

Focused Playtime Intervention: Engaging Young Children with Autism in Shared Toy Play



Michael Siller, Ph.D.



**Responsive parental communication
predicts long-term (16-year!) language
gains in children with ASD.**



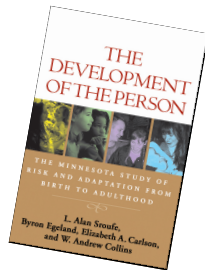
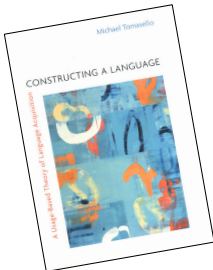
Marian Sigman
(1941 – 2012)

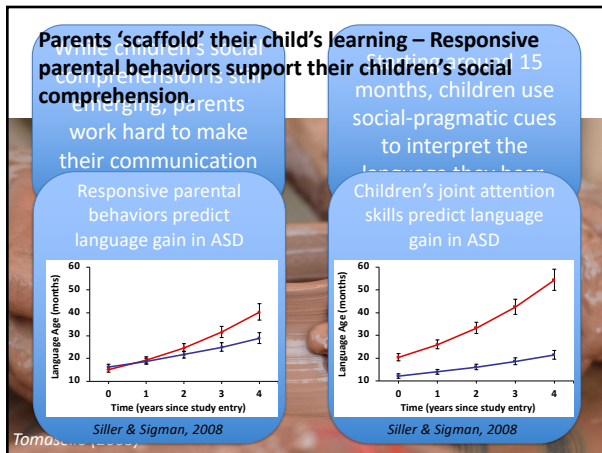


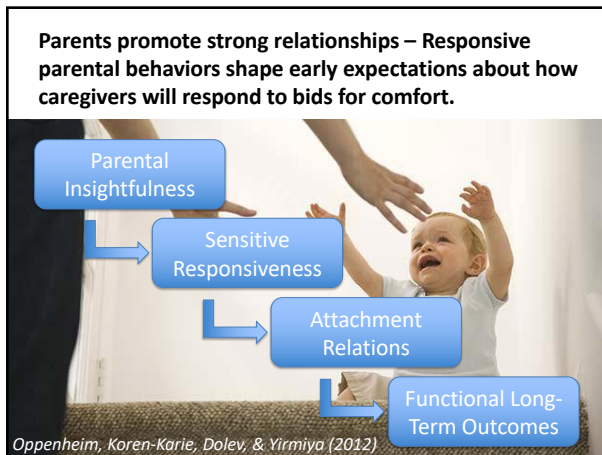
	Long-term language gains		
	1-year	10-year	16-year
Responsive parental communication	.33	.67**	.79***

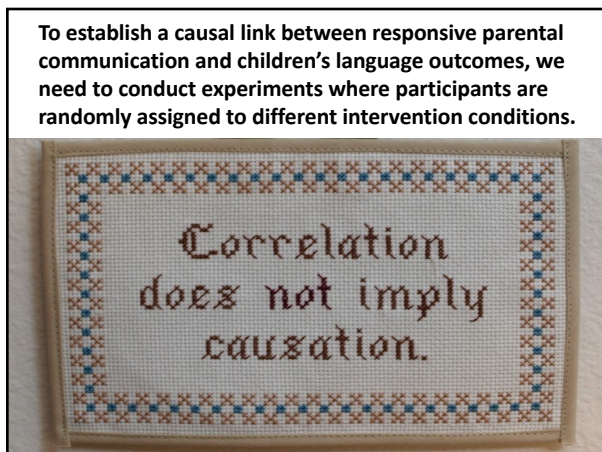
Siller & Sigman, 2002

**Two theories that explain why parental responsiveness
may be linked to children's language outcomes: 'A
Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition' and
'Attachment Theory'.**







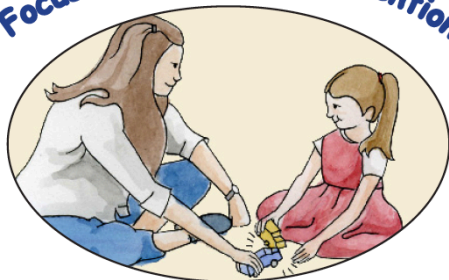


Two Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) to evaluate the efficacy of Focused Playtime Intervention (FPI), a parent-mediated intervention aiming to increase responsive parental communication.

