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### Effectiveness of Youth Engagement Through Intervention (YETI): An Intensive Treatment

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# Effectiveness of Youth Engagement Through Intervention (YETI): An Intensive Treatment

Westley Hughes, Danika Bosch-Greer, Mary Humphreys

## Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Range of developmental disorders characterized by communication and nonverbal difficulties.

**Goal:** Examine the effectiveness of the Youth Engagement Through Intervention (YETI) program at the University of Montana. YETI is a social skills intervention framework that uses a variety of evidence based practices to teach children social and communication skills (Goforth & Schoffer Closson, 2017).

### Previous research:

- In a program similar to YETI, improvements were made in greetings and play, but not in peer-to-peer conversing. Skills were generalized to a new room with new peers, but not to a non-clinical setting (Barry et al., 2013).
- Another study integrated children with ASD with typically-developing peers for a circle time based intervention. The treatment group showed improvements in responding to peer-initiated contact and self-initiated contact with peers (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2005).

**Hypothesis:** Participants will show improvement in social interaction from baseline to posttest.

## Method

Participants were recruited from YETI, which included children from Missoula area elementary and middle schools. The study looked at 2 boys (8 & 11) and 1 girl (7). The younger children were in one treatment room, while the older children were in a separate treatment room.

Evidence-based practices like video modeling, social narratives, differential reinforcement through token economy, role-play, and visual schedules were utilized. Sessions took place in an observation room with a one-way mirror.

Social interactions were defined as verbal and nonverbal greeting and goodbyes; orientation of face and body towards a clinician or peer when they are being spoken to; and engagement in back and forth, turn taking communication with peers.

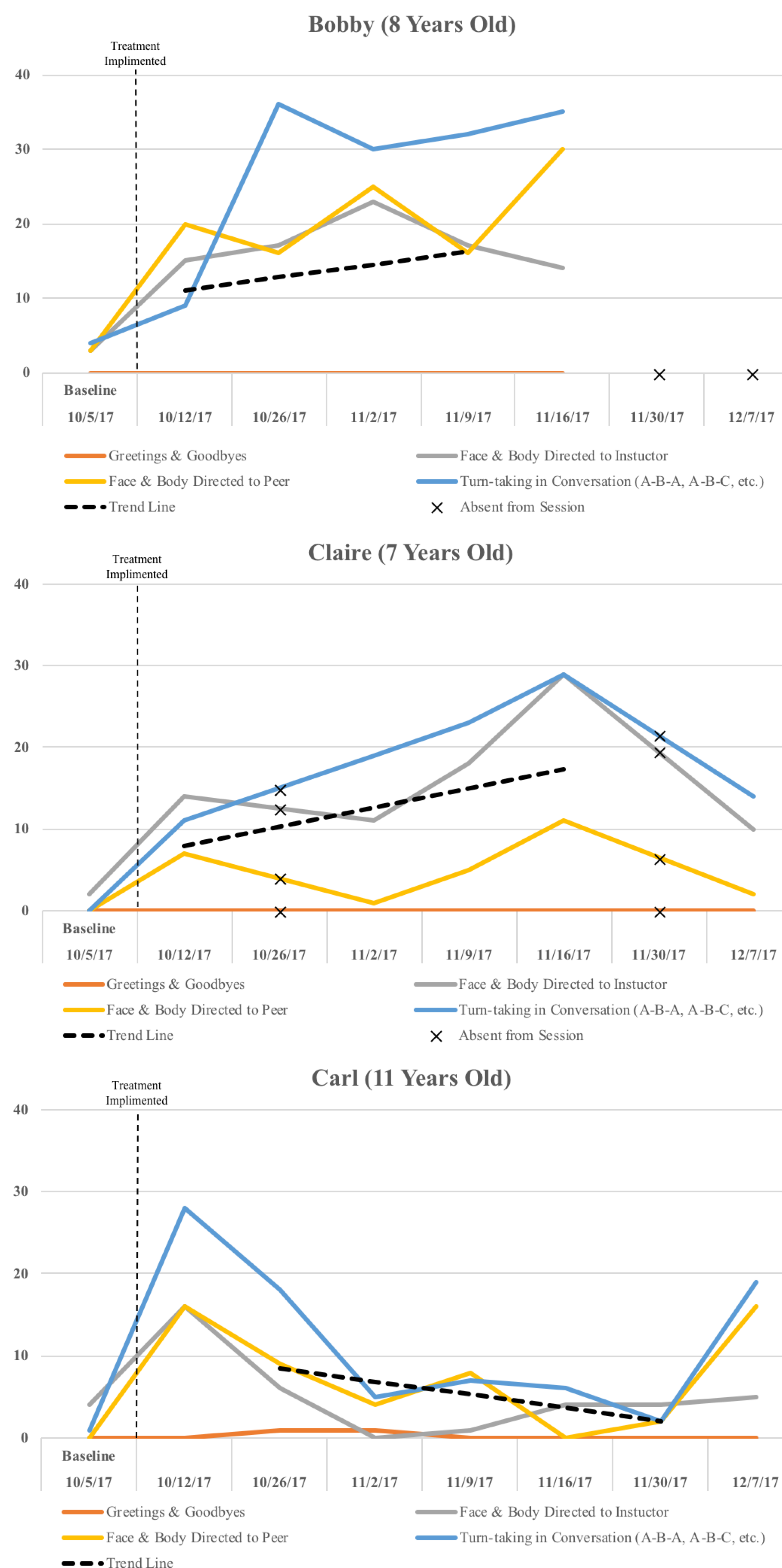
The program consisted of 8 sessions lasting 1.5 hours on Thursdays. An AB single subject design was used.

