

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): Saul Hudson

Procedures and Results

I used five procedures to collect information about the environmental conditions likely to affect occurrences of Saul's problem behavior. First, I used the Functional Analysis Screening Tool (FAST; Iwata & DeLeon, 1995) to collect information from Saul's house manager. Second, I used the Functional Assessment Interview Form (FAI; O'Neill et al., 1997) to collect additional information from his house manager and a staff member at his worksite. Third, I conducted a Scatter Plot Assessment (SPA; Touchette, McDonald, & Langer, 1985) to identify occasions when behavior was more likely and less likely to occur. Fourth, I informally observed Saul for approximately 2 hours at his home and 1 hour in his work setting. Fifth, I used a preference assessment to identify settings, objects, foods, and activities that Saul likes and dislikes. The procedures that I used and the people who were involved are summarized in the table below.

Method	Informants
Functional Analysis Screening Tool (FAST; Iwata & DeLeon, 1995)	Tim Conroy
Functional Assessment Interview Form (FAI; O'Neill et al., 1997)	Tim Conroy and Jimmy Walker
Scatter Plot Assessment (SPA; Touchette, MacDonald, & Langer, 1985)	James Hetfield
Direct Observation (Bijou, Peterson, & Ault, 1968)	James Hetfield
Preference Assessment	Saul Hudson and Tim Conroy

FAST Interview and FAI Results

Staff members report that Saul emits two behaviors that have been considered socially unacceptable or may compromise Saul's well-being or the well-being of others. Saul's behaviors and operational definitions are listed in the table below.

Problem Behavior	Operational Definition
Verbal Aggression	Cursing, threatening to harm others, calling others derogatory names or all three behaviors.
Physical Aggression	Hitting, kicking, bear hugging with enough force to injure others or swinging or throwing objects in the direction of others.

Setting Events. Information gathered from the FAI suggests that Saul's participation in preferred activities (e.g., social gatherings, household chores) or anticipating his participation in preferred activities are likely to set the occasion for Saul's problem behavior.

Antecedents. Information gathered from the FAST and FAI reveals several physical and social conditions that may "trigger" (i.e., evoke) Saul's behavior. His behaviors and environmental "triggers" are described below.

1. Verbal aggression is more likely to occur during times when staff members provide abrupt task demands/requests during participation in preferred activities, or staff or peers antagonize him for 5 or more minutes.

2. Physical Aggression is more likely to occur when primary forms of communication are unsuccessful or when verbal aggression does not result in access to positive consequences (i.e., access to attention, access to activities, or escape from aversive social interactions).

Behaviors. Results from the FAI reveal that Saul uses language as his primary form of communication which serves as functionally equivalent alternatives to socially unacceptable behaviors; however, he may use other behaviors that are more coercive (i.e., verbal and physical aggression) if socially acceptable behaviors are unsuccessful. Limitations in his symbolic forms of communication include asking for help or rejecting aversive social interactions. Moreover, he is likely to show verbal aggression before escalating to physical aggression. Thus, under delays in reinforcement socially unacceptable behaviors serve as highly efficient ways to access reinforcement. Historically, "interventions" for these behaviors have consisted of (a) a token economy for incompatible behaviors, (b) relaxation training, and (c) crisis management procedures; however, these procedures have been ineffective for reducing unacceptable behaviors or increasing socially acceptable behaviors.

Consequences. Information gathered during the FAI process reveals that Saul is highly motivated by access to attention (e.g., social approval and interaction) and activities. Thus, he is likely to emit problem behaviors under conditions that are likely to result in access positive attention or preferred activities. Additionally, he is likely to emit behaviors that result in the discontinuation of negative interactions. This information is supported by results of the FAST which indicate that Saul's verbal and physical aggression is maintained by access to attention and preferred activities, and escape from aversive social interactions.

SPA Results

I gathered information for the SPA by reviewing data sheets and behavior incidence reports (i.e., A-B-C data) from 8/1/07 to 7/1/08. The SPA results revealed a general pattern in Saul's behavior during the 8:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 7:00 pm hours. Since Saul's behavior is infrequent the results of the SPA do not provide substantial evidence that reveals conditions that are likely to evoke his behavior. However, when this information is combined with anecdotal reports some inferences can be drawn about his behavior. For example, some of his behavior has occurred during times at work when he is likely to experience down time, transitions, and more frequent interactions with peers. Other times likely represent occasions when he is likely to participate in social gatherings with friends, community activities, or both.

