THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF A GIRL WITH SEVERE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY: A CASE STUDY

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go4kidds — Great Outcomes for Kids Impacted by Severe Developmental Disabilities

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YORK UNIVERSITÉ UNIVERSITY

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Background

- Children with developmental disabilities (DD) are regularly integrated into mainstream classroom and community settings.
- Although they may be physically present, they are not always included in activities and may be ignored by their peers (Cooney et al., 2006).
- These children often participate in social activities with adults (Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2009).
- Children in integrated or mixed settings have higher ratings of social inclusion that those in segregated settings (Carvalho, Bebko, Perry, & Minnes, 2014).
- It is important to examine the interactions that take place in school and community settings.

Purpose

- Present findings from a case study of one child with DD in order to gain a better understanding of her social inclusion across settings.

Participant

- "Mary" is a 12-year-old girl with Down Syndrome.
- IQ = 50 (age equivalent about 5 years).
- School: public school and is in a **special education classroom**.
- Community activities: **dance class** and **church day camp**.

Method

- This case study comes from the Social Inclusion Project [part of the Great Outcomes for Kids Impacted by Severe Developmental Disabilities Canadian (GO4KIDDS) team project], which includes 27 Children with DD aged 6 to 17.
- **Mary**, her parents, teachers/educational assistants, and community leaders were interviewed regarding Mary's social inclusion.
- Mary's **social interactions** at school, dance class, and camp were **observed** by research assistants.
- Behaviour was recorded in real time using a **coding scheme** developed for the Social Inclusion project (Bebko, Perry, & Minnes, 2009).
  - Mary was coded as "interacting" when she was engaged in a social exchange with a peer (e.g., talking, playing together).

Note: Please see companion poster at this conference: **The Social Inclusion of a Child with a Severe Developmental Disability in School and the Community** (Shine, Weiss, Perry, Bebko, & Minnes)

Results
PARENTS

- Lack of opportunities [have made it difficult for Mary to participate in school activities].
- The [school board] is not interested in inclusion.
- I wish kids were more accepting and aware.
- General acceptance and non-issue of her being included [in community activities].
- Mary has a rich life outside school, although meaningful friendships are totally lacking.
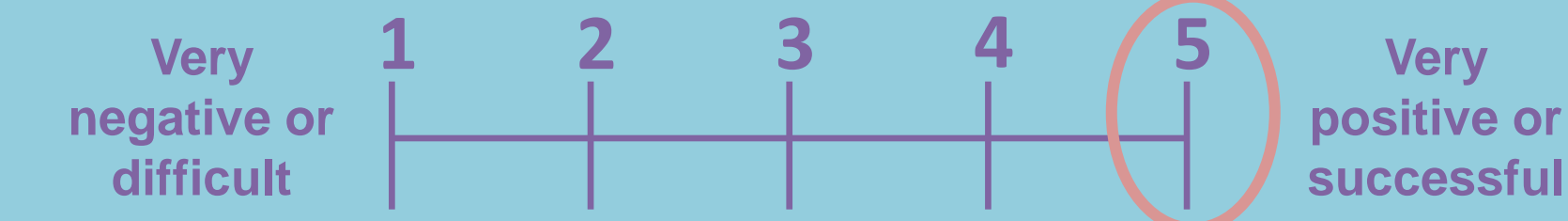- [Need to] talk to peers about disabilities and how they may do things differently.
- Peers can be very uncomfortable, not always handled well.

Is Mary integrated/included at school?

Very negative or difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive or successful (circled: 3)
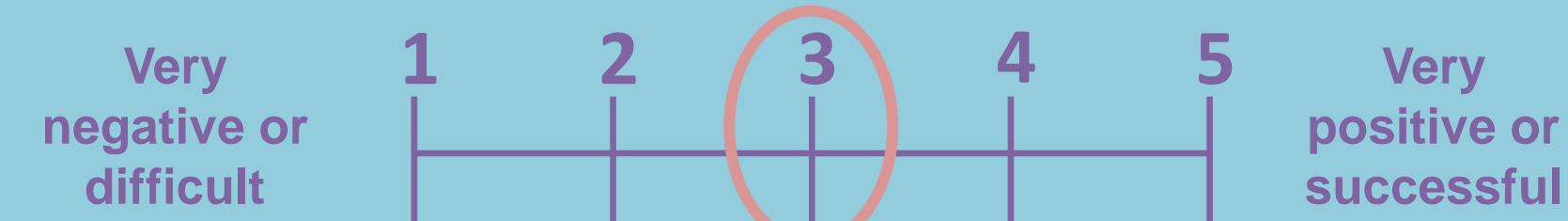
Is Mary integrated/included at dance and camp?

