

Contemporary ABA, Social Skills, Relationships, and Groups: How ABA is Still Finding It's Heart



A Bit of History (mine and a few others)

- Getting Old So Indulge Me
- Eyewitness to History
- The Benefit and Beauty of What Has Come Before



Lovaas



University of Kansas



*SOME CURRENT DIMENSIONS OF APPLIED
BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS*¹

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The analysis of individual behavior is a problem in scientific demonstration, reasonably well understood (Skinner, 1953, Sec. 1), comprehensively described (Sidman, 1960), and quite thoroughly practised (*Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 1957—). That analysis has been pursued in many settings over many years. Despite variable precision, elegance, and power, it has resulted in general descriptive statements of mechanisms that can produce many of the forms that individual behavior may take.

The statement of these mechanisms establishes the possibility of their application to problem behavior. A society willing to consider a technology of its own behavior apparently is likely to support that application

tions, it seems, are. Analytic behavioral application is the process of applying sometimes tentative principles of behavior to the improvement² of specific behaviors, and simultaneously evaluating whether or not any changes noted are indeed attributable to the process of application—and if so, to what parts of that process. In short, analytic behavioral application is a self-examining, self-evaluating, discovery-oriented research procedure for studying behavior. So is all experimental behavioral research (at least, according to the usual strictures of modern graduate training). The differences are matters of emphasis and of selection.

The differences between applied and basic research are not differences between that



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SOCIAL VALIDITY: THE CASE FOR SUBJECTIVE MEASUREMENT
OR
HOW APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS IS FINDING ITS HEART¹

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I apologize, but I must begin making my case for subjective measurement by recounting to you my own experiences with it over the past few years. Almost a decade ago, when the field of applied behavior analysis was beginning to expand so rapidly, we were faced with the task of putting together the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*. For a period of several months Garth Hopkins, who was our managing editor, presented us with a series of unexpected decisions to make; like: What color should the paper be? And did we need a paper that would hold together for two thousand years or were

What was the purpose of our journal? It was a question that was clearly more important than the others I had been asked. So I decided to consult the Gods but, as usual, Don Baer, Don Bushell, Barbara Etzel, Vance Hall, Bill Hopkins, Judy LeBlanc, Keith Miller, Todd Risley, and Jim Sherman were not in their offices. However, I did find Don Baer in the hall. So I asked Don, "What is the purpose of *JABA*?" and Don said in his usual offhand but eloquent way, "It is for the publication of applications of the analysis of behavior to problems of social importance." Well, that sounded so reasonable that



General State of Affairs

- ABA Approach: Can Be Simple, Superficial, Rote, Mechanical
- Other Approaches: Can Be Nebulous with indefinite, “magical” process—but some have appeal because respects social-ness



Other Approaches

- Floor Time
- RDI
- Social Stories
- Social Thinking/Cognition Approaches
- Experiences and Exposure

