

Reviewer's comment-1

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review this manuscript. There are inaccuracies in the presentation of foundational concepts. For example, B. F. Skinner is described as “having studied ABA,” when he is more accurately recognized as the father of operant conditioning and a key figure in the development of applied behavior analysis. In another example, the author described functional analyses as, “the go-to clinical methods to understand why problem behaviors occur,” without providing context as to the profession or environment (e.g., a school psychologist rarely conducts an FA because an FBA is more in line with their training, is fairly reliable, and is easier to do; counselors aren't doing FAs in their offices). Throughout the manuscript, there is also a noticeable lack of citations to support key claims, which undermines the scholarly rigor of the paper.

Response: Thank you to reviewer 1 for capturing those oversights. This document was originally written for an entry-level journal to bridge the gap between exposure to research in secondary education to research at the undergraduate level. As such, there are several areas that are less rigorous to meet that target population. Considering this, I have revised the title to better reflect the level of content within. Additionally, I've addressed the reviewers comments while maintaining the same entry-level focus. Using the reviewers notes above, I've identified 3 key areas of comment/review.

B.F. Skinner: addressed and in hindsight a bit embarrassed for having worded it as such.

Functional Analyses: thank you for reminding me of the non-traditional behavior analytic applications. I have addressed this by removing any confusion across perspectives and approached this strongly from a behavioral standpoint. I understand that this does not capture all professionals who may be supporting individuals with challenging behavior. However, I feel this change allowed for a more streamlined and focused audience.

Citations: addressed throughout the document.

Reviewer's comment-2

I'd like to thank reviewer 2 for their detailed feedback and review of the manuscript. I have thoughtfully reviewed each of the recommendations, including the provided references and addressed or discussed the responses below. Again, your detailed feedback is greatly appreciated and is being used as a learning and growth opportunity.

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 manuscripts unique contribution beyond summarizing established knowledge.
 - a. **Response:** This work has been written for an entry-level journal to bridge the gap between exposure to research in secondary education to research at the undergraduate level. As such, there are several areas that are less rigorous to meet that target population. I've addressed the reviewers comments while maintaining the same entry-level focus. Additionally, I have been more direct in the abstract and throughout the paper that this is a summary of existing knowledge presented in a way to hopefully make FA methodology more accessible beyond academics and researchers

2. The title is clear, but slightly informal for a scholarly journal. Suggestions: Understanding behavioral function: A narrative review of functional analysis methodology.
 - a. **Response:** addressed to align with recommendations as I feel it is an appropriate shift considering the new publication outlet while maintaining the entry-level focus.
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.
 - a. **Response:** I have revised the abstract to align more with the flow and sequence of the paper. Additionally, I clarified that this paper is an entry-level introduction to FA methodology.
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.
 - a. **Response:** I appreciate the thoughtfulness of this feedback. In line with the original target audience, I've chosen to keep these metaphors to aid in entry-level clarity. However, I feel that by changing the title, it better guides who the intended reader is. Additionally, I have reviewed to improve clarity, flow and term consistency.
5. The manuscript is logically organized and covers many FA variations, but several sections require deeper analysis.
 - a. **Response:** Using this reviewers additional comments, several areas have been extended. These include areas such as synthesized vs. isolated reinforcement contingencies, contemporary debates, and safety and acceptability.
6. 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.
 - a. **Response:** This has been extended in alignment with the introductory nature of this article. Where elements were beyond the scope of this particular summary, that was stated as well as guidance for where readers can go to explore more.
7. 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.
 - a. **Response:** This has been addressed, again briefly as aligned with the introductory nature of this article. I have expanded to include more information on latency-based FA in the procedural variations section.
8. 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 .
 - a. **Response:** This section has been modified and includes reference to the BACB ethics code.
9. 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.
 - a. **Response:** I appreciate this comment; however, the intent of the article is to offer an entry-level exposure to how behavior analysts explore behavioral function. While valuable, a critical analysis of the various methods is beyond the scope of this paper.
10. 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.

- a. **Response:** I addressed the reference section to ensure APA formatting of each entry. Additionally, I have included key references suggested by this reviewer in the manuscript where appropriate. Further, I have ensured to add more contemporary sources specifically in the areas of synthesized and isolated contingencies of reinforcement and safety and acceptability of procedures. Thanks to the reviewer for sharing key references to support and strengthen the current work. I appreciate it.

* Missing References: **Response:** each of these articles have been reviewed & included

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.

Response: I have reviewed and adjusted some of the language per this feedback while maintaining an entry-level focus. I appreciate the depth of feedback offered by this reviewer!