School Bullying Intervention: Nuancing the Functional Behavioral Assessment Process

RONALD B. JACOBSON
Whitworth University

MICHELE T. JACOBSON
Central Washington University

Abstract: Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) has shown promise for responding to a range of behaviors, helping teachers and counselors target strategies more precisely. One struggle with employing FBA strategies by classroom teachers, at least in part, is due its observable data-driven approach. This is especially true as applied to school bullying behavior. School bullying is often invisible to adults. Bullies become adept at operating under the adult radar, while being quite visible to peers. Yet, FBA provides strong strategies for the individualized behavioral interventions necessary to address the multi-faceted motivations that may fuel bullying behavior. Making those behaviors visible, or at least accessible, is key to employing an FBA approach to school bullying. In this article we advocate for designing protocols aimed at considering the invisible nature of school bullying to adult eyes, aimed at better data collection and analysis crucial to the FBA process.

Résumé : L'évaluation comportementale fonctionnelle (FBA) s'est révélée prometteuse pour répondre à une gamme de comportements, aidant les enseignants et les conseillers à cibler les stratégies de façon plus précise. L'une des difficultés liées à l'utilisation de stratégies FBA par les enseignants, du moins en partie, est due à son approche observable axée sur les données. Cela est particulièrement vrai en ce qui concerne le comportement d'intimidation à l'école. L'intimidation à l'école est souvent invisible pour les adultes. Les intimidateurs deviennent habiles à opérer sous le radar des adultes, tout en étant très visibles pour leurs pairs. Pourtant, FBA fournit des stratégies solides pour les interventions comportementales individualisées nécessaires pour répondre aux motivations multidimensionnelles qui peuvent alimenter le comportement d'intimidation. Rendre ces comportements visibles, ou du moins

accessibles, est essentiel pour utiliser efficacement une approche FBA à l'intimidation scolaire. Dans cet article, nous préconisons la conception de protocoles visant à considérer la nature invisible de l'intimidation scolaire aux yeux des adultes, visant à améliorer la collecte et l'analyse des données essentielles au processus FBA.

Introduction

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) has shown promise for responding to a range of behaviors, helping teachers and counselors target strategies more precisely. According to Steege et al., "[F]unctional behavioral assessments (FBAs) both *describe* behavior and *illuminate the functional, "cause-effect" relations* between behavior and the environment" (2019, p. 1, emphasis in the original).

In other words, FBA work is focused on developing a clear understanding of the *function* of a particular behavior, determining what fuels it. Specifically, FBA practices include a number of components: providing "an operational definition of problem behavior", identifying "predictable antecedent-behavior-consequence chains", determining "stimulus control and operant function for the behavior", determining "an appropriate functional replacement behavior", and manipulating "antecedent and consequence events to facilitate the replacement behavior" (2010 Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, p. 89). Simply put, functional assessment, is a process of identifying the influences of behavior. The underlying assumption of FBA work is that problematic behavior is learned, and is fueled by the environment. Hence, understanding the nature of the needs behind, or purposes of the behavior, and how the behavior is shaped by particular environmental factors, becomes a focal point in the process (Hanley 2012, p. 68).

Often, though, the struggle with employing FBA strategies by classroom teachers, paraeducators, and families involves its observable data-driven approach. FBA relies on observable data to determine the environmental factors supporting specific behaviors. School bullying is incredibly impactful, yet is often invisible to adults. Bullies become adept at operating under the adult radar, while, at the same time, being quite visible to peers. FBA provides strong strategies for the individualized behavioral interventions necessary to address the multifaceted motivations that may fuel

bullying behavior, yet struggles with non-observable behaviors. In this article, we consider modifications to the FBA protocol aimed at the often-hidden behaviors associated with school bullying.

To do this work, we employ a conceptual research methodology, focusing on definitions, procedures, and critique to guide our findings, rather than more traditional 'scientific' quantitative or qualitative methodologies. "Once we move away from the self-styled 'scientific' area of educational research," argues Michael Scriven, "… the need for conceptual analysis skills becomes even greater. Concepts of causation and explanation, of intention, of meaning, and of valuing become crucial and involve quite sophisticated conceptual analysis" (1988, p. 135). Here, we aim to critique specific elements within current approaches, doing so in light of problematic scenarios that shed light on current practice or theory. Conceptual inquiry provides tools to consider normative practices, processes, definitions and aims, employing a critical lens to consider gaps, misunderstandings, or unintended consequences. In particular, our aim is to consider greater nuance in the FBA process, helping to employ it more effectively to school bullying. We begin with an overview of the literature surrounding the motivations behind school bullying.