70	66
single-site	multi-site
3-7 years	15-31 months
ASD, no phrase speech	"high risk" of ASD
Parent advocacy	Challenging behaviors, communication

STRUCTURE ... APPROACH ... CONTENT

Focused Playtime Intervention



STRUCTURE: Focused Playtime Intervention (FPI) is a short, focused intervention that improves parent-child communication in the context of toy play.

- Twelve in-home training sessions
- Ordered sequence of eight topics
- Psycho-education, video feedback, modeling, & coaching
- Treatment manual, fidelity checklist, illustrated workbook for parents

SPECIAL PLAY TIME JOURNAL! TOPIC 3

Date: _____

1. How did the special play time start? _____

2. Overall, was your child in a good mood? _____

3. Was there anything that distracted your child? _____

4. Which toys did you play with? Were there activities that did not involve toys? _____

5. Did your child do anything dangerous or challenging? _____

6. Did the special play time end on a happy note? _____

APPROACH: Focused Playtime Intervention (FPI) is a family-centered approach, which is required for publicly funded early intervention programs.

- Addresses the families' informational need;
- Uses their natural environments as the intervention context;
- Engages parents to be active participants in the intervention process;
- Supports the caregivers' reflection and self-evaluation.

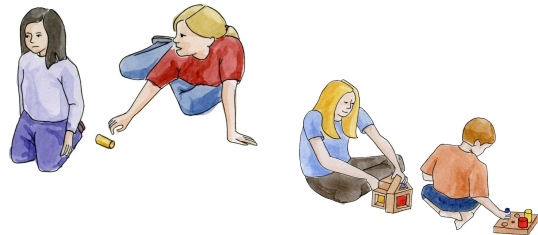
Woods & Brown (2011)

CONTENT: Focused Playtime Intervention (FPI) covers an ordered sequence of eight topics



Goal 1: To help parents appreciate the importance of shared toy play

- Topic 1: When and how does my child communicate?
Topic 2: What do I hope to accomplish during play?



Goal 2: To facilitate coordinated attention between parent and child

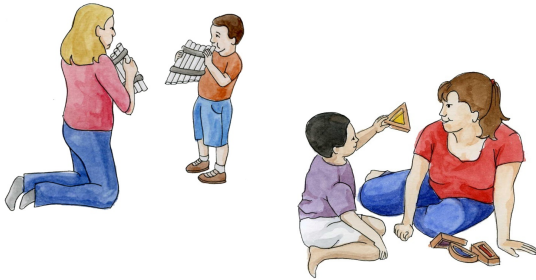
- Topic 3: Developing a play time routine.
Topic 4: Monitoring your child's gaze.
Topic 5: Who gets to pick the toys?



Goal 3: To move from shared attention to shared actions

Topic 6: Who decides the 'correct' way of using the toys?

Topic 7: How do I speak to my child during play?

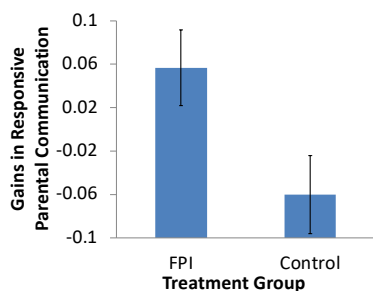


Goal 4: To encourage spontaneous communication

Topic 8: How do I make play more balanced between me and my child?

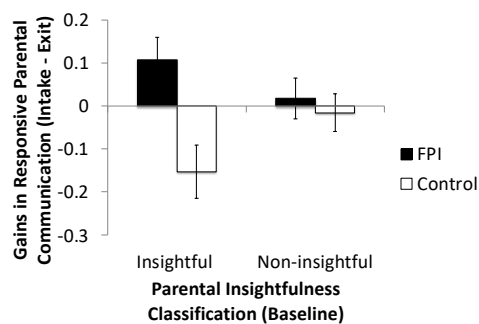
Results

FPI increases responsive parental communication - Preschool RCT.

