

Practical Assessment and Treatment of Severe Problem Behavior

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Autism is characterized by:

Impairments in

language development

social interaction

and

Excessive repetitive behavior

With Autism, there is a higher likelihood of problem behavior

Meltdowns

Aggression

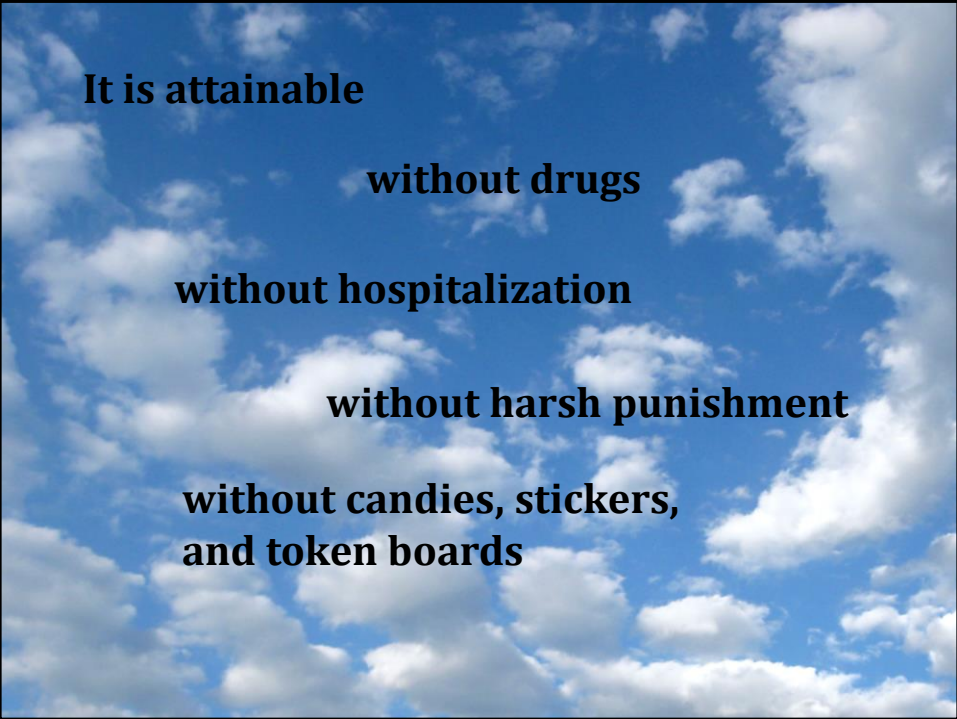
Self-injury

Chronic stereotypy

Sleep problems

References: Baghdadli, Pascal, Grisi, & Aussilloux, 2003; Horner et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2000; Murphy, Healy, & Leader, 2009; Thompson, 2009





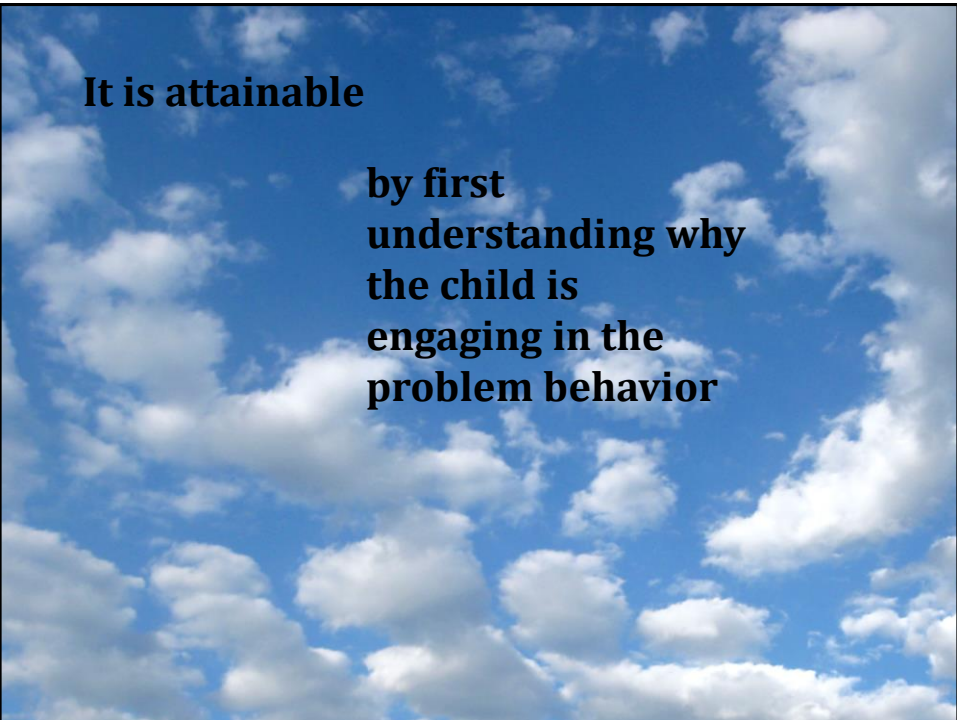
It is attainable

without drugs

without hospitalization

without harsh punishment

**without candies, stickers,
and token boards**



It is attainable

**by first
understanding why
the child is
engaging in the
problem behavior**



It is attainable

**when children are
taught skills to
help them navigate
our complex social
world**



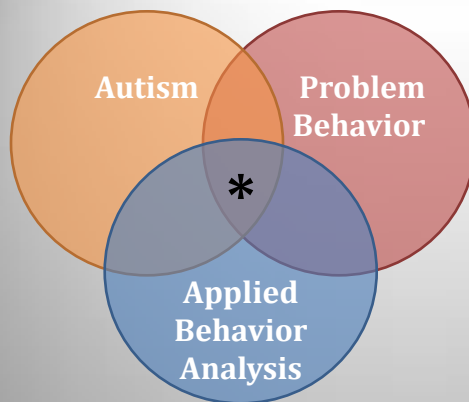
It is attainable

**while showing
complete respect for
their preferences**

**without altering
their rich and
unique personalities**

It is attainable

**with proper
assessment and
treatment by a BCBA**



***Main assumption**

**Severe problem behavior is
understood as learned behavior
influenced by its outcomes and context**

Assumptions Regarding Problem Behavior

Problem behavior serves a purpose for the child

Assumptions Regarding Problem Behavior

**Problem behavior is a primarily function of
particular environmental conditions
(not of their diagnoses)**

Assumptions Regarding Problem Behavior

**There are not aggressive kids per se
but contexts that support aggression**

Assumptions Regarding Problem Behavior

**Extraordinary behavior can develop and persist
under rather ordinary conditions**

Assumptions Regarding Problem Behavior

**If the problem behavior is persisting,
it is being reinforced**

Assumptions Regarding Problem Behavior

**The answers to how to help children
with their problem behaviors
can be found in understanding
the effect their problem behavior
is having on the environment**

**To determine the personally
relevant outcomes and context that
influence problem behavior**

**behavior analysts conduct
functional assessments**

What is a functional assessment?

(You can't hold it in your hand)

It is a *process*

**through which the variables influencing
problem behavior are identified**

Why conduct a functional assessment?

In order to identify

an **effective**

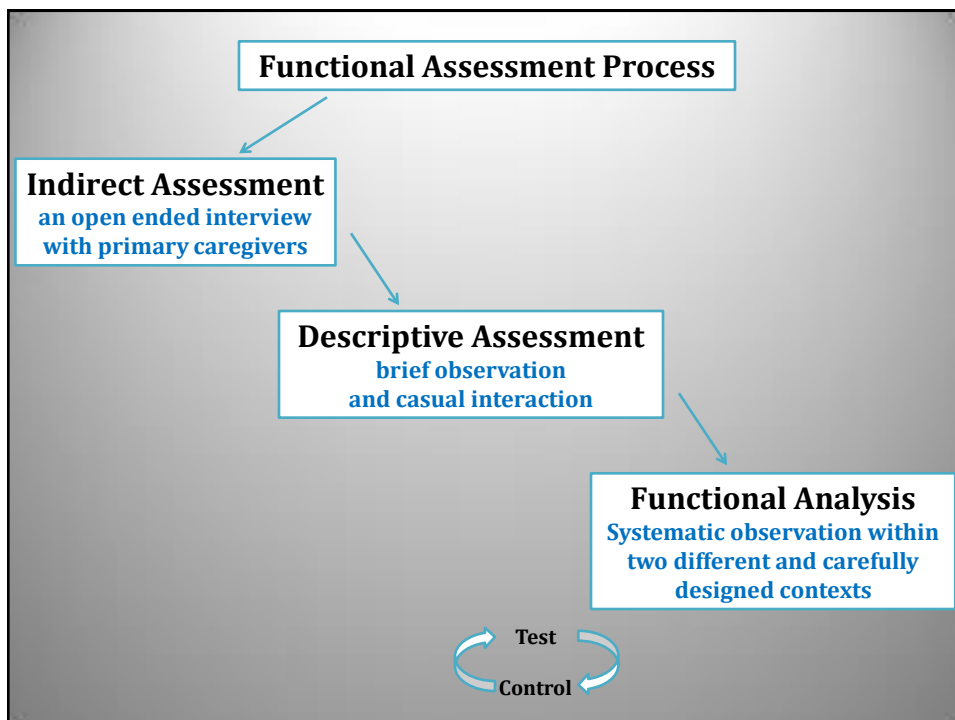
precise

personally relevant,

and

humane treatment

for problem behavior



**These are not experimental techniques
awaiting validation**

**435 studies with *functional analyses* and
981 distinct functional analyses
have been published between 1961 and 2012**

