

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) [theme music]

Speaker 2: [00:10](#) Welcome to behavioral groups. My name is Kurt Nelson

... and I'm Tim Houlihan. In this episode of behavior grows, we want to recap some experiences that we had at the Uber Science Symposium and being in the behavioral sciences track from May, 3rd, 2019 out in San Francisco. So we were lucky and very privileged to be invited to this, this component. And we went because it was, uh, a one day of just behavioral science, you know, Nirvana, we got to hear a lot of great speakers and talk to a lot of people who are really interested in, in part of this community of behavioral science that we just so love. And so what were some of the highlights

Speaker 2: [00:51](#) for you, Tim? Some of the highlights for me were, uh, academic speakers. We got to hear from both academics and from practitioners, right? But the, the first one that, that really struck me was, uh, Melanie Brooks. Melanie was great. Yeah. So her, just to quickly recap what she was working on was a study to try to understand is it, is there a better way to innovate? And in a virtual world where there's a lot of video conferencing, is can innovation be successful?

Speaker 3: [01:21](#) Yeah. Can you, is innovation more likely to happen in that virtual face? Uh, virtual, uh, electronic world versus a face to face world? And she looked at it really interested me because he looked at, um, innovation being two components, looking at this element of idea generation, which is this divergent thinking component. And this idea of idea selection, idea of idea selection. Like I said, that's good. I like that. And that's, I'm more of a convergent component. And so the findings on that or actually interesting because on that divergent component, that idea generation and the brainstorming part, the brainstorming part, getting more ideas and better ideas, uh, actually face to face, which is kind of what you think, write various different things. However that made sense. Yeah. However, on that idea selection, the convergent thinking, convergent thinking, uh, her research is pointing to the fact that actually video component of that may be a better way of doing that. It's more focused. It allows the for a better idea selection based upon that criteria that they used in some of this research. So it was really cool. It really fast.

Speaker 2: [02:27](#) Yeah. And, and we actually got to talk to her and she had a couple of things to say.

- Speaker 4: [02:31](#) Yeah. So when we look at divergent thinking as a generative process of coming up with new ideas are coming up with new content and in general you want to be unfocused and broad and, and approach it from different perspectives. The conversation thinking is when you want to narrow in on one solution, come up with the best, um, outcome or best decision. And what we find is that technology affects these two processes differently. So, um, when you want to be diversions is better to be face to face interacting with people in a broad environment where you can draw upon different things and look around. But actually it turns out that communicating over video can actually help you for conversation thinking because it actually focuses you in on the task. You ended up being more focused in your decision making process and you make better students standard day.
- Speaker 3: [03:21](#) If there are any differences between men and women in this, in this case.
- Speaker 4: [03:25](#) And that's a great question. Um, we haven't found anything so far in our labs. They've been students and staff who do five minute things and then in our field study as they'd been almost primarily men. Um, but I do, we are looking now, we haven't done any analysis yet, but we're interested in, there might be an equalizing factor in technology where the role of gender is, um, is less prominent when you're communicating virtually then when you're face to face.
- Speaker 3: [03:59](#) So Kurt, who else did you listen to that really brought some great ideas to mind? I mean, there are tons, but Wendy de la Rosa, uh, again, second time I've heard her, we love her. Oh my, you know, from, from common sense labs and really looking at how do you get people who aren't necessarily financially, uh, who are a fan of financial risk to actually get them to start saving and how do you do this using behavioral science to really get there. And some of the work again that she was doing was great. So she commented that her group has done 80 random controlled tests. I mean, they are bringing behavioral science to the field in a really big way and absolutely. Just, just love that. Yeah. Uh, who else? Tim, what were some of the other highlights? I really enjoyed listening to Liz Dunne. Liz was great. She was absolutely terrific from the University of British Columbia talking about time, money, technology, and asking the simple question, why don't people talk to strangers?
- Speaker 3: [04:59](#) Right? And I mean, she's a happiness researcher. And so one of the things that she points out in all of the happiness research is that we are, are almost always more happy when we are in