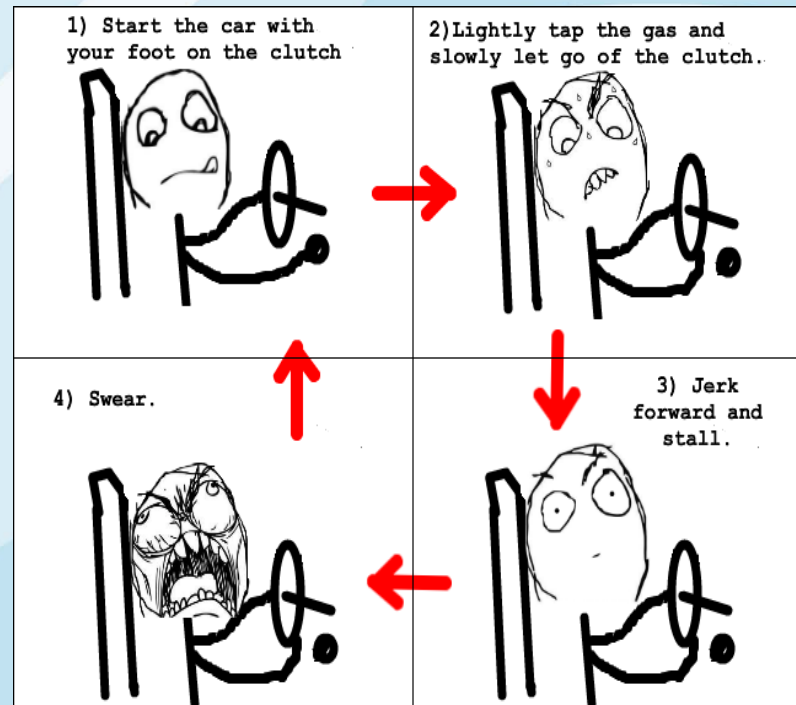


What's The Research?

- Leaf, J. B. et al. (In Press). What is the proof? A methodological review of studies that have utilized social stories. Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities.
- Kassardjian, Al. et. al. (2014) Comparing the Teaching Interaction Procedure to Social Stories: A Replication Study. 2014. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders 44, 2329-2340.
- Leaf, J.B. et. al. (2012) Comparing the Teaching interaction procedure to social stories for people with autism. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. 45, 281-298



SOME COMMON SENSE





*Knowing is
not enough,
we must
apply.*

*Willing is
not enough,
we must
do.*

Bruce Lee



HOW?

- Capture of Meaningfulness, Naturalness, Essence, Intent, and Spirit without blind hope of magic approaches
- Approached the Way Individuals with Autism need to Learn
- Matter of how taught, what taught, and social purpose



HOW?

- **NO COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULA**
 - ELUSIVENESS
 - BREADTH OF NEEDS
 - INDIVIDUALIZED NATURE
- **SOCIAL SKILLS TAXONOMY**
 - WAY TO ORGANIZE AND CONCEPTUALIZE EFFORT
 - GUIDES ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION
 - SOCIAL VALIDITY
 - RESEARCH SUPPORT



HOW?

SOCIAL SKILLS TAXONOMY

- SOCIAL AWARENESS
- SOCIAL COMMUNICATION
- SOCIAL INTERACTION
- SOCIAL LEARNING
- SOCIAL RELATEDNESS
- *Not mutually exclusive*
- *Early, Intermediate, & Advanced in Each*



What's The Research

- Leaf, J. B., Taubman, M., Leaf, J., Dale, S., Tsuji, K., Kassardjian, A., Alcalay, A., Milne, C., Mitchell, E., Townley-Chochran, D., Leaf, R., & McEachin, J. (In Press). Teaching social interaction skills using cool versus not cool. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*.
- Milne, C., Leaf, J.B., Leaf, J., Alcalay, A., Dale, S., Kassardjian, A., Taubman, M.T., McEachin, J., & Leaf, R. (2014). An empirical investigation on the the effectiveness of a social taxonomy for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Applied Behavior Analysis International*



SOCIAL AWARENESS

Beginning



Intermediate



Advanced

- Identifying Significant Others
- Relationship Discrimination
- Gestures
- Impact of Behavior on Others
- Inferences
- Jokes
- Optimal Times
- Perspective Taking (Theory of Mind)
- Character Traits
- Interpersonal Dynamics



SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Beginning



Intermediate



Advanced

- Basic, Intermediate, Advanced Conv (W in P)
- Inflection Pattern
- Conversational Tracking
- Giving Compliments/Feedback
- Acknowledging points/message
- Interrupting
- Expressing Feelings
- Conversational Repair
- Apologizing
- Maintaining or Changing Conv Flow
- Implying/Subtleness/Hints
- Joke Provision
- Arguing/Discussing/Persuasion



TEACHING INTERACTIONS

- Identification and Labeling
- Rationale
- Description/Demonstration
- Practice
- Feedback
- Consequence *



What's the Research?

