Functional Assessment of Behavior
EDS 240
Introduction to, & Overview of, Assessment (Quiz)
Defining the Behavior
Reviewing Student Records

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Fieldwork

Everyone should have found an FBA setting by today.

Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

- Indirect Assessment
  - Ask about behavior
- Direct/Descriptive Assessment
  - Observing behavior
- Functional or Experimental Analysis
  - Testing relationships between interventions and behaviors

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### Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

#### Indirect Assessment (Ask)
- Quick and easy, **but data sources can be subjective.**
  - Interviews are based upon retrospective recall.
  - Triangulating a number of different data sources minimized these disadvantages.
- Goal is to identify which of the many antecedent and consequence events in the environment are linked to behavior.
  - To identify how the environment (not the individual) should be changed to better ensure student success (adaptive behavior).

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#### Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

#### Indirect Assessment (Ask)
- **Areas of Inquiry**
  - What are the problem behaviors? (B)
  - What events or physical conditions occurring well before the behavior appear to predict its occurrence? (A, or EO)
  - What events/situations occurring just before the behavior appear to predict its occurrence/nonoccurrence? (A, or SI)
  - What consequences appear to maintain the behavior? (C)
  - What adaptive/appropriate behaviors might produce the same consequences as the problem behavior? (Replacement Behavior)
  - What is the behavior intervention history and what does it tell us about the problem behavior?

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#### Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

#### Direct/Descriptive Assessment (Observe)
- **Advantage:** Should improve accuracy of data
- **Disadvantage:** Requires significant professional time and resources (requires the observer to be present when the behavior occurs in order to observe/record the antecedents and consequences).
- Therefore, it is important to know the times of day when the behavior is most likely to occur so that observations can be planned at those times.
- Use of a scatter plot is one way of determining when to observe.

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Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

- Direct/Descriptive Assessment (Observe)
  - Scatter plot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
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Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

- Scatter plot sample (Target: Hitting others)

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-9am</td>
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<td>9-10am</td>
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Count one every time the student strikes someone else. Each strike counts as one.

Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

- Direct/Descriptive Assessment (Observe)
  - Often done by “familiar” observers.
  - Must not interfere with normal daily events.
  - Allows for discovery of behavioral patterns.
    - What problems occur at the same time?
    - Where, when, with whom are the problems most likely to occur?
    - What consequences appear to be maintaining the behavior?
Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

- Functional or Experimental Analysis (Test)
  - Experimental manipulation of antecedents and/or consequences to demonstration a functional relationship between one or more of the antecedents and consequences and the occurrence of the challenging behavior.
  - Three steps:
    1. Objective measurement of the challenging behavior.
    2. Demonstration of a change in the level of the challenging behavior following the manipulation of variables.
    3. Replication.

Conducting the Functional Assessment:
Three general approaches

- Functional or Experimental Analysis (Test)
  - The most precise, rigorous, and controlled functional assessment method.
  - Expensive and time consuming.
    - Should be employed only when it is truly needed.

Preparing for the Functional Assessment

- Identify who will participate in the assessment.
  - Teachers
  - Teacher aides
  - Parents
  - Counselors
  - Principals
  - Language Specialists
  - Physicians
  - Occupational Therapists
  - An IEP team

Determined by the needs of the student and the behavior!!!
Conducting the Functional Assessment

1. Identify and define the target (problem) and replacement (adaptive alternative) behaviors.
   - Observable and Measurable
     - Countable with a clear beginning and end

2. Review student records.
   - Identify relevant background information

3. Select and administer behavior rating scales.
   - A quick and inexpensive way to begin to understand the caregivers’ view of the problem behavior

Conducting the Functional Assessment

   - Typical Functional assessment interview questions.
     - Who is present when the problem occurs?
     - What is happening just before the problem behavior occurs (Sb), and what happens immediately after the problem behavior (Sa)?
     - What influences expression of the behavior (EO)?
       - Physiological
       - Psychological
       - Environmental
       - Curricular and Instructional
     - When does the problem behavior occur?
     - Where does the problem behavior take place?

Conducting the Functional Assessment

5. Conduct systematic behavioral observations.
   - Should not interfere with classroom functioning or normal daily events.
   - Should strive to be objective not subjective (what you see not what the behavior means).
   - 2-5 days worth of observations is typically necessary to identify patterns.
   - The more data the more accurate the picture of the behavior.

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Conducting the Functional Assessment

5. Conduct systematic behavioral observations.
   - Types of data
     - Frequency counts
     - Interval data
     - Duration data
   - ABC forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
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Conducting the Functional Assessment

6. Analyze the data (look for relationships among establishing operations, antecedents or triggering events, target behaviors, behavioral consequences).