social components and have conversations with different people. And yet we're in all of these situations where you're traveling on a, on a bus or a subway or you're in line waiting for somebody and we don't strike up conversations with strangers. It's, it's we, we typically don't do it. And so she did some really cool research that was looking at some of the reasons why. So it's, it's great stuff. It is really cool stuff. And, and the fact of the matter is, one of her research was the studies had red bracelets in green bracelets. This was kind of a ironic red meaning don't talk to me green meaning I'm willing to talk to anybody. Right? And so some really cool things about that. However, the Uber Science symposium and we joined, we had to put on a red bracelet to begin with. So I'm wondering if there was any priming going on after to be an ultimate, at least the ultimate irony. So that was very cool. After we listened to Liz, we actually talked to Elizabeth Kim from Spotify about some of her observations.

Speaker 4: [06:09](#) What do you think so far [inaudible] collection of be more years absolutely astounding. Getting practitioners and researchers together in the same space deeply into the theoretical aspects of [inaudible].

Speaker 3: [06:33](#) So Kurt, who else? Well, of course I love Charlotte Blank, former guests on this podcast of course of course, but she brought in some really cool research and again, great stuff at uh, can, can firms be loss averse and looking at research that, that they did that field research real like actual dollars, a lot, a lot, a lot of dollars that were being invested in this program with real car dealers, with real car dealers and looking at does a uh, incentive program that actually gives people the dealers money at the beginning of the month and they'd call back if you don't hit your goals, does that perform better than the normal money, which is be saying, okay, you get the month and if you hit your goals, we'll pay you. And contrary to what we would necessarily think and what the research might point to that, you know, the loss of versus more motivating, the research didn't necessarily point to that. So really cool work and they're even, what was interesting is all the statistics and the modeling and some of the, the really in depth research that's going on with that. Yeah, it was pretty terrific. After Charlotte's spoke, we actually got to talk to her and she had a couple of things to say.

Speaker 5: [07:46](#) So Charlotte, do you spoke today and how did you think it went? This was an incredible event. I had so much fun today and I love to see the incredible turnout and the rise of this sort of coming together of, uh, academics and practitioners. This is really what I'm all about. And I'd love to see this here.

- Speaker 3: [08:03](#) We also got to talk to Ingrid Paulson who is at rally health and she had some interesting observations.
- Speaker 6: [08:08](#) So Ingrid or you go to a lot of these conferences, you've been in behavioral science for a long time in the academic world and in and in as a practitioner. So tell me what, what do you think about this conference so far? Were there any things that really struck you that the Suta Hook? Yeah. Yeah.
- Speaker 7: [08:27](#) So I think it's, um, it's a great initiative [inaudible] organizing this event and bringing together people that use a lot of really different methods. I think that's been particularly what's stood out as in this conference that, um, normally we, we hear a lot in these conferences, the people use kind of randomized controlled trials and experiments, but I think what Uber has done in conferences that they've, they're bringing together people who use the broader range of methods and introducing some of those, um, and how they've launched. You apply that to two different problems.
- Speaker 6: [09:06](#) Yeah. Do, do you like the idea of hearing from practitioners as well?
- Speaker 7: [09:10](#) Yes, I think it's great to kind of see people have no kind of skills and expertise from academia, but uh, but also kind of taking it beyond the lab and looking at and kind of real world concepts and using that kind of really large amount of rich data that companies have access to.
- Speaker 2: [09:33](#) And then we were able to stop and get a really couple of interesting comments from Sharon Orisey and Scott Drummd from next step. Okay.
- Speaker 6: [09:41](#) Okay. And tell me a, you show up at these behavioral science conferences before we've met before. So what do you think so far? We're at lunch.
- Speaker 7: [09:49](#) Oh yeah, it's great. I mean, it's always really interesting to see people's stocks and, you know, learn from folks. Uh, I think, uh, it's particularly interesting how just kind of, I feel like two different sets of presenters. There's folks that are like very much applied in the real world and the applications of behavioral science in the real world. And then obviously the, you know, Eh, academically rigorous presentations. And so it's a, I think you have a preference. Well, we're apply behavioral scientists, so we apply it in, you know, at business. So naturally we're always looking at things with that angle. And even if it's

the academic research is for trying to figure out how it can be applied to solving our clients' challenges. So that's perfect. Yeah.