- Achievement Place and The Teaching Family Model (Phillips, Phillips, Fixsen, & Wolf, 1972)
- Maloney et al., 1976
- Solnick, Braukmann, Bedlington, Kirigin, & Wolf, 1981
- Leaf, J.B., et al. Increasing social skills and pro-social behavior for three children diagnosed with autism through the use of a teaching package. Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders. 2009, 3,275-289.
- Leaf et al, (Group) 2010
- Dotson et al, (Adolescents) 2010
- Oppenheimer-Leaf et al, (Play and Communication) 2011
- Oppenheimer-Leaf et al, (Game Play) 2012
- Leaf et al, 2012
- Kuyumjian et al, (Generalization) 2013
- Kassarjian et al, 2014



SOCIAL INTERACTION

Beginning



Intermediate



Advanced

- Comfortable Proximity
- Responding to Other's Initiations
- Attention Seeking
- Initiating/Maintaining Interactions
- Being a Good Sport
- Interactional Reciprocity
- Responding to Cues
- Helping
- Assertion
- Sharing
- Negotiation
- Decision Making/Problem Solving/Coping



SOCIAL LEARNING

Beginning



Intermediate

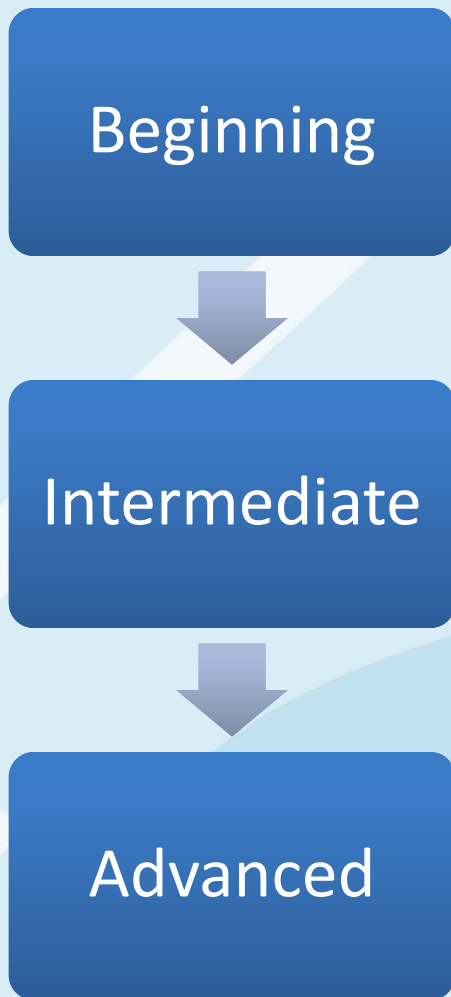


Advanced

- Imitation
- Observational Learning
- Vicarious Learning
- Incidental Learning
- Flow of Group Social Play
- Information Seeking
- Group Effects
- Peer Culture Influence
- Screening Negative Influences



SOCIAL RELATEDNESS



- Desire for Proximity/Social Reinf Value
- Joint Attention
- Engagement
- Playing To and Off of Others
- Desire for Approval/Acceptance
- Attachments Friendships
- Interpersonal Reciprocity/Being a Good Friend
- Empathy/Compassion/Caring/Altruism



ESSENCE, INTENT, AND AUTHENTICITY

- How Do You Capture These?
- The Failure of Prompts
- The Lesson of Communication Temptations
- Remembering Natural Reasons



ESSENCE, INTENT, AND AUTHENTICITY

- How Do You Capture These?
- The Failure of Prompts
- The Lesson of Communication Temptations
- Remembering Natural Reasons/Social Validity
- An Empathy Example