Why Do Bullies Bully?

Before delving into the reasons why bullies might bully, it is important to define what we mean by bullying behavior. Horne et al. argue that bullying is purposeful, involves an imbalance of power, and occurs over time (2004, 298). Pellegrini and Long argue that bullying involves proactive aggression that is often unprovoked (2004, 108). This aggression can be direct, involving physical aggression or verbal abuse. It can also manifest in indirect ways, including rumor spreading through third parties. This can involve harming others through disrupting or harming their relationships as well. Olweus, a foundational voice in school bullying research asserts that "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (1993, p. 9). Gaffney, Farrington, and Ttofi (2019) concur, citing intention, repetitiveness, and power imbalances. For the purposes of this article, we will use the following definition of bullying:

> Bullying is proactive, it is repeated over time, it is targeted upon a victim, and it may involve verbal abuse, physical abuse, or subtle relational disruption. It is disruptive to the learning environment and to the victim's well-being and involves elements of asymmetric power focused on securing some objective (whether tangible – e.g., lunch money; or intangible – e.g., social status). Bullying is also dyadic (between individuals) and it is enmeshed in peer relations (Jacobson 2013, 14).

Like many behaviors, bullying certainly is not a 'one-size-fits-all' phenomenon. This variability is one of the most difficult aspects of crafting meaningful interventions. Why, then, might a bully bully? Bullies may bully due to a lack of understanding. Here, the bully may not know or understand what bullying is and is not, and the fact that the behavior is problematic. Based on this view, many bullying intervention strategies involve instructional approaches, including school-wide informational campaigns aimed at communicating definitions, rules, and consequences surrounding bullying activities (Jacobson 2013, 34). A second type of misunderstanding associated with bullying involves a perceived lack of empathy. On this view, the bully does not understand fully the pain caused by his or her activities in the life of the victim (Hoover and Oliver 1996; Rigby 2002). Others contend that rules are often inconsistent, thus creating confusion (Thornberg & Delby 2019). The direct solution in this case is to simply 'fill in the gaps' in understanding, whether those gaps are informational or empathetic.

Some bullies may bully due to a lack of skill. Here we imagine that a bully may struggle to regulate aggression (Olweus 1993), taking out their frustration on a less powerful classmate. Others have portrayed bullies as lacking in social skills or social intelligence (Sheridan, Warnes, and Dowd 2004, 245-257), unable to pick up on the social cues of those around them, including their victims. Social coaching, helping bullies to develop anger management skills may be in order here.

Bullies also may bully because of environmental forces. Family modeling (Rigby 202, 152; Chen et al. 2019) and relationships (Rigby 202, 156-168; Kasen, et al. 2004, 200) are linked to bullying activity. School culture, including teacher attitudes, may also play a role in fostering bullying activity (Rodkin 2004, 101; Holt and

Keys 2004, 122-124; Espelage and Swearer 2003, 378; Chen et al. 2019). Of course, the attitudes of peers often play an important role as well (Duncan 2004, 232-240; Juvonen and Graham 2001, 83-86; Hoover and Oliver 1996, 5). Here, interventions might target culture, attitudes, and norms within families, schools, and peer alliances.

