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ABSTRACT

Many children with and without disabilities fail to develop the requisite social skills necessary to obtain a level of social competence that facilitates positive peer interactions and relationships. This study was designed to test a combination of training and generalization techniques to promote independent social interactions for children with severe visual impairment. Methods used were sociodramatic script training using puppets, social skills training, systematic instruction and the generalization techniques of naturally occurring contingencies and multiple exemplars. The subjects included a 30-month-old girl with severe esotropia and four of her classmates without disabilities. All of the subjects were enrolled in an integrated preschool. Results demonstrated that the visually impaired child learned the target behaviors and generalized their use to free-play activities with her peers. The study supports the use of puppet script training using sociodramatic scripts to teach social skills to young children with visual impairments and suggests that script training sessions immediately followed by free play activities with group participants promotes the generalization of taught social skills without teacher prompting in the generalized setting. In addition, teaching sociodramatic scripts related to actual social skills such as greetings, respondings and conversations probably facilitated generalization since the skills taught in the scripts were more applicable to the natural environment. Further studies should incorporate additional students and group participants for puppet script training and expand data collection to all subjects. Contains 17 references. (MOK)

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Promoting Generalized Social Interactions Using Sociodramatic Scripts

in an Integrated Preschool Setting

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Abstract

We used puppet script training to teach social skills to a preschool child with visual impairments. Susie and four peers without disabilities were taught social skills utilizing puppets enacting sociodramatic scripts within group training sessions. Training sessions were immediately followed by free play activities among peers without disabilities to assess generalization of skills. Our results demonstrated that Susie learned the target behavior and generalized their use to free-play activities with her peers.

Promoting Generalized Social Interactions Using Sociodramatic Scripts
in an Integrated Preschool Setting

Social skills are essential for the development of a socially competent child (Foster & Ritchey, 1979). However, many children with and without disabilities fail to develop the requisite social skills necessary to obtain a level of social competence which facilitates positive peer interactions and relationships (Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Oden & Asher, 1977; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992). Without active intervention, social skills deficits which appear in the early years of life tend to become more debilitating as children grow older (Erin, Dignan, & Brown, 1991; Strain & Odom, 1986; Strain, Shores, & Timm, 1977; Strain & Timm, 1974).

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of sociodramatic scripting to enhance social interactions among children with and without disabilities (Goldstein & Cisar, 1992; Goldstein, Wickstrom, Hoyson, Jamieson, & Odom, 1988). In order to promote generalization, studies utilizing sociodramatic scripts related to careers were designed to require subjects to maintain sociodramatic roles during free play activities and incorporated teacher prompting to assess generalization of skills (Goldstein & Cisar, 1992; Goldstein et al., 1988). Unfortunately, analyses conducted during social skills interventions have not always demonstrated the generalization of taught social skills to other environments (Kohler & Fowler, 1985; McConnell, Sisson, Cort, & Strain, 1991; Sisson, Van Hasselt, Hersen, & Strain, 1985). However, interventions based on McConnell's (1987) concept of entrapment, incorporate group training and the use of peers to increase prosocial behaviors in generalized settings (Dougherty, Fowler, & Paine, 1985; Kohler & Fowler, 1985; McConnell et al.,

1991; Odom, Hoyson, Jamieson & Strain, 1985; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992; Odom & Strain, 1984; Strain & Odom, 1986; Strain et al., 1977; Strain & Timm, 1974).

The purpose of this study was to extend the previous work of Goldstein and Cisar (1992) by combining sociodramatic script training, social skills training, systematic instruction with 100% mastery of the skill, and the generalization techniques of naturally occurring contingencies and multiple exemplars, to promote spontaneous, independent social interactions for a child with severe visual impairments. Our scripts were associated to actual social skills such as greetings, responses and conversations. There has been a paucity of research investigating the effects of social skills training to young children with visual impairments (Erin et al., 1991; Rogow, 1981; Sisson et al., 1985). The preceding studies of Goldstein & Cisar (1992) did not address children with visual impairments, utilized scripts pertaining to careers, and required teachers to actively prompt sociodramatic roles during free play activities. In our analysis we attempted to extend the work of Goldstein & Cisar (1992) to a new, low-incident, student population, teach scripts that were associated with actual social skills, and attempt to incorporate procedures based on entrapment to facilitate generalization of social skills to novel settings.