ESSENCE, INTENT, AND AUTHENTICITY

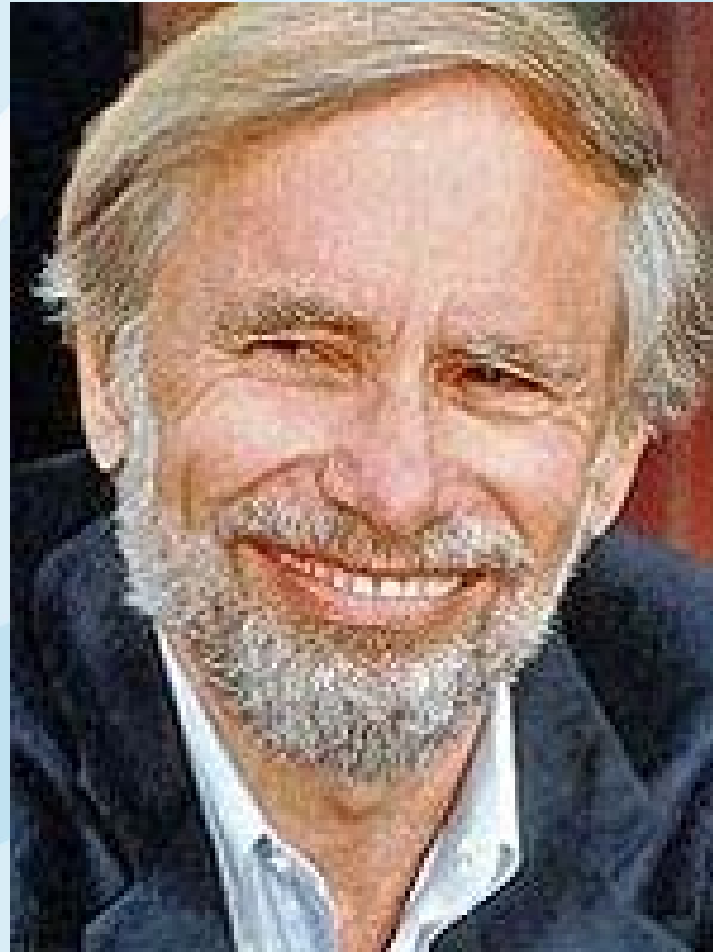
- How Do You Capture These?
- The Failure of Prompts
- The Lesson of Communication Temptations
- Remembering Natural Reasons/Social Validity
- An Empathy Example
- What About Relationships?



Some More History



IVAR LOVAAS



ADVANTAGES OF GROUP WORK

- **Efficiency**
- **Social Context**
- **Observational Learning**
- **Vicarious Learning**
- **Generalization Potential**
 - **Natural**
 - **Opportunity to De-Centralize Adults**
 - **Broad-Based Effort Reduces Inadvertent Staging**



THE RESEARCH

- **Early Research Had Methodological Limitations (And/Or Limited Effects) (White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2007)**
- **Generally, Social Skills Groups Have Been Shown To Be Effective. However, More Research Is Necessary**
- **Often Part of Social Treatment Package**
- **Little Done with Lower Functioning Individuals**
- **Little Known About Necessary Components**
- **Little Known About Groups In School Settings
(Reichow & Volkmar, 2010)**
- **(Kaat & Lecavalier, 2014)**



WHAT SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS TYPICALLY OFFER

- **Highly Structured Type:**
 - Instruction That is Often Sequential
 - Emphasis On Use of Consequences
 - Specific and Typically Basic Social Targets
 - Adult-Centric
 - Limited Group Benefit (Facilitated)
 - Social Bleaching



WHAT SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS TYPICALLY OFFER

- **Social Experience Type:**
 - Opening Routine
 - Social Lessons
 - Social Exercise
 - Social Activity

 - Common-Denominator Work and General Objectives
 - High Levels of Facilitation and Guidance
 - Adult-Centric
 - VooDoo:
 - Social Stories
 - Social Cognition



WHAT SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS SHOULD OFFER

- **Individual Assessment**
- **Individual Instructional Content (and Methods?)**
- **Trained Staff**
- **Systematic, Evidence-Supported Programming**
- **Active, Inter-active, Experiential Learning**



WHAT SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS SHOULD OFFER

- **Clarity of Objectives (Exposure? Skills? Relationships?)**
 - **Know the Various Purposes and Design Accordingly**
- **Diminishing Role of the Adult**
 - **Balance of Adult Led and Adult Orchestrated Activities**
- **Facilitate Generalization**
- **Be Social and Fun**



SHOULDN'T WE WAIT?