Direct Observation Results (A-B-C Data)

I formally observed Saul on two occasions for approximately 2 hours in his home and 1 hour in his work setting. During my observation in Saul's home, I did not observe occurrences of problem behavior. However, his environment reflected conditions that may have led to the non-occurrence of behavior. First, preferred staff interacted with Saul at least every 30 minutes. These interactions were characterized as being friendly and respectful, and staff was responsive to Saul's social interactions. Second, Saul had opportunities to engage in preferred activities such as one-on-one interaction with staff and listening to his radio. Third, staff did not provide abrupt or abrasive task demands that prevented Saul from accessing preferred activities. For example, Saul talked to staff about possible participation in a preferred leisure activity at home, sitting on the porch. Staff reminded Saul that it was still too hot to go outside and suggested that it would be better if he waited until later in the evening to go outside when it was cooler. Saul did not show any signs of agitation, agreed to wait until it was cooler, and staff then suggested an alternative activity, listening to his radio. During my observation at his worksite, I observed several conditions that may set the occasion for Saul's problem behavior and behavior that may prevent problem behavior. First, Saul worked mostly independently for more than 45 minutes; however, he received very little praise for his on-task behavior. Second, Saul and several of his peers talked while he worked. Approximately 30 minutes into the observation, his peer's comments took on characteristics of "teasing." Although Saul ignored his peer's comments, he appeared agitated (i.e., tone of voice, short comments, working away from peers) but did not ask for assistance. Moreover, staff did not intervene between Saul and his peers. Third, after Saul had completed his work he began to perform another task (gathering the trash). Staff respectfully redirected him to wait until later to perform the task and provided an explanation why he needed to wait. Saul honored the request and a staff member directed him to another preferred activity.

Preference Assessment Results

Results from Saul's preference assessment are listed below.

Settings:	Likes- Social gatherings with friends and family and community settings. Dislikes- No settings were identified.
People:	Likes- Family members, Donna, Crystal, Walker, Jimmy. Dislikes- Although Saul or staff did not identify non-preferred social partners, staff indicated that Saul may not like some peers who "tease" him at his worksite.
Items or Objects:	Likes- His radio, TV, DVDs, clothes, and shoes. Dislikes- Cats and dogs.
Food	Likes- Chicken, pork chops, BBQ, hamburgers, French fries, corn, collard greens, grape and orange soda, chocolate chip cookies, cake, and bananas. Dislikes- No foods were identified.

Routines or Activities: Likes- Helping staff members with household and work related duties, one-on-one social interactions with family and friends, parties and social gatherings, listening to his radio (e.g. Steve Harvey show), watching T.V., going to church, going shopping, dinning out, attending sporting events (basketball, football), going to the movies, going to Lowes, and visits with his family.
Dislikes- No dislikes were identified.

Summary

The summary statement below depicts the likely relationship between conditions in Saul’s physical and social environment, and his problem behavior:

Setting Events	Antecedents	Problem Behavior	Consequences
When Saul is being antagonized by others	and antagonizing continues for 5 or more minutes	he is likely to emit verbal or physical aggression	to escape antagonizing comments.
When Saul is engaged in a preferred activity (e.g., social gathering) or is anticipating participation in a preferred activity	and staff or peers abruptly discontinue the activity or abruptly deny Saul access to preferred items or activities without an explanation	he is likely to emit verbal or physical aggression	to access or maintain attention or preferred activities.

Information gathered during the FBA process revealed that language is Saul’s primary form of communication; however, he will also use other behaviors such as eye gaze (maintaining eye gaze or averting his gaze), facial expressions (e.g., smiling, frowning), gestures (e.g., pointing, head movements for “No” and “Yes”), and body movements (e.g., moving closer, moving away, no response, holding his head down) that serve communicative functions. Although Saul has a repertoire of several socially acceptable forms of communication, he is likely to use coercive behaviors (i.e., verbal and physical aggression) under states of deprivation and satiation to access attention and activities, or escape aversive social interactions. The FBA process did not include a functional analysis. That is, I did not conduct an experimental manipulation of environmental conditions that were hypothesized to evoke and maintain his behavior. Therefore, I do not have evidence that provides an empirical demonstration to support the hypothesized functions of Saul’s behavior. However, the results of the FBA can be used to develop a hypothesis-driven behavior support plan.

Recommendations

Saul often uses language and other socially acceptable forms of communication to express his wants and needs to others in his social environment. However, under some environmental and social conditions, he is likely to show more coercive behavior that compromises his well-being and the well-being of others. Staff members and Saul would benefit from a behavior support plan that (a) structures environmental conditions to prevent occurrences of socially unacceptable behavior, (b) supports or maintains his existing socially acceptable behavior, and (c) provide guidelines for maintaining consistent and reliable consequences across social contexts, environments, and partners.

James Hetfield

Date