- Beavers, Iwata, & Lerman, 2013; Hanley, Iwata, & McCord, 2001

**The functional analysis is integral to the
success of the process**

**Larger reductions in problem behavior were evident
when a *functional analysis* was part of
the functional assessment process**

- Campbell, 2002; Kahng, Iwata, and Lewin, 2003

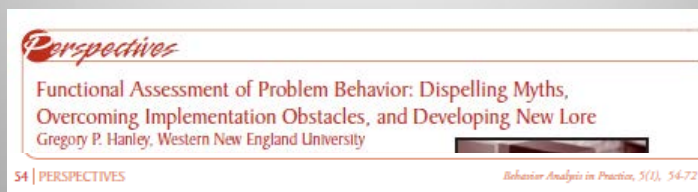
But,

most people,

**including most practicing behavior
analysts who work with children with
autism**

**have shied away from conducting
functional analyses**

**It has taken a lot of research, but there are no
longer obstacles to conducting functional
assessments including functional analyses**



Free pdf:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3546636/pdf>

Producing Meaningful Improvements in Problem Behavior of Children with Autism via Synthesized Analyses and Treatments

Hanley, Jin, Vanselow, & Hanratty (in press) *JABA*;

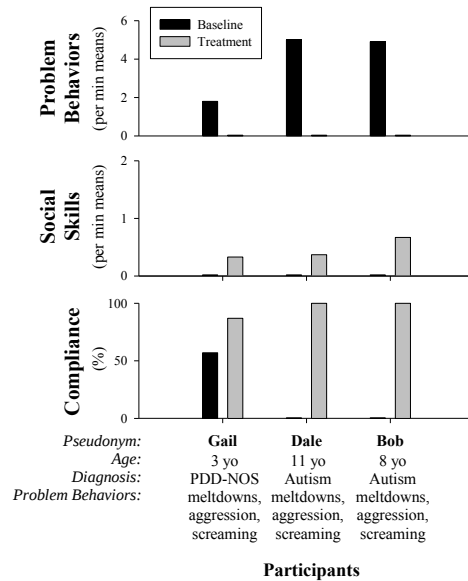
url to awkward video introducing the article:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbQxeQ5S3Vo>

Participants

<i>Pseudonym:</i>	Gail	Dale	Bob
<i>Age:</i>	3 yo	11 yo	8 yo
<i>Diagnosis:</i>	PDD-NOS	Autism	Autism
<i>Problem Behaviors:</i>	meltdowns, aggression, screaming	meltdowns, aggression, screaming	meltdowns, aggression, screaming

Outcomes (aggregated)



Functional Assessment and Treatment Model

Steps (abbreviated)	
1	Functional Assessment Process
2	Functional Communication Training
3	Delay and Denial Tolerance Training
4	Treatment Extension

Case Example (Gail, 3 yo, dx: PDD-NOS)

Hypotheses:

Gail engages in meltdowns and aggression in order to obtain:

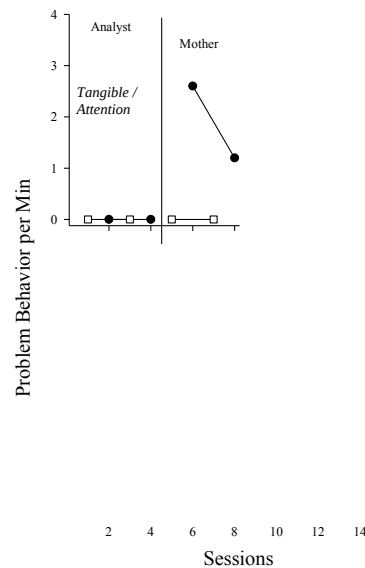
- (1) preferred (tangible) items,
- (2) maternal attention,
- (3) or both

Case Example (Gail, 3 yo, dx: PDD-NOS)

Hypotheses:

Gail engages in meltdowns and aggression in order to obtain:

- (1) preferred (tangible) items,
- (2) maternal attention,
- (3) or both

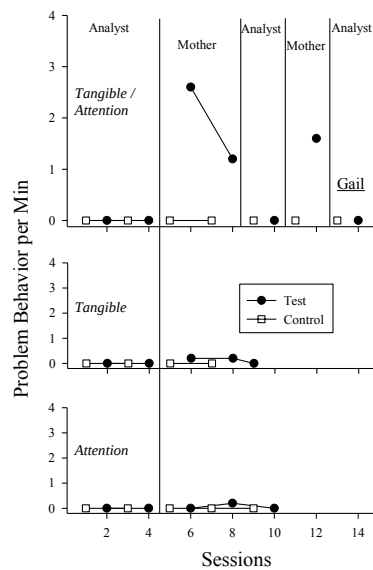


Case Example (Gail, 3 vo. dx: PDD-NOS)

Hypotheses:

Gail engages in meltdowns and aggression in order to obtain:

preferred (tangible) items,
And maternal attention,

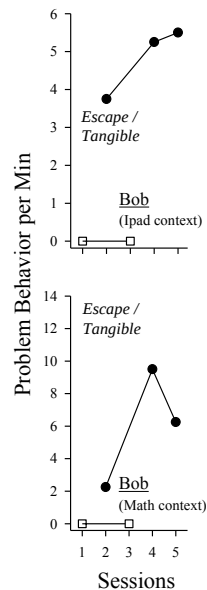


Case Example (Bob, 8 vo. dx: Autism)

Hypothesis:

Bob engages in meltdowns and aggression in order to obtain:

"His way" in the form of escape from adult instructions and access to preferred ways of interacting with electronics or academic materials

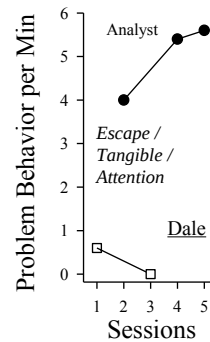


Case Example (Dale, 11 yo, dx: Autism)

Hypothesis:

Dale engages in meltdowns and aggression in order to obtain:

“His way” in the form of escape from adult instructions and access to preferred (tangible) items, and adult attention.



Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

- 1. Closed-ended indirect assessments (MAS, QABF, FAST) are never used in the process**

Closed ended indirect assessment are unreliable

Without reliability, questions regarding their validity are moot.

More important is that closed ended assessments do not yield any specific information to design an analysis

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

2. Extensive descriptive assessments (those requiring more than 30 min) are never part of the process

DAs are:

- time-consuming
- require complex data collection and analysis
- usually suggest invalid relations

(St. Peter et al., 2005; Thompson & Iwata, 2007)

Descriptive assessments can suggest prevalence but can never demonstrate relevance

Two Take Home Points with DAs

- 1. Conduct an informal observation and write down some possible controlling variables**
- 2. Conduct closed DAs when you know what you are looking for....**
 - E.g., treatment integrity assessments

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

3. An open-ended interview is always part of the process (as is one brief and informal observation)

Goals of interview are to:

- a) Develop rapport with parents
 - b) Develop “function hunches”
 - c) Identify idiosyncratic aspects of contingencies
 - d) Set up a safe and efficient analysis
- *Open-ended* indirect assessments (akin to clinical interviews) allow for discoveries which can then be verified in a functional analysis

Take home point

Indirect assessments/descriptive assessments and functional analyses are not substitutable; they are complimentary

Open ended assessment allows for discovery of possible factors whereas functional analyses allow you to demonstrate the relevance of those factors....

