**SYMPOSIUM: EXAMINING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DD IN CANADA**

This proposed symposium would be composed of an introduction to the Great Outcomes for Kids Impacted by Severe Developmental Disabilities (GO4KIDDS) CIHR Canadian Team Project’s, Social Inclusion study, followed by 2 papers. The first paper, entitled, “Measuring Social Inclusion in Children with Severe DD: Development of the GO4KIDDS Social Inclusion Coding Scheme” will outline the development of the coding scheme, and results from the observations of children with severe DD in school and the community. The second paper, entitled “Examining the Social Inclusion of Children with Sever Developmental Disabilities in School and the Community: A Descriptive Analysis using Multiple Case Studies”, will follow with the qualitative interview data from this study. Themes from the interviews of 10 case studies of children with severe DD, some with ASD, will be presented to examine themes present in parent, teacher and community leader interviews. As we know that symposia are limited, the abstracts for these 2 talks were submitted online through the RSIG call for abstracts as presentations by Rebecca Shine, York University. The abstracts are included in this document below as well for your convenience.

**MEASURING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DD: DEVELOPMENT OF THE GO4KIDDS SOCIAL INCLUSION CODING SCHEME**

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**Objectives:** Social inclusion and participation has many benefits for children with or without Developmental Disabilities (DD) (e.g., King et al., 2009). Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities are often integrated into “mainstream” settings with typically developing children, however, physical presence in a setting or program does not necessarily equate to actual participation, and children with DD may experience lower rates of social inclusion (e.g., Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2010; Taheri, Perry, & Minnes, 2016). There is currently limited research on social inclusion of children with severe DD, especially in community settings (Shields, et al., 2014). This presentation will describe the development and implementation of a live observational coding scheme, which allows for the systematic examination of social inclusion experiences of children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in potentially social situations at school and in the community.

**Method:** We developed the GO4KIDDS Social Inclusion Observational Coding Scheme in order to code *live* observations of children with Severe Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at school and in the community. Twenty children (aged 6 – 18) were observed for 15 – 30 minutes at a time during unstructured school activities and in the community. Children’s opportunities for interactions and actual interactions with peers and adults were coded.

**Results:** Overall, levels of social interaction were low, despite the presence of others. Children had the opportunity to interact with peers for 86% of the observation intervals, however, the children with DD in the study were only involved in social interaction for a mean of 32% of the observation intervals. Children’s cognitive, adaptive and social skill levels were positively correlated with the amount of time children spent interacting with peers.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** This measure provides an objective indicator of the social inclusion experiences of children with severe Developmental Disabilities in social settings, and is able to be implemented reliably in natural settings with live observations where videotaping is not allowed or practicable. This study showed that despite the opportunity for interaction, typically little interaction occurred.

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**EXAMINING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IN SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS USING MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES**

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**Objectives:** Although often present in "inclusive" settings, children with Severe Developmental Disabilities (DD) are at high risk of social exclusion. When they also have ASD, there are even greater difficulties participating in social interactions and maintaining relationships.  Themes from multiple case studies of children and adolescents with Severe DD, some with ASD, will be presented. The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the social inclusion of children with Severe DD (with and without ASD) in school and community settings.

**Method:** The parents, teachers and community leaders (e.g., Brownie leader) of 27 children were interviewed to gain their perspectives about the children’s social experiences in school and community settings.  Children were also observed in potentially social settings, and information was collected surrounding the types of play, and amount of social interaction with peers and adults, as well as observer ratings.  This presentation will describe themes from 10 cases with data from multiple sources and settings. Parent, teacher and community leader interviews were examined for emerging themes. The themes were compared across diagnostic groups (with and without ASD), informants and settings.

**Results:** Several themes emerged across settings, such as child characteristics, environmental characteristics, integration, accommodation/adaptation, staff resources, communication, and societal awareness/stigma.  Examples of these themes from various cases will be presented.  Agreements and discrepancies in ratings based on the setting and informant will be discussed.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** These case descriptions and themes provide information surrounding barriers to children’s inclusion, and directions for future research in this population. Implications for parents, and clinicians will be discussed.

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