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**SOCIAL PROBLEM-SOLVING  
SKILLS TRAINING AND ADULTS  
WITH INTELLECTUAL  
DISABILITY**

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## Abstract

Previous research has demonstrated that social problem-solving training can significantly improve social problem-solving skill and maladaptive behaviour in adults with mild intellectual disability. A multiple-case study design was used to extend these findings by investigating whether social problem-solving training can decrease psychological distress (i.e., low self-esteem, anxiety and depression), as well as social problem-solving skills and behaviour. Five participants from a vocational community centre, with mild intellectual disability and mental illness and/or challenging behaviour, were invited to participate in 15 sessions of Social problem-solving training. Social problem-solving skill was measured by structured interview, and adaptive and maladaptive behaviour by Adaptive Behavior Scale, before and after training. Participants completed self-reports on depression, anxiety and self-esteem at baseline, pre-treatment, mid-treatment, post-treatment and follow-up. Three out of the five participants completed the training. Participants' individual test-scores and case histories are presented. All three participants showed improvement in social problem-solving skills, and two participants showed improvement in depression. There was no noticeable change in self-esteem or anxiety, but support workers reported improvement in behaviour for two participants. Improvement was maintained at four-week follow-up. Future research may improve results and treatment integrity by involving support staff in the follow-up of between session homework tasks to improve generalization and learning, and by drafting a detailed treatment manual. Further improvement could be enhanced by decreasing the number of sessions to nine to decrease boredom, and by incorporating self-esteem training and social problem-solving training as a daily routine within the community centre.

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## PREFACE

This thesis consists of a multiple-case study involving three clients from a vocational community centre. The material written in the results section contains personal and private information, and although the participants' names are hidden, there is a concern that they may be identified. To prevent this occurrence, the name of the vocational community centre is hidden and a two-year embargo of public accessibility to this thesis is applied.

This study followed ethical guidelines set out by the New Zealand Psychological Society and the American Psychological Association (2001). It also adhered closely to recommendations for working with individuals with intellectual disability as suggested by Bray (1998) from the Donald Beasley Institute (in particular to the means of gaining informed consent). In line with University regulations, the proposed study was reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and the Auckland Ethics Committee.