Method

Participants and Setting

Susie was a 30-month old girl with severe esotropia enrolled in an integrated preschool. Two previous operations had enabled Susie's limited peripheral and partial vision. Identified as a socially isolated child prior to intervention, she rarely interacted with her peers, usually played by herself and sporadically interacted with one girl. Susie verbally conversed with her

caregivers, however she interacted with her peers using non-verbal hand and body movements. Susie and four classmates without disabilities, ages 26 months to 37 months, participated in group sociodramatic puppet script training. Training was conducted at Susie's school in a preschool classroom and target behaviors were observed on the adjacent playground during mid-morning recess.

Procedures and Data Collection

Data Collection. Data for baseline, post training, and follow-up observations, were collected during ten minute consecutive sessions throughout each 55 minute mid-morning recess period to determine the frequency and performance of target behaviors. Behaviors during observations were recorded and scored on an event recording data sheet. Susie's vocal behavior was scored as opportunities for targeted behavior performances and her performance of target behaviors. Figure 1 outlines the target behaviors and associated opportunities and scored behavior for interactions between Susie and her peers.

Baseline. Data were collected prior to puppet script training to establish baseline for the target behaviors and to determine the number of Susie's opportunities to correctly perform such behaviors. Data were collected on the playground during mid-morning recess period when Susie was playing with her entire class and group participants.

Puppet script training. Puppet script training was conducted daily utilizing four puppets with an instructor, Susie and three-to-four group participants during initial thirty minutes of each 55 minute mid-morning recess period. Puppets and specific scripts were adapted from Cartledge and Kleefeld (1991) and were related to actual social skills of greeting, responses, initiations of conversations and conversations. Large, colorful, paper puppets with big eyes

were designed to take advantage of Susie's limited vision. The instructor enacted a sociodramatic script using hand-held puppets to: (a) introduce the social skill; (b) check for understanding of why the skill was important; (c) outline necessary components of the social skills; (d) review the components; (e) model the skill following the scripted skill components; (f) provide sufficient exemplars, and (g) re-state and summarize the social skill components. After the instructor modeled what each puppet character said, the instructor gave the children opportunities to respond to each puppet's role.

Target behaviors were taught using different scripts. Greeting and responding to greeting were modeled and taught in the first sociodramatic script. Response to verbal initiation of peers, was modeled and taught in the second script. Susie's verbal initiation of a conversation when she approached a peer and her initiation of a conversation when she was approached by a peer, were modeled and taught in the final script.

Training incorporated guided practice following script enactment. Susie and all participants practiced and enacted different puppet roles (i.e., "Shelli-Bird" was always the teacher of the target behavior, "Susie Frog" always wanted to learn the target behaviors). A most-to-least prompt hierarchy was used to assess Susie's performance during 15 minute observations throughout guided practice. Correct performance was scored when Susie independently performed all required components of the target behavior. Training was conducted for three to eight sessions following baseline conditions and was terminated once 100% independent performance criterion was met for each skill.

Immediately following training sessions, all participants joined classmates during mid-morning recess on the adjacent playground which included a sandbox, climbing bars, slide,

tricycles, tables and chairs. All participants were told to go to the playground and were not given any instruction regarding performance of behaviors by the instructor. Additionally, teachers were instructed not to provide prompts regarding social skills to Susie, group participants, nor classmates throughout the study.

Data collection after training. Data were collected after each training intervention once Susie had reached a 100% performance criteria for target behaviors of each sociodramatic script to determine the number of opportunities for target behaviors and associated behavior responses. After stable baseline was established, Susie was taught target behaviors in the ensuing sociodramatic script.

Three and twenty-four month follow-up data collection. Three months and twenty-four months after intervention, follow-up data were collected for verbal initiations of conversations when Susie was approached by a peer. Follow up data were collected to determine if social skills were maintained after conclusion of intervention.

Social Validity

After intervention, Susie's two teachers were asked to rate her performance before and after puppet script training. Teachers ranked Susie's performance of target behaviors using a pre-post questionnaire which was developed by the instructor. Pre-Post intervention proficiencies rated Susie's performance of dependent variables using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 signifying that behavior was performed very well.