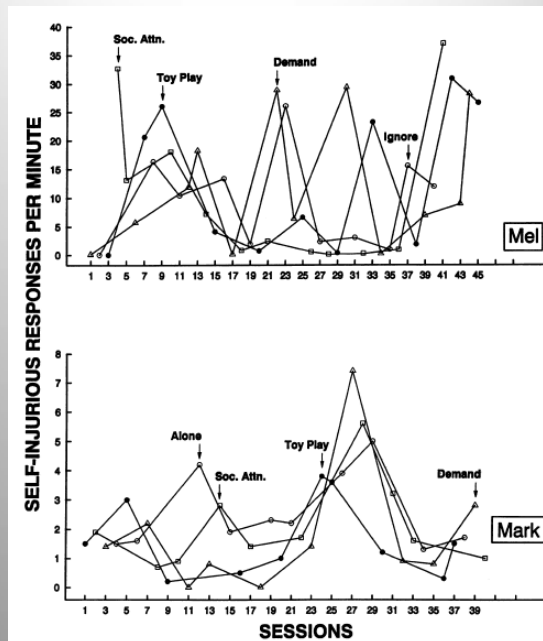
Therefore, use both of them....both are essential.

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

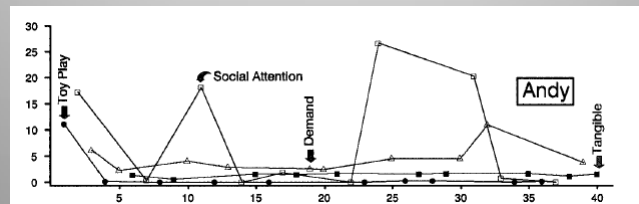
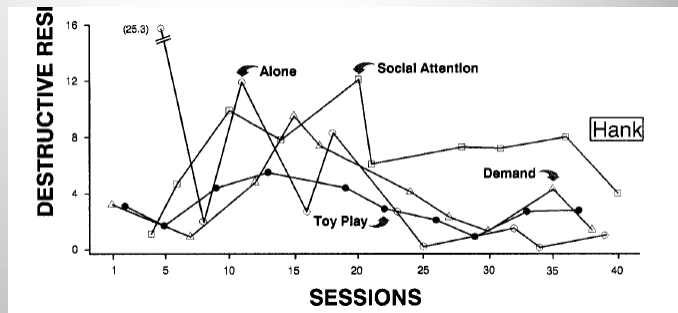
4. A standard 4 or 5 condition analysis (with the play condition as the control, e.g., Iwata et al., 1982) is never part of the process

We think it is a mistake to standardize a powerful idiographic assessment

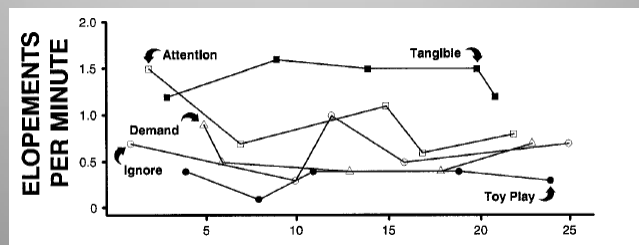
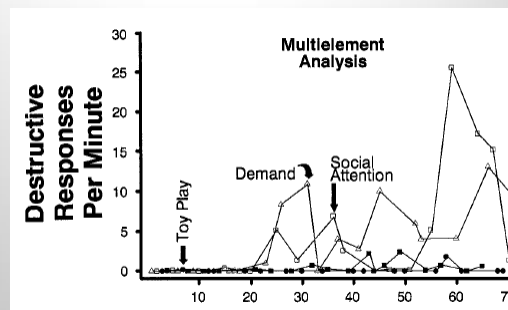
**Some
standard
analyses
published a
while ago**

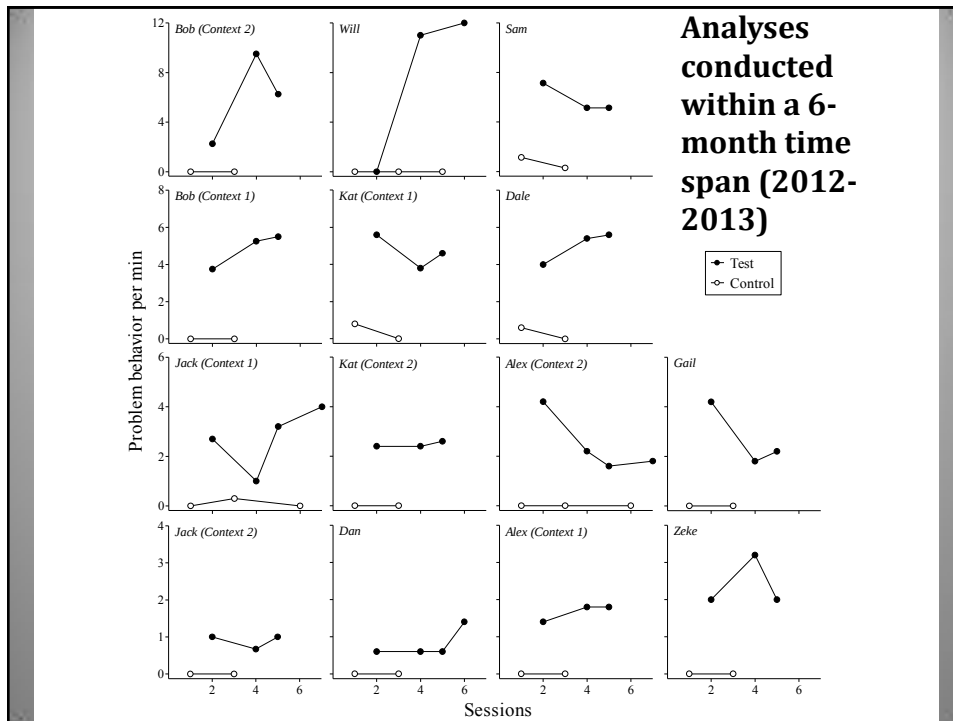


Some
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Some
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a while
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Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

5. A two-condition analysis designed from the open-ended interview is always part of the process

Functional analysis:

Direct observation of behavior under at least *two* conditions in which some event is manipulated

Two Conditions:

Test: Contains the contingency thought to maintain severe problem behavior

Control: *Does not* contain the contingency thought to maintain severe problem behavior

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

6. We synthesize multiple contingencies into one test condition, if the interview suggests the contingencies are operating simultaneously

(e.g., we don't worry about whether we can determine if the behavior is maintained by positive or negative reinforcement)

Why might problem behavior occur?

- Single contingencies:

1. **Attention or toys** (social-positive reinforcement)
2. **Escape/avoidance** (social-negative reinforcement)
3. **Sensory/non-social** (automatic reinforcement)

- Combinatorial contingencies:

1. **Attention *and* Toys**
2. **Escape *to* toys**
3. **Escape *to* toys *and* attention**
4. **Escape *to* automatic reinforcement**
5. **Control (often specified via excessive and varied requests)**
6. **Access to rituals, preferred conversations**

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

6. We synthesize multiple contingencies into one test condition, if the interview suggests the contingencies are operating simultaneously

(e.g., we don't worry about whether we can determine if the behavior is maintained by positive or negative reinforcement)

Main Result: Our analyses are short and safe.

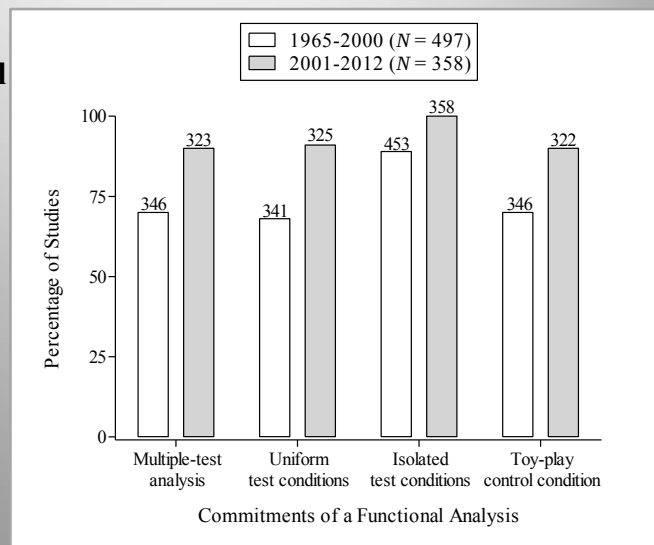
Safety improved by:

- providing all reinforcers immediately and for every problem behavior in the test condition
- always using a “No EO” control condition

An unfortunate standardization of functional analysis has developed in last 10 years

