FREQUENCY AND QUALITY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FUNCTIONAL
BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS AS REPORTED BY EDUCATORS

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The research investigation reported herein examined the quality and experience of the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) process as reported by educators working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD). The data accrued is based on a 30-item survey and participant telephone interviews examined the overall knowledge of the FBA process by educators and their general experience when conducting a FBA, specifically the procedural timeline, types of education professionals involved, and typical outcomes and results. Survey responses indicated two common barriers in the FBA implementation which often inhibit best practice: lack of true collaborative teamwork and insufficient communication among FBA team members. Survey responses also indicated a level of statistical significance from education professionals working in elementary school settings who self-rated positively higher when conducting a FBA than those education professionals working on either a secondary or special campus. Additionally, participant interviews indicated a growing awareness of the advantages of using the FBA as an early intervention process when dealing with challenging behaviors.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders (E/BD) can often present a series of challenges that are unique to the population. Students with an identified E/BD profile often demonstrate hallmark traits (e.g., inept social skills, tendencies toward aggressive or violent behavior), and typically experience the most stringent disciplinary action during their academic lifetimes (Kauffman, 2005; Quinn & Poirer, 2004). With this consideration, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (U.S. Department of Education, 1997) stipulated the mandatory use of the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) as a scientifically based process to investigate the functions of challenging behaviors and the development of interventions to address the behaviors, all of which has created a greater demand for information on the process in the field of education (Asmus, Vollmer, & Borrero, 2002; Peterson, 2002).

In the reauthorization of IDEA 1997 and later reaffirmed in IDEA 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), the initiation and practice of the FBA was stipulated as a means to assess challenging behaviors by students with disabilities who are under consideration for severe school disciplinary action (e.g., suspension, alternate education placement) for dangerous behaviors (e.g., drug use, weapon possession) and/or for chronic student misbehavior which impede the learning process. Stipulated responses constituted three actions: conducting a FBA, development of measurable goals, and the design of an appropriate
behavioral intervention plan (BIP) consisting of positive behavioral supports that are non-coercive in nature (Drasgow, Yell, Bradley, & Shriner, 1999; Gable et al., 2003; Nelson, Roberts, Rutherford, Mathur, & Aaroe, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001).

Since the stipulation of the FBA in IDEA 1997 and again in IDEA 2004, the professional knowledge base on the FBA process has grown. Although there is the considerable research and sources available on the FBA process, there remain several significant barriers which prevent the FBA process from being ideally used as an early intervention or for proper implementation. According to several authors (e.g., Quinn et al., 2001; Scott, Meers, & Nelson, 2000) the barriers, include the lack of professional understanding of the concept of the FBA, inappropriately written BIPs, use of the FBA as a last resort, and lack of team collaboration among the professionals involved. Unfortunately, the aforementioned barriers have resulted in controversial views and understanding of the FBA process as well as inadequate practices of both the FBA and resulting BIP (Fox & Gable, 2004).

The FBA process has demonstrated a supportive database on the validity of the resulting data and the overall effectiveness of the BIP (Burke, Hagan-Burke, & Sugai, 2003; Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Fox & Gable, 2004; Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001; Hoff, Ervin, & Friman, 2005; Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2005; Mueller, Sterling-Turner, & Moore, 2005; Murdock, O’Neill, & Cunningham, 2005; Olympia, Heathfield, Jenson, & Clark, 2002; Packenham, Shute, & Reid, 2004). Additionally, several authors have described the positive and encouraging results of utilizing
the FBA process as an early intervention process for both general and special student populations (e.g., Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Fesmire, Lisner, Forrest, & Evans, 2003; McKinney, Campbell-Whatley, & Kea, 2005; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott, Liaupsin, Nelson, & Jovilette, 2003; Scott et al., 2005; Walker, Cheney, Stage, Blum, & Horner, 2005). However, the FBA process remains an underused and infrequent intervention process in addressing challenging behaviors in the public schools. Recent investigations (e.g., Fox & Davis, 2005; Nelson et al., 1999; Quinn et al., 2001; Scott et al., 2000) have explored the possible reasons for the lack of frequent and appropriate practice of the FBA process as an early intervention. As well, the current research has focused almost exclusively on the use of the FBA as a last resort as stipulated by federal law rather than as an act of best practice of positive behavioral supports.

**Statement of the Problem**

As previously stated, the FBA process can have a significant impact on the reduction and replacement of challenging behaviors by students with E/BD. However, current and past research has limited discussions and investigations on the FBA as reported by those individuals involved in the actual process in the field. Individuals such as special education teachers, general education teachers, para-educators, administrators (e.g., principals) and ancillary service personnel (e.g., school psychologist, evaluation personnel) are often the best indicators of the quality of the FBA process and how it is implemented in the
school setting. Data and information from individuals in the field can help to develop a more accurate description of the quality and implementation of the FBA process and its resulting success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency and the quality of the implementation of the FBA process as an early intervention for students exhibiting challenging behaviors. While federal legislation has stipulated the use of the FBA process, there have been relatively few investigations on the frequency and quality of the implementation of FBA in professional literature. There are various factors and individuals involved in the FBA, which differ dramatically from location and setting and can impact the implementation of the process.

Research Questions

Five research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1: Who are the types of education professionals/para-educators who participate in the FBA process as an active member of the IEP team?

Research Question 2: In what ways has the FBA process been used as a form of early intervention during the initial stages of challenging behaviors?

Research Question 3: What was the typical (average) length of time in which a FBA has been conducted (from planning to hypothesis development)?
Research Question 4: In what ways did the data from the FBA result in a specific function (i.e., reason) for the challenging behavior?

Research Question 5: What was the source and extent of professional/formal training on the FBA process for each team member?

Significance

There is an apparent need to investigate the possible factors which influence school professionals to utilize the FBA process as an early intervention. The information derived from the proposed investigation may be utilized to increase the current knowledge and literature base of the FBA. Additionally, the data derived from the investigation may increase the level of information used in professional development for both pre-service and in-service educators.

Limitations

The investigation is presented with possible limitations which may possibly affect the scope and generalizability of the results. The study sample population was based upon convenience sampling as opposed to randomized sampling. Additionally, all participants have an expressed interest in working with children/youth with behavioral issues as demonstrated by attending the most recent Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) conference.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms and acronyms which special education
personnel often use and may be unfamiliar to the reader.

Administrator: Professional educator charged with the responsibilities of school and curriculum functions, teacher support, and student learning (e.g., school principal; Mercer & Mercer, 1993).

Alternative education placement (AEP): Removal of student from general campus for either interim or permanent placement into a separate school campus based on dangerous behaviors (e.g., carrying of weapons; Etscheidt, 2006).

Antecedent: Events or settings that are present or occur before a challenging behavior (Barnhill, 2005).

Behavior intervention plan (BIP): Individualized plan developed by a school team to reduce challenging behaviors, improve social performance, and reduce educational barriers for students with challenging behaviors (Benazzi, Horner, & Good, 2006).

Behavioral specialist: Professional trained in the instructional and behavioral needs of students with emotional/behavioral difficulties (Benazzi et al., 2006).

Consequence: Reinforcing event or object that is contingent upon the use of a challenging behavior (Barnhill, 2005).

Emotional/behavioral disorder: Collection of maladaptive and distressing behaviors, emotions, and thoughts that is qualitatively different from normality (Cullinan, 2004).

Functional behavioral assessment: Process with a purpose of understanding the relationship between behavior and the surrounding environment (Scott & Kamps, 2007).
**General education teacher:** Classroom teachers who teach the basic curriculum outside of the special education setting (Mercer & Mercer, 1993).

**Individual education plan (IEP):** Plan developed by a committee which outlines the plan (i.e., outcomes, curriculum, teachers’ responsibilities, schedule, and setting) that facilitates instruction for an individual student (Mercer & Mercer, 1993).

**Manifestation determination:** Process used to determine whether a student’s disability impaired his or her judgment and understanding of the consequences for their challenging behavior (Knoster, 2000).

**Para-educators:** School personnel who are trained to assist professional teachers with diagnostic support, instruction, behavior management, classroom organization and may be assigned to a class or individual students (Etscheidt, 2005).

**Positive behavior supports (PBS):** General term used to describe the application of positive behavioral interventions used to achieve and maintain the teaching of pro-social behaviors (Sugai & Lewis, 1999).

**Special education teacher:** Professional teacher trained to deliver academic and/or behavioral instruction, services and assessments to students with disabilities (Mercer & Mercer, 1993).
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review focused on the analysis of inclusion of the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997 (USDE, 1997), the FBA process, recent investigations into the empirical validity and reliability of the FBA, and the practice of the FBA in the positive behavior support (PBS) school model as well as its application toward students in the general population. Although the FBA stipulation was designed to meet the situational needs of any student with disabilities who exhibits severe misconduct, the literature review examines implications for students with emotional/behavioral disorders (E/BD) as the specific population due to their frequent involvement with severe disciplinary actions. The timeframe of the literature review is based on professional journal articles, ERIC database and scholarly works published within the 1997-2008 timeframe.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997

The FBA is described as a collaborative effort by the student’s individual education plan (IEP) team (Jolivette, Barton-Arwood, & Scott, 2000) to examine the multiple dynamics that contribute to or set the occasion for demonstration of challenging behaviors. In the FBA, the IEP team examines the challenging behavior in terms of a three-component relationship through an empirically based methodology. The components include: (a) the events or environment preceding the immediate
demonstration of the behavior (i.e., antecedents), (b) the behavior established in terms of a quantifiable and observable definition (i.e., target behavior) and (c) the events or rewards that reinforce the continued use of the challenging behavior (i.e., consequences) by the student. A well-implemented FBA can result in the development of hypotheses to explain the function (i.e., reason) of the challenging behavior, which the IEP team can utilize to develop a BIP to address the target behavior (Asmus, Vollmer, & Borrero, 2002).