Reliability

Reliability was assessed for 23% of the observations. Interobserver reliability of event recording measurement system across behaviors was assessed by conducting two observations

concurrently every fourth observation session. Reliability was calculated for behaviors by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus the number of disagreements and multiplying by 100%. Reliability for greeting was 100%, response to greeting was 100%, response to conversation was 100%, peer approached initiation of conversation was 90% (range 87% to 100%), and Susie approached initiation of a conversation was 88% (range 85 to 100%).

Results

Data were recorded for all puppet script training sessions. Once performance criteria of 100% for a script was reached, training was terminated. Training data collection resumed for subsequent scripts. Susie reached criteria for script one in eight sessions, criteria for script two in three sessions and criteria for script three in four sessions. After training, data were collected for target behaviors.

The data are presented as Susie's mean percent of skill components performed correctly of targeted social skills during baseline and post-training intervention sessions. The mean percent of skills components performed correctly was determined by adding the scores for all of the occurrences of the target behavior during one session, calculating the mean score of the skill, and dividing this score by the opportunities per each session. Correct performance was scored when Susie performed all the required skill components of the target behavior when there were opportunities to perform a behavior. When there were no opportunities to perform a behavior, no data point is indicated on the graph.

Prior to intervention, Susie had a 0% mean percentage of greeting, a 0% mean percentage response to greeting, a mean 4% for conversation, 12% for conversation when she

approached a peer, and 0% for when she was approached by a peer and she initiated conversation. Following training script one, Susie's mean percentage of greeting and response to greeting increased to 100% whenever she had an opportunity to greet a peer or respond to a greeting.

Following script two intervention, Susie's mean percentage response to conversation increased to a mean of 94% per session (range, 86% to 100%). After training of script three, Susie's mean percentage peer approached initiation of conversation increased to 93% per session (range, 66% to 100%) and her mean percentage initiation of a conversation when she approached a peer increased to 100% per session. Prior to intervention, Susie had many sessions where she never approached a peer during a session. After intervention she approached peers at a minimum of 2 times per session.

Follow-up data was collected three and twenty-four months after intervention to assess maintenance of target behaviors and to measure her initiation of peer approached conversations. During three month follow-up observations, Susie had a mean of 98% for initiation of peer approached conversations per session (range, 88% to 100%), with a mean opportunities of 6.3 per session (range, 4 to 8). During twenty-four month follow-up observations, Susie had a mean 97% for initiation of peer approached conversations (range 88% to 100%) per session, with a mean opportunities of 7.5 per session (range, 6 to 9).

Social validity

After intervention, Susie's two teachers were asked to rate her performance before and after script training. A rating of five signified that the behavior was performed very well and a

rating of one signified a poor performance. Susie's pre-intervention mean score of behaviors performance was 1.8 (range, 1 to 2); post-intervention mean score was 5.0.

Discussion

The results suggest that puppet script training of social skills using sociodramatic scripts to a preschool child with visual impairments can increase prosocial behaviors in a generalized setting. The training effects were replicated across three scripts, with Susie reaching 100% performance criterion more quickly for the second and difficult third script. After intervention, significant gains in the rate of social skill performance and social interactions in a generalized setting were exhibited by Susie for all target behaviors. The use of a multiple baseline across skill design (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968) demonstrates the intervention increased performance of dependent variables during recess with peers. Previous studies utilizing sociodramatic scripts associated with careers were designed to require subjects to maintain sociodramatic roles during free play activities (Goldstein & Cisar, 1992; Goldstein et al., 1988). This study demonstrated that taught skills were exhibited during free play activities without teacher prompting.

It is probable that teaching sociodramatic scripts related to actual social skills such as greeting, responding and conversations readily facilitated generalization as the skills taught in the scripts were more applicable to the natural environment (McConnell & McEvoy, 1992). Additionally, it is likely that training, immediately followed by naturally occurring contingencies of reciprocal interactions between Susie and peers appeared to be a powerful reinforcer to maintain taught social skills in generalized settings without teacher prompting. If the training had not been with an integrated group, or not immediately followed by recess with

group participants and other peers, reinforcement from naturally maintaining contingencies might not have occurred.