Standard Functional Analysis

- Multiple tests
- Uniform tests
- Isolated tests
- Toy-play control



Consider an Interview-informed Synthesized Contingency Analysis

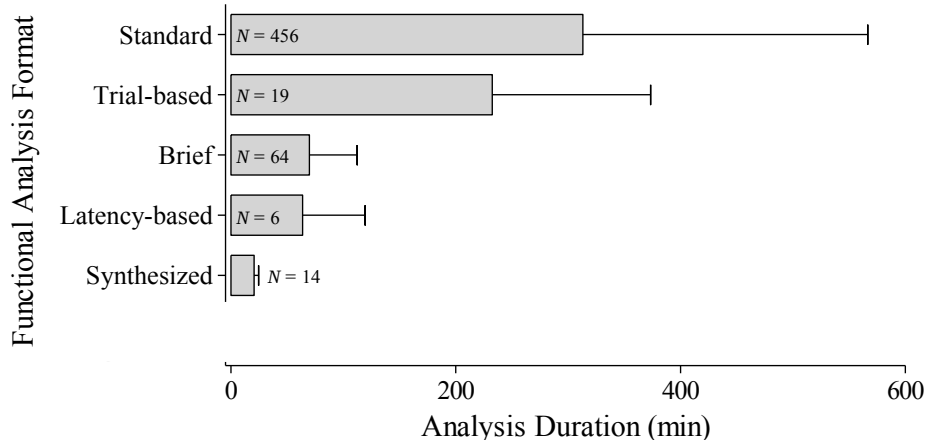
Standard Functional Analysis

- Multiple tests
- Uniform tests
- Isolated contingencies
- Toy-play control

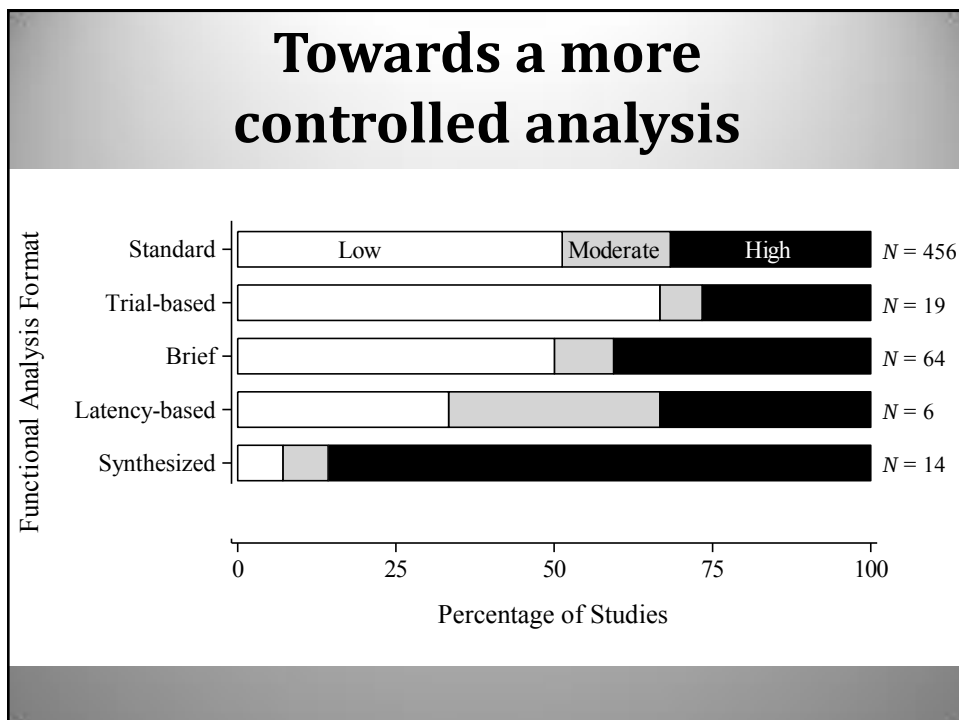
Synthesized Contingency Analysis

- Single-test
- Individualized test
- Synthesized contingencies
- Test-specific control

Towards an efficient analysis



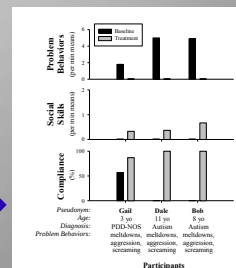
Towards a more controlled analysis



Remember what an informed analysis provides

1. A valid demonstration of the function of behavior
2. A stable and sensitive baseline from which to evaluate treatment
3. A properly motivating set of condition to teach functional communication
 - or other important skills like:
 - delay/denial tolerance
 - independent play
 - compliance with adult instructions

And, socially meaningful outcomes →



Activity

Billy is a 5-year old boy with severe self-injurious behavior (hand-to-head hitting).

Carefully describe an ecologically and experimentally valid assessment process that would allow one to discover and demonstrate the function of his behavior.

**Billy is a 5-year old boy with severe hand-to-head hitting.
Describe the functional assessment process.**

- **1st step: Open ended interview & brief observation of child**
 - From this, function hunches should emerge
 - The specific conditions to emulate in a functional analysis should be apparent
 - The behaviors to include in the *contingency class* should be apparent
- **2nd step: Functional analysis:**
 - Observing and measuring problem behavior while manipulating the suspected contingency
 - Manipulation occurs via two rapidly alternating conditions
 - Test condition contains suspected contingency
 - Suspected reinforcer is available immediately and only following problem behavior
 - Control condition does not have suspected contingency
 - Suspected reinforcer is usually provided freely (i.e., noncontingently)
 - High rates in test condition relative to control condition confirms hypothesis that child's hitting is reinforced by _____

Questions?

Some **Test Condition** Tips

- **Select topographically similar behavior as the target of the analysis or topographies that cluster when emitted**
 - Consider safe precursors
 - Carefully consider whether to include dangerous behavior in the contingency class
- **Schedule consequences to occur immediately following each target behavior (and withhold the same consequences for all other behaviors).**

p.8

Some **Control** Condition Tips

- Set up the same as the test condition except:
 - correlate the condition with a different salient stimulus
 - remove the putative reinforcement contingency
- **“No EO” is the best control condition**
- **Probably better than:**
 - Extinction
 - Noncontingent reinforcement
 - Differential reinforcement
 - of other behavior
 - of an alternative behavior
 - Compound schedule (FT / DRO)

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Role Play

- Select a unique contingency
- Discuss what the Test and Control conditions would look like
- Practice the Test and Control conditions
- Share role play with entire group

Questions?

p.7

Designing own analysis

- 1) What target behavior(s)?
- 2) What behaviors will be measured and how?
- 3) Safety precautions? Consent?
- 4) What reinforcers will be arranged in the test condition?
- 5) How will the value of the reinforcer be established?
- 6) How will the control condition be arranged?
- 7) What Sds will be incorporated in test/control conditions?
- 8) What materials will be available in all conditions?
- 9) How long will sessions be? How long in between sessions?
- 10) Where will they be conducted and by whom?
- 11) What session order will be used (what will the design be)?
- 12) Who will graph and interpret the results?

Other Myths!

1. Compared to other assessment types, functional analyses are more **time-consuming, complex, risky, impossible to "sell" to constituents, less ecologically valid.**
2. Problem behavior is shaped during a functional analysis, or irrelevant functional relations are created during a functional analysis.
3. Functional analyses can't address:
 - **low rate problem behavior,**
 - **covert problem behavior,**
 - **extremely dangerous problem behavior,**
 - **problem behavior influenced by constantly changing reinforcers**

See: Hanley, G. P. (2012). Functional assessment of problem behavior: Dispelling myths, overcoming implementation obstacles, and developing new lore. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 5, 54-72

Functional Assessment and Treatment Model

Steps (expanded)	
1	✓ Interview
2	✓ Functional Analysis
3	Functional Communication Training
4	Complex FCT
5	Tolerance Response Training
6	Easy Response Chaining
7	Difficult Response Chaining
8	Treatment Extension