Bullies may bully to gain status with others (Jacobson 2018, 1354). Pellegrini and Long contend that bullying "is a specific form of aggression and one that is used deliberately to secure resources" (2004, 109). "Bullying," they continue, "seems to be used as a way in which boys [and I would argue girls as well] gain and maintain dominance status with peers" (2004, 110). Malecki and Demaray argue that bullying behavior may actually bolster peer support for the bully (2004, 221). Most bullying is witnessed by others. This is not to say that bullying does not take place privately, but even in those cases the bully often shares his or her dominance of the victim with a close circle of friends. Status is a socially negotiated construct; i.e., status is always status *with*, or in the eyes of, others. "Status often allows one to construct lines of inclusion – that is who is in and who is out (Simmons 2002; Brown 2003; Juvonen and Graham 2001, 225-226). Dominance, often associated with status, is depicted as a primary goal of bullying (Rigby 2002, 150; Pellegrini and Long 2004, 109-110)… High social status is often sought by the bully (Rodkin 2004, 94) offering certain benefits to the bully with peers (Pellegrini and Long 2004, 108-111) – especially as one negotiates group inclusion (Pellegrini and Long 2004, 112) – and offers the bully a certain amount of attention (Juvonen and Graham 2001, 224-225) and attractiveness (Espelage and Swearer 2003, 376)" (Jacobson 2013, 37). This social positioning (Thornberg et al 2019) is seen as a foundational element in bullying motivation.

Relatedly, it has been argued that bullies may bully as a process of identity construction. As noted, status is always status *with* those around us. Immanuel Gent (1990) argues that in the give and take of relationships, with others responding and reflecting back to us, we gain and revise our sense of self. Here, at least in some measure, bullying activity is enmeshed in identity construction processes for the bully; but, not only for the bully, but for all who watch and cheer as well (Jacobson 2013, 45-59; Jacobson 2018, 1359).

In their research with Swedish school children, Thornberg and Knutsen find seven "social representations of the causes of bullying". These include,

> (a) bullying as a reaction to deviance, (b) bullying as social positioning, (c) bullying as the work of a disturbed bully, (d) bullying as a revengeful action, (e) bullying as an amusing game, (f) bullying as social contamination, and (g) bullying as a thoughtless happening (Thornberg and Knutsen 2011, 179).

In interviews with nearly 200 ninth-graders, Thornberg and Knutsen (2011, 182) found five relevant factors at the center of bullying activities. Bullies may bully because of their: inner flaws, attempts to affect social position, hostile feelings, problematic family situations, bad personalities, or simply because they enjoy it. Victims are targeted because of their: irritability, weakness, meanness, or family problems. Peers are to blame because of their role in fostering group pressure, group reinforcing, and group norms that support bullying activity. Finally, those interviewed implicated school factors (e.g., boredom in school, poor antibullying practices) and human nature (e.g., biological instinct of rejection, human difference, appearance-focused society) as well.

Our aim, here, is not to create an exhaustive list of the 'causes' that lead bullies to bully, but instead to illustrate the wide range of factors that may influence bullying behavior and the nuanced conflagration of those influences. Bullying is always, indeed, a complicated behavioral process that plays out differently in different contexts and with different participants.

The Promise of Functional Behavioral Assessment

Research indicates that current bullying intervention programs have shown some, but uneven promise. For example, in their meta-analysis of the effectiveness of school bullying worldwide, Gaffney, Farrington, and Ttofi (2019) find that school-bullying perpetration was reduced by 8-40% depending on the country and program used. Ross and Horner find that, "although some interventions have shown promising results, the overall results of bully-prevention efforts have been mixed (2009, p. 748). "In a meta-analysis of 16 bully-prevention studies conducted by Merrell et al. (2008)", Ross et al. contend that "none of the 16 antibullying programs were shown

to produce a reduction in observed incidents of bullying" (2009, p. 748). Programs employ a range of whole-school, peer and parent-teacher strategies. But, a one-size-fits-all approach, while certainly targeting what one might call 'Tier 1' populations, may not adequately address all of the nuances of individual behavior noted in the previous section. For example, using an informational approach (e.g., explaining to a bully that her actions hurt the feelings of the victim) may be less than effective if the bully's central motivation is to gain status (i.e., the thirst for popular status may outweigh any empathetic impulses).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) strategies, more recently targeting bullying behaviors, provide the individual-level analyses and responses necessary to navigate the varied and nuanced behavioral motivations indicative of bullying behaviors (Lee, 2018; Gage et al., 2018). Following the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework used for academic support, PBIS employs a three-tiered system of analysis and support focused on behavioral interventions. Tier 1 strategies are aimed at all students, establishing a "foundation of regular, proactive support while preventing unwanted behaviors. Schools provide these universal supports to all students, school-wide" (pbis.org, 2019). Similar to current school-wide approaches, PBIS Tier 1 strategies call for whole-school approaches, involving interventions such as: teaching all students appropriate behaviors, intervening early before behaviors escalate, monitoring student progress across the school, etc. Tier 2 strategies are employed to "support students who are at risk for developing more serious problem behaviors before those behaviors start. These supports help students develop the skills they need to benefit from core programs at school" (pbis.org, 2019). Targeting students for whom Tier 1 supports are not enough, these supports are continuously available and monitored, flexible and depend upon some type of function-based behavioral assessment. At Tier 3, "students receive more intensive, individualized support to improve their behavioral and academic outcomes. At this level, schools rely on formal assessments to determine a student's need" (pbis.org, 2019). According to PBIS.org, Tier 3 supports are reserved for 1-5% of students for whom Tier 1 and Tier 2 approaches are ineffective. PBIS, then, provides a range of strategies, escalating support and targeting interventions based on specific student behaviors.