- **Group Research is Limited**
- **Little to No Content/Component Analysis**
- **Aren't We Evidenced Based?**



SHOULDN'T WE WAIT?

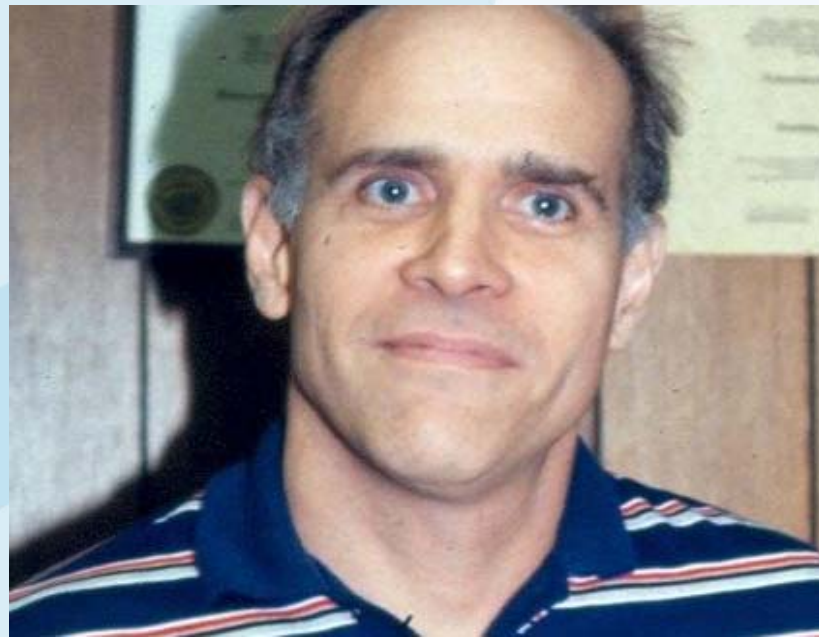
But....

- **Empirical Support for Principles and Procedures**
- **Clinical and Field Testing Contribution**
- **The Need is Substantial**
- **This Promotes Research**



The Balance of The Applied and Analytic

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Groups as a Means for Developing:

- Social Tolerance
- Social Awareness
- Social Interest
- Social Skills
- Friendship



Objectives Determine

- Nature of Activities
- Targets
- Programming (Motiv. And Instruct.)
- Perhaps Peer Composition



For Tolerance

- Just Presence—Only case where exposure enough
- Child vs. Children
- Manner of child
- Special needs vs. Typical



For Awareness

- Programming for Obs. Learning, Obs. Awareness, Social Cues
- Noticability, Accessibility of Peer



For Interest

- Compelling Activities and Material
- Social Temptations, Relevancy, and Enhancement
- Peers Willing and Able



For Social Skills

- Combination of Programmed/Contrived and Orchestrated/Naturally Occurring Opps (to be discussed)
- Objectives and Program
- Peers with Similar Needs. Peers with Higher and Lower Capabilities



For Friendships.....



Seems Obvious But....

- Work on Behavior First (and Throughout)



Didactic/Instructional Efforts

- Variety of Configurations
- Being Systematic
- Differentiation
- Themes and Flow
- Don't Get Stuck in Cool Vs. Not Cool
- Discussions, Social Cognition and Social Knowledge
- Actual Skill Development



Teacher Orchestrated Efforts

- Balance with Teacher Led
- Fed From and To Instructional Efforts?
- Types
 - Projects
 - Structured Leisure/Social
 - Unstructured Social Activities
 - Gatherings and Social Experiences
 - Primed Scenarios
 - Unexpected Situations
- Teacher Facilitation/Role
- Generalization Efforts?