Speaker 6: [10:36](#) So you're new to the industry when you believe in behavioral sciences and the application of behavioral sciences. So I was introduced to behavioral science about six weeks ago and so every day is a new awakening. And I was fortunate enough to join up with next step because next step is combining behavioral science and design in a completely new way. We call it the science of design. And what's been fascinating to me is that as I began to learn more about what's happening in the field, a lot of it is in academia. And in fact the vast majority of the work that's being done, it's great work, but it's not yet in the commercial sector for the most part, large companies like Uber and some of the social media companies have behavioral scientists on staff. But I think more of an exception than the rule. And what I think is, you had asked me earlier, um, what are the things that are going to help to make this shift between the academic work that's being done and more commercial applications.

Speaker 6: [11:31](#) And the thing that's been, I think really apparent to me is that digital experience, user journeys, customer experience is a place where not only is there an obvious application of behavioral science, but it's easy for people to understand what it can do in those applications. And so I think once people start to see in businesses and France start to see the benefits, the behavioral science principles and how they can affect outcomes in those applications, we're going to see a lot more traction in the industry if you, so we're going to realize the benefits. So what do you think about a symposium like this? Well, it's interesting because you know, you have, you have on the one hand like really deep tricky data that people are trying to unpack for you in a 20 minute presentation. And my head just started spinning because there's so many ways that you can dive into it. You need probably three hours for some of these discussions. And then on the other hand you have some folks who are obviously more representative of kind of commercial applications in a single case study and they're taking really one small piece of what behavioral science can do. And they're illustrating it pretty nicely and showing you're really exciting outcomes. So that gets me very excited about the potential. Sharon, any, any other comments about that?

Speaker 7: [12:44](#) Yeah, I mean it's, it's really interesting because when you think about it, we are at a behavioral science conference and yet we're defaulting back to what we say we know doesn't work,

which is knowledge doesn't drive behavior yet. We continue to give knowledge. And so is there a way that we can really rethink the way we do conferences in a different format, et cetera. So that it really allows for much better way to actually interact with the thought leaders and the folks that are, um, you know, doing this research or do these findings in a way that can be much more applicable to how we can leverage the knowledge that they've gathered and really bring it to industry. So I think it would be really interesting if we fundamentally rethought how we can do, uh, you know, conferences. So everybody comes out getting a lot more from it.

Speaker 3:

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Okay. So Kurt, what else? So I liked, uh, Hal Hershfield from Ucla. Oh yeah. He had this element of bringing the self into the choice architecture that we're working with and looking at your future self and how that drives your behaviors today. And how can we make the future-self more relevant and again, just really great research. Um, that has some really relevant components, right? We are better at making long-term decisions that are positive for us. If we can visualize our future self being it more readily vivid and apparent. My favorite quote from Howe's comment from his presentation was it's rational to treat our future-self worse than we treat our current stuff is, oh man, that was just mind blown. This idea in mind blowing. You know, we have this idea that we have this oneself throughout our life, but in reality we don't, we have a past self, we have a current self and we have a future self and they're actually all very different selves in the way that we're looking and think about things. So this element of, of yeah, if I'm going to maximize my myself wellbeing, you know, there's component of my future. My future self isn't the same person as I am right now. So I can discount them. They're not as important. And the more that we can make that future self be relevant to who we are, like facial aging components and different things in pictures and various different ways of thinking about ourselves in the future. Uh, you know, again really impactful on actual real world decisions that are making an impact

Speaker 2:

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done people's lives. And he had a couple of tips because someone asked, well what do you do in your life to, to actually you know, improve on this. And I thought these tips were absolutely great. First was create more habits. Yes. Like just create an environment where we do things so that we are acting in our best self-interest for our future self. Just to create those habits. And the second thing was to use our future self to push guilt on her car itself. I just loved that. Oh it's like it's okay to use our future self to push guilt back on our, on our