FBA Stipulation in IDEA 1997

While IDEA 1997 incorporated several revisions to meet the needs of all students with disabilities and continued the guarantee of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), the nature of the revisions reflected a shift from the accessibility of quality education to an increased accountability for academic instruction, positive interventions, and strategies and supports, all of which yield positive academic and behavioral outcomes (Gresham et al., 2004; Hendrickson, Gable, Conroy, Fox, & Smith, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001). Accordingly, the FBA was explicitly stipulated in IDEA to meet the unique needs of students with E/BD based on its foundation of scientific methodology (Fox & Gable, 2004; Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001; Olympia, Heathfield, Jenson, & Clark, 2002; Packenham, Shute, & Reid, 2004), validity (Crimmins & Farrell, 2006), and reliability (Burke, Hagan-Burke, & Sugai, 2003; Hoff, Ervin, & Friman, 2005; Ingram, Lewis-Palmer,
Paradigm Shift in IDEA 1997

In the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, several key changes in the educational legislation reflected a progressive shift for the public education system and students with disabilities. Previous legislative versions of IDEA (e.g., IDEA, 1990; USDE, 1990) concentrated on the accessibility and FAPE for students with disabilities to ensure all students were receiving an education individually designed to meet their needs, regardless of the disability. However, as the barriers to accessibility and FAPE became less prevalent, the professional focus shifted to increased higher quality, standards-based education (Gresham et al., 2004; Hendrickson et al., 1999; Quinn et al., 2001; Yell & Shriner, 1997). Hendrickson and associates described several of the changes to IDEA, which substantially changed the academic environment for students with disabilities. Notably, the 1997 legislation introduced the inclusion of a general educator on the student’s IEP team, required reference of the student’s goals/objectives to the general curriculum, and stipulated the provision of a transition plan, if appropriate, for the student at age 14. Additionally to-date, the emphasis on educational accountability has been reinforced by subsequent educational legislation such as IDEA 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act, 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
In addition to general practices and protocol for all students with disabilities, the 1997 reauthorization specifically stipulated actions for students with E/BD and the demonstration of disruptive and/or dangerous misconduct in the learning environment (Gable et al., 2003; Gresham et al., 2004; Hendrickson et al., 1999; Nelson, Roberts, Rutherford, Mathur, & Aaroe, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001; Yell & Shriner, 1997). Prior to 1997, students with disabilities, particularly those with E/BD, who exhibited disruptive and/or dangerous behavior were penalized with disciplinary actions (e.g., suspension, expulsion) that often were punitive in nature with little, if any, legitimate intervention to reduce the behaviors. However, both IDEA 1997 and 2004 now stipulate the use of proactive interventions, such as the FBA and an appropriate BIP.

Impetus for Disciplinary Provisions in IDEA 1997

Yell & Shriner (1997) described the FBA stipulation in IDEA as the result of concerns by school administrators brought before Congress during the drafting sessions of the legislation. School administrators described the difficulties in establishing a balance between creating a safe, conducive environment for all students while recognizing and serving the individual needs of a disruptive student with E/BD. IDEA established a protocol for school administrators to follow when working with students with E/BD who are exhibiting chronic, challenging behaviors in the school environment. The legislation allows school administrators to discipline students with E/BD in the same manner as students
without disabilities but with key differences. Specifically, school administrators may remove the student with E/BD from the educational environment, either through change of placement or suspension, for no more than a total of 10 school days within an academic year. Additionally, in accordance with public and professional concern for school safety, IDEA created provisions for the immediate removal of a student with E/BD from the general campus upon the possession of or use of weapons and/or controlled substances for a maximum of 45 school days in an academic year.

With the exception of high-stakes circumstances (i.e., weapon and/or controlled substance possession), Quinn and associates (2001) discussed the stipulated disciplinary protocol for students with E/BD under IDEA 1997. Students with E/BD who have exhibited challenging and disruptive behaviors in the academic environment and have received disciplinary actions leading to the removal from campus (e.g., suspension) exceeding a total of 10 occurrences require school professionals to conduct a FBA. The FBA is stipulated as a means to proactively address challenging behaviors by developing a professional and methodical understanding of the function of the behavior and the likely antecedents and consequences supporting the continued demonstration rather than delivering punitive consequences (Drasgow, Yell, Bradley, & Shriner, 1999; Gresham et al., 2001; Kennedy, 2002).

In addition to the view on disciplinary actions, Drasgow and associates (1999) postulated the stipulation of the FBA as a reflection of the growing professional philosophy to investigate
and address the function of challenging behaviors with positive interventions rather than through punitive, negative consequences. The authors proposed that the professional drive for the inclusion of the FBA in IDEA was based on several philosophical and empirical facts, including: challenging behaviors serve a function, the goal of education is intervention and not simply behavior reduction, challenging behaviors do not exist outside the influence of environmental or humanistic factors, and behavioral interventions should reflect lifestyle changes to enhance student lives. In regards to the last point made by Drasgow and associates, several authors (e.g., Artesani & Mallar, 1998; Asmus et al., 2002; Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Feinstein, 2003; Fox & Gable, 2004; Gresham et al., 2004; Hendley, 2007; Ingram et al., 2005; Jolivette, Barton-Arwood, & Scott, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Peterson, Derby, Berg, & Horner, 2002; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott & Eber, 2003) also found that agreement on the goal of behavioral intervention is education, not only as a means to simply reduce or eliminate challenging behaviors but to teach students with E/BD socially acceptable behaviors that will enhance lives and increase access and positive interaction in the community.

Overview of FBA

The FBA process itself has a clinical history in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) as it relegates all behavior into a quantifiable, measurable and predictable relationship based on preceding events and reinforcing consequences (i.e., A-B-C
relationship; Ellis & Magee, 1999; Fox & Gable, 2004; Gable et al., 2003; Gresham et al., 2001; Lewis, Lewis-Palmer, Newcomer, & Stichter, 2004). Asmus et al. (2002) reviewed the developmental research of the FBA by Carr (1977) and indicated the operant functions of challenging behavior serve one of three possibilities: attention/acquisition, escape/avoidance, and sensory reinforcement. Additionally, Carr’s research demonstrated that professionals can accurately identify the function of the target behavior across various environments (e.g., schools, homes, hospitals) when the FBA is conducted properly. However, the authors noted the clinical significance of Carr’s work served more to recognize the importance of identifying the underlying cause of challenging behavior rather than delivering punitive consequences in the hopes of extinguishing the behavior—a professional philosophy, which is evident in the respective amendments in IDEA 1997.

**FBA Process**

The professional understanding of accurately identifying the function of a challenging behavior is critical in the FBA philosophy. The FBA process itself requires multi-method strategies and key collaboration. Gresham et al. (2001) described the FBA process as a gathering process of critical data and information on antecedents and consequences in order to determine the function of the challenging behavior. Once the function of the challenging behavior has been determined and proven accurate, the IEP team can then take steps to create a BIP to address the
challenging behavior and introduce a more appropriate behavior as a replacement.

While the A-B-C relationship is comprised of three components, the accurate determination of each of the corresponding components is a meticulous process involving the entire IEP team. Several authors (Burke et al., 2003; Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Davis & Conroy, 1999; Fox & Gable, 2004; Gresham et al., 2001; Ingram et al., 2005; Kinch, Lewis-Palmer, Hagan-Burke, & Sugai, 2001; Hoff et al., 2005; Murdock et al., 2005; Mueller et al., 2005; Packenham et al., 2004; Olympia et al., 2002; Quinn et al., 2001; Ryan, Halsey, & Matthews, 2003) described the FBA process in slightly different degrees, however, remained in agreement to the FBA process consisting of three fundamental stages. Fox and Gable (2004) detailed the three stages: indirect assessment, direct assessment and hypothesis testing. Each stage successively builds upon the data and information from the previous stage. Indirect assessment involves the collection of data and information from existing data bases and soliciting reports through interviews from school professionals, parents, peers, and the student him- or herself. The data collected during the indirect stage allows the IEP team to clearly identify and define the challenging behavior in operational terms, thus establishing the target behavior for change.

Olympia and associates (2002) discussed the direct stage as significant in that it allows the professional to observe the target behavior in specific, measurable and quantifiable terms.
The direct stage takes the data collected from the indirect stage and provides an observable basis to measure the target behavior and derive an extensive, detailed description. The target behavior can then be measured in terms of frequency, intensity, and shape in the environment of its occurrence, such as the classroom or home. Additionally, the direct assessment stage allows different individuals from the IEP team to observe, rate, and reach an inter-observer agreement about the target behavior using a behavior rating instrument (e.g., behavior rating scale; Elliott & Busse, 2004).

In the third stage, the IEP team evaluates the data, information and observation of the target behavior, and develops a hypothesis regarding the function of the target behavior. The IEP team evaluates the antecedents that are in existence immediately prior to the demonstration of the target behavior. Antecedents can create the conditions for the student to utilize the target behavior to serve the function of attention, escape, or sensory reinforcement. Upon demonstration of the target behavior, the IEP team evaluates the possible consequences that reinforce the continued utilization of the target behavior by the student, thus increasing the likelihood of the same behavior in the future. Once the IEP team has established a hypothesis that supports and correlates the antecedents, behavior, and consequence into a relationship with face validity, the IEP team can design and implement a BIP to address the target behavior and teach a replacement behavior (Fox & Gable, 2004; Gresham et al., 2001; Kennedy, 2002; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004; Olympia et al.,
Additionally, in order to sustain the long-lasting behavioral changes and reinforce newly learned behaviors, the school environment must make certain that positive supports (both implicit and explicit) are evident throughout the student’s daily interactions in order ensure the behavioral maintenance of the replacement behaviors (Gresham et al., 2004; Liaupsin, Jolivette, & Scott, 2004; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott & Eber, 2003).

**IEP Team Collaboration**

While the process of an appropriately conducted FBA can be tedious, several authors recognized the significance of professional collaboration in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the hypothesis and its ensuing BIP (Asmus et al., 2002; Burke et al., 2003; Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Drasgow et al., 1999; Fox & Gable, 2004; Gresham et al., 2001; Hendrickson et al., 1999; Hoff et al., 2005; Jolivette et al., 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Murdock et al., 2005; Olympia et al., 2002; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004; Peterson, 2002; Peterson et al., 2002; Quinn et al., 2001; Scott & Caron, 2002; Scott & Eber, 2003; Yell & Shriner, 1997). Peterson and associates discussed the ideal and advantageous approach to involving all members of the student’s IEP team. During the indirect and direct assessment phase of the FBA, data collection and information gathering can span across various environments (e.g., difference classes) and can involve a variety of individual people (e.g., teachers, para-educators,
peers) as a means to deliver an accurate portrayal of the antecedents, behavior, and reinforcing consequences.