But, employing a PBIS approach, including the implementation of FBAs can be problematic for teachers and school administrators for a number of reasons. In particular, employing FBAs toward bullying behavior is difficult because the behavior is often 'invisible' (i.e., it is often conducted under the adult radar) and because clear antecedents are not always evident. Finding ways to forefront, or become aware of those behaviors is key to any intervention activity. We now turn to a discussion aimed at the regular employment of Tier 2 and 3 processes for teachers as applied to school bullying behaviors, beginning by addressing the complexities of bullying assessment.

FBA for School Bullying:
A Teacher-Friendly Approach

Assessment
One of the hallmarks of Functional Behavior Assessment is data collection and analysis. The goal of the FBA is to determine a function-based intervention predicated on various types of available data. This includes indirect assessments. "Indirect assessment methods", according to Steege et al., "are characterized by the assessment of behavior using information provided by teachers, parents, staff, and in some cases the referred student" (2019, 5). This also includes descriptive assessments. "Descriptive assessment methods involve direct observation and real-time recording of interfering behaviors and associated antecedents and consequences" (Steege et al. 2019, 6). "Assessments of bullying," contend Grief and Furlong, "have various functions and the intended implications of the assessment can be used to select the appropriate measurement tool" (2006, 25).

It is well established that if we are to develop Tier 2 or 3 interventions, we must collect data that will allow proper analysis in our FBA process. In fact, Malecki and Demaray argue that "reviewing for Tiers 2 and 3 would involve examining data for individual students more closely [...] to facilitate problem analysis and hypothesis development" (2007, 164). For example, Ross & Horner in their 2009 study aimed at implementing PBIS approaches to bullying prevention focused on overt, observable behaviors (specifically physical or verbal aggression during lunch recess). They defined physical aggression as, "hitting, biting, kicking, choking, stealing, throwing objects or restricting freedom of movement" (2009, p. 751). They defined verbal aggression as, "the

direction of verbal or gestural negative communication toward one or more children including teasing, taunting, threatening, negative body language or negative gestures" (2009, p. 751).

Yet, as we have noted, bullying can often operate 'under the radar', becoming invisible to adults (Simmons 2002; Jacobson 2013, 8, 61). Because bullying is widely forbidden in schools, bullies tend to hide their behavior from adults, yet continue the practice in full view of their peers. Thus, collecting the data necessary forces us from our usual practices of 'information gathered from teachers' or from 'observation', though we certainly should train adults what to look for. Hanley, discussing the 'obstacles' to FBAs that we might encounter, lists 'covert' problem behaviors. He argues that we may need to create "baited environments in the absence of others" (2012, p. 65). Here, Hanley argues that trying to replicate the situations that might spur bullying may allow the 'invisible' to manifest in a 'test' situation. This, for many reasons, becomes problematic in regards to bullying behavior. In addition, Hanley suggests that, for covert behaviors we might conduct a "reinforcer analysis in which the likely reinforcers for problem behavior are available concurrently and / or for arbitrary response of similar effort" (2012, p. 65). Here, the interventionist may infer motivations from available data, without direct observation of the behavior, seeking to analyze the impact of such interventions on the behavior. "A small inferential leap," continues Hanley, "is required to determine behavior function with this sort of reinforcer analysis" (2012, p. 62). We will return to this notion of 'inferential, or conceptual, analysis later, acknowledging that this type of strategy for covert behavior is supported in the literature.