Using typical peers for training incorporated common stimuli that was instrumental in facilitating generalization (Odom et al., 1985; Odom & Strain, 1984; Stokes & Baer, 1977; Stokes et al., 1978). Other interventions which include salient common stimuli (e.g., peers) found in both training and generalization settings have effectively promoted generalization of skills as the peers in training settings become discriminative stimulus control for generalization of prosocial skills to other environments (Stokes, Doud, Rowbury, & Baer, 1978). Susie's peers that participated in training were a common stimulus to both the training and generalization settings as they were also present during free play activities that immediately followed all training sessions. The use of common stimuli ensured that peers who were familiar with the targeted social skills and present during training sessions would be present to interact with Susie during free play activities. This enabled Susie to generalize and maintain her social skills to outside free play activities.

Future studies should incorporate additional students and group participants for puppet script training. If replicated, the study should also be expanded to include data collection identifying specific peers that subjects interact with during baseline and post intervention conditions. Data were not taken on the specific peers who interacted with Susie prior to intervention. However, anecdotal notes recorded prior to intervention recorded that Susie spoke less than three words to one female peer throughout morning recess. Data were also not taken on whether specific peers that interacted with Susie after intervention or during the three

month follow-up were group participants. However, anecdotal notes recorded Susie maintained conversations with group participants as well as other peers during recess.

Incorporating common stimuli and naturally maintaining contingencies were effective programs to facilitate the entrapment, generalization and maintenance of newly acquired social responses in an unprompted free play environment. The preschool environment provided a natural environment to encourage the generalization of skills without the utilization of indiscriminable contingencies and mediated generalizations.

Contributions

This study expands upon the previous studies of Goldstein and Cisar (1992) and supports the use of puppet script training of sociodramatic scripts associated with actual social skills to teach social skills to young children with visual impairments. This study also suggests that script training sessions immediately followed by free play activities with group participants and other peers promotes the generalization of taught social skills without teacher prompting in the generalized setting. Additionally, our study implies incorporating common stimuli and naturally maintaining contingencies can facilitate the entrapment and maintenance of newly acquired social responses in an unprompted free play environment.

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OPPORTUNITY	SCORED TARGET BEHAVIOR
<p>An opportunity to greet occurred when Susie approached a peer or was approached by a peer when the peer entered the playground or sandbox</p>	<p>Target Behavior #1: A greeting was scored when Susie faced the peer, positioned herself within three feet of the peer, looked into their eyes, smiled and said "Hello," "Hi," or "Good morning".</p>
<p>An opportunity to respond to a greeting occurred when a peer said "Hello," "Hi" or "Good morning" to Susie as the peer entered the playground or sand box in the morning, and faced Susie within three feet proximity</p>	<p>Target Behavior #2: A response to a greeting was scored when Susie faced the peer, positioned herself within three feet of the peer, looked into their eyes, smiled and said "Hello," "Hi," or "Good morning".</p>
<p>An opportunity for a verbal response to peer initiated conversation occurred when a peer approached Susie, faced her while being within three feet proximity of Susie and asked a question requesting a response such as "Want to play?"</p>	<p>Target Behavior #3: A response to a verbal initiation of a peer was scored when Susie faced the peer, positioned herself within three feet of the peer, looked into their eyes, and said single word utterances such as "No!," "Mine," "Here," "Play" or "Okay".</p>
<p>A. Susie approached opportunity to initiate a conversation occurred when Susie approached a peer, positioned herself in front of the peer and could have begun conversation</p>	<p>Target Behavior #4: A verbal initiation of a Susie approached conversation was scored when the Susie walked up to a peer, positioned herself within three feet of the peer, faced the peer, looked into the peer's eye and said at least two clearly spoken words that required a response such as "Want to play chase?"</p>
<p>An opportunity to initiate a conversation when Susie was approached by a peer occurred when a peer walked up to Susie, positioned himself/herself in front of Susie and could have begun conversation.</p>	<p>Target Behavior #5: A verbal initiation of a peer approached conversation was scored when the peer walked up to Susie and Susie faced the peer, looked into the peer's eye and said at least two clearly spoken words that required a response such as "Do you want to play" or "Want to play chase?".</p>

MEAN PERCENT SKILLS COMPONENTS PERFORMED CORRECTLY

