Sensory and Social Preference in Children with Intellectual Disabilities
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**Background**
- Some children with an intellectual disability have a strong drive to gain access to social and sensory experiences.
- We are interested in whether we can:
  a) Use these preferred experiences in interventions.
  b) Teach children how to manage their strong motivation for preferred experiences.
- We are conducting two studies with children with Angelman syndrome (AS), a rare genetic disorder, who have a strong drive for social and sensory experiences.

**Teaching children when to approach for attention**

**What is the problem?**
- Often when children have a strong drive for adult attention, they will approach adults even when attention is not available e.g. if a parent is busy doing something else.
- This can be difficult both for parents and for the child.

**Aims of the study:** to teach children how to discriminate between times of adult availability using a cue. We used a bright orange jacket as a cue to signal to children when attention was not available.

**What did we do?**
- Four children with AS were visited at their school by a researcher.
- Children were exposed to two different conditions:
  - **Reinforcement**
    - Attention given when the child approaches the researcher.
  - **Extinction + coat**
    - No attention given when the child approaches. The researcher wears the coat.

**What did we find?**
After three days of training, all four children began to show lower rates of social approach behaviours when the researcher wore the coat.

**What does this mean?**
- The results suggest that all four children were beginning to understand that if the researcher wore the coat attention was not available.
- This means that using a cue in this way might be a good way to make the environment more predictable for children.

**Using reinforcement to teach behaviour**

**What is the problem?**
- Sometimes when children with intellectual disabilities find learning new behaviours difficult or challenging.
- Often those things which children prefer can be used as effective rewards to help teach children new behaviours.
- By identifying children’s preferred experiences, we can begin to develop effective behavioural interventions.

**Aims of the study:**
**Study 1:** to find out more about sensory and social preferences in children with Angelman syndrome.
**Study 2:** to test the use of these preferred sensory and social stimuli to use as reinforcers to teach behaviours.

**What are we going to do?**
**Study 1:** Parents of children with AS will fill out a survey looking at sociability and sensory experiences.
**Study 2:**
- Children with AS will be given rewards for doing certain tasks e.g. a simple jigsaw.
- The reward children will be given will be varied (preferred vs. non-preferred items), and the effect on children’s completion of the task will be observed.

**Outcomes:**
- We are interested in whether children will complete more tasks if they are given certain sensory and social experiences as rewards.
- This may inform future behavioural interventions.

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