In essence, the 'invisibility' of the behavior to adult eyes means that we will need to employ inside information, tapping peer awareness of bullying to better understand its prevalence, shape and the perpetrators within the school setting. Of course, bullying behavior also may not present clearly connected antecedents to bullying behavior. For example, while we may be able to trace a direct antecedent for some behavior (struggling in Algebra directly leads to frustration implicated in pushing a classmate into a locker), modeling by a parent may be difficult to suss out. This modeling is more systemic and ongoing, and often invisible to the school community. These factors complicate data collection surrounding bullying activity.

Of course, school climate surveys, and in particular surveys of students, teachers, and parents in regards to bullying are not new. In fact, Olweus, one of the originators of bullying research, includes as a hallmark of his program, questionnaires aimed at determining bullying activity (1993). Malecki and Demaray also suggest conducting interviews with students, parents, and teachers as part of the data-gathering-analysis process necessary for Tier 2 and 3 analysis (2007). Thornberg and Knutsen provide a helpful example of such a data-gathering process in their work with ninth-graders (2010). Yet, for such surveys and interviews with 'insiders' to be pertinent, participants must report openly and accurately. This means that one major component of our Tier 1 (i.e., school-wide) work involves creating school-wide narratives surrounding cultures of safety, protection, and dominating behaviors. Much as we do when we seek to elicit peer interventions to bullying situations, moving peers from bystanders to advocates for the victim, we must work to include 'insiders' (i.e., peers to whom bullying activities are visible) in our data collection work. In other words, we must create narratives that will help peers and other insiders to buy-in, to share openly and honestly because they have come to believe that bullying is harmful, that it isn't cool.

Of course, we will also need to work deeply with peer insiders (i.e., students, teachers, and parents) to, not only create buy-in, but to also foster trust with those soliciting such data. Part of our Tier 1 strategies must include paying attention to the individual relationships we have with our students, our colleagues, and our school families. "Teaching is complex," Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green and Hanna contend, "and cannot be reduced to discrete tasks that can be mastered one at a time. Teachers must 'win their students' hearts while getting inside their students' heads' (Wolk, 2003, p. 14). As Haberman (1995) suggested, this winning of the hearts occurs through very personal interactions, one student at a time" (2010, 4). To see the invisible, we must glean data from those who actually see the activity, creating cultures of buy-in and trust between students and teachers. While it is beyond the purview of this article to detail building school-wide cultures with anti-bullying narratives, this is the foundation of any data collection necessary for an FBA process. Trust-filled relationships, including creating avenues and aptitudes to listen well are, thus, at the heart of gathering the data necessary to respond effectively to student bullying (Jacobson 2010). And, recall, school bullying is a complicated phenomenon, often requiring

individual, nuanced responses, especially for students warranting Tier 2 and 3 interventions.

Intervention Strategies

We have argued that bullying is a particularly difficult behavior to understand and mitigate. Partially this is due to the variance and nuance of the factors that play into its motivation. Bullies might bully because of parental modeling, skill deficiencies, to accrue status with peers, because they do not understand the rules or the effect of their efforts on the victim, etc. Often bullying activity involves a mixture of these, as well as other motivating factors. Depending on the 'function' of the bullying behavior, quite different interventions might be called for. In addition, bullying activity is not always visibly linear. In other words, clear antecedents are not always apparent when bullying behavior arises.

Thus, a process like FBA, collecting and using available data to seek to better understand functional behavior, trying to parse why a particular bully continues to bully, is crucial. Certainly, whole school responses are helpful for Tier 1, as are broad Tier 2 strategies. But, working collaboratively to understand the desire or motivations behind individual bullying behavior, especially in Tier 3 cases provides a strong strategy moving forward.