Very negative or difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive or successful (circled: 5)
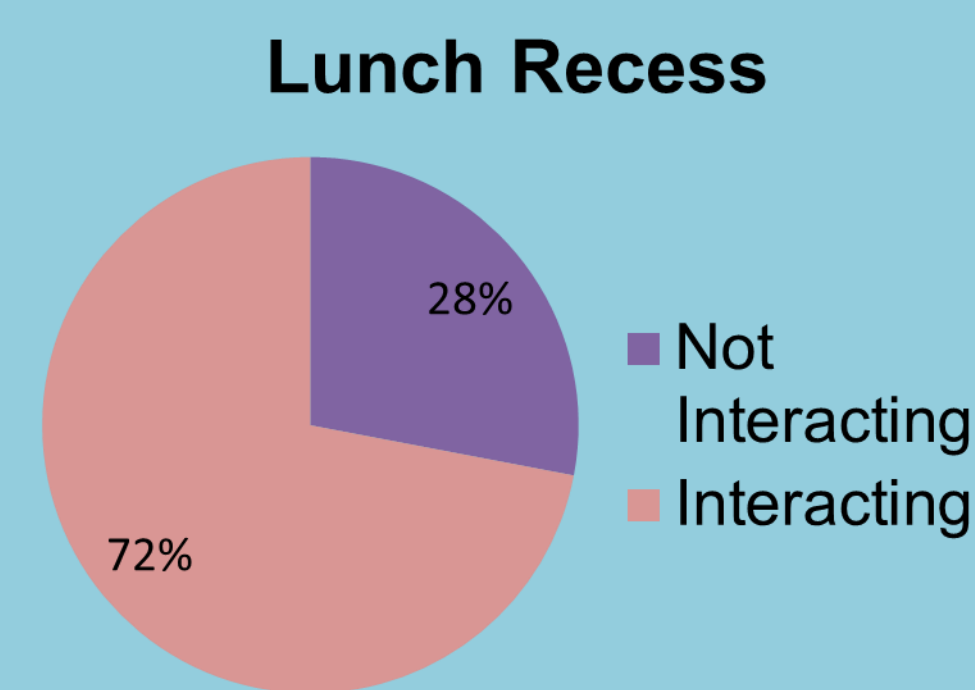
Results
SCHOOL

- The children go about their business.
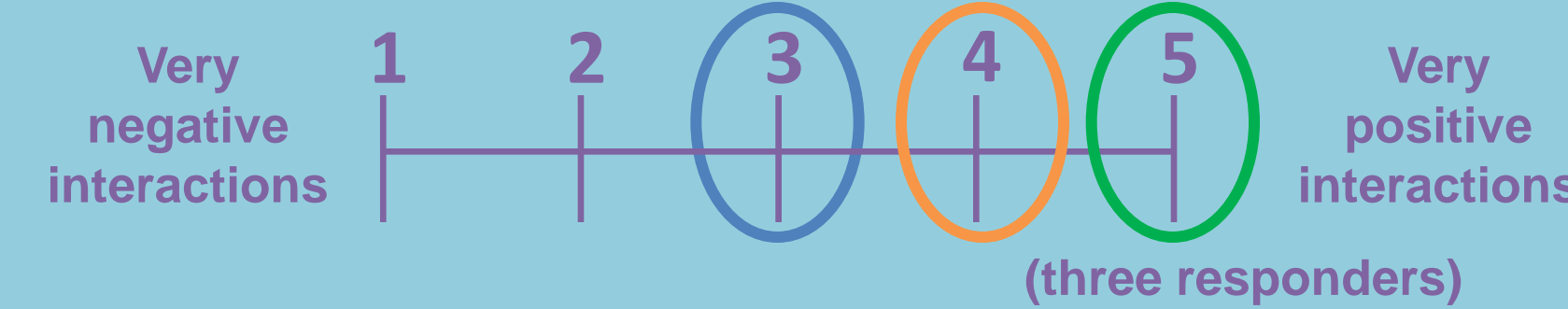- The children treat her as one of their peers as if she is not different.
- She can be stubborn…but she responds to humour.
- There is not a lot of unstructured interaction between other kids.
- She likes everything to be her way so the other kids don't participate.
- Can be very stubborn- gets upset or angry.

