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"Say Cheese": Teaching photography skills to adults with developmental disabilities

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ABSTRACT

We evaluated a video prompting procedure to teach adults with developmental disabilities to take a digital photograph and print it using a laptop computer and a printer. Participants were four men with developmental disabilities. Training was conducted at the participants' residential facility. During baseline, participants were told to take a photograph, but were given no other instruction. During intervention, participants received instruction using a video prompting procedure. Video prompting consisted of watching a clip of each step of the task analysis and then having the opportunity to imitate that step. Video prompting was evaluated using a multiple-probe across participants design. Following acquisition, video prompting was removed to assess maintenance at 2, 4 and 8 weeks and at 6 months. During naturalistic probes, participants had the opportunity to take a picture of their choice of flora, surroundings or persons. All four participants learned to take and print a digital photograph with the video prompting procedures. The skills generalized to novel situations and were maintained at each follow-up probe. These data suggest that video prompting may be an effective instructional strategy for teaching digital photography skills to adults with developmental disabilities.

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1. Introduction

Recreation could be defined as an activity that people engage in for the primary purpose of enjoyment and satisfaction (Schleien & Larson, 1986) while, leisure describes one's perception that one is free to choose and participate in meaningful recreation (Dattilo & Schleien, 1994; Schleien, Kiernan, & Wehman, 1981). It can often be difficult to establish, maintain, and integrate leisure activities for individuals with developmental disabilities (Schleien, Meyer, Heyne, & Brandt, 1995). Furthermore, developing age-appropriate leisure activities for persons with developmental disabilities can be a challenging task (Adkins & Matson, 1980; Schleien, Wehman, & Kiernan, 1981). Dattilo and Schleien (1994) argue that all human beings have a right to engage in leisure activities and that services provided to individuals with developmental disabilities should offer these individuals opportunities to engage in leisure activities.

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Recreation and leisure skills have been considered a curricular domain for persons with developmental disabilities for several decades (Giangreco, 1983; Matson & Marchetti, 1980). A series of studies were done in the area of leisure skill training starting the late 1970s' (Hill, Wehman, & Horst, 1982; Marchant & Wehman, 1979; Wehman, 1976, 1978). Areas within leisure that were examined included teaching play skills (Hopper & Wambold, 1978; Kissel & Whitman, 1977; Singh & Millichamp, 1987; Wehman & Marchant, 1978; Wehman, 1977, 1979), dancing (Lagomarcino, Reid, Ivancic, & Faw, 1984), game playing (Hill et al., 1982; Rankin, Bates, Baldwin, Kelly, & Hannah, 1975; Schleien & Larson, 1986; Wehman & Schleien, 1980) and hobbies (Giangreco, 1983; Marchant, 1979; Wehman & Schleien, 1980).

Hobbies can be distinguished from the other categories, in that they can be done alone, and frequently culminate in a permanent product, such as painting, photography stamp collection, and butterfly collection. While hobbies, such as bird watching, whale watching, and attending musical performances, may not necessarily result in a permanent product. Regardless, all hobbies can be individually adapted to the hobbyist (Giangreco, 1983). Furthermore, hobbies remain as an activity that is easily transferable from one location to another. Additionally, they are enjoyable to persons with and without disabilities. Marchant (1979) stated that proficiency at a hobby for persons with developmental disabilities was unlikely to occur without direct instruction. In spite of this apparent instructional need, there has only been one study directed at teaching leisure activities or hobbies to adults with developmental disabilities published in the peer-reviewed literature in the last 15 years (Jerome, Frantino, & Sturmey, 2007). Similarly, it has been 17 years since the study by Giangreco (1983) identified photography; the active art of taking a still or moving picture, as a viable leisure activity for persons with developmental disabilities. In his study, Giangreco used a series of decision cue cards to effectively teach participants to take a Polaroid® photograph. The four-step process included: (1) loading the film in the camera, (2) checking the flash attachment, (3) deciding what to photograph, and (4) taking a photograph. The last step produced a Polaroid® photo. Simulated materials were used during training due to the expense associated with the Polaroid® paper while a real Polaroid® camera was used during probe sessions.

Over the last 20 years, advancements in technology have changed photography. Digital photography has made photography less cumbersome, less costly, and more practical and transferable. For example, no longer does a person have to load a film into the camera or wait to see how the photographs turn out. Instead with digital cameras, the picture is immediately visible in the liquid crystal display (LCD) screen. Photographs can be deleted and retaken over and over again till just the "right" image is captured.

Processing digital photographs has also become more cost effective and efficient. The need for a processing facility or a "photo shop" has become obsolete. No longer is it necessary to wait anywhere from 2 days to 2 weeks for the photographs to be printed. Today, any local pharmacy or photo booth can easily print digital photographs in a couple of minutes. Furthermore, anyone with access to a home printer can print "quality" photographs by using photo paper. The fact that all steps required — from taking a photograph to acquiring the final product (i.e. printing the photograph) — can be performed by the hobbyist adds to the value of such a hobby. Amateur photography is no longer a leisure activity of the wealthy, but has truly become a realistic option for a hobbyist.

Over the past decade, methods of instruction using technology have emerged as an effective tool to teach individuals with developmental disabilities vocational skills. These methods may be worthy of evaluating to teach leisure skills, such as digital photography, to this population. One such advance in instructional technology is video-based instruction. Video-based instruction can be considered a well-established, empirically validated procedure for teaching individuals with developmental disabilities vocational/occupational skills (Sigafoos, O'Reilly, & de la Cruz, 2006). One approach to implementing video-based instruction is known as video prompting. In video prompting, the target behavior, skill, or task is analyzed into a series of distinct, short individual video clips, which are generally filmed from the perspective of the person completing the task. Participants view a step and are then given the opportunity to complete that step before viewing the next step of the task. This may be a particularly suitable strategy for teaching leisure skills, as it is relatively nonintrusive and it allows the learner to move through the learning process at his or her own pace.

In the current study, we examined the use of video prompting to teach digital photography skills to four adult men with developmental disabilities. This study extended the Giangreco (1983) study by evaluating a video prompting procedure to teach participants to take a digital photograph and then print the photograph using a laptop computer and a printer.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Four men with mental retardation (MR) that attended a residential care facility participated in this study. Joshua was 41 years old and was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder and moderate MR. He functioned at a 3-year-old level on the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales-Interview Edition (VABS) (Sparrow, Balla, & Cicchetti, 1984). Kenneth was 34 years old and was diagnosed with Autistic Disorder and moderate MR. He was functioning at a 4-year-old level on the VABS. Bernard was 39 years old and was diagnosed with Autistic Disorder and moderate MR. He was functioning at a 3-year-old

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