Creating a tiered approach to behavior is not new. And a tiered approach includes developing teams to gather and analyze behavioral data. "Through the FBA process," argue Sayeski and Brown, "teams collect data to identify the function of a problematic behavior and then generate strategies to address the identified need. … As a result of conducting an FBA on a student, educators generate hypotheses about the communicative function of the behavior" (2014, 125). Here we argue that, along with the typical Tier 1 school-wide approaches involving school climate development, informational campaigns, teacher and staff training, and student training, etc., that each school designate specific intervention teams (Jacobson 2013, 138-139). As we have with school-based PBIS teams, we might employ something akin to a 'Critical Friends Group' (National School Reform Faculty, Harmony Education Center), using such protocols to direct an in-depth consideration of individual students who persist in bullying activity. For instance, one might employ a modified 'ATLAS' protocol, focusing on student behaviors instead of student work. Here the

pertinent behavioral data is presented for the individual student, moving, then, through the set protocol. Team members, using the data, attempt to describe what they see, beginning to interpret the behavior (e.g., does the behavior seem to exhibit status-gaining ends, skill deficiencies, family modeling, etc.?). From these deliberations, the team would then move toward implications focused on targeted interventions.

Following this model, we would like to outline a Bullying Understanding and Mediation Protocol (BUMP). Before detailing the protocol, a little framing will be helpful. Integral to the FBA process is the collection of data, from which to make intervention decisions. We have argued that many sources of data are available, and meaningful, and that many aspects of bullying activity are invisible to the adult world. For the more visible aspects of bullying activity, data should be gathered to include in the FBA process. This data collection might include observation data, specifically asking personnel to strategically observe the student who is suspected of bullying. In addition, conversations with family members, peers, and school personnel should also be a part of the data collection process. As noted earlier, working to create a school-wide narrative and trust-filled relationships with students will help create buy-in, motiving student peers to be more forthcoming about the activities they are aware of, or witness. Yet, in the case of bullying activities, these data sources, while crucial, may not account for the more hidden motivations underlying bullying activity. We now turn to the BUMP process as another relevant data source.

The BUMP process is to be followed when a Tier 3 protocol is necessary for a particular student. Appropriate school personnel should be put in place, preferably the same personnel will serve in this role for the entire year in order to build familiarity with the process. This team may include the school counselor or psychologist, teachers, para-educators, or other school personnel who would have insights into and interactions with students. This team will be called together when a Tier 3 situation arises, participating in an initial BUMP analysis and one or more follow up sessions. Initially, the BUMP process will involve the following:

Roles:

- Presenter: the team member who is bringing the Tier 3 situation to the group

- Facilitator: the team member who 'runs' the BUMP session, while also participating in the process.

1. Individual Narrative Construction [prior to the gathering]
   a. The Presenter will bring a one-page descriptive narrative outlining the details of the situation.
   b. This should be free of judgement words (e.g., one student is *bullying* another), instead focusing on behavioral descriptions (e.g., one student regularly *pushes* another into the locker bank).
   c. This descriptive narrative will become the center-piece of the protocol.
   d. This descriptive narrative will be distributed, and seen for the first time by team members, as they gather for the BUMP process.
2. Narrative Review [10 minutes]
   a. The gathered team will review the narrative individually (without interaction);
   b. Each member will list clarifying questions (needing more clarity on the information);
   c. Each member will list probing questions (pushing against the information, seeking to expand or deepen an understanding of the situation).
3. Clarifying Questioning [10 minutes]
   a. Group members raise clarifying questions, seeking answers from the facilitator or others with specific knowledge of the situation;
   b. These questions should not probe, but simply be aimed at gathering the relevant details of what has taken place in the bullying situation (i.e., gathering facts);
   c. Here group members are asking questions that have brief, factual answers.
4. Probing Questioning [15 minutes]
   a. Group members raise probing questions, seeking to broaden the possibilities of what may be happening;

      b. These questions should now probe motivations, context, and new ways of considering the initial narrative.

5. Focused Discussion [15 minutes]
      a. The facilitator asks two questions for group consideration:
          i. What do you see?
         ii. What do you think might be going on?
      b. Here, the facilitator leads group members in a probing discussion, seeking to forward and discuss potential hypotheses based on the narrative and the group questioning.

6. Consolidation [10 minutes]
      a. The facilitator leads group members to make two next-step lists:
          i. Further questions that need to be answered, likely requiring some outside work (e.g., talking with a parent, gathering additional information from peers of the focus student, etc.), and;
         ii. Developing a list of potential motivations that might be driving the behavior.

