

Reviewer's comment-2

1. The manuscript addresses a foundational area in applied behavior analysis – the use of FA to identify the maintaining variables of problem behavior. This area remains central to both clinical practice and research. However, the manuscript currently functions more as an introductory overview than a scholarly contribution. To maximize its scientific value, the authors should deepen the conceptual analysis, integrate a broader and more current literature base, and more explicitly articulate the manuscript's unique contribution beyond summarizing established knowledge.

2. The title is clear, but slightly informal for a scholarly journal. Suggestions: Understanding behavioral function: A narrative review of functional analysis methodology.

3. The abstract is overly general and does not adequately summarize the major sections, key findings, or implications. I recommend the authors concisely describe (a) the purpose of the paper, (b) the major FA variations reviewed, and (c) clarify what gap the article addresses relative to existing reviews.

4. Several sections of the paper use informal language or metaphors that are not appropriate for scholarly writing. Some sentences are overly long or conversational. A careful line-by-line edit is recommended to improve clarity, precision, and academic tone.

5. The manuscript is logically organized and covers many FA variations, but several sections require deeper analysis.

1. Synthesized vs Isolated reinforcement contingencies – the sections on PFA and synthesized reinforcers are incomplete, and in some cases, inaccurate. The authors do not sufficiently review or analyze literature comparing synthesized and isolated contingencies.

2. Missing empirical findings and contemporary debates – several important strands of FA research are absent including studies comparing efficiency and accuracy of trial-based versus traditional, research on latency-based FA, precursor FA, and protective equipment FA.

3. Safety and acceptability section needs greater depth – authors should consider including references to the ethics code, discussion of empirical data on FA safety, clarification that both traditional FA and PFA evoke PB and safety depends on safeguards rather than FA format .

4. Need for critical evaluation rather than a summary – methodological strengths and weaknesses, conditions under which certain FA formats are preferable, limitations of existing literature, and unresolved controversies in the field

6. The reference list includes several foundational and contemporary sources; however, it omits many essential articles related to synthesized contingencies, IISCA/PFA methodology, and comparative analyses of isolated versus synthesized test conditions. The omissions result in an incomplete and somewhat unbalanced portrayal of the literature. The authors should incorporate a more comprehensive and current state of the references and ensure full adherence to APA 7 formatting. There are also many citations included in the manuscript that are missing from the references list. Below are some suggestions on missing references to strengthen the manuscript.

* Missing References: Slaton, J. D., & Hanley, G. P. (2018). Nature and scope of synthesis in functional analysis and treatment of problem behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 51(4), 943–973. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.498>

Hagopian, L. P., Rooker, G. W., Jessel, J., & DeLeon, I. G. (2013). Initial functional analysis outcomes and modifications in pursuit of differentiation: A summary of 176 inpatient cases. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 46(1), 88-100.

Fahmie, T. A., & Sullivan, E. K. (2025). Shapers at Odds: Isolation, Synthesis, and Resulting Division in the Assessment and Treatment of Problem Behavior. *Perspectives on Behavior Science*, 48(3), 661–675. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40614-025-00471-3>

Frank-Crawford, M. A., Piersma, D. E., Fernandez, N., Tate, S. A., & Bustamante, E. A. (2024). Protective procedures in functional analysis of self-injurious behavior: An updated scoping review. *Journal of applied behavior analysis*, 57(4), 840–858. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.2906>

Rooker, G. W., Iwata, B. A., Harper, J. M., Fahmie, T. A., & Camp, E. M. (2011). False-positive tangible outcomes of functional analyses. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 44(4), 737–745. <https://doi.org/10.1901/jaba.2011.44-737>

Specific Comments

The manuscript requires careful proofreading to improve precision and consistency of tone. Several sections would benefit from tighter academic language and removal of informal or instructional phrasing.