In addition to school professionals, parents are a critical part of the IEP team and can offer information on antecedent events that do not necessarily occur immediately before the target behavior (i.e., distant events), which may not otherwise be included in the data collection. Distant events can create conditions for the target behavior to occur with little relevance to the immediate environment. Distant events can include domestic problems, disrupted sleep patterns or medication effects among others. Additionally, continued involvement by the parents after the conclusion of the FBA and the implementation of the BIP is just as critical as parents can provide information on the progress of the BIP with the student at home. Parental collaboration can provide the IEP team opportunities to evaluate and refine the BIP as necessary. Furthermore, Peterson and associates (2002) described the significance of continued parental involvement as not only critical to the FBA process in the immediate term but can help teach both the parents and the student necessary skills to problem-solve in the future; all of which serve the underlying philosophy of the FBA and positive behavioral supports.

Empirical Research on the FBA

The IDEA 1997 stipulation for the use of the FBA has sparked professional research into the application of the process across various populations and environments. However, while the FBA
process itself has been recognized for its scientific basis in ABA, there have been several authors (e.g., Fox & Gable, 2004; Kennedy, 2002; Kern, Hilt, & Gresham, 2004; Kinch et al., 2001; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004; Shriver, Anderson, & Proctor, 2001; Test & Rose, 1990) that have investigated the grounds of validity and reliability, all of whom have found issues worthy of recognition and concern.

Issues of Validity and Reliability

With the inclusion of the FBA process in the development of a data-driven BIP, many education professionals have recognized the significant pragmatic and philosophical contributions the FBA process has brought to the field of special education, particularly to students with E/BD (Artesani, & Mallar, 1998; Asmus et al., 2002; Burke et al., 2003; Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Drasgow et al., 1999; Feinstein, 2003; Fox & Davis, 2005; Gresham et al., 2004; Hendrickson et al., 1999; Ingram et al., 2005; Jolivette et al., 2000; Liaupsin, Umbreit, Ferro, Urso, & Upreti, 2006; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004; Peterson et al., 2002; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott & Eber, 2003). The FBA stipulation helped encourage the professional philosophy of positive behavioral interventions, supports and strategies as well as recognize the nature of the E/BD in general. However, while the FBA process itself has been accepted and encouraged by many professional organizations, there are various concerns that continue to be evaluated as to the validity of the FBA process (Fox & Gable,
Fox & Gable (2004) discussed the validity and reliability of the FBA process. Based on their point of view, various components and the nature of the implementation can significantly alter the integrity of the FBA process. They do not question the FBA process, but the nature of the implementation which may threaten its accuracy. Accordingly, the FBA process is strongly dependent on the integrity of the data collection instruments and the method of hypothesis testing. With regards to the A-B-C relationship as the underlying principle of the FBA process, educational researchers have accepted the FBA on face validity—meaning the observational relationship between the antecedents, behavior and consequence serve as indicators that the process can offer a measurable validation for the target behavior. Although face observation can serve as one measure of validity, it is not "...an unequivocal demonstration of validity" (Fox & Gable, 2004, p. 154). As the authors suggest, validation requires a side-by-side comparison of an intervention based on the A-B-C relationship derived from the FBA and an intervention that is not based on the FBA.

Ingram and associates (2005) researched the validity of interventions based on FBA-derived information versus interventions based on nonFBA-derived information. In the investigation, the authors evaluated intervention plans developed for two participant students with challenging behaviors based on collected information. One student’s intervention plan was based
on information derived from the FBA process and the other student’s intervention plan was based on a competing (nonFBA-based) methodology. The two participant students had similar histories of challenging behaviors and were recommended for behavioral assistance. The authors described the necessary procedures to counter-balance and account for various factors in the information collection process as well as the development of the intervention plans. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the authors found the FBA process to be more time-consuming, effortful and complicated than the nonFBA process as well as both interventions having demonstrated immediate reductions in target behaviors. However, the intervention based on the FBA information yielded an intervention that reduced the target behavior in the long-term observation with less frequent number of occasioned momentary increases (i.e., spikes in behavior), while the intervention based on nonFBA information demonstrated the target behavior at constant higher levels; all of which reinforced the validity of FBA-based interventions versus nonFBA-based interventions.

In regards to reliability, Fox and Gable (2004) described the FBA process as one which may be evaluated in two manners: the reliability between the observers during the direct assessment stage and the varying circumstances in which the FBA process clearly indicated the function(s) of the target behavior. During the direct assessment stage, different IEP team members observed the student and the proposed A-B-C relationship. In order to quantify the identified target behavior and the nature of the
antecedents and consequences, the FBA process required the use of a behavior rating instrument. The observer records the various features of the target behavior (e.g., frequency, intensity) and the IEP team then compared the level of agreement among the various observers. A higher level of agreement between the observers yielded a more reliable A-B-C hypothesis in the FBA process (Elliott & Busse, 2004; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004; Olympia et al., 2002). However, as Fox and Gable discussed, while the rating agreement between observers is critical, the behavior rating instrument should have a previously demonstrated level of reliability to ensure observers are using an instrument with strong reliability and validity; a weak instrument can misconstrue and reduce the reliability of the FBA process itself.

Conceptual Understanding by Professionals

In addition to empirical validity and reliability, the FBA also requires comprehensive professional understanding for the process to accurate and effective. Nelson and associates (1999) discussed how the lack of professional knowledge, improper training and experience with the FBA process among school professionals has created barriers to its appropriate implementation. In their investigation, the authors surveyed various school professionals in both special and general education sectors, including classroom teachers, school psychologists and school administrators. The majority of the surveyed population agreed upon the idealistic principles of the FBA process; however, there was generally little agreement upon
the practicality of implementation in everyday school settings, citing tremendous planning and intensive collaboration.

Additionally, several authors (e.g., Quinn et al., 2001; Scott, Meers, & Nelson, 2000) cautioned the lack of proper FBA training and awareness can serve as a significant barrier against the FBA process being appropriately conducted. The authors described a gap of research-to-practice that exists in public education. The research-to-practice gap has resulted in the lack of clear consensus among FBA experts and indicates the need for a standardized approach to conducting the FBA.

FBA Usage in the Positive Behavioral Support Model

The stipulated use of the FBA in IDEA 1997 requires school administrators to use the process as a means to develop a data-driven intervention for challenging behaviors prior to the delivery of severe disciplinary action. Unfortunately, the FBA process is often used as a final resort before the removal of a student with E/BD from the general campus. However, the nature of the FBA process has a wider application aside from the use stipulated in IDEA. The PBS school model incorporates the FBA process in all three tiers of school structure as both a preventative and intervention process.
**PBS School Model**

The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (2008) has defined the PBS model as an academic environment built upon the principles and practices of positive behavioral strategies. In the PBS model school, the campus population is divided into three tiers of behavioral expectations and professionally driven supports (i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary). Each tier specified as host environments that adopt and sustain practices that teach and encourage positive behaviors for different students. The PBS model addresses the explicit objective of a school-wide discipline system that teaches, maintains and reinforces pro-social student and teacher skills (Liaupsin et al., 2004; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott & Eber, 2003).

In the discussion by Scott and Eber (2003), the first tier (i.e., primary tier) encompasses the entire school population and is estimated to meet the needs of 80%-90% of the student population through the use of positive strategies and preventative measures to facilitate student success. The primary tier is designed to teach students specific pro-social skills for use both within the school and in the community. The secondary tier is designed to meet the needs of students requiring additional assistance to achieve academic and social success. It is estimated that this involves about 5%-15% of the student population. Students requiring the additional assistance are referred to the secondary tier to meet with school professionals in either individual or small group settings. Within the
secondary tier, school professionals meet to assess and determine the individual needs of the student and develop an appropriate social/behavioral intervention with opportunities for re-evaluation and refinement. Finally, the PBS model delivers services in the tertiary tier which is reserved to address the needs of students with complex and chronic problems. The tertiary tier allows for the collaboration of key stakeholders as a means to deliver an intense and effortful approach for students whom have yet to successfully respond to the preceding tiers and require specific, individualized attention. The tertiary tier addresses an estimated 1% of the student population.

FBA Use in the PBS School Model

Several authors (e.g., Artesani & Mallar, 1998; Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Feinstein, 2003; Gresham et al., 2004; Hendley, 2007; Liaupsin et al., 2004; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; McKinney, Campbell-Whatley, & Kea, 2005; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott & Eber, 2003) recognized the significance of the PBS model and philosophy as a more proactive means to prevent intensive, challenging behaviors prior to their escalation. The PBS model, whether implemented school-wide or within classrooms, has demonstrated that the proactive approach to challenging behaviors tends to reduce the behaviors with longer-lasting results as well as provide the opportunity to teach students appropriate replacement behaviors. In regards to the use of the FBA, the PBS model utilizes the process as both a preventative means and as an intervention.
The FBA process is indicative of the methodical, positive philosophy that makes up the PBS school model, which makes the process a fitting component within the three-tier school (Gresham et al., 2004; Scott & Caron, 2005). Scott and Caron discussed the use of the FBA process as a preventative practice as well as an intervention within the PBS school model. They see the FBA process as a predictive model for foreseeable problematic behavior, "the heart of FBA is the identification of predictable relationships between factors in the environment and the behaviors of groups of individuals in the school" (p. 14). The use of the FBA process as a predictive model can serve students within the primary tier of the PBS school and substantially prevent challenging behaviors before escalation. Educators, when trained appropriately, can identify the A-B-C relationships within minor problematic behaviors before worsening to challenging behaviors which may warrant the need for the secondary or tertiary tier of intervention.

Packenham et al. (2004) as well as others (e.g., Symons, McDonald, & Wehby, 1998) discussed the use of a truncated version of the FBA process as an equally effective approach with students whose needs are not as intense as those within the tertiary tier of the PBS model. The authors discussed the use of a truncated FBA process, which maintained the stages of assessment within the scope of a small number of individuals and with non-disabled students, which would serve as a problem-solving intervention prior to escalating, more intensive interventions. The
investigation found the truncated version of the FBA resulted in valuable data, which resulted in better, more successful BIPs.