7. Formulate a hypothesis regarding the function of the behavior (consequences that support it) and the environment.
   - Does the behavior get something (positive reinforcement)?
   - Does the behavior escape or avoid something (negative reinforcement)?

Conducting the Functional Assessment

8. Write the functional assessment of behavior report.

9. Develop the positive behavior intervention plan (BIP)
   - The result of the FBA
   - Intervention elements may include
     - Modifying the physical environment
     - Adjusting the curriculum or instructional strategy
     - Changing the antecedents or consequences for the student's behavior
     - Teaching a more adaptive/appropriate replacement behavior that serves the same function as the target behavior.

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The Functional Assessment “Process”

- Collect Data
- Continue or Modify
- ID function & Develop BIP
- Review Goals & Evaluate Progress

Interpreting Functional Assessment Data

Janice is a kindergartener who likes being the center of attention. During morning calendar time she often pokes other students. Her teacher manages this by placing Janice in her lap. As the school year progresses, the teacher has observed that Janice’s problem behaviors are increasing.

- What is your assessment of the behaviors function?
- What do you recommend?

Interpreting Functional Assessment Data

- Janice is being taught maladaptive/inappropriate ways to obtain attention.
- Possible interventions
  - Stop putting Janice on her teacher’s lap when she misbehaves
  - Give Janice lots of attention when she sits appropriately
  - Use carpet squares to clearly define seating areas
  - Teach Janice to ask for attention.
Quiz
- Take ten minutes to complete the quiz to be passed out by the instructor.
- Use the quiz as an opportunity to assess your understanding of the material.
- Quiz results will be reviewed at the start of our next class meeting.

Writing Behavioral Definitions
- Consider each of the inadequate descriptions of possible target behaviors on the worksheet found in the course reader.
- Use your imagination to consider exactly what behaviors a given student might be displaying.
- Write an appropriate behavioral definition.
- Keep in mind that such definitions define behavior in such a way that it is likely any two people will agree, with a high degree of reliability, that the behavior is occurring.

### Writing Behavioral Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inadequate Description</th>
<th>Sample Operational Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student engages in self-abusive behavior.</td>
<td>Student bangs forehead on floor with increasing speed and force until restrained by an adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is belligerent and aggressive.</td>
<td>Student becomes red in the face, clenches his fist, increases his vocal volume, and moves closer and closer to people, frequently culminating in hitting them repeatedly with little attempt to aim the strikes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is apathetic.</td>
<td>Student looks into space, initiates few comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Identifying the Target Behavior

Review Student Records

- Review of records for health and medical factors which may influence behaviors (e.g., medication levels, sleep cycles, health, diet).
- Review of the history of the behavior to include the effectiveness of previously used behavioral interventions.

Review of Records for the Functional Assessment of Behavior
Medical or Biological Conditions That Have Behavioral Features

- **Schizophrenia**: Severe panic reactions or behavior that is violently aggressive and destructive toward self and others may be exhibited by students with schizophrenia.
- **Klinefelter's Syndrome**: Aggressive behaviors are frequently exhibited by individuals with this syndrome.
- **Epilepsy**: Assaultive behaviors may be exhibited by individuals with temporal lobe epilepsy or tumors on the hypothalamus or temporal lobes.
- **Fragile X Syndrome**: Behavior dysfunction, including self-mutilation and violent outbursts, may be displayed by individuals with this syndrome (which is a genetic disorder that is a common cause of inherited mental retardation).

Adapted from *Positive Interventions for Serious Behavior Problems*, by D. Browning-Wright, et al. (1998). Published by the California Department of Education, Sacramento, CA.

Medical or Biological Conditions That Have Behavioral Features

- **Prader-Willi Syndrome**: A behavior disorder that includes a lack of emotional control, as well as self-injurious (typically skin picking) or aggressive behaviors may be seen among individuals with this syndrome.
- **Autism**: Aggressive, self-injurious behaviors, and unusual responses or sensitivity to sensory stimulation are frequently seen among individuals with this disorder.
- **Tourette Syndrome**: The involuntary, recurrent stereotyped motor movements and vocal behaviors, typical of Tourette syndrome, may be exacerbated under stress and result in self-injury and/or aggressive behavior.
- **Migraine Headaches**: In some individuals, these headaches may be immediately preceded by a change of personality, leading to an exacerbation of preexisting aggressive, self-assaultive, or self-stimulator behaviors.

Adapted from *Positive Interventions for Serious Behavior Problems*, by D. Browning-Wright, et al. (1998). Published by the California Department of Education, Sacramento, CA.

Next Week

- **Topics**
  - Behavior Rating Scales
  - Interviews
- **Assignments**
  - Read O'Neill et al., pp 9-34,
  - Read Browning-Wright & Cafferata, Sections 5 & 6
  - Read Cummings, Brock, & Puopolo
  - Fieldwork: Identify case study

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