Lunch Recess (pie chart: 28% Not Interacting, 72% Interacting)

Do other children approach and interact with Mary?

Very negative interactions 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive interactions (circled: 3, 4, 5)

(three responders)

Results
COMMUNITY

Church Day Camp

Soccer Warm-Up (pie chart: 100% Interacting — Not Interacting / Interacting)
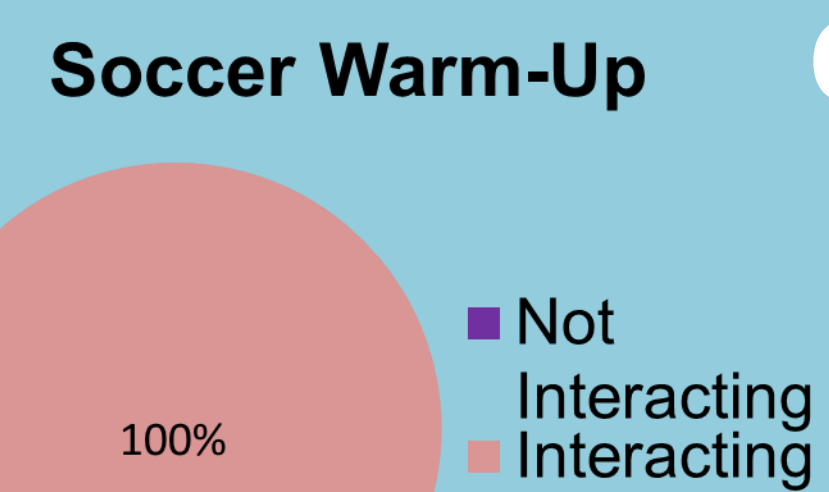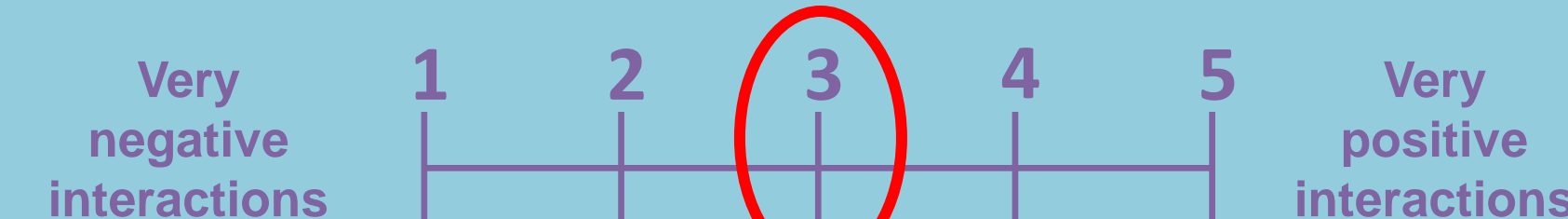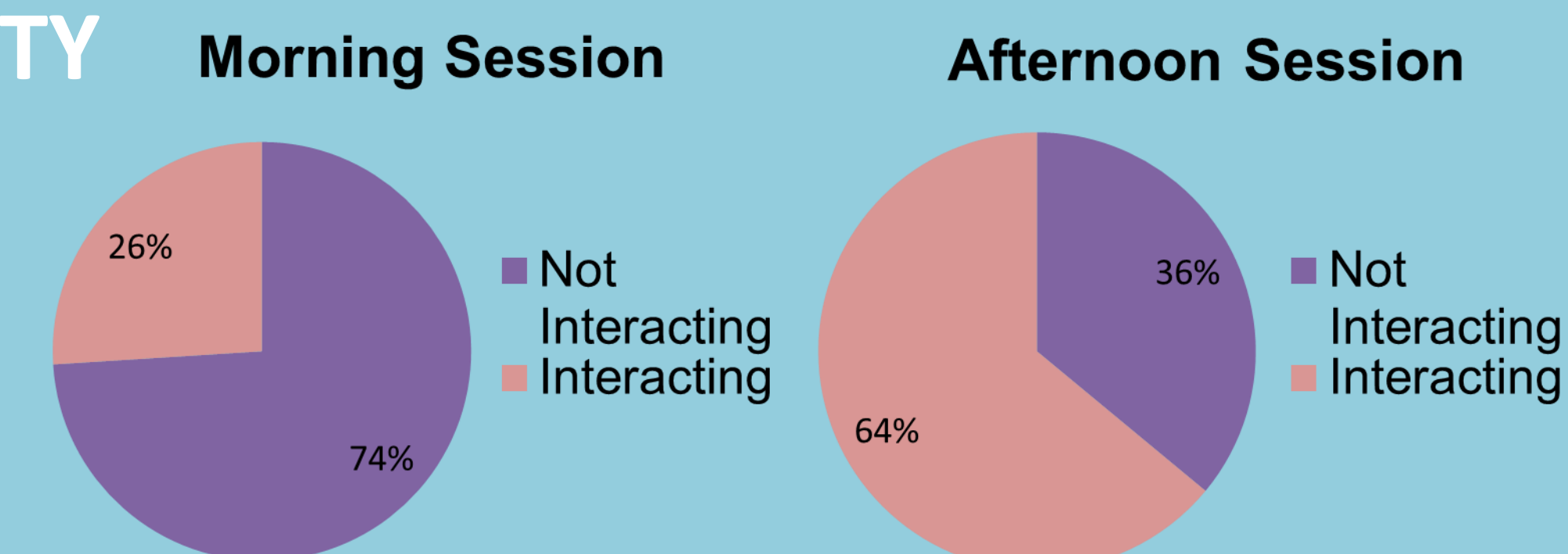
- Kids are not sure what to do with her. They don't talk to her really.
- She is really enthusiastic. Screams on rides and dances for worship.