FBA Implementation in the General Student Population

While the IDEA 1997 provision stated the primary focus of the FBA was to assist students with special needs, the FBA has found an emerging acceptance as an assistance and information tool for all students, regardless of disability or background. Considering the FBA is based on the principles of ABA, many educators have found the FBA to be extremely useful in student assistance teams and pre-referral committees, such as Child Study Teams (CST) (Fesmire, Lisner, Forrest, & Evans, 2003), Student Support Teams (SST) (Scott, Liaupsin, Nelson, & Jovilette, 2003) as well as incorporated into the PBS school model for all students (Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; McKinney et al., 2005; Scott & Caron, 2005; Scott et al., 2005; Walker, Cheney, Stage, Blum, & Horner, 2005).

Several authors (e.g., Fesmire et al., 2003; Lee & Jamison, 2003; Scott et al., 2003; Sterling-Turner, Robinson, & Wilczynski, 2001) discussed the use of the FBA as another approach to assist non-disabled students who are experiencing challenging behaviors in the general classroom. The FBA process can be used to assist students of all backgrounds and needs, who demonstrate challenging behaviors in the class as the result of situational stressors. The use of the FBA by a SST has shown effectively and systematically to assist the student and address the challenging behaviors through the collaborative effort.
between educators, parents, and the student.

Summary

In the reauthorization of IDEA 1997, the federal legislation demonstrated a shift of professional philosophy. While the earlier mandates of special education concentrated on the accessibility to an appropriate education and civil rights, IDEA 1997 advocated for a raise in accountability of instruction and related practices. Additionally, as the knowledge base of the categorical disabilities has grown, education professionals have become more aware and knowledgeable of the nature of each specific disability.

In accordance with professional understanding, educational professionals recognize the nature of E/BD and the impact it can have on daily social and academic behaviors of a student. Students with E/BD have typically received the most stringent disciplinary actions, often in excess when compared with their non-disabled peers. The stipulated use of the FBA was designated to establish a balance to a common problem for school administrators by creating a safe school environment while concurrently meeting the needs of students with E/BD. Public opinion places a heavy emphasis on safety policies in schools, such as the implementation of "zero tolerance" for weapons, violence and controlled substances. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the disability, students with E/BD have an increased likelihood to exhibit or experience such dangerous behaviors, which often result in excessive removal from the school setting.
and educational opportunities.

The FBA, when implemented appropriately, can deliver a data-driven understanding of why the challenging or dangerous behaviors are occurring and provide valid and reliable information to school professionals to facilitate the design of an intervention to replace the behaviors. By conducting a FBA, school professionals can not only deliver an intervention to reduce the behaviors and teach socially valid replacement behaviors, but concurrently create a safer school environment. However, the FBA is not a simplistic solution; rather it is an effortful, complicated, and intensely collaborative process that requires professional and philosophical commitment by all stakeholders.

In best practice scenarios, the FBA would be utilized as a preventative process or early intervention to address potentially challenging behaviors before any escalation has an opportunity to occur. In following the IDEA stipulation, the FBA is often practiced as a last resort before permanent removal of the student from campus. While the complete FBA process does not necessarily need to be conducted in all early prevention or intervention cases, the fundamental concept of the A-B-C relationship has demonstrated a distinct utility on smaller scales, which may serve students in all levels of academic environments rather than as a last resort. Additionally, the underlying philosophy of the FBA falls into the line of ethical education practices. The FBA process does not merely seek to solely reduce challenging behaviors but rather the process
provides the opportunity for educational professionals to teach replacement behaviors that will better serve the student and the community in the long-term.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Chapter 3 discusses the proposed methodology to be used in the investigation, including: (a) instrument and measurement, (b) target population and sample selection, (c) data collection, and (d) data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency and the quality of the implementation of the FBA process as an early intervention for students exhibiting challenging behaviors. While federal legislation has stipulated the use of the FBA process, there have been relatively few investigations on the frequency and quality of the implementation of FBA in professional literature. There are various factors and individuals involved in the FBA, which differ dramatically from location and setting and can impact the implementation of the process.

Research Questions

Five research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1: Who are the types of education professionals/para-educators who participate in the FBA process as an active member of the IEP team?

Research Question 2: In what ways has the FBA process been used as a form of early intervention during the initial stages of challenging behaviors?
Research Question 3: What was the typical (average) length of time in which a FBA has been conducted (from planning to hypothesis development)?

Research Question 4: In what ways did the data from the FBA result in a specific function (i.e., reason) for the challenging behavior?

Research Question 5: What was the source and extent of professional/formal training on the FBA process for each team member?

Instrument and Measurement

Sample

The target population was education professionals/para-educators who work with students with E/BD in either a public school or clinical setting. The sample participants were selected from a directory of recent attendees of events sponsored by the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD), a division of Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). The participants received an e-mailed invitation with information on the study and the website address of the survey. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Based on the sample population database, participants received an electronic mail message (i.e., e-mail) describing the purpose of the study and a hyperlinked invitation to participate in the survey. Participants were able to view the survey via any personal computer meeting the minimum technological requirements with an Internet connection. Upon reading the questions, participants were asked to indicate their responses by clicking
on the appropriate button. Additionally, the final survey item contained an open text box section in which participants were able to enter additional comments. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were able to click the submit button to forward the completed survey to a database which was hosted on a University of North Texas (UNT) server.

Data Analysis

Upon the close of the survey, participant responses were collected and exported to a computerized spreadsheet and entered into a computer application for statistical analysis. A comparative analysis examined (a) the responses by participants on the professionals involved in the FBA process, (b) the likelihood of the FBA used as an early intervention, (c) the typical length of time for a FBA to be conducted, (d) the use of the data from the FBA and an identified function, and (e) the source and extent of professional/formal training on the FBA process. Additionally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine any possible relationships or associations between items in the demographic section of the survey (e.g., number of years working in the field of education, current role in education).
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

The study reported herein was conducted with the intent of investigating the experiences of educators regarding the implementation and quality of the functional behavioral assessment (FBA). The data were collected through an Internet survey and was supplemented with follow-up telephone interviews with randomly chosen participants. The sample population is representative of recent attendees of events sponsored by the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD), a division of Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

Demographic Information

In order to establish a better understanding of the data results of the survey and interviews, demographic data are provided. A total of 80 participants responded to the online survey and a total of 3 participants were interviewed via the telephone.

Professional Knowledge of FBA

Participants were asked to provide a self-rating on their own level of FBA understanding and competence. Overall, 49 (61%) participants self-rated as very knowledgeable, 22 (28%) participants self-rated as having a working knowledge, 6 (8%) participants self-rated as having a limited knowledge, and 1 (1%) participant self-rated as having no knowledge. Additionally, 2
participants self-rated as having no opinion or would prefer not to self-rate. Table 1 delineates the self-rating responses.

Table 1

**Self-Rating of FBA Knowledge and Competency (n=80)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Rating Level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not have any knowledge/information about FBA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have limited knowledge about FBA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a working knowledge about FBA</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very knowledgeable about FBA</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organizational and Environmental Setting**

Participants were asked to share demographic information related to their current work setting based on population type, geography, and size of student enrollment at both the local and organizational level. Twenty-seven (34%) participants responded as working at the elementary level, 20 (25%) participants worked at the secondary level and 33 (41%) worked on special campuses, which encompassed all grade levels. Table 2 delineates the campus setting according to grade levels serviced.

Table 2

**Campus According to Grade Levels Serviced (n=80)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Campus According to Grade Levels</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school campus</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school campus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special campus</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of participants, 61 (76%), responded as working at a publically funded campus. Four (5%) worked at a private organization and 15 (19%) participants worked at a special campus, funded through a combination of means. Table 3 provides the listing of campus types.

Table 3
Type of Campus Setting According to Funding (n=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Campus</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public school campus</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school campus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special school campus</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to describe the geographic location of their work setting. Nineteen (24%) participants reported as working in a rural setting, 36 (45%) participants listed their work location as suburban, while 25 (31%) listed their work location as an urban setting (See Table 4).

Table 4
Geographic Location of Campuses (n=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Locations</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural location</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban location</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban location</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 5 and 6 describe the number of students enrolled at both the immediate and organizational level for each of the participants. Participants were asked to estimate the number of
students enrolled at their immediate campus (i.e., daily work setting) and of their organization (e.g., school district).

Table 5

*Student Enrollment on Immediate Campus (n=80)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students Enrolled</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 50 students enrolled</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 51 - 99 students enrolled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 100 - 499 students enrolled</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 500 - 999 students enrolled</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1,000 - 2,000 students enrolled</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2,000 students enrolled</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Student Enrollment in Organization (n=80)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students Enrolled</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 1,000 students enrolled</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1,001 - 4,999 students enrolled</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5,000 - 10,000 students enrolled</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10,001 - 50,000 students enrolled</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50,000 students enrolled</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Experience

Overall, participants had a considerable number of years of experience in the education field. As represented in Table 7, the majority of participants, 55 (69%), responded as having more than ten years of experience. Fifteen (19%) participants responded as having six to ten years of experience, eight (10%) participants
had two to five years of experience, and two (2%) participants had less than one year in the field.

Table 7
Number of Years of Experience in Education (n=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the participants were employed in a variety of current work positions in the field. Table 8 lists the participants according to their current work position: three (4%) were administrators (e.g., campus principal); thirteen (17%) were ancillary personnel (e.g., school psychologists); eight (10%) were educational consultants, and one (1%) was a school counselor. Seventeen (22%) participants were special education teachers and thirty-seven (46%) responded with their work position as other.

Table 8
Participant Current Work Positions (n=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Services Personnel</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Professional</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Consultant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education Teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Data and Discussion

The aforementioned demographics are informational and only serve to complement the data accrued in regards to the five research questions. The next section will examine the data accrued in relation to the five research questions.

Research Question 1: Who are the types of education professionals/para-educators who participate in the FBA process as an active member of the IEP team?

As noted in Table 9, the participants were provided a list of common education personnel often involved with the FBA process. Typically, special education personnel and ancillary personnel (e.g., school psychologists, assessment personnel) are involved with the FBA process due to the fact the stipulation of the FBA is required under federal special education legislation. The responses provided by the participants reflected a diverse range of personnel involved in the process, including the parent and the student him/herself.

