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Evaluation and treatment of aggressive behaviors maintained by social and nonsocial reinforcement

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Experimental functional analysis procedures have been used to identify the variables maintaining aggressive behaviors. Results of functional analysis have demonstrated that an individual's aggressive behaviors may be maintained by positive reinforcement (access to attention or to tangibles), negative reinforcement (escape or avoidance of aversive stimuli), or automatic reinforcement (a reinforcement contingency that exists independent of the social environment). Results of several studies in the field of applied behavior analysis indicate that the outcomes of functional analysis can be useful in linking interventions to the identified function maintaining aggression. The authors of this symposium will: a) provide a brief overview and rationale for the use of functional analysis procedures; b) review functional analysis data collected in inpatient and outpatient clinics that illustrate social and nonsocial functions of aggressive behaviors, and c) discuss treatment interventions that are matched to results of functional analyses.