## Results

Percentage of Non-Overlapping Data (PND)

	Greetings & Goodbyes	Face & Body to Instructor	Face & Body to Peer	Turn-taking in Conversations	Overall
<b>Bobby</b>	0%	100%	100%	100%	<b>75.0%</b>
<b>Claire</b>	0%	100%	100%	100%	<b>75.0%</b>
<b>Carl</b>	28.6%	42.9%	85.7%	100%	<b>64.3%</b>

## Results



## Discussion

Based on the trend line analysis and percentage of non-overlapping data, it was concluded that YETI is an effective treatment for improving social interaction of two of the participants, supporting our hypothesis that the participants would show improvement in social interaction from baseline to posttest. However, these analyses indicate that this intervention did not improve the social interaction of the third participant.

With both Bobby and Claire:

- Some data points are missing, as children were not always present every day of YETI, due to illness or other engagements.
- Bobby missed the last two weeks of the YETI program, but still managed to exhibit improvements in the six weeks he was present.
- Claire was absent for the third and seventh week of YETI, resulting in data gaps.

For Carl, the reason it appears YETI was ineffective for him could be due to a few special circumstances:

- Carl was in a different group than Bobby and Claire as he was placed with the older children. The younger group focused on interpersonal skills, which were closer to our observation goals, while the older group focused on intrapersonal skills, thus accounting for the difference between participants' scores.
- Early in the treatment, the older group learned how to ask for breaks, which Carl utilized increasingly each week, resulting in him being present for less observation time.

In addition, while greeting and goodbyes were intended to be observed, the nature of YETI made that generally un-observable, as children were able to greet each other before walking into the YETI classroom.

### Limitations:

- YETI treatment was only 8 weeks.
- First and last sessions of YETI included pre and post tests, periods of time in which limited data was collected.
- Observation goals were not congruent with the treatment goals of YETI.

## Conclusion

While this study did show that YETI is an effective treatment, future research in this area should focus specifically on social interaction skills and teaching the children how to implement learned skills into their daily lives. Future studies on YETI should take data on skills that are the direct focus of the program, or on specific goals of the individual children, so that it can be determined that YETI is effective for those specific treatment concerns.

### Acknowledgements

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