Table 9
Indicators Involved in the FBA Process (n=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position or Role</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Services Personnel</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Paraeducator</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were also asked to select the individual typically charged with managing the FBA process (i.e., FBA case coordinators). Often, ancillary personnel (e.g., school psychologists, behavioral interventionists) and special education teachers are the coordinators for the FBA process for a student due to the additional training in behavioral interventions and knowledge of special education resources and legislation. The responses by the participants reflected this practice, which is listed in Table 10.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals Designated as Coordinators for FBA Process (n=80)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position of FBA Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Services Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the identification of specific professionals involved in a FBA, participants were asked to rate the general likelihood of a FBA being conducted on their immediate campus with "best practice" measures (e.g., adequate planning,
consistent implementation, periodic re-evaluation for progress). ANOVA summary tables were compiled to identify differences between likelihood ratings of FBA best practice and individuals involved, school settings, grade levels services, and the size of both the immediate campus and organization. The results demonstrated only one area of statistical significance, the type of campus (i.e., elementary, secondary, and special) with the rating of the likelihood of a FBA/BIP being conducted under best practices had a .039 level of significance. The results of the ANOVA calculations are listed in Table 11. Generally, participants who have served on a FBA team on an elementary campus rated the likelihood of a FBA being conducted under best practice higher than those participants who have served on a secondary or special campus.

Table 11

ANOVA Summary Table for FBA/BIP Rating and Campus Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Campus</td>
<td>14.270</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.757</td>
<td>2.986</td>
<td>.039*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Level of significance is set at .05.

Research Question 2: In what ways has the FBA process been used as a form of early intervention during the initial stages of challenging behaviors?

The reduction and replacement of challenging behaviors can often be developed through a variety of means, such as individual or group counseling, peer or adult role modeling or through the delivery of wraparound services (Barnhill, 2005; Kauffman, 2005; Sugai & Lewis, 1999). The likelihood of FBA being utilized in the
early stages of the display of challenging behaviors is dependent on the individual campus and the IEP committee. Participant responses, as delineated in Table 12, demonstrate a majority of IEP committees often consider the use of the FBA as an early intervention.

However, in regards to students with more escalated, violent behaviors, the participant responses indicated the FBA is typically reserved as a last resort. The last resort option is indicative that IEP teams are following the stipulation in IDEA of utilizing the FBA prior to a student’s removal from campus. Table 12 also lists the likelihood of IEP committees to use the FBA as a last resort intervention according to participant responses.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood of the FBA Used as:</th>
<th>Early Intervention</th>
<th>Last Resort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>13 16</td>
<td>14 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unlikely</td>
<td>10 13</td>
<td>16 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>4 5</td>
<td>7 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat likely</td>
<td>26 32</td>
<td>21 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most likely</td>
<td>27 34</td>
<td>22 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 3: What was the typical (average) length of time in which a FBA has been conducted (from planning to hypothesis development)?

As delineated in Table 13, responses provided by the participants described the majority of FBA cases conducted as typically lasting longer than one school week from planning to hypothesis agreement. However, a significant number of participants responded, "I don’t know" to the question thus leaving room for further investigation as to the normative timeline of the FBA process on school campuses.

Table 13

Approximate Length of Time to Complete Typical FBA (n=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximation in 5-day School Week</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one (1) school week</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately one (1) school week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one (1) school week</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4: In what ways did the data from the FBA result in a specific function (i.e., reason) for the challenging behavior?

The majority of participant responses indicated that the FBA cases in which they had participated resulted in a definitive hypothesis to explain the function of the challenging behavior (i.e., target behavior). Collectively, the participants strongly indicated all or mostly all of the FBA cases resulted in an accurate hypothesis. Only three (3) individuals indicated that not a single FBA case resulted in an accurate hypothesis to
describe the function of the challenging behavior. The responses are listed in Table 14.

Table 14

**FBA Cases Resulting in an Accurately Identified Function (n=80)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximation of Accuracy</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the FBA cases</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the FBA cases</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the FBA cases</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 5: What was the source and extent of professional/formal training on the FBA process for each team member?

Participants were asked to list the sources of their formal training and/or formal instruction on FBA. As listed in Table 15, 42 (53%) participants received formal instruction on the FBA process as a one-time topic in a college course. As well, 43 (54%) participants reported formal instruction provided at district/regional levels and 25 (31%) participants listed FBA training at the local school level; 48 (60%) participants listed self-initiated research as a source of professional development on FBA.

Table 15

**Sources of FBA Instruction/Professional Development (n=80)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of FBA Instruction</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal college courses</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District/-Regional-level staff development</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, as noted in Table 16, only 4 (5%) participants responded as having no formal professional development on FBA provided by any source. Participants responded as having multiple, concurrent sources of FBA training (see Table 16).

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Concurrent Sources of FBA Instruction</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One source</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two sources</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three sources</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four sources</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (0) sources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Telephone Interviews

Upon conclusion of the online survey, all participants were offered an opportunity to identify themselves as a person of contact for a telephone interview to elaborate upon their responses in the online survey. Seventeen individuals volunteered as being willing to participate in a telephone interview. Additionally, all of the 17 participants self-identified as either having "a working knowledge of the FBA process" or "being very knowledgeable of the FBA process."

The 17 participants were assigned a number from 1 - 17 and using a random numerator instrument (Haahr, 2008), three
participants were randomly selected as interviewees. Each of the interviewees was contacted with a preliminary e-mail informing them of their selection and with a specific date and time for the telephone interview. Upon agreement to the telephone interview, each interview was conducted via telephone using a standard script with the identification of the investigator, purpose of the study, confidentiality clause, and three questions on their professional experience with the FBA process. Each interview lasted approximately seven to ten minutes. The telephone interview script and interview transcripts for each interviewee may be found in Appendices B and C respectively.

Interviewee A

Interviewee A, a female special education teacher in Oklahoma, worked primarily as a high school teacher in a mathematics resource classroom for students identified with disabilities. Interviewee A serviced a total of 60 students in Grades 11 and 12 and served as individual education plan (IEP) case manager for each student.

In the discussion, Interviewee A had little experience with the FBA process as an early intervention for challenging behaviors; rather, she described the FBA as a formality prior to a student’s removal from campus. Interviewee A described the typical FBA process as, "something that is only used when a student is approaching ten days of suspension and close to getting to a manifestation determination."
In regards to the actual three-part FBA process (i.e., indirect data collection, direct data collection, and behavioral hypothesis), Interviewee A described her experience with the FBA process as a "written exercise" conducted by the administrators and little input from classroom teachers or related professionals. As well, Interviewee A described many of the behavior intervention plans (BIP), which resulted from a FBA, often designated the special education teacher as the sole implementer.

Finally, when asked about identifying specific barriers to the best practice of the FBA process, Interviewee A described the lack of collaboration and communication between professionals when conducting the FBA and the resulting BIP. In many of the student cases with an active BIP, Interviewee A was unsure of the number of BIPs that were designed using actual FBA data which contained teacher information. As well, the interviewee described the lack of communication between parents and teachers as one that is "severely lacking with no follow-through," which fails to help the student at school.

Interviewee B

Interviewee B, a male behavioral support teacher in Missouri, served in many roles within his school organization, such as a child behavioral specialist, an autism in-home trainer, and a staff development trainer for FBA/BIP planning. As well, Interviewee B had participated on a number of IEP committee teams which conducted a FBA.
In the discussion, Interviewee B described his school organization as a "small district with an over-representation of students with behavior problems." As an instructor of special education topics for most of the campuses in the organization, Interviewee B described his role as one with a unique perspective in terms of being able to understand the level of knowledge of the FBA process and "have a hand in its use of best practice." Interviewee B described the progressive movement of many school administrators and special education teachers using the FBA process as a problem-solving tool early in the display of challenging behaviors rather than after the challenging behaviors had reached intolerable levels.

However, despite the promising signs of the use of the FBA process, Interviewee B described one particular barrier which has been difficult to overcome in his professional experiences. Interviewee B described the lack of professional understanding by general education teachers when working with students with disabilities and the use of accommodations, modifications and behavioral supports, such as a FBA or BIP. Due to the nature of his position, Interviewee B was able to describe the lack of understanding and commitment of professionals with little experience in working with students with disabilities, which he described as something expressed as "indifference and a feeling of inconvenience when working with students with disabilities." As Interviewee B explained, "In order to bring regular education teachers to the table, there needs to be more professional development on the advantages of the prevention of poor behaviors..."
through the use of systems, like positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS) and response to intervention (RTI). Professional development on such topics as PBIS and RTI will help teachers to not see students as individuals with a disability but as students simply needing different accommodations and learning styles."

Interviewee C

Interviewee C, a female school psychologist in Texas, had served many roles in a large school organization, which included serving as a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP) for two large elementary school campuses and as a supervisor for interning school psychologists. In addition, she had delivered individual counseling services for students with high-risk behaviors.

In discussing her professional experience with the FBA, Interviewee C described her role as "routine and not very extensive" in terms of the level of data collection process and in designing the resulting BIP. Interviewee C elaborated, "In Texas, the LSSP has a very big role in the FBA and in most, if not all cases, is the case manager." The discussion with Interviewee C coincided with the results of the online survey as the large percentage (30%) of responses indicated the LSSP (i.e., ancillary personnel) was the case manager for the typical FBA.

In regards to barriers to FBA best practice, Interviewee C mentioned the lack of professional understanding by many education professionals. In her experience, Interviewee C described her role as the FBA case manager, also often placed her
in the role of FBA educator to professionals unfamiliar with the process. As Interviewee C described, "Teachers consider the FBA as only a one-step process and not sure of what it ultimately accomplishes. This makes it difficult to collect data in a lot of cases and get to the root of the behavior."

Although the interviewees worked in three different states and held different roles within their organizations, there were points of commonality among their responses regarding the implementation of a FBA in schools. While all three interviewees had a general positive view on the FBA process and felt comfortable in suggesting and using the process when working with students with challenging behaviors, there was general agreement regarding the barriers which often inhibited FBA best practices. The barriers mentioned included a lack of professional training on FBA, lack of time to coordinate classroom observations, and pre-conceived notions by teachers which suggests that the FBA process can only be used as a last resort intervention due to amount of planning and implementation.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An online survey and personal interviews were used with participants to accrue data on the experiences and quality of functional behavioral assessments (FBA) as reported by education faculty and staff. This chapter includes (a) summary, (b) implications and (c) recommendations.