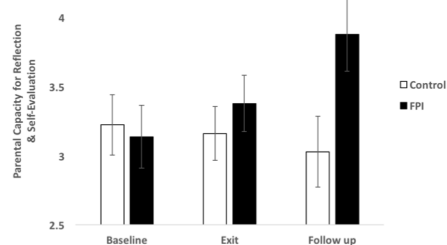


Significant treatment effect on residualized gains (intake to exit), $t=2.3$, $p<.05$; $f^2=.08$, medium effect size.

Baseline classifications of parental insightfulness predicts treatment gains in responsive parental communication - Preschool RCT.

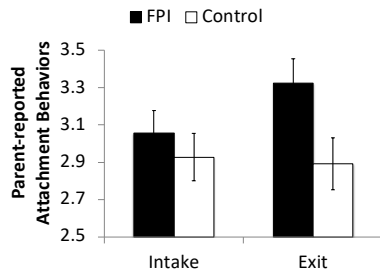


FPI increases the parents' capacity for reflection and self-evaluation.



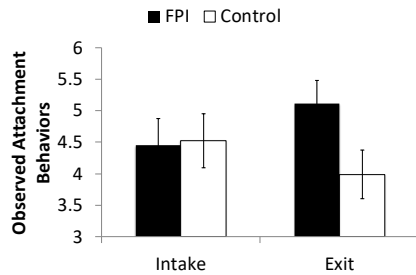
Parents whose capacity for reflection and self-evaluation was classified as emerging at baseline ($n=42$) showed higher rates of growth when assigned to FPI, compared to the control condition; $F(1, 65) = 5.6$; $p < .05$.

FPI increases parent-reported attachment behaviors - Preschool RCT.



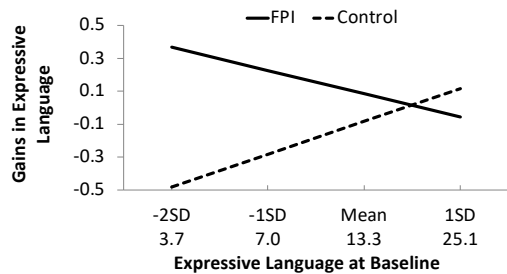
Maternal Perception of Child Attachment Questionnaire (Hoppes & Harris, 1990); Significant treatment effect on residualized gains (intake to exit), $t(48)=3.0$, $p<.01$; medium effect size.

FPI increases observed attachment behaviors - Preschool RCT.



Avoidant Behavior Scale coded from separation-reunion episode. Significant treatment effect on residualized gains (intake to exit), $t(54)=2.2$, $p<.05$, small to medium effect size.

FPI increases language skills, but only for children who entered the project nonverbal - Preschool RCT.



Significant conditional treatment effect on residualized gains (intake to follow-up). For 24 children who entered the project nonverbal, effect size estimates were medium/large.

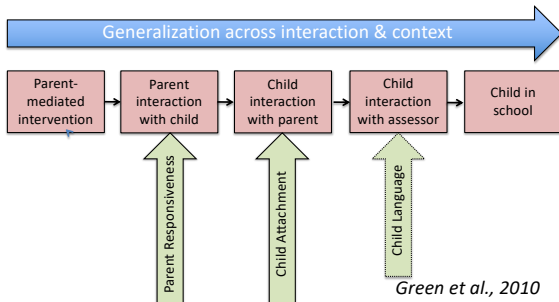
Discussion & Conclusions

During the last decade, parent responsiveness (and various related concepts) have entered the mainstream of intervention research in ASD.

Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBI, Schreibman et al., 2015) – Intervention strategies are embedded within child-centered, everyday activities selected to increase children's motivation and engagement.

Family-Centered Approach - The emphasis of parent education in general has shifted from an emphasis on 'skill attainment' towards a more holistic approach that aims to enhance the capacity of families to meet the needs of their children.

Focused, low-intensity interventions allow researchers to specify the hypothesized 'active ingredient' - BUT they may not be sufficient to produce treatment effects that generalize across interaction and context.



Overall, results are consistent with the hypothesis that an intervention that targets responsive parental behavior causes improvements in a) attachment related behaviors and (b) expressive language. Important questions remain:

- Interventions that target parental responsiveness are necessary, but are they sufficient?
- Not all parents benefit equally from FPI. Why?
- FPI effectively enhances attachment-related behaviors in ASD. Clinically, these improvements are significant, but the long-term impact of early attachment relations in ASD is poorly understood.

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