**Do other children approach and interact with Mary?**

Very negative interactions 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive interactions (circled: 3)

Dance Class*

Morning Session (pie chart: 26% Not Interacting, 74% Interacting)

Afternoon Session (pie chart: 36% Not Interacting, 64% Interacting)

*different groups of children

- Sometimes uses her disability to not do things.

Do other children approach and interact with Mary?

Very negative interactions 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive interactions (circled: 3)
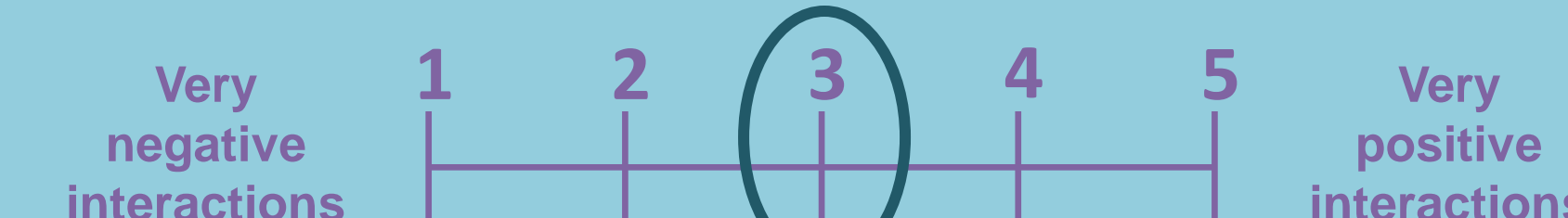
Results
CHILD INTERVIEW

Are the other kids nice to you at dance and day camp?
- Not so good. Some are mean, some are good.

Are the other kids nice to you at school?
- No. They push me around and swear.

Do you have any friends at school?
- My best friend is "Amanda". We talk, hang out, and go on field trips.

Discussion

- Observations demonstrated that Mary interacts with her peers.
- Interviews revealed great variability in the perception of Mary's social inclusion across settings and reporters.
- School/community leaders had a somewhat negative view of Mary's ability to be socially included by her peers.
- **Themes:**
  - Child characteristics (e.g., "stubborn").
  - Lack of knowledge (e.g., "kids are not sure what to do with her").
  - Lack of opportunities (e.g., "not a lot of unstructured interaction").
- **Limitations/Future Research:**
  - School and community staff may not want to report negatively.
  - Examine settings more closely to determine what accounts for differences in interaction.
  - Compare observation data to typically developing peers.
  - Gather interview data from peers.

Acknowledgements