Summary

It is been over ten years since the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (U.S. Department of Education, 1997), which included the stipulation of the use of the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) as an intervention process. During this time, the FBA has been used with increasing frequency by educators as a means to intervene with students demonstrating challenging behaviors (Gresham et al., 2004; Hendrickson, Gable, Conroy, Fox, & Smith, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001; Sugai & Lewis, 1999). However, as Quinn and associates discussed, while the frequency of the FBA has increased, the FBA process itself has been presented with various barriers that discourage best practice in the field.

Data from this study revealed two potential barriers to FBA best practice: lack of true collaborative teamwork and insufficient communication among FBA team members. Results from the data accrued found many professional educators self-rated less than satisfactory "best practice" executions when conducting a FBA for a student. As well, many of the participants reported
the FBA teams were typically small, consisting of only key individuals (e.g., school psychologist, special educator) as caseworkers, with some variety in terms of the individuals involved in the data collection.

Secondly, 16% of participants responded with "I don’t know" when asked whether their experiences in the FBA process has yielded an accurate hypothesis (i.e., function of the target behavior). One important aspect of an ideal FBA team is the significance of communication among all its members (Lee & Jamison, 2003). Individuals who are members of a FBA should ideally be informed of the definitive goal, the purpose for the challenging behavior, if a successful Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is to be developed and implemented.

In general, the data demonstrated various levels and types of FBA implementation among the participants. However, there was no conclusive pattern of FBA protocol or implementation among the size of organizations as reported by the participants. Several participants working in smaller organizations reported both formal and informal FBA implementation. As well, participants working in larger organizations reported both formal and informal FBA implementations, regardless of the more likely availability of professionals and resources.

**Implications**

The results from this study are meaningful and have revealed varying degrees of member participation in the FBA process within different organizations. As mentioned earlier, the stipulation in
the federal legislation of IDEA 1997 (U.S. Department of Education, 1997) does not specify the protocol for the use of the FBA process, rather the FBA is mandated as an intervention prior to a removal from campus. The open interpretation of the FBA stipulation has been demonstrated by the varying responses by the participants both in the online survey and in the personal interviews indicating a variety of FBA protocol, regardless of the size of the working organization and type of educational environment (e.g., elementary school, secondary campus).

Additionally, many participants reported a lack of knowledge about the final outcome when asked to participate in the data collection process, such as the final hypothesis. The FBA process is a collaborative team effort (Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Fox & Gable, 2004; Kennedy, 2002; Scott & Caron, 2002) which relies on the contributions of all individuals who have contact with the student with the challenging behaviors. The communication of the timeline of the FBA process and the results among all the FBA team members is critical to the development of an appropriate BIP to address the target behavior. Many of the responses by the participants indicated a lapse of communication among all involved team members. By ensuring stronger communication among FBA team members throughout the process, the development of a more accurate hypothesis and the subsequent BIP will more likely occur.

Formal knowledge of the FBA process is a significant point of interest. Although it is not necessary for every educator to have a formal course on the FBA process, continual staff
development at some level for all education professionals is advantageous as it can provide an understanding of the goal of the FBA process and increase the likelihood of a more accurate and effective process. A working knowledge of the FBA process by each of the FBA team members will allow each individual to have a better understanding of his or her contribution to the data collection process (Quinn, Gable, Fox, Rutherford, Van Acker, & Conroy, 2001).

Recommendations

Recently, the use of the FBA process has become one of the most researched topics in the field of working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders. The FBA has an extensive research base demonstrating the effectiveness and the applicability of the process. While the stipulation in IDEA 1997 has mandated the use of the FBA process prior to a student’s removal from campus for challenging behaviors, research on the FBA has demonstrated the process to be more effective when the challenging behaviors are identified early and offered an appropriately developed BIP.

Oftentimes challenging behaviors in the school are addressed through negative consequences, which do little to discourage the use of the challenging behaviors (Kauffman, 2005). More often than not, challenging behaviors are allowed to increase in intensity and frequency before the student receives a formal intervention, such as a FBA; all of which can be complicated by the possible removal of the student from campus due to the challenging behaviors. In the many school organizations which
are built upon positive behavioral supports (PBS), the FBA is considered an early intervention process. When utilized in the early stages of the challenging behavior, the FBA process and the subsequent BIP tend to require less time and investment of school resources and personnel and have demonstrated longer lasting positive behavioral changes (Barnhill, 2005, Sugai & Lewis, 1999). Such positive results from the use of the FBA process as an early intervention should encourage nonPBS school organizations to utilize the FBA process early when introducing behavior change as opposed to a last resort measure.

Several recommendations are offered for future research. Additional research should be conducted to (a) investigate the effectiveness of the FBA process across culturally/linguistically diverse populations, particularly with students whose English is not the primary language spoken at home, (b) identify the level of involvement of the parent of a student with challenging behavior, and (c) continue to compare BIP derived from FBA data and nonFBA data.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
Survey on the Quality and Implementation of Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA)

The survey on the Frequency and Quality of Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) will be used to examine four areas of concern regarding the experiences of education personnel and the use of the FBA process for students with emotional/behavioral disorders (E/BD). The four areas include (a) the knowledge of the FBA process by education personnel, (b) which education personnel are typically involved when conducting a FBA, (c) the frequency of a FBA used as an intervention, and (d) the overall quality of the planning and implementation of the FBA.

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and click on the response(s) which best represents your answer.

Section I: Knowledge and Experience with Functional Behavioral Assessments

A. Indicate your sources of professional training on FBA for use with students with disabilities. Check all that apply:

- □ Formal college courses (e.g., undergraduate or graduate level courses)
- □ District/-Regional-level staff development
- □ School level staff development
- □ Self-initiated professional development (e.g., journal article, conference topic)
- □ I have no professional training on FBA

B. Assuming you received professional training on FBA from formal college course(s), please select the quantity of formal instruction time spent on the topic:

- □ Briefly mentioned (e.g., off-topic class discussion)
- □ 1 class session specifically on FBA
- □ 2 - 4 class sessions specifically on FBA
- □ 5 or more class sessions specifically on FBA
C. Assuming you received professional training on FBA from formal district-/ or regional-level staff development, please select the quantity of formal instruction time spent on the topic:

- [ ] 1 hour or less
- [ ] 2-4 hours
- [ ] 5 hours or more
- [ ] Multi-day training (More than 1 day)
- [ ] I did not take a district-/regional-level staff development with information on FBA

### Section 1: Knowledge and Experience with Functional Behavioral Assessments

D. Assuming you received professional training on FBA from a school-level staff development, please select the quantity of formal instruction time spent on the topic:

- [ ] 1 hour or less
- [ ] 2-4 hours
- [ ] 5 hours or more
- [ ] Multi-day training (More than 1 day)
- [ ] I did not receive professional training from a school-level staff development with information on FBA

E. Assuming you received professional training on FBA from a personal or self-initiated professional development (e.g., journal articles, conference topics), please select the quantity of time spent on the topic:

- [ ] 1 hour or less
- [ ] 2-4 hours
5 hours or more

☐ I have not engaged in personal or self-initiated professional development on the topic of FBA

Continue

Section I: Knowledge and Experience with Functional Behavioral Assessments

F. Assuming you received professional training on FBA from some source (e.g., college course, district-/regional-level, school-level or personal professional development), please rate your overall knowledge about the topic of FBA:

☐ I do not have any knowledge/information about FBA

☐ I have limited knowledge about FBA

☐ No opinion

☐ I have a working knowledge about FBA

☐ I am very knowledgeable about FBA

G. Have you conducted or participated in a FBA prior to implementing a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for a student?

☐ Yes

☐ No

H. How many FBAs have you participated in to assist a student?

☐ 0

☐ 1

☐ 2 - 4

☐ 5 - 10

☐ More than 10

Continue
### Section I: Knowledge and Experience with Functional Behavioral Assessments

#### I. In the situations where you have participated in a FBA, where was the decision made to conduct the FBA and design a BIP for the student's challenging behaviors? Check all that apply:

- ☐ Annual Individual Education Plan (IEP) Committee meeting
- ☐ IEP Committee meeting - Manifestation Determination
- ☐ Parent-Teacher conference
- ☐ Student Support Team (SST) or Pre-referral Committee meeting

#### J. Based on your setting, who are the individuals who have participated in any part of the FBA process? Check all that apply:

- ☐ Administrator (e.g., campus principal, assistant principal)
- ☐ Ancillary Services Personnel (e.g., psychologist, behavior specialist)
- ☐ Classroom paraeducator (i.e., teaching assistant)
- ☐ Parent (s)
- ☐ General Education Teacher
- ☐ School Counselor
- ☐ Special Education Teacher
- ☐ Student (him or herself)
- ☐ Other, please state [ ]

---

Section I: Knowledge and Experience with Functional Behavioral Assessments

#### K. Based on your setting, which professional typically is designated as the coordinator for student FBAs? Check one:

- ☐ Administrator (e.g., campus principal, assistant principal)
- ☐ Ancillary Services Personnel (e.g., psychologist, behavior specialist)
- ☐ School Counselor
L. Based on your setting, what is the approximate length of time needed to conduct a typical FBA. Select one:

- Less than one (1) school week
- Approximately one (1) school week
- More than one (1) school week
- I don't know

M. Based on your setting, upon completion of most FBA cases, how many have resulted in a function (i.e., reason) to explain the challenging behavior?

- All of the FBA cases
- Most of the FBA cases
- None of the FBA cases
- I don't know

Section II: Challenging Behaviors and Interventions

N. Based on your setting, indicate the types of challenging behaviors which are often exhibited by the student population. Check all that apply:

- Carrying of illegal weapons
- Defiance/Non-compliance with authority school figures
- Destruction of school or personal property
- Excessive absenteeism, chronic tardiness, running away from campus and/or truancy
- Inattentive to classroom instruction
- Physical self-abuse
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social withdrawal from peers or adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of school or personal property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and/or physical aggression with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section II: Challenging Behaviors and Interventions**

**O.** Based on your setting, indicate the interventions that are used by school personnel with a student with challenging behaviors prior to conducting a FBA. Check all that apply:

- Adult or peer role modeling
- Individual or Small group counseling (by school or outside agency)
- Parent/Teacher-developed informal BIP
- Positive behavior reinforcement (e.g., token economy)
- School-Community Partnerships (e.g., wraparound)
- Other, please state

**Section II: Challenging Behaviors and Interventions**

**P.** Based on your setting, indicate the likelihood of interventions being used for a student with challenging behaviors prior to a FBA.

