

The Start of Shifting a Culture Towards Compassionate and Effective Care: 21 PFA's & 19 BCBA's

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Introduction

- Hanley et al. (2014) previously designed a treatment package that included three phases: a caregiver interview that is used to design a safe and televisable assessment, practical functional assessment (PFA) that identifies and verifies reinforcers for severe interfering behavior, and skill-based treatment to teach contextually appropriate behaviors for the client to gain skills and flexibility in coping with previously aversive stimuli and situations (Fiani & Jessel, 2022).
- Large scale implementation of PFA has previously been done in an outpatient clinic setting (Jessel et al., 2018), and this study aims to extend previous findings that used the PFA to identify and verify the evocative antecedents for severe interfering behavior and do so in a manner that is safe for all involved, provides dignity to the client, and is televisable to anyone who would view the procedures being implemented.

Methodology

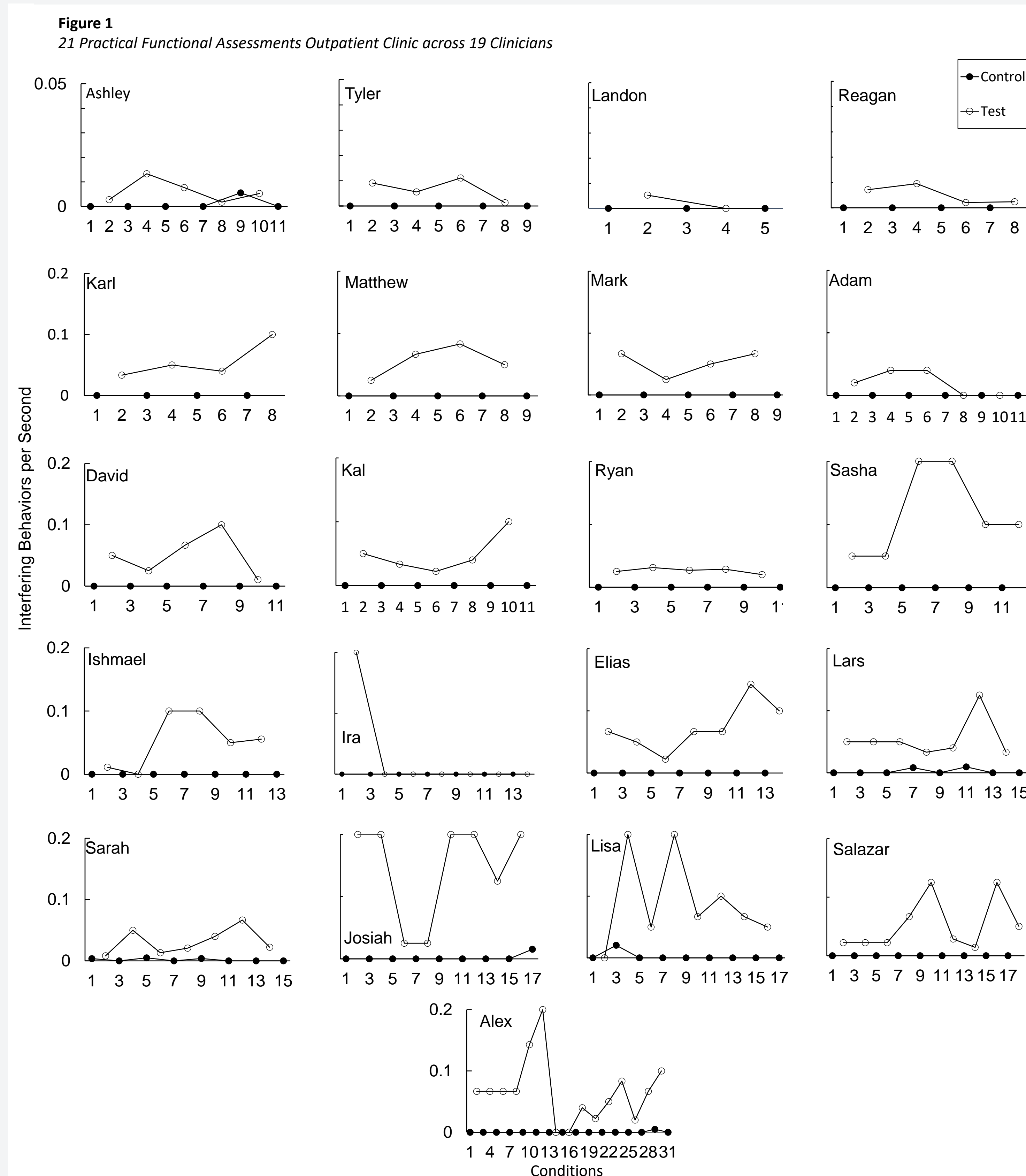
Participants and Setting:

- 21 participants
 - 15 male and 6 female, who were clients at Centria Autism's Dearborn Center. Clients were between the ages of 4 and 15.
 - All participants had a diagnosis of autism
 - All participants had reported high levels in frequency or magnitude of severe interfering behavior, per caregiver or behavior technician report.
 - Assessment took place in a private therapy room, or an individualized therapy space designated for the client.

Procedure:

- Clients were provided a synthesized reinforcement condition, which included items and activities that had a history of producing behavior that the caregiver or behavior technician noted as "happy, relaxed, and engaged."
- Once the child was said to be in this state, the child's interfering behavior was tracked for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, evocative antecedents were produced in the environment.
- When produced, frequency and magnitude of problem behavior were measured. When interfering behavior was evoked, the evocative antecedents were immediately removed.
 - This was done in repetitions until there were at least 3 consecutive trials where the interfering behavior was evoked and quickly stopped following the removal of the evocative stimuli.

Results



Discussion

This study aimed to verify antecedents to severe interfering behavior for 21 clients who had autism. Results showed that we were able to safely implement the PFA process for 21 participants in an outpatient clinic. We were able to effectively evoke interfering behavior with previously specified evocative antecedents that were determined prior to the practical functional assessment, as well as showing that removal of those evocative antecedents after presentation would result in ceasing the problem behavior occurring.

The results of this study are an extension of previously completed case studies. Continued success of replication of these findings indicate the ability to safely and effectively complete the PFA procedure in a large-scale setting. This is significant because this procedure produces such drastic reductions in problem behavior, which further indicates the effectiveness our services hold for improving the lives for people with autism. Some results show that there was not an ability to "turn on and turn off" problem behavior effectively.

Implications

- Successful Implementation of Skills Based Treatment with 20 clients has led to significantly reduced interfering behavior.
- Noticeable increase in compassionate care in the center.
 - Physical Engagement
 - Empathizing
 - Boundary setting
- Limitations
 - Implementer's first time's, could have led to lower implementation validity.
 - Some clients had difficulty achieving HRE

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References

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