- Speaker 3: [15:49](#) current cell phone at least every now and then. Young Kiddo, you know, old self. You weren't good enough to be in now. All right.
- Speaker 2: [15:59](#) We also got to speak to Joseph [inaudible] from UCLA. He's doing his PhD and as a student he had some really interesting observations. Terrific. So, uh, what did you think, how is the day for you? Uh, it was fantastic. Yeah, the um, the kind of scene research at the intersection of practice and theory was really, really cool. Yeah. Was there any one particular or two particular insights that really stood out for you? How else seen, um, in the data of what's that a machine can predict someone's personality by their facial features. It's pretty interesting. That is pretty interesting. Excellent. Anything else? Um, no, it was just, it was just great to see the theories that we're learning about in the classroom applied in real world settings that the real world impact. So that is terrific. Okay. Thank you.
- Speaker 3: [16:46](#) So I have to just comment because one of my favorite conversations was there was an interview with Brad Voytech from the University of California, San Diego, who is one of, I mean literally from a 20 minute conversation I could tell that he was one of the smartest people I've ever heard ever. Ever. Yeah. I mean he's a neuroscientist. He has a lab at UC in San Diego and they're doing all this research of where they're applying data science principles. Oh. So not only does he lead the co, the neuroscience lab, but he also teaches data science to the students there. So he's teaching in a whole separate discipline. And by the way, he used to work at Uber, uh, as a data scientist bringing in when they first started off and, and doing all this stuff and Gad, he is just brilliant and I hate him. Wow.
- Speaker 3: [17:37](#) I hate in that jealous way. My God, this guy is too perfect and he is so bright and so intelligent and he just blew me away. He's a nice person. God dammit. Why do you have to be a nice person too? Yeah, it was really cool. But the big takeaway from his conversation for me was the future is data science and the integration of behavioral science with data science. We have to be looking at heterogeneous data sources. We have to be combining them and bringing them together. Just like he did when he started talking about, wow, there's a big surge for demand after Obra concert. Right? And so looking at Uber at the early days right there, they're trying to get the algorithms right to get their, their drivers in the right place. So people aren't waiting too long and they're looking at all right, all of a sudden we get this huge surge up on the north side of San Francisco.

Speaker 3: [18:30](#) Well, Beyoncé concert just got let out. And then they're looking at, oh, it's starting to rain. We're getting a lot more things. And so, and then they're looking at, oh, the dodger game, you know, is going so badly, let's be leaving in the fifth inning. And so he's taken the, they, they started taking all these different data sources, real time scores from the dodger game, right? Looking at real time weather data, real time weather data, looking at concert schedules, various different things. And, and combining all of that in order to make this demand model so that they can get drivers, you know, so people aren't waiting 10, 15 minutes to get a ride home. And that was fascinating. And now he's applying that same principle into, you know, this work that they're doing on cognitive neuroscience and looking at, um, some of the differences of how people process information.

Speaker 3: [19:19](#) And he's not even doing any actual lab work on this. He's using data science to mine and scrape all this data from people that are, have already done the stuff and looking at, cause the data's already there, can combine this with this and this and does that give us a better insight into neural oscillation, you know, and various different pieces. And I'm like, God dammit hates you. You are just so bright and amazing. And um, actually I, I don't hate him. I'm just very jealous of him then I would love to spend some time in learning from him and talking with him too. So with that, just a big thanks to Candice Hogan for inviting us to the Uber Symposium. We loved being there and it completely, you know, put brand new juice in our systems. It was just fabulous. Yes. And so if you enjoyed this episode, please let us know. Uh, always refer a friend if you think that this will be something that they'd be interested in. Also, just leave us a review if you like, and, uh, at your favorite podcasting place, you know, and write something nice or not nice. We'll look and we'll read it both ways, both, but we always like nice. Better. So with that, thank you for listening.

Speaker 1: [20:32](#) [theme music].