Treatment Analysis

Dale

11-year old boy

diagnosed with Autism

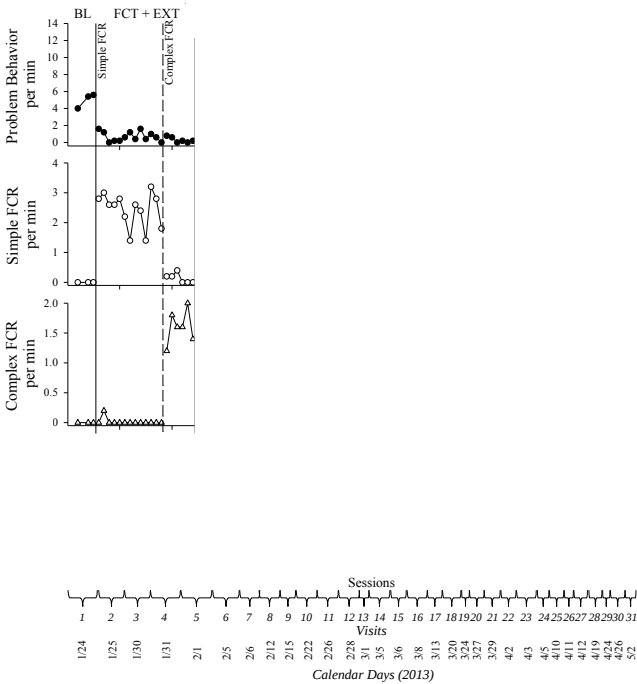


Treatment Analysis

Date

11-year old boy

diagnosed with Autism

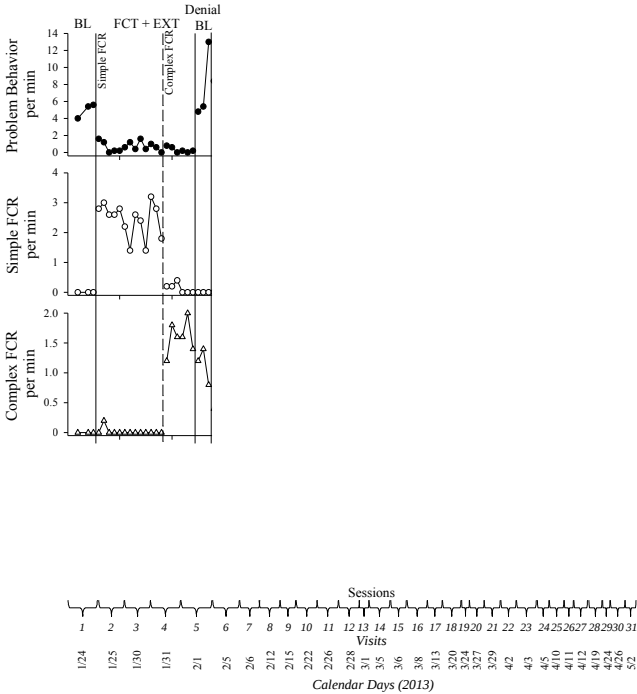


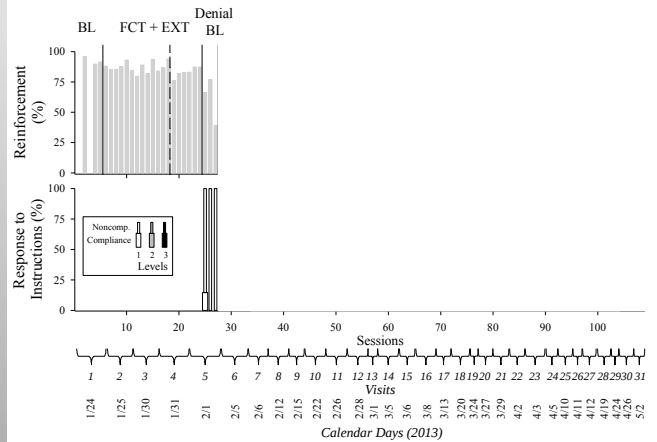
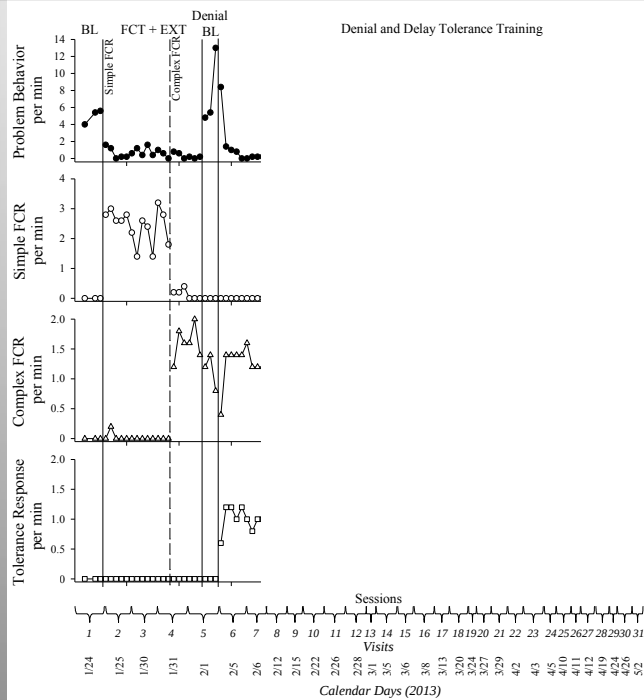
Treatment Analysis

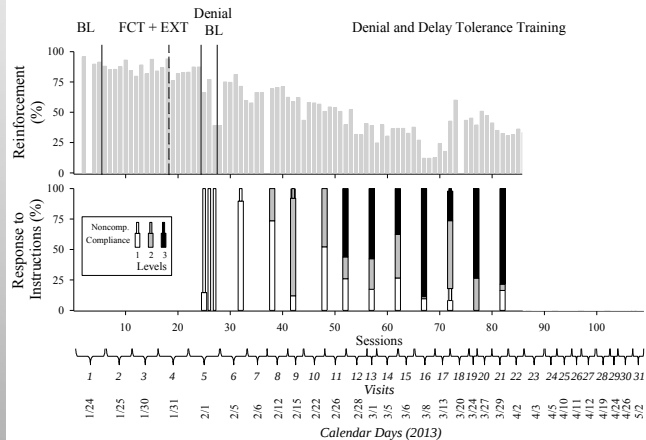
Date

11-year old boy

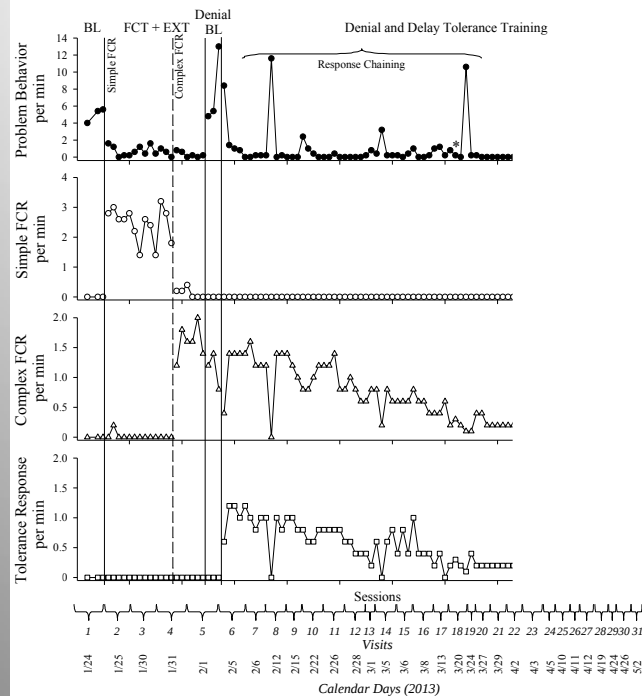
diagnosed with Autism

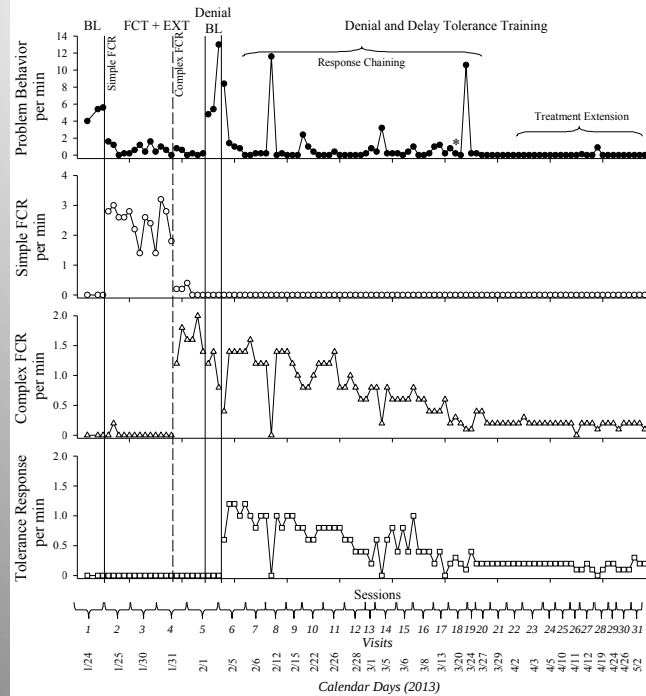
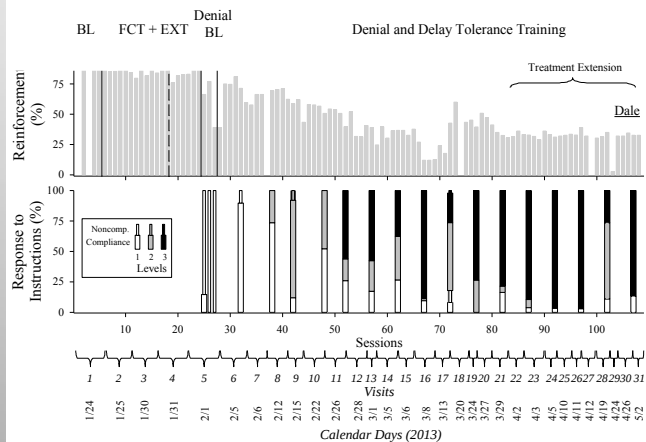