- Not likely at all
- Somewhat unlikely
- I don't know
- Somewhat likely
- Most likely

**Q.** What is your opinion as to whether FBA are typically implemented under "best practice", such as adequate planning, consistent implementation, and periodic re-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation for progress?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Not likely at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Somewhat unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Somewhat likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Most likely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**R.** Based on your setting, indicate the likelihood that a FBA would be considered as an early intervention or used to design a BIP for a student who is NOT facing removal from campus (e.g., alternative educational placement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on your setting, indicate the likelihood of a FBA being designated as a &quot;last resort&quot; practice for a student with challenging behaviors.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Not likely at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Somewhat unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Somewhat likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Most likely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section II: Challenging Behaviors and Interventions**

**S.** Based on your setting, indicate the likelihood of a FBA being designated as a "last resort" practice for a student with challenging behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on your experiences in developing or participating in either a formal/informal Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), how many adults are typically involved in the process (including yourself)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Not likely at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Somewhat unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Somewhat likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Most likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section III: Demographic Information**

**U. Gender**

- Male
- Female

**V. Select the item which **BEST** describes your educational setting:**

- Elementary (Early Childhood-grade 6)
- Secondary (Middle or High School, grade 7-12)
- Special campus, please state

**W. Select the item which **BEST** describes your setting:**

- Public school
- Private school
- Special campus, please state

**X. Select the item which **BEST** describes your geographic location in which you work:**

- Rural
- Suburban
Section III: Demographic Information

Y. Select the item which **BEST** describes your immediate setting (e.g., school campus):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 50 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 51 - 99 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 100 - 499 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 500 - 999 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1,000 - 2,000 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2,000 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Z. Select the item which **BEST** describes your organization (e.g., school district):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 1,000 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1,000 and 4,999 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5,000 and 10,000 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10,001 and 50,000 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50,000 students enrolled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section III: Demographic Information

AA. How many years have you been teaching or working as an education professional/paraeducator?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 year</td>
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<td>2-5 years</td>
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The current position options include:

- Administrator (e.g., campus principal, assistant principal)
- Ancillary Services Personnel (e.g., psychologist, behavior specialist)
- Instructional Professional (e.g., curriculum specialist)
- Educational Consultant
- General Education Teacher
- School Counselor
- Special Education Teacher
- Other, please state [space for text]

Additional Information

If you have any additional comments regarding your experience and/or knowledge of Functional Behavioral Assessment, please enter them in the text box below (note: 500 character limit):

If you would like to be contacted in regard to the findings of this research study, please leave your e-mail address below; all e-mail addresses will be kept confidential.

Additionally, if you would like to be contacted for a brief, confidential telephone interview regarding your professional experience in working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders, please click "YES" in the box below and fill in the fields with your contact information.
Yes, you may contact me for a brief, confidential telephone interview regarding my professional experience in working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD).

Name: 
Title: 
Area Code + Phone Number: 
Best time to contact: 

No, I do not wish to participate in a brief, confidential telephone interview.

Finish

Thank you for your time.

Principal Investigator: Gerardo Moreno 
Doctoral Candidate 
University of North Texas (UNT) 
Denton, Texas 
xxx.xxx.xxx
gerardo.moreno@unt.edu 

Doctoral Faculty Advisor: Lyndal M. Bullock 
Faculty Advisor 
University of North Texas (UNT) 
Denton, Texas 
940.565.3583 
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You have completed the survey. Click on the button, "Close this Window" or the "Close" button in the corner of your window to exit.
APPENDIX B

STANDARD SURVEY SCRIPT
Interviewer

Greeting and Principal Investigator

Good morning/afternoon. May I please speak with ____? This is Jerry Moreno from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.

Thank you for replying to my e-mail indicating that you would like to participate in a telephone interview regarding my research in special education. Is this a good time to speak with you for a few minutes about your responses from the online survey on Functional Behavioral Assessments?

First of all, thank for you participating in the online survey, I realize it is difficult to find time to participate in anything that is not work related.

Confidentiality Clause

Before we begin, I would like to inform you about this interview and your rights as a participant. This interview will consist of three questions and should last no longer than 7-10 minutes. As well, you will not be personally identified in the results of research however your responses may be quoted as an anonymous source. For example, your response may appear in print as "...a special education teacher from Maryland described her experience in the last FBA as...".

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Standard Questions

1. Please describe your role and capacity in your organization (e.g., type of instructional or support contact with students, parents, professionals).

2. Please describe the typical process or series of events in which an FBA is chosen, implemented, and a brief description of the resulting BIP.

3. What do you perceive as barriers or inhibitors to the implementation of proper FBA? If you feel there aren’t any barriers or inhibitors to consider, what are the conditions that allow your organization to implement a FBA appropriately?

Closing

Thank you very much for your time and participation. I sincerely hope you realize your contribution to this interview will help our knowledge base of working with students with disabilities continue to grow.
If you happen to have any questions or additional information you would like to contribute, please feel free to call me at home at xxx.xxx.xxxx or via e-mail at Gerardo.Moreno@unt.edu.

As well, if you have any questions, you can contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Lyndal Bullock at the University of North Texas at 940.565.3583.

Thank you for your time. Best of luck for the remainder of the school year!
Interviewee A

Monday, April 21, 2008

Interviewer: Good morning, may I please speak with _____?

Interviewee: This is _____.

Interviewee: This is Jerry Moreno, a doctoral student from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: A few weeks ago you had participated in an online survey on Functional Behavioral Assessments and special education and you had agreed to participate in a telephone interview.

Interviewee: Yes, I remember.

Interviewer: Is this a good time to speak with you for a few minutes about your responses from the online survey on Functional Behavioral Assessments?

Interviewee: Yes, it is.

Interviewer: Great! Before we begin, I would like to give you some information about this interview and your rights as a participant. This interview will consist of three questions and should last no longer than 5-10 minutes. As well, you will not be personally identified in the results of this research however your responses may be quoted as an anonymous source. For example, your response may appear in print as "...a special education teacher from Maryland described her experience in the last FBA as...". As well, the anonymous responses from this interview may appear in future papers, presentations or future research.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewee: No, I don’t. That’s fine.

Interviewer: Okay, that’s great. And one more thing, if you hear excessive keyboarding going on in the background, that’s just me taking notes. I can take better notes typing than with a pencil and paper.

Interviewee: Oh, that’s fine. I’m a little old fashioned. I like to write things down.

Interviewer: Well, for me, it’s just easier this way. Okay, the first question... Could you please describe your role in your organization, such as the specific title of your position and what responsibilities your position entails?
Interviewee: Okay. I’m a resource teacher for math in a high school. I work with 11th and 12th grade students.

Interviewer: That’s great. I’m sure it’s quite an interesting position.

Interviewee: Yes, it is.

Interviewer: Great. Could you describe some of your responsibilities, such as your daily tasks and your overall duties?

Interviewee: I’m the resource teacher for math for all junior and senior students with an IEP. I develop their IEP with the committee. I’m also the IEP chairperson for the committee and take care of the annual testing. I build the IEP assessments, class scheduling, and IEPs around the Show-Me objectives to ensure the student is meeting state standards and is showing they are passing the equivalent to the state test. I also do parent conferences and meet with other teachers in the regular education departments to help with the students planning for other courses, if they need it.

Interviewer: That sounds like a lot of responsibilities. And this is for 60 students?

Interviewee: Yes, typically, the number varies throughout the year.

Interviewer: In regards to Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans, do you participate in planning and conducting those for any of your students?

Interviewee: Actually, those are done in an IEP meeting when administration is having problems with a student. A lot of times, it is a written exercise. It is something that is only used when a student is approaching ten days of suspension and close to getting to a manifestation determination. Most of the time, only the resource teachers are the ones responsible for carrying through with the BIP, there is not mention of the regular education teachers; which doesn’t make sense as they spend most of their time in regular ed. They only come to the resource room for the one, two or three periods.

Interviewer: I see. Thank you for that response. Second question: Please describe the typical process or series of events in which an FBA is chosen, implemented, and a brief description of the resulting BIP. I think you may have already addressed this one but could you elaborate?

Interviewee: It’s just that. The FBA is something that really the administration will sit in the IEP meeting and go around the table asking questions about the student’s behavior. For example, what have you done when the student does this? Do you have any
documentation for it? It’s not much of a process. If the student is one the principal has been dealing with, she will sit in and begin the FBA when the suspensions are too many. If it’s a student the assistant principal has been dealing with, he will sit down and start the FBA. It all depends on the student, what he’s done and which administrator has been dealing with that student.

Interviewer: I see. Okay, last question: What do you perceive as barriers or inhibitors to the implementation of proper FBA? If you feel there aren’t any barriers or inhibitors to consider, what are the conditions that allow your organization to implement a FBA appropriately?

Interviewee: Could you repeat that? There’s a lot of static on the line.

Interviewer: Yes, I hear it, too. I thought it was just my end of the line. Well, let me put it this way, what do you think are barriers that prevent you and your campus from doing best practices when it comes to the FBA? And if you don’t feel there are any barriers, what are the conditions or factors that help you to conduct best practice for FBA?

Interviewee: Well, we’re not really doing best practices. I think I would have to say it is the lack of administration commitment. Since they are the ones to decide when to do the FBA, it’s not really from the teachers. It’s just something to say we’ve tried it and it didn’t work.

Also, a lot of the IEP meetings take place with no parents or family members. We write the IEP and the FBA or BIP with no parental input. It’s severely lacking with no follow-through. The parents aren’t there to help out the school in carrying out a BIP and the students can go home and not worry about what’s being done at school to help them. There is no consistency in trying to change those bad behaviors.

Interviewer: Really? Parental input is very important in any student’s education. What would you say is the percentage of IEP meetings without a parent present, in any shape or form?

Interviewee: About three out of five. It’s not very often we’ll get a parent.

Interviewer: I see. That is something. Well, that was the last question. Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Interviewee: No, not really. I can’t think of anything else right now.
Interviewer: Well, I thank you very much for your time and participation. I sincerely hope you realize your contribution to this study.

If you happen to have any questions or additional information you would like to contribute, please feel free to call me at home at xxx.xxx.xxxx or through e-mail at Gerardo.Moreno@unt.edu. Or you can just do a reply to the confirmation message I sent you about the date and time for this interview.