Somewhere In Between...

- “Shared Excitement” Experiences/Games



What Happens the Rest of Their Lives?

- Coordination
- Communication and Assignments
- Monitoring
- Maintenance/Consistency
- Fading/Generalization



Back to Friendships

- What Makes a Relationship a Friendship?



Friendships—How Do You Know?

- Preference
- Gravitation
- Spontaneous Initiation
- Anticipation
- Uniqueness
- Reciprocity



Different Arena Different Skills

- Popular
- Value and Success in Group Relationships
- Value and Success w/BFF
- Functional Relationships
- Not Being a Pariah



Relationship/Friendships

- Building Authentic, Reciprocal Relationships
 - General Social Competencies
 - Social Desire and Interest
 - Anticipating Other's Likes and Dislikes
 - Reciprocity
 - Shared Experience
 - Compromising
 - Being Interesting and Having Value
 - Empathy, Caring, Thoughtfulness, and Altruism



Relationship/Friendships

- The Relationship Development Process
 - Necessary Skill Development
 - Identifying Candidates
 - Creating Opportunities and Shared Experiences
 - More Than the Group
 - Monitoring and Facilitation of the Process
 - Getting Out of the Way



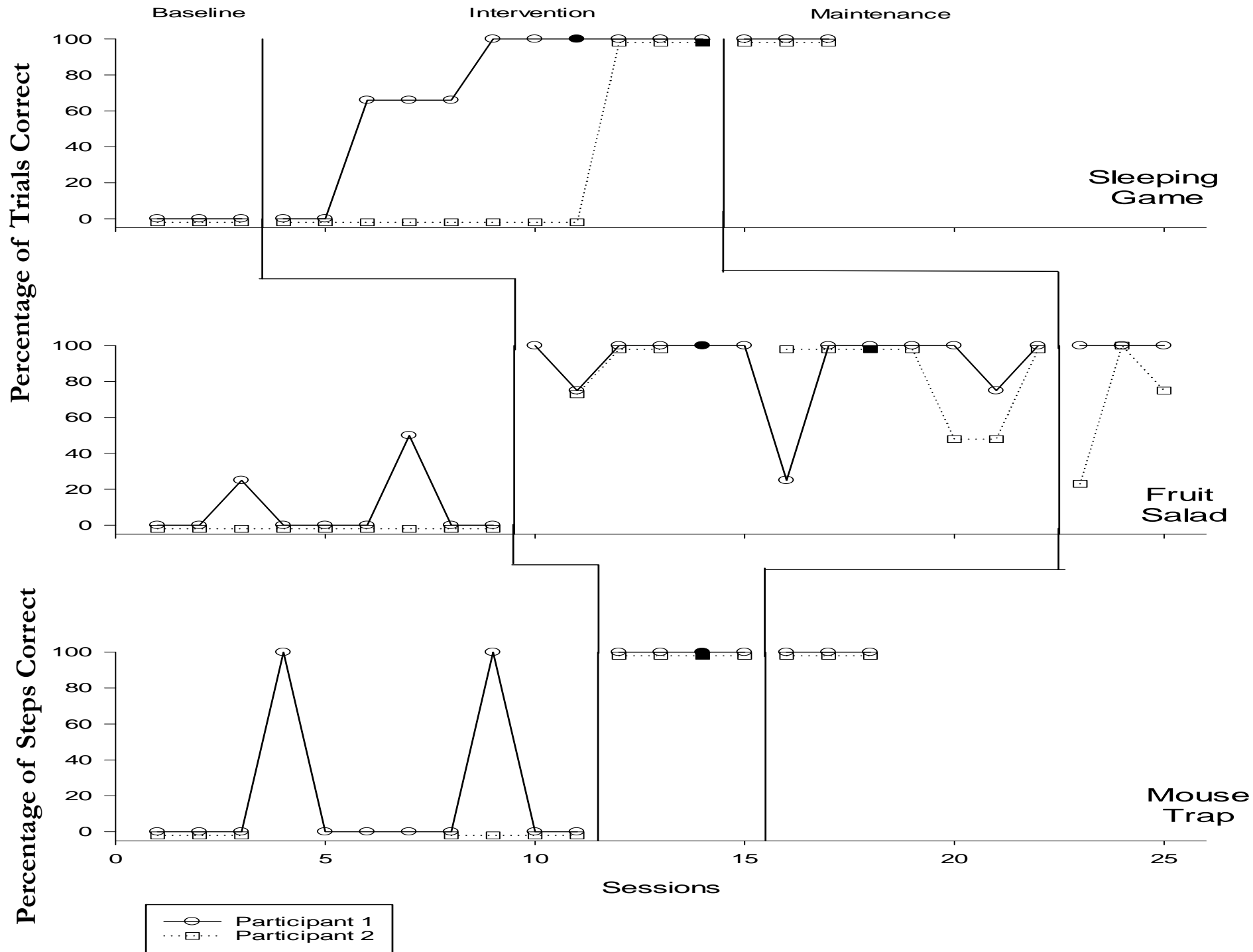
Some Current Research



A **PRELIMINARY** Evaluation of a Behaviorally Based Social Skills Group For Young Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Randomized Control Trial

Justin B. Leaf, Mitchell Taubman,
John McEachin, Ronald Leaf, Jeremy Leaf, Christine Milne,
Donna-Townley Cochran, Misty Oppenheim-Leaf, & Alyne Kassardjian
Autism Partnership Foundation





GROUP DESIGN: SSIS

Evaluator	Group A Pre	Group A Post	Group B Pre	Group B Post
Blind Evaluator	70.5 (3%)	96.6 (37%)	62.7 (1%)	59.7 (<1%)
Social Skills Teachers	64.3 (1%)	104.8 (57%)	58.9 (<1%)	63.4 (1%)
Researchers	60 (1%)	91.5 (42%)	60.4 (1%)	51.4 (<1%)

SSIS: ONE WAY ANOVA ANALYSIS

Evaluator	Group A & Group B: Pre	Group A: Pre & Post	Group B: Pre & Post	Group A & Group B: Post
Blind Evaluator	.836 Not Significant	<.001 Significant	.494 Not Significant	<.001 Significant
