

Background

- Participation in social and physical activities promotes physical, emotional, and social well-being for children with or without disabilities (e.g., Geisthardt et al., 2002).
- Despite the benefits, individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are often excluded from taking part in social activities (e.g., Bigby, 2012; King et al., 2013; Solish et al., 2010)
- Lack of sufficient opportunities to participate in activities may prevent exploration of various areas of development (i.e., social, intellectual, emotional, communicative and physical) (King et al., 2003)
- Results from one study (Solish et al., 2010) indicate that children with ID and ASD have fewer friends than their Typically Developing (TD) peers; in addition, those with ASD have fewer friends than those with ID only
 - However, more research is needed with regards to quality of these friendships
- Most of the research on social participation has focused primarily on higher functioning children with disabilities, often those with physical or medical disabilities (e.g., King et al., 2003; Law et al., 2006)
- The present research focuses on the social participation of children who are "low functioning" with severe or complex needs (i.e., behavioural challenges, mental health, physical health needs, etc.)

Purpose

- To report on the social participation of children with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in relation to a Typically Developing (TD) sample

Objective 1.

- Compare the activity participation (Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2010) of the 3 groups (ID vs. ASD vs. TD)

Objective 2.

- Compare the quantity and quality of friendships of the 3 groups (ID vs. ASD vs. TD)

Method

- Great Outcomes for Kids Impacted by Severe Developmental Disabilities (GO4KIDDS) is a Canadian team project exploring the health, well-being, and social inclusion of school aged children with Severe Developmental Disabilities and that of their families
- The data used for the present study comes from the Basic GO4KIDDS Survey (Perry & Weiss, 2008) completed by parents of children with ID and ASD across Canada
- Parents of TD children completed a modified version of the survey called the GO4KIDDS TD Survey

Child Characteristics

		TD (n = 210)	ID (n = 186)	ASD (n = 232)
Age	M (SD)	10.65 (4.40)	11.58 (3.90)	11.02 (4.00)
Sex	% Boys	69.0	56.8	79.7

Parental Characteristics

		TD (n = 210)	ID (n = 186)	ASD (n = 232)
Sex	% Mothers	100	88.5	90.0
Marital Status	% Married	81.4	77.3	72.1
Neighborhood Income	M	\$61,350	\$63,031	\$61,613

Measures

Activity Participation (Solish et al., 2010)

- The modified questionnaire examines six types of activities:
 - Unstructured Play (e.g., friends coming over);
 - Social Outings (e.g., going to the mall, to the movies, out for meals);
 - Special Occasions (e.g., birthday parties);
 - Sports Team (e.g., hockey, soccer);
 - Lessons (e.g., swimming, gymnastics, skating, etc.);
 - Community Activities (e.g., Sunday school, cubs/brownies, etc.)
- The frequency of participation is rated on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = not available/no opportunity, 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often)
- In the current sample, the measure had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$)

Quantity and Type of Friends

- Caregivers were also asked to select the child's number of friends (none, one, two, etc. up to six or more) for different types of friends (school friends and other friends)

Quality of Friendships

- Caregivers were asked to rate the quality of the friendships in comparison to other children of the same age
- Quality was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = very poor to 5 = excellent

Results

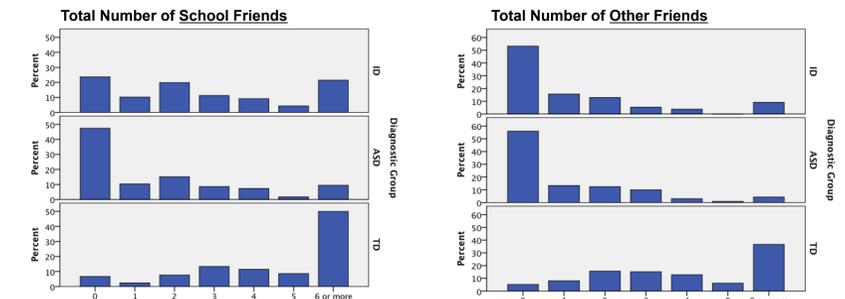
Objective 1. Comparing the Activity Participation Across the Groups

	TD (n = 210)	ID (n = 186)	ASD (n = 232)	F	P	Post Hoc
Unstructured Play	3.50 (1.10)	2.01 (.97)	1.88 (.96)	168.85	<.001	TD > ID = ASD
Social Outings	3.61 (1.03)	3.14 (1.13)	3.06 (1.11)	16.44	<.001	TD > ID = ASD
Special Occasions	3.42 (.98)	2.04 (.92)	1.80 (.96)	179.70	<.001	TD > ID > ASD
Sports	2.87 (1.42)	1.53 (1.03)	1.52 (.99)	93.73	<.001	TD > ID = ASD
Lessons	2.90 (1.33)	2.58 (1.40)	2.39 (1.34)	8.06	<.001	TD > ID > ASD
Community Activity	2.47 (1.42)	1.89 (1.26)	1.80 (1.25)	16.06	<.001	TD > ID = ASD

- The TD group participated more often in each type of activity than the ID and ASD groups
- For two of the activities (*Special Occasions* and *Lessons*), the ASD group participated significantly less often than the ID group
- The TD group participated in significantly more total number of activities than the ID and ASD groups ($F = 8.06, p < .001$)
 - On average the TD group participated in 5 out of the 6 activities, the ID group participated in 3.5 out of 6 activities, and the ASD group participated in 3 out of the 6 activities

Results (cont' d)

Objective 2. Comparing the Quantity of Friendships Across the Groups



- The majority of the TD group have 6 or more "school friends", while almost half of the ASD group and 20% of the ID group have no school friends
 - The majority of the TD group have several "other friends" besides school friends, while the majority of both ID and ASD group have no other friends
- The total number of friends was dichotomized into no friends or one or more friends, for both types of friends
- 93% percent of the TD group have school friends, whereas 76% of those with ID and 53% of those with ASD have school friends; $\chi^2 = 94.69, p < .001$
 - ID group was more likely to have one or more school friends than ASD group; $\chi^2 = 25.04, p < .001$
 - 95% percent of the TD group have other friends, whereas 47% of those with ID and 44% of those with ASD have other friends; $\chi^2 = 145.67, p < .001$

Objective 2. Comparing the Quality of Friendships Across the Groups

	TD %	ID %	ASD %
Poor	3.8	61.3	78.8
Average	49.0	30.9	17.6
Good	47.1	7.7	3.6
Total (N = 613)	181	222	210

- The quality of friendships differed significantly for the 3 groups; ($\chi^2 = 291.85, p < .001$)
- The ID group differed marginally from the ASD group; ($\chi^2 = 5.89, p = .052$)

Discussion

- Despite the benefits of participation in social activities and peer relationships, the results from this study suggest that children with ID and ASD are at a disadvantage
- This is a particular area of concern for children with ASD, since they participate less frequently in some activities and have fewer friends
- The findings from this study indicate the importance of finding ways to encourage and provide opportunities for these children to become more involved in social activities and build meaningful friendships

Limitations and Future Directions

- The caregivers may not represent all of those with a child with DD
- Although the Activities Questionnaire (Solish et al., 2010) had good psychometric properties, there is a lack consensus in terms of measuring social participation
- Children with ID and ASD have complex needs and limitations in various areas of adaptive functioning and may exhibit maladaptive behaviours, these child factors need to be further explored in relation to social participation
- In addition, this study does not allow for examination of broader factors such as family factors and larger community factors that may influence children's social participation.

Acknowledgments

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