As well, if you have any questions, you can contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Lyndal Bullock at the University of North Texas at 940.565.3583.

Thank you for your time. Best of luck for the remainder of the school year!

Interviewee: Thank you. I enjoyed this. It was very interesting. Good luck to you.
Interviewee B

Monday, April 21, 2008

Interviewer: Good morning, may I please speak with _____?

Interviewee: This is _____.

Interviewer: This is Jerry Moreno, a doctoral student from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.

Interviewee: Yes, speaking.

Interviewer: A few weeks ago you had participated in an online survey on Functional Behavioral Assessments and special education and you had agreed to participate in a telephone interview.

Interviewee: Yes. I was expecting your call.

Interviewer: Great. I’m glad. I was trying to stay on schedule. Is this a good time to speak with you for a few minutes about your responses from the online survey on Functional Behavioral Assessments?

Interviewee: Yes, it is. It’s the perfect time.

Interviewer: Great! Before we begin, I would like to give you some information about this interview and your rights as a participant. This interview will consist of three questions and should last no longer than 5-10 minutes. As well, you will not be personally identified in the results of this research however your responses may be quoted as an anonymous source. For example, your response may appear in print as "...a special education teacher from Maryland described her experience in the last FBA as...". As well, the anonymous responses from this interview may appear in future papers, presentations or future research.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewee: Are you going to distribute the results to those who would like them once you’re done?

Interviewer: Yes, there was a check-box on the online survey, which provided people with an opportunity to provide the e-mail address as a way to communicate the findings. Did you do that?

Interviewee: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Right, I see it here on my spreadsheet. I’ll make sure I get you those results once everything has been settled. Are you ready for the first question?
Interviewee: Yes, go ahead.

Interviewer: All right, the first question... Could you please describe your role in your organization, such as the specific title of your position and what responsibilities your position entails?

Interviewee: I work as what we call a district support teacher. Under this title, I’m a trainer of trainer. We used to be called a classroom teacher under special assignment. But that changed about two years ago. I help with IEP training for principals and assistant principals and provide training for FBA/BIP and behavior management when a school requests it. Also, during the first part of the school year, I help in the training of parents with In-Home training for children with Autism.

Interviewer: Wow! You’re sort a jack of all trades. That’s great.

Interviewee: Well, wait, I’m not finished. And during the evenings and I am also the district trainer for CPI and ABA and then I also visit teachers, counselors and parents about specific student cases.

Interviewer: Okay, I think I typed that all in. You’ll have to excuse me while I have the phone to my ear and both hands on the keyboard. I’m much better at taking notes. Great! Could you describe some of your responsibilities, such as your daily tasks and your overall duties?

Interviewee: Okay, well, as I mentioned, I’m a trainer of trainers. Basically, the school will contact me for anything specifically dealing with problem behaviors or students who are in need of a BIP. Then I’ll go in and help guide the process along for a BIP. If the behaviors are very severe, then we’ll go with a FBA to help find exactly what is going on. And I do this for all students, not just those with an emotional disturbance; this includes Autism and mental retardation.

Interviewer: So, you are the "go to" person for all things behavior?

Interviewee: There are actually 3 of us for the entire district and we each have about 4 to 5 campuses from elementary to high school and we’re a small district with an over-representation of students with behavior problems; so we’re busy.

Interviewer: I see. All right, well in regards to FBA and BIPs for specific students, do you participate in planning and conducting those for any students?

Interviewee: Yes, almost all of the ones that call for a FBA and BIP in the IEP. If it’s something just to help the classroom teacher with management, then we’re more like consultants. If
it’s a specific student and we’re needed, yes, we are in the meeting.

Interviewer: I see. Okay, question number two. Could you describe the typical process or series of events in which an FBA is chosen, implemented, and a brief description of the resulting BIP?

Interviewee: We are called in by the school for a specific student and we being the planning process for a specific student and we become the coordinator for the FBA for that student. Usually students with high-profile cases result in FBAs and BIPs, so we begin with the planning and decided how to observe and collect the data. We take things like classroom observation, discipline referrals, and help to encourage a team effort by all the professionals and not just individual teacher. As well, we help to ensure all teachers are trained in FBA and BIP when we start the process or at least to understand what is being done.

Interviewer: Good. That sounds like a lot of efforts to work toward best practice.

Interviewee: We try. That’s our job.

Interviewer: I think that is great. Okay, now the last question:

What do you think are barriers that prevent you and your campus from doing best practices when it comes to the FBA? And if you don’t feel there are any barriers, what are the conditions or factors that help you to conduct best practice for FBA?

Interviewee: Well, I think as far as procedure, we do what we’re supposed to do. We have a hand in its use of best practice. I think the biggest problem is teacher attitude toward the process. There have been times where the general education teachers are reluctant to participate in collecting data because it is something else to do. And they are not mean-spirited people, it’s just there is so much on them as far as accountability, this can sometimes be so much. There seems to be indifference and a feeling of inconvenience when working with students with disabilities, like it’s just too much.

Interviewer: I see. That is something. What do you think could be done to help with this problem?

Interviewee: In order to bring regular education teachers to the table, there needs to be more professional development on the advantages of the prevention of poor behaviors through the use of systems, like Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI). Professional development on such topics as PBIS and RTI will help teachers to not see students as individuals with a disability but as students simply needing different accommodations and learning styles. It can save so much trouble dealing with these problems in the classroom.
Interviewer: Well, I thank you very much for your time and participation. That was our last question. You’ve given me a lot here.

Interviewee: I’m glad I could help. Is there a way I can contact you?

Interviewer: Sure, please feel free to call me at home at xxx.xxx.xxxx or through e-mail at Gerardo.Moreno@unt.edu. Either way, you can reach me. Or you can just do a reply to the confirmation message I sent you and that should get right back to me.

As well, if you have any questions, you can contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Lyndal Bullock at the University of North Texas at 940.565.3583.

Interviewee: Thank you for the interview.

Interviewer: No, thank you for everything. This has been the most productive interview, so far. Thanks.

Interviewee: Well, I’m glad I could help. Take care.

Interviewer: Thanks. Take care.
Interviewee C

Monday, April 21, 2008

Interviewer: Good afternoon, may I please speak with ____?

Interviewee: This is ____.

Interviewer: This is Jerry Moreno, a doctoral student from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. A few weeks ago you had participated in an online survey on FBA and special education and you had agreed to participate in a telephone interview.

Interviewee: Of course.

Interviewer: Is this a good time to speak with you for a few minutes about your responses from the survey?

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: Great! Before we begin, I would like to give you some information about this interview and your rights as a participant. This interview will consist of three questions and should last no longer than 5-10 minutes. As well, you will not be personally identified in the results of this research however your responses may be quoted as an anonymous source. For example, your response may appear in print as "...a special education teacher from Maryland described her experience in the last FBA as...". As well, the anonymous responses from this interview may appear in future papers, presentations or future research.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay, and one more thing, if you hear excessive keyboarding going on in the background, that’s just me taking notes.

Interviewee: All right.

Interviewer: Could you please describe your role in your organization, such as the specific title of your position and what responsibilities your position entails?


Interviewer: Is that near ____?

Interviewee: Yes, we’re about 15 miles in the suburbs.
Interviewer: Okay. I’m driven through there. It’s a very nice place.

Interviewee: Yes, it is.

Interviewer: Great. Could you describe some of your responsibilities?

Interviewee: I am a supervisor or psychological services for _____ ISD, and I serve as the LSSP on 2 campuses for behavioral consultations for students with ED and also provide counseling on an individual basis.

Interviewer: Pretty straight-forward.

Interviewee: That’s all I do but it’s tougher than it sounds. I put in a lot of after-work hours.

Interviewer: I’m sure you do. In regards to FBAs and BIPs, do you participate in planning and conducting for any students?

Interviewee: Yes, I plan out the FBAs and help the committee put together the plan to help those students.

Interviewer: Including data collection?

Interviewee: Yes, data collection and observation. In Texas, the LSSP has a very big role in the FBA and in most, if not all cases, is the case manager.

Interviewer: All right, second question: Please describe the typical process or series of events in which an FBA is chosen, implemented, and a brief description of the resulting BIP. I think you may have already addressed this one but could you elaborate?

Interviewee: If a teacher or even a parent says the child is experiencing problems in the classroom or even at home. We decide if there is a need to put together a BIP to help out the child. If there is, then we get together and figure out the behavior we would like to address. We review basic information with the use of a teaching staff, like collected data, information from previous psychological evaluations, and office referrals. Usually, the FBA is pretty routine and not very extensive. We get together come up with a BIP and implement it. If it doesn’t work, we come back and change it until we get it right. We haven’t seen any behaviors that have been out of control or too dangerous.

Interviewer: Okay, last question: What do you think are barriers that prevent you and your campus from doing best practices when it comes to the FBA? Or if you don’t feel there are any barriers, what are the conditions or factors that help you to conduct best practice for FBA?
Interviewee: Well, the biggest barriers include time, shortage of staff to conduct observations and professional knowledge by teachers. A lot of the time, teachers consider the FBA as only a one-step in a process and not what it ultimately accomplishes. We (LSSPs) often have to go in and give mini-training on what we are trying to do with the child to help him or her. Having to explain what a function is and that the behaviors are not meant to be vicious or lazy, it’s just there is a reason for it. All of that takes time and people to accomplish, especially when there are things like state testing going on.

Interviewer: Do you feel all teachers require or could use formal training on FBAs and BIPs?

Interviewee: Well, mostly the regular education teachers and the principals. The special education teachers are BIC teachers and they are very familiar with it.

Interviewer: I see. Thank you. Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Interviewee: Not that I can think of at the moment.

Interviewer: Well, I thank you very much for your time and participation.

If you happen to have any questions or would like to add something, please feel free to call me at home at xxx.xxx.xxxx or through e-mail at Gerardo.Moreno@unt.edu. Or you can just do a reply to the confirmation message I sent you. Also, if you have any questions, you can contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Lyndal Bullock at the University of North Texas at 940.565.3583.

Thank you for your time. Best of luck for the remainder of the school year!

Interviewee: You’re welcome. Good luck with the thesis.
REFERENCES


Failure, 47(2), 75-78.