Social Skills Teachers	.192 Not Significant	.002 Significant	.637 Not Significant	<.001 Significant
Researchers	.298 Not Significant	<.001 Significant	.073 Not Significant	<.001 Significant

One of the most comprehensive and easy-to-use guides available for teaching social skills to children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. A valuable resource for teachers, clinicians, and families!

TRISTRAM SMITH, PH.D.

Associate Professor of Pediatrics
University of Rochester
Medical Center



This is a terrific addition to the information available on how to teach social skills. The authors have outlined ways to teach critically important skills in social awareness, social communication, social interaction, social learning, and social relatedness. They outline sub-skills, prerequisites, and methods of instruction for each area in a methodical, easy to read, logical, and elegant manner. One of the many strengths of this book is the ways in which different threads of the curriculum are emphasized and interwoven. This book is very thorough, and approached these skills with programming that is both broad and deep. It is a very practical book as well, addressing real world issues such as teasing and bullying, conversational development, and social comprehension. In general, this book outlines skill development in clear and behavioral frameworks, and provides parents and teachers with a wealth of information regarding goals and strategies. Most individuals with ASD's have substantial social challenges. Many receive good and thorough intervention in many areas of the curriculum, but few receive excellent instruction in social skills. This book will increase the quality of social skill instruction offered to learners on the spectrum.

MARY JANE WEISS, PH.D.
Director of Research and Training
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CRAFTING CONNECTIONS

Taubman Leaf McEachin

CRAFTING CONNECTIONS

Contemporary Applied Behavior Analysis for
Enriching the Social Lives of Persons with
Autism Spectrum Disorder



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