Treatment Analysis**Date****11-year old boy****diagnosed with Autism****Treatment Analysis****Date****11-year old boy****diagnosed with Autism**

Treatment Analysis**Date****11-year old boy****diagnosed with Autism**

Levels		
1	Simple motor movements	Walk over here, stand up, sit down, clap your hands, touch your (shoulder, head, toes)
2	Simple academics	Draw a circle, write your name, copy what I write
	Homework/Task preparation	Unzip your backpack, take out the book, erase the board come to the board, put these books on the book shelf
3	Complex academic: Reading skills	Read this paragraph, Answer this question...., Sound out the words
	Complex academic: Math skills	Solve this (addition, subtraction etc...)
	Self-help skills	Wash your hands, do this chore (e.g., organizing chairs)
	Play skills	Throw or kick the ball

Treatment Analysis**Date****11-year old boy****diagnosed with Autism**

Treatment Analysis**Date****11-year old boy****diagnosed with Autism****Treatment Analysis****Date****11-year old boy****diagnosed with Autism**

- Three analysts alternated while parents observed the sessions
- Following training, the father was introduced after the analyst presented the evocative trial and halfway through the session; the mother was present in the session room
- The mother implemented treatment in the session room
- Parents varied the type and amount of instructions during the delay period
- Parents implemented treatment in the home while novel instructions were introduced

Steps	
1*	Interview
2*	Functional Analysis
3	Functional Communication Training
4	Complex FCT
5	Tolerance Response Training
6	Easy Response Chaining
7*	Difficult Response Chaining
8*	Treatment Extension

Time Assessment			
Steps		# of Visits (1 hr each)	
		Range	Mean
1*	Interview	--	1
2*	Functional Analysis	1 - 4	2.3
3	Functional Communication Training	1 - 3	2
4	Complex FCT	1 - 4	2.4
5	Tolerance Response Training	2 - 7	4.6
6	Easy Response Chaining	1 - 5	2.6
7*	Difficult Response Chaining	2 - 11	5.1
8*	Treatment Extension	4 - 9	7.3
Totals:		23 - 32	27
Supervision meetings:		16 - 28	20
Report writing / planning:		--	4

Cost Assessment

Steps		# of Visits (1 hr each)		Cost (in US dollars)	
		Range	Mean	Range	Mean
1*	Interview	--	1	--	200
2*	Functional Analysis	1 - 4	2.3	166 - 800	467
3	Functional Communication Training	1 - 3	2	200 - 534	400
4	Complex FCT	1 - 4	2.4	200 - 860	487
5	Tolerance Response Training	2 - 7	4.6	300 - 1400	913
6	Easy Response Chaining	1 - 5	2.6	200 - 960	520
7*	Difficult Response Chaining	2 - 11	5.1	400 - 2240	1,013
8*	Treatment Extension	4 - 9	7.3	800 - 1800	1,467
Totals:		23 - 32	27		5,467
Supervision meetings:		16 - 28	20	1000 - 1750	1250
Report writing / planning:		--	4	--	500
Grand Totals:				6225 - 8650	7,217

General Social Validity Data

Social Acceptability Questionnaire Results

Questions	Ratings			Mean
	Gail	Dale	Bob	
1. Acceptability of assessment procedures	7	7	7	7
2. Acceptability of treatment packages	7	7	7	7
3. Satisfaction with improvement in problem behavior	7	7	6	6.7
4. Helpfulness of consultation	7	7	7	7

Note. 7=highly acceptable, highly satisfied, or very helpful
1=not acceptable, not satisfied, or not helpful

Personalized Social validity Data

Parents' Comfort Level of Presenting the Evocative Situation

Questions	Comfort Levels	
	Pre-treatment	Post-treatment
Gail		
1. Taking away toys	1	7
2. Telling child "no" when they ask for something	3	7
3. Giving instructions	5	7
Dale		
1. Interrupting child's preferred activity and telling them to do homework or other non-preferred activities	4	6
Bob		
1. Taking away DS or iPad at meal times	3	7
2. Taking away DS or iPad on a transition	3	7
3. Interrupting or correcting math work	3	7

Note. 7=very comfortable
1=not comfortable.

Some open-ended responses from the Social Acceptability Questionnaire

Please comment:

I found strategies in how well she did after the analysis of this program. I was amazed in how I could use these techniques and feel comfortable about it.

1. Please provide any additional comments for our team.

I would like to thank Nick especially for all the work and studies done on my child you were wonderful with her. This is a great program. It taught me to how better deal with my daughter skills of communication. I too have developed patience and how to communicate with her without the melt downs.

3. Rate the extent to which you are satisfied with the amount of improvement seen in [redacted]'s meltdowns.

1 2 3 4 5 6 ⑦

Not Satisfied

Highly Satisfied

Please comment:

Highly Satisfied is an understatement! He has come a long, long way in such a short time.

11. Please provide any additional comments for our team.

[redacted] and I are very happy with how this whole process took place. We both feel our homelife and [redacted]'s quality of life is getting better and better. This was one of the best summers we had with him behavior wise, and best summers over all because of less behaviors. We actually took day trips to CT science Museum, Boston Science Museum and Hampton Beach with 0 issues of bad behavior. We feel that without this great program, we wouldn't have even attempted these trips knowing what the usual outcome would have been.

Implications

- **If the problem behavior occurs with regularity, it is being reinforced**
 - Solution involves four main steps:
 1. Identify the reinforcing contingency for the problem behavior
 2. Replace problem behavior by providing the functional reinforcer for socially acceptable alternatives
 3. Teach child to tolerate (intermittent and unpredictable) periods when the reinforcer is unavailable
 4. Extend treatment to relevant people and contexts

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

(continued)

7. Our function-based treatments are always skill-based

Functional Communication Training: A Review and Practical Guide

Jeffrey H. Tiger, Louisiana State University, Gregory P. Hanley, Western New England College and Jennifer Bruzek, Vanderbilt University

ABSTRACT

Functional communication training (FCT) is one of the most common and effective interventions for severe behavior problems. Since the initial description of FCT by Carr and Durand (1985), various aspects of the FCT treatment process have been evaluated, and from this research, best practices have emerged. This manuscript provides a review of these practices as they arise during the development of effective FCT interventions.

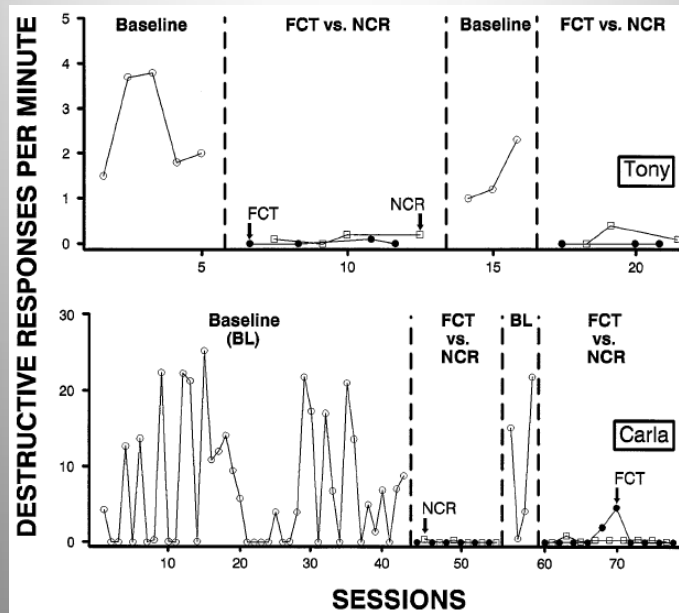
Descriptors: Behavior disorders, differential reinforcement of alternative behavior, functional communication training, function-based treatment

Published in *Behavior Analysis in Practice* in 2008
(available for free at PubMed Central)