7. Set Follow-Up Meeting [1 minute]
      a. The facilitator will set the date for a follow-up meeting of the team, with the following 'assignments' to be taken up before the next meeting:
          i. Collecting answers to the questions listed in the 'consolidation' phase (determine who will work to collect the information for which questions), and;
         ii. Each team member will consider the possible motivations listed in the 'consolidation' phase, taking time to allow that discussion to 'settle' before passing this 'data' on to the FBA team working on the situation.

The BUMP team will then meet at the appointed time, writing up their understanding of the motivations involved in the situation, passing these notes on to the associated FBA team. This BUMP process is aimed at providing another data source for the FBA team,

surfacing motivations and understanding of aspects of the behavior that may remain invisible, yet salient to the intervention process. Incorporating this BUMP data, along with additional data that the FBA is able to gather, the FBA team will outline appropriate interventions, following the normal FBA protocol. This would, of course, involve implementing interventions, evaluating effectiveness, and adjusting interventions per the normal PBIS process. This may include reconvening the BUMP process if new information comes to light.

Conclusion

The FBA process holds significant promise for school bullying intervention, in part because of the varied nature of school bullying activity. Yet, we have argued that in regards to school bullying, the typical FBA process is limited because the observational data needed for the FBA process may not be readily available due to the often-covert activities involved in bullying. Hence, in this article we advocate for expanding our FBA data gathering process to include observational data from school personnel, interview data from victims, bullies and families, data from student peers (requiring trust-filled relationships and strong school-wide narratives that invite peers into the prevention process), as well as use of an instrument like the BUMP protocol aimed at developing nuanced data of the more covert and widely varied motivations underlying school bullying. Employing these key revisions to the FBA process as applied in school bullying Tier 3 responses, provide a stronger pathway forward in understanding and mitigating behaviors that have stubbornly persisted.

If bullying were a one-size-fits-all behavior, we could simply choose an intervention (i.e., skill development approaches, informational campaigns, etc.). Further, if bullying were visible to all involved, readily observable by teachers and parents, we could more quickly determine antecedents and, thus, interventions. Yet, in the over fifty years of focused research aimed at mitigating bullying behaviors in schools, we have learned that bullying activity is persistent and complex. For the sake of the thousands of students deeply impacted by the behaviors of a bully, continuing to search for nuanced tools of response is crucial. Functional Behavior Assessment, we believe, is one such tool. With the subtle enhancements offered here, we hope to strengthen its effectiveness

in our efforts to create more humane and thriving school communities.

References

Beaty-O'Ferral, Mary Ellen, Green, Alan, and Hanna, Fred (2010). Classroom management strategies for difficult students: Promoting change through relationships. Middle School Journal, 41(4), 4-11).

Brown, Lyn Mikel (2003). Girlfighting: Betrayal and rejection among girls. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Chen, Ji-Kang, Wang, Shu-Chen, Chen, Yu-Wen, Huang, Tzu-Hsin (2019). Family climate, social relationships with peers and teachers at school, and school bullying victimization among third grade students in elementary schools in Taiwan. School Mental Health, 13, 452-461.

Duncan, Renae D. (2004). The impact of family relationships on school bullies and their victims. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Espelage, Dorothy L., and Swearer, Susan M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? School Psychology Review, 32, 365-383.

Espelage, Dorothy L., and Swearer, Susan M., Eds (2004). Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Gaffney, Hannah, Farrington, David P., and Ttofi, Maria M. (2019). Examining the effectiveness of school-bullying interventions programs globally: A meta-analysis. International Journal of Bullying Prevention, 1, 14-31

Gage, Nicholas A., Lee, Ahhyun, Grasley-Boy, Nicolette, George, Heather Peshak (2018). The impact of school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports on school suspensions: A statewide quasi-experimental analysis. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20:4, 191-202.

Ghent, Emmanuel (1990). Masochism, submission, surrender. Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 26, 108-136.

Grief, Jennifer L., and Furlong, Michael J. (2006). The assessment of school bullying: Using theory to inform practice. Journal of School Violence, 5(3), 33-50.

Haberman, M. (1995). STAR teachers of poverty. Bloomington, IN: Kappa Delta Pi.

Hanley, Gregory P (2012). Functional assessment of problem behavior: dispelling myths, overcoming implementation obstacles, and developing new lore. Behavior Analysis in Practice, 5(1), 54-72.

