

Critical Review:
What is the evidence that video modeling is an effective intervention to teach pretend play skills to young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?*

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This critical review examines the effectiveness of video modeling as an intervention tool to teach pretend play skills to young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Five experimental single subject, multiple baseline design studies were reviewed as a result of a literature search using computerized databases. All participants were between the ages of 3;8 and 7 years and had a diagnosis of ASD. Overall, the results of this critical appraisal yield promising evidence for the use of video modeling as an appropriate intervention to teach scripted play skills to children with autism in independent, pretend play scenarios. Clinical implications are discussed.

Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by impairments in verbal and nonverbal communication skills, restricted or repetitive behaviours, and social interaction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Deficits in symbolic and pretend play are also trademarks of the disorder for many children with this diagnosis (Lifter, 2000). In fact, the play of children with ASD is often characterized as repetitive, ritualistic, and lacking in imaginative themes, indicating a marked difficulty in engaging in appropriate play behaviours (Paterson & Arco, 2007). As symbolic play has been shown to be a predictor of both language abilities and social communication skills, particularly for young children with this diagnosis, the development of pretend play skills is important to include in intervention plans (Barton & Pavilanis, 2012). To target play skills, video modeling has been used as a form of intervention to provide children with ASD exemplars and scripts of appropriate play skills.

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intraclass correlations (ICCs) ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$) was reported for both participants with the exception of Child 2's unscripted verbalizations (0.08, non-significant). There are, however, several limitations. First, as with all of the research being reviewed, the small sample size of this study prevents the conclusions from this study to be strengthened further. Additionally, although sessions were coded blind and in random order, the first author was the primary coder and was not blind to the purpose of the study, which could increase bias. Finally, Child 2's unscripted verbalizations were coded jointly between both coders due to issues achieving reliability in determining the participant's responses. These results are suggested to be interpreted with caution.

Overall, conclusions drawn from the Bourdreau & D'Entremont paper provide compelling evidence of the effectiveness of video modeling to teach pretend play skills to children with ASD, which have the potential to be both generalizable and maintainable over time.

Dupere, MacDonald, & Ahearn (2013) used three play sets to teach three children with ASD (5-6 yrs) pretend play skills with trained and untrained characters using a video modeling intervention with substitutable loops. A substitutable loop is

Boudreau, E. & D'Entremont. (2010). Improving the pretend play skills of preschoolers with autism spectrum disorders: The effects of video modeling. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 22*, 415-431.

Charlop-Christy, M.H., Le, L., & Freeman, K.A. (2000). A comparison of video modeling with in vivo modeling for teaching children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 30*, 537-552.