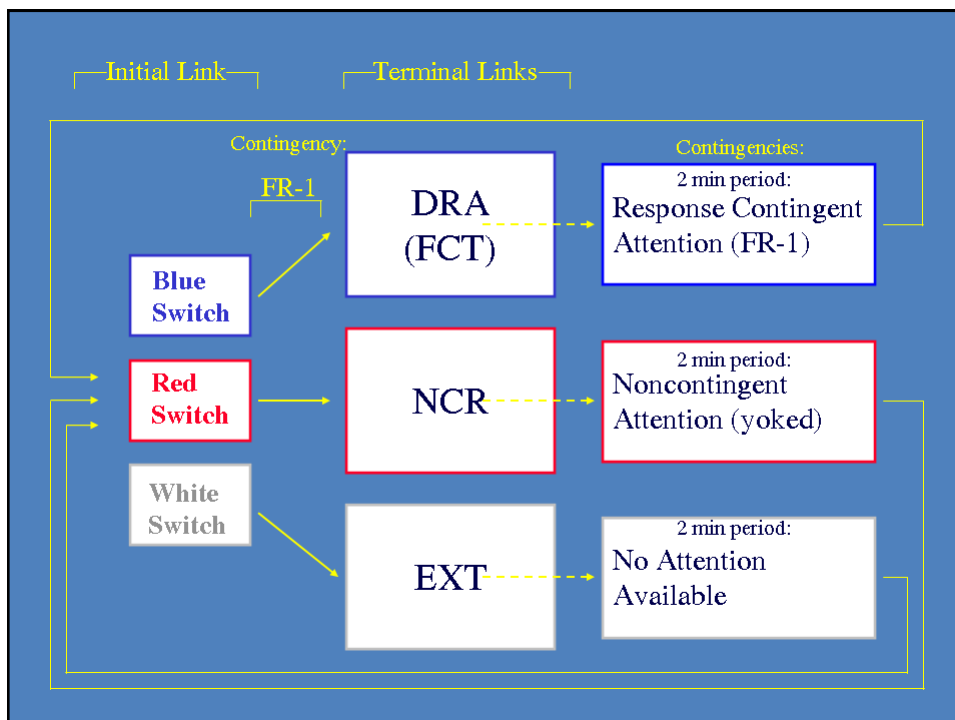
Reminder: Extinction takes many forms, is necessary, but is insufficient and non-preferred

- Function and context predict form of extinction.
- Almost all effective function-based treatments involve extinction
- Extinction should not be used as sole component of a function-based treatment
 - Too many negative side effects, minor integrity breaches have large impact, & it is probably aversive

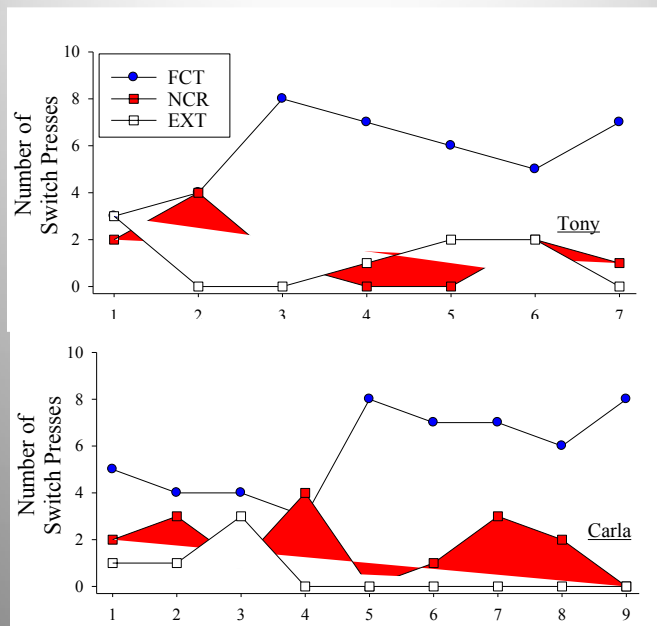
FCT Example: Treatment Analyses



Hanley, Piazza, Fisher, Maglieri, & Contrucci, *JABA*, 1997



Treatment Preference Assessments



Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

8. We always increase the complexity, flexibility, and/or interactional nature of the FCR before teaching delay/denial tolerance

Simple FCR: ("My way" or "My way, please")

Complex FCR:

"Excuse me"

After a second or two, "Yes, Billy"

"May I have my way, please?"

"Will you play my way, please?"

After a second or two, "Sure, Billy"

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

9. We always explicitly teach delay/denial tolerance

This takes up most of our time with children and families
(not the functional assessment or teaching the FCRs)

To make treatment practical:

- Either *response chaining* or *stimulus control* is involved
- there is always a *progressive* component (gradual increase in time, stakes, or both)

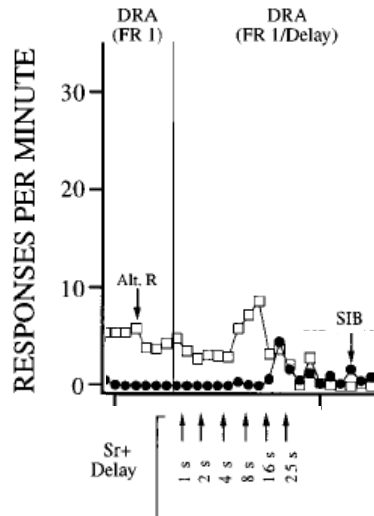
Reinforcement delay....

Use it if you are willing to **teach a “go-to” skill** and then chain parent-directed behavior to it

Do this by **reinforcing progressively longer chains** of adult-directed (expected) behavior to the delayed, functional reinforcer

Do not simply gradually increase the delay between FCR and its reinforcement

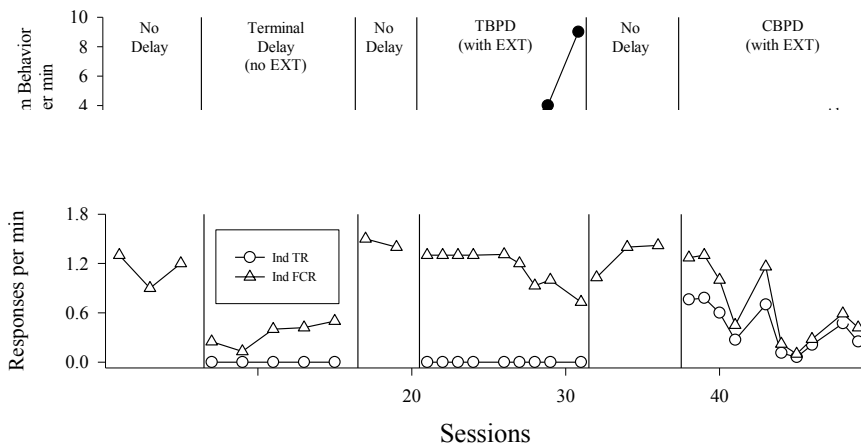
With only Progressive Reinforcement Delay:

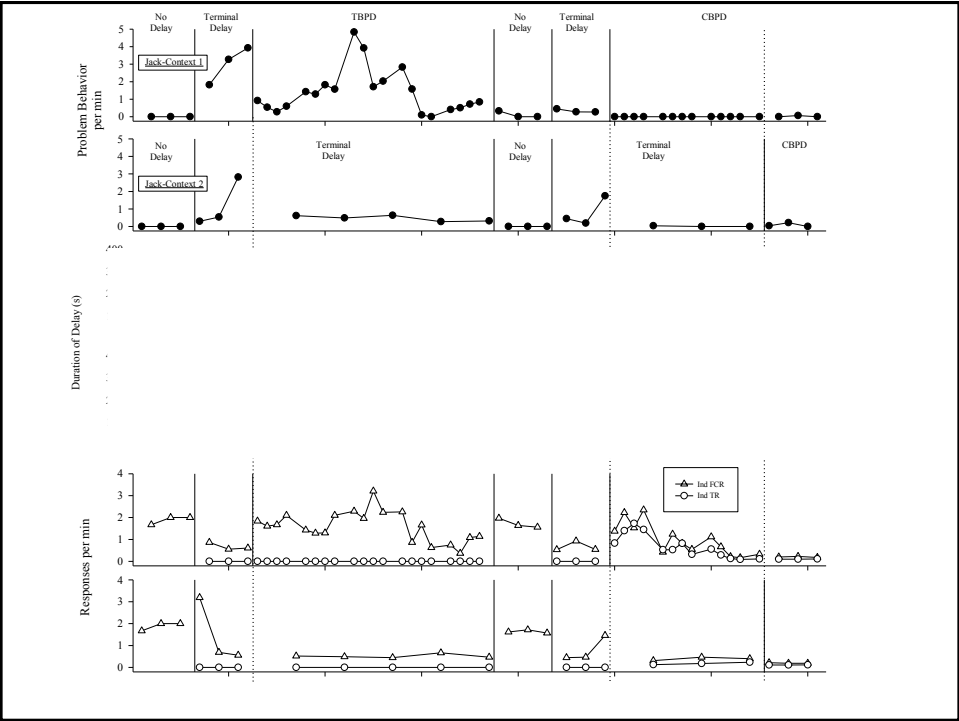
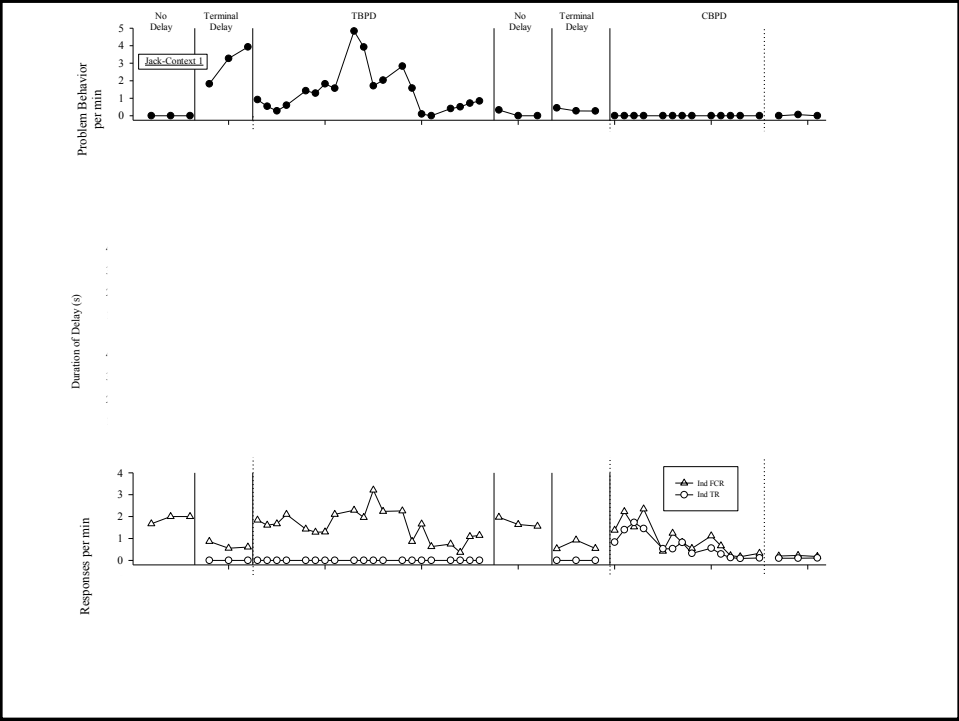


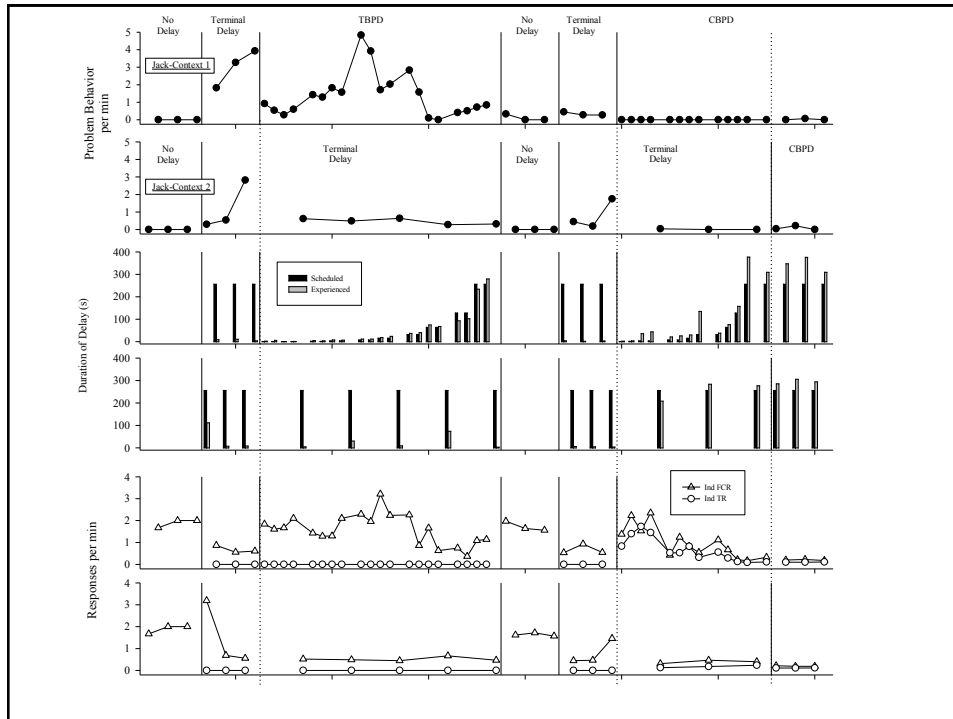
As delay increases,
FCR weakens &
probability of PB
increases

JOURNAL OF APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS 2001, 34, 17-38 NUMBER 1 (Spring 2001)
REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULE THINNING
FOLLOWING TREATMENT WITH
FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING
GREGORY P. HANLEY, BRIAN A. IWATA, AND RACHEL H. THOMPSON
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Time-based vs. Contingency-based Progressive Delay (Lead Author: Mahshid Ghaemmaghami)







5 Critical Aspects of Delay/Denial Tolerance Training

1. Always provide immediate sr for some FCRs
2. Teach an appropriate response to multiple cues of delay, denial, or disappointment
3. Progressively increase the average amount of behavior (not just time) required to terminate the delay
4. Terminate the delay for various amounts of behavior (sometimes expect very little behavior sometimes request larger or more complex types of behavior during the delay)
5. Probably best to not signal how much behavior is required to terminate the delays

Ten Unique Aspects of our Approach

- 10. We work hard to ensure that the process is agreeable and outcome is meaningful to both children and parents**

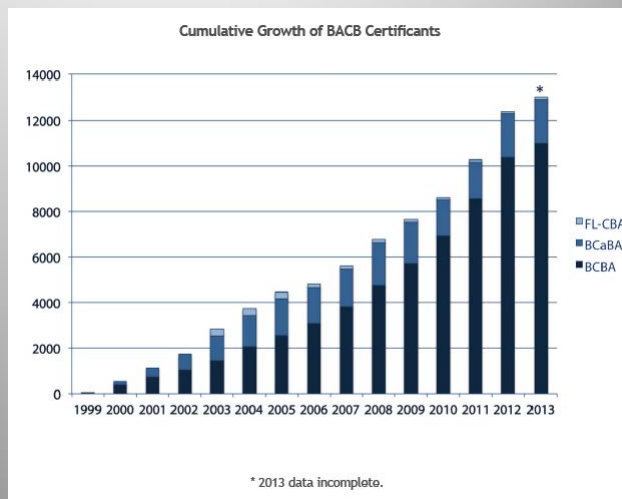
Have parents witness and take part in the entire process

Keep working with child until the wish list goal is met
(e.g., going to Six Flags as a family)

Implications

- Solution is simple to describe but more complex in execution**

- Specific skills of a BCBA are required
- We need more and better training programs, hospitals, and schools that embrace behavior analysis



Implications

- **Medication is not the solution for meltdowns, aggression, or the self-injury exhibited by children with autism**
 - No good evidence for medication decreasing these problem behaviors *while* strengthening socially desirable alternatives
 - When there are *demonstrated* positive effects, they are merely *statistically* significant changes in *reported* levels of problem behavior of *unknown social significance*
 - and those effects probably represent lethargy or enhanced placebo effects

Considerations

- The speed with which this model will bring about meaningful improvements in problem behavior is probably moderated by:
 - **children's ability to learn via instructions and/or modeling**
- The overall success of this model is probably moderated by:
 - **the complexity of the contingencies influencing problem behavior**
 - **people's willingness and ability to manage those contingencies**

Limitations / Future Directions

We are planning on addressing the following limitations:

- The lack of measures showing the effect of consultation throughout day and over an extensive period of time
- Omission of global measures of functioning before and after the consultations
- Omission of participants randomly assigned to either receive consultation versus traditional care

Conclusions

Autism is not a life sentence of:

- Meltdowns
- Aggression
- Self-injury
- Chronic and interfering stereotypy
 - See Potter et al., 2013, *JABA*
- Sleep problems
 - see Jin, Hanley, & Beaulieu, 2013, *JABA*



Freedom from these problem behaviors is possible and probable with:

BCBA-led, objective analysis

Skill-based treatments yielding functional reinforcers

Contingency-based delay tolerance procedures

Thank you.

**Good luck with all that you do for all
who you teach and provide care**

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