

# Comparing Staff-Rated Precursor Behaviors of SIB to Actual Precursor Behaviors

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## The Evergreen Center



**Subjects and Setting**

**Staff:**

- Nine classroom staff (4 men and 5 women)
- 24 to 43 years old
- Experience working with subjects = 1.5 to 2.5 years
- Educational levels ranged from high school to Bachelor's degree

**Students:**

- Ned
- 18-year old male
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) and Severe Mental Retardation
  - Little functional speech, 4-word phrases, echolalia, pica, and self-injurious behavior
  - Ambulatory and normal hearing and vision
- Eddie
- 13-year old male
  - Autism, Landau-Kleffner Syndrome and Moderate-Severe Mental Retardation
  - Little functional speech, self-injurious behavior, and aggression
  - Ambulatory and normal hearing and vision
- Setting**
- Residential school for 90 children and young adults
  - Ranging in age 6-22 years
  - Divided into 12 different classrooms and residences
  - Sessions conducted in regular classrooms



**Procedure**

- Developed open-ended questionnaire asking staff to write down any possible precursors of:
  - SIB - biting hands and/or arms, putting fingers down throat, and hitting head against any object
  - Aggression - hit, slap, kick, pinch or scratch to another person
- Counted frequency with which individual staff members identified each different potential precursor
- Developed rating scale questionnaire and asked staff to rate likelihood of occurrence of each precursor
- Rank-ordered the occurrence of all identified precursors per target behavior
- Videotaped subjects in their classrooms during the regular day
- Divided the tape into ten separate behavioral vignettes that included instances of target behaviors
- Independently counted the presence or absence of each of the precursors per target behavior
- Graphed the number of times each precursor was observed
- Compared these data to the staff ratings

**Abstract**

Staff report is a common way of gathering information on variables related to behavioral dysfunction. However, research has shown that staff reports often lack correspondence with systematically obtained and more objective data. The current study developed a systematic procedure for determining precursors to dangerous behaviors and investigated correspondence between staff opinion of precursors and the systematic assessment of them. Two teenage boys with developmental disabilities exhibited self-injurious behaviors leading to tissue damage. Staff rated the likelihood of ten possible behaviors occurring immediately prior to each SIB and aggressive episode. Researchers watched videotapes of the subjects and counted the occurrence and frequency of each specific precursor. Results showed low agreement between the systematic counts and staff opinion on two of three target behaviors. Results were discussed in terms of the reliability of staff report.

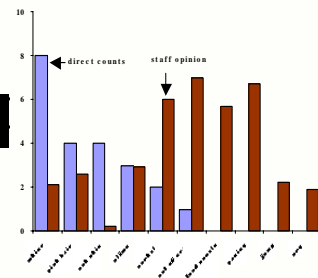
**Dependent Variables**

- Staff opinion ratings on the likelihood of specific behaviors being precursors to the targeted primary self-injurious behaviors and aggression
- Frequency of occurrence of each of the precursors; counted by watching videotaped clips of subjects working in the classroom and engaging in SIB and aggression

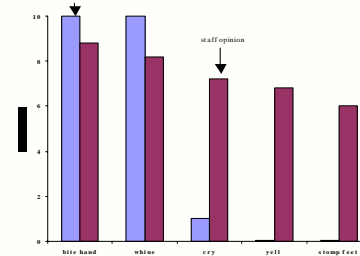
**Results and Discussion**

- Staff opinion closely matched systematic counts on 4 of 20 precursors
- For most cases, staff opinion varied widely from systematic counts
- Perhaps higher correspondence could be obtained by training staff on operational definitions
- Treatment based solely on staff opinion should be carefully considered, and other methods to collect more objective data be used

Ned - Comparison of Staff Ratings and Systematic Counting of Precursors



Eddie - Comparison of Staff Ratings and Systematic Counting of Precursors Aggression



Eddie - Comparison of Staff Ratings and Systematic Counting of Precursors SIB

