course Sequences  
 550 W. Centre Avenue  
 Portage, MI 49024

**Email**  
[VCS@abainternational.org](mailto:VCS@abainternational.org)

In October 2020, ABAI held its first international conference focused on cultural phenomena - Culturo-Behavior Science for a Better World, co-chaired by Mark Mattaini and Maria Malott, when the CBS VCS was again presented.

Figure 3  
 Culturo-behavior science for a better world, ABAI Conference



The conference was announced as follows:

*“Why are we not acting to save the world? Skinner asked this question in a speech to the American Psychological Association in 1982 (see also Skinner, 1987). Almost 40 years later, we are revisiting it at a time*

*when we face extraordinary threats to our planet and its inhabitants ensuing from global warming; when populations around the world suffer from various systemic ills, such as extreme economic inequality; when public health systems have failed a vast majority; when many people lack access to clean drinking water or basic medical care; and when significant numbers of people die from preventable causes, including smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, and overdoses of illicit and prescription drugs” (ABAI, 2020).*

In April 2021, Mark Alavosius brought together members of the ABAI Cultural Studies Task Force and other researchers such as Richard F. Rakos to discuss the *experiential learning component of the CBS VCS as it applies to cultural analysis at multiple levels of organized complexity*. At the 47th ABAI Annual Convention in May, 2021, a panel discussion chaired by Alavosius was dedicated to this topic.

In 2020, with the participation of João Claudio Todorov, the Graduate Program in Behavioral Sciences at the University of Brasilia offered the first course of CBS VCS ABAI - *Behavioral Systems Analysis*, and in 2021, the second course related to experiential learning – *Topics in Behavior Analysis: Cultural Intervention Planning 1*. The course Behavioral Systems Analysis also featured Maria Malott, Mark Mattaini and Ingunn Sandaker, and the second course *Topics in Behavior Analysis: Cultural Intervention Planning 1* with Ramona Houmanfar, Ingunn Sandaker and Mark Alavosius.

The significant expansion of Brazilian researchers active in the cultural selection field of study and the interactions among international researchers from the Think Tank on Cultural Studies have contributed to advance knowledge production, starting with high interaction between basic, applied and theoretical research, which boosts the development of science and technology. The trend of increasing cross-citations, not just self-citation in each category of research has been identified in three national journals (Strapasson, Magalhães & Custódio, 2013).

We conclude this essay with thoughts offered by the scientist João Claudio Todorov. In the last Think Tank, TTCS7, he cautioned the group to remain committed to our roots in behavior science as we explore relationships with other disciplines. He envisioned a unified Behavior Analysis, a utopia to be sought by future generations, with strengthened relations between basic and applied researchers. Basic research is crucial with bidirectional exchanges between basic research-theory-applied research (Todorov, 2016, 2020).

With this view, João Claudio was able to encourage and support the efforts of several generations of researchers in Brazil and abroad towards the study of cultural selection under the conceptual framework of Behavior Analysis. We are all very thankful and proud of his distinguished contribution to the science of behavior, and of his commitment with education and science to build better societies.

### **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

### **Contribution of each author**

All the authors have equally contributed to complete the manuscript.

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 Invited paper

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