Holt, Melissa K., and Keyes, Melissa A. (2004). Teachers' attitudes toward bullying. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Hoover, John H., and Oliver, Ronald (1996). The bullying prevention handbook: A guide for principals, teachers, and counselors. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Jacobson, Ronald B. (2010). On bullshit and bullying: Taking seriously those we educate. Journal of Moral Education, 39(4), 437-448.

(2013). Rethinking school bullying: Dominance, identity and school culture. New York, NY: Routledge

(2018). Democratically undemocratic: The case of school bullying in the International Handbook of Philosophy of Education (Paul Smeyers, ed). Cham, Switzerland; Springer International Publishing, pp. 1349-1361.

Juvonen, Janna, and Graham, Sandra, Eds. (2001). Peer harassment in school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimized. New York, NY: The Guildford Press.

Kasen, Stephanie, Bernson, Kathy, Cohen, Patricia, and Johnson, Jeffrey G. (2004). The effects of school climate on changes Aggressive and other behaviors related to bullying. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Lee, David L. (2018). Social Dynamics Management and functional behavioral assessment. Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 26:1, 3-10.

Malecki, Christine Kerres, and Demaray, Michelle Kilpatrick (2004). The role of social support in the lives of bullies, victims, and bully-victims. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

(2007). Social behavior assessment and response to intervention. In Jimerson, Shane R., Burns, Matthew K., and Vanderheyden, Amanda M., Handbook of response to intervention: The science and practice of assessment and intervention. 10.1007/978-0-387-49053-3.

Merrell, K., Gueldner, B., Ross, S. W., & Isava, D. (2008). How effective are school bullying intervention programs? A meta-analysis of intervention research. School Psychology Quarterly, 23, 26-42.

National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center (www.nsrfharmony.org).

Olweus, Dan (1993). Bullying at school. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

PBIS.org (2019). Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports. Retrieved December 1, 2019, from https://pbis.org.

Pellegrini, Anthony D., and Long, Jeffrey D. (2004). Part of the solution and part of the problem: The role of peers in bullying, dominance, and victimization during the transition from primary school through secondary school. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Rigby, Ken (2002). New perspectives on bullying. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Rodkin, Phillip C. (2004). Peer ecologies of aggression and bullying. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Ross., S.W., & Horner, R.H. (2009). Bully prevention in positive behavior support. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 42(4), 747-759.

Sayeski, Kristin L., and Brown, Monica R. (2014). Developing a classroom management plan using a tiered approach. Teaching Exceptional Children, 47(2), 119-127.

Scott, Terrance M., Alter, Peter J., and McQuillan, Kathleen (2010). Functional behavior assessment in classroom settings: Scaling down to scale up. Intervention in School and Clinic, 46(2), 87-94.

Scriven, Michael (1988). Philosophical inquiry methods in education. In, Jaeger, Richard M. (Ed), Complementary methods for research in education. Washington, D.C.: American Education Research Association.

Sheridan, Susan M., Warnes, Emily D., and Dowd, Shannon (2004). Home-school collaboration and bullying: An ecological approach to increase social competence in children and youth. In Espelage, Dorothy L. and Swearer, Susan M. (Eds.), Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Simmons, Rachel (2002). Odd girl out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls. New York, NY: Harcoute.

Steege, Mark W., Pratt, Jamie L., Wickerd, Garry, Guare, Richard, and Watson, T. Steuart (2019). Conducting school-based functional behavioral assessments: A practitioner's guide. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Thornberg, Robert, and Delby, Hanna (2019). How do secondary school students explain bullying? Educational Research, 61(2), 142-160.

Thornberg, Robert, and Knutsen, Sven (2011). Teenagers' explanations of bullying. Child Youth Care Forum, 40, 177-192.

Wolk, S. (2003). Hearts and minds. Educational Leadership, 61(1), 14-18.

Author and Affiliation

Dr. Ronald B. Jacobson
Professor – Dean of the School of Education
Faculty of Education
Whitworth University
Email:rjacobson@whitworth.edu
ORCID:0000-0002-5981-9761

Ms. Michele T. Jacobson
Instructor
Faculty of Education
Central Washington University
Email:michele.jacobson@cwu.edu