

**SOCIAL SKILLS FOR
ADOLESCENT GIRLS WITH
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS**
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INTRODUCTION

- Female participants underrepresented in research studies on social skills and ASD
- 20-25% of participants female
- Appropriate and meaningful interventions for girls with ASD
- Gain understanding of issues affecting girls with ASD



METHODS



PROCEDURES

- Design
 - Qualitative methodology
 - Words as data
 - Includes:
 - Ethnography
 - Case study
 - Naturalistic inquiry
 - Life-history



LITERATURE

- Parents
 - Music therapy experience (Allgood, 2005)
 - Experience of entering preschool (Hanson, Beckman, Horn, Marquart, Sandall, Greig, & Brennan, 2000)
- Individuals with disabilities
 - Health issues (Brown & Gill, 2009)
- Educators
 - Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (Finke, McNaughton, & Drager, 2009)



PROCEDURES

- Data Collection
 - All sessions were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder
 - Sony ICD-PX820 2 GB digital voice recorder
 - Recordings were then transcribed by a transcriptionist



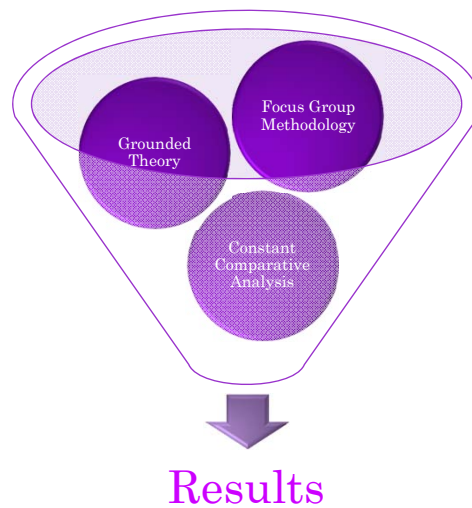
PROCEDURES

○ Data Analysis

- Focus Group Methodology (Morgan, 1988; Madriz, 2000)
- Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
- Constant Comparative Analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)



DATA ANALYSIS QUALITATIVE METHODS

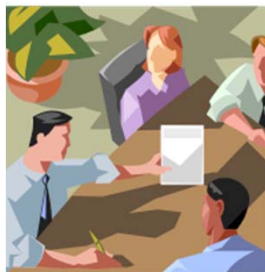


PARTICIPANTS

	GIRLS	PARENTS	EDUCATORS
Inclusion Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diagnosed with an ASD •10-15 years old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •At least 1 daughter, 10-15 yrs old, with an ASD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Taught at least 1 female student, age 10-15 yrs old, with an ASD
Participated:	6	10	9
Total:	25		

SETTINGS

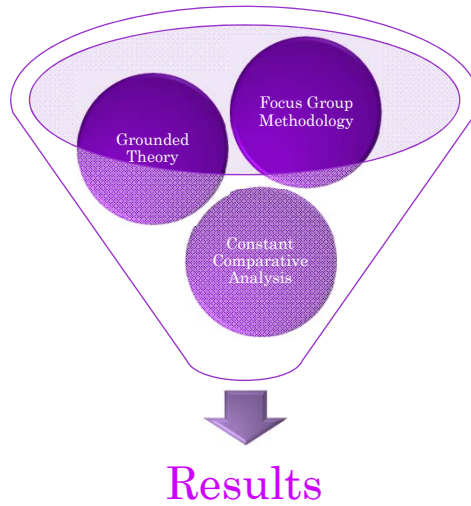
- Girls and Parent Focus Groups
- Parent Interview
- Educator Focus Group



RESULTS



DATA ANALYSIS QUALITATIVE METHODS



GIRLS



OVERVIEW OF THEMES FOR GIRLS

	Theme	Ideas included:
1	“Me”	Self-image; interests, emotions; future
2	“Friends”	What; who; why
3	“School”	Public; home school; activities
4	“Adults”	Parents/grandparents; teachers
5	“Bullying”	Verbal; physical



“ME”

Theme:
“Me”

Ideas:
Self-image (disability,
gender); interests; emotions;
future plans

- “I don’t hang out with any of [the people at school] because I can’t really stand a lot of people.”
- “I have really, really mild special needs, just really mild, but these other kids who have special needs who have way more than me and it’s a bit hard to tolerate them because they act weird.”
- “A lot of things about me change.”

Theme 1

“FRIENDS”

Theme:
“Friends”

Ideas:
Who, What, Why

- “I hang out with everybody until I kinda find the right people to be my friend...pretty much, even though you may have one [friend] at church or elsewhere, you feel like you must have one at school so you can just not be alone, as in somebody in the background, somebody you can just hear or something as if some kind of prop so you can feel kind of connected in the world.”

Theme 2

“SCHOOL”

Theme:
“School”

Ideas:
Public school; home school;
activities; social skills
programs

• “[Y]ou’re supposed to write things like oh, did you feel frustrated today? What happened? Were you upset or something? Yesterday, it was so funny because it asked what I was going to do differently tomorrow then what I did today at school and I’m like, uh, tomorrow’s a Saturday. What does this packet know? I don’t really think that this is, like social at all.”

Theme 3

“ADULTS”

Theme:
“Adults”

Ideas:
Parents/grandparents;
teachers

• “Since I have guy friends, my parents know that I’m not, I think junior high dating is stupid and people shouldn’t be doing it until age 18 and stuff and my grandma gets kind of nosy... which [gets] me kind of mad”

• “I have to avoid my academic lab teacher because the teachers walk right by the same area where my friends hang out outside at lunch everyday. So, if I see her walking by, I’m just like running down where she can’t see me so I don’t get bugged.”

Theme 4

“BULLYING”

Theme:
“Bullying”

Ideas:
Verbal bullying; physical bullying

•“After my mom said no more [public] school, I got a lot more friends and no more name calling.”

•“I had PE for first period and they always lock the doors and I knocked on the door and ‘Lucy’ opened it and then she saw me and then she closed it and my fingers were probably about a few inches away from getting hit and they could have gotten broken... Then I finally got in the gym... she just said no one likes you ‘Mary

• and everyone hates you, and not everyone hates me and stuff.”



Theme 5

EDUCATORS



OVERVIEW OF THEMES FOR EDUCATORS

	Theme	Ideas included:
1	“The Girls”	Gender; interests; social skills; self-perceptions
2	“School”	Social skills programs; bullying; transitions; behavior issues
3	“Diagnoses”	Getting a diagnosis; comorbid diagnoses
4	“The Adults”	Teachers; families
5	“The Future”	Fears: transitions, assault, comorbidity



“THE GIRLS”

Theme: “The Girls”	Ideas: Gender; Interests; Social Skills; Self-perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •““They [girls with ASD] are just so interesting.” •“I feel like with the Asperger’s sometimes it’s kind of ‘Oh, she’s got an attitude’ and [with] the guys [we] are like ‘Oh, he’s just flustered and upset.” •“A guy who isn’t as social maybe isn’t in as much trouble as a girl that has that difficulty...” •“The girls I’ve seen have a bigger desire to make a connection, but lack the skills.” 	



Theme 1

“SCHOOL”

Theme:
“School”

Ideas:
Social Skills Programs;
Bullying; Transitions;
Behavior Issues

- “[T]hat leap from elementary school is so huge in that there’s no sense of where I belong, especially for the kids on the spectrum...”
- “When any kid is treated badly, horrendously, by their peers, when that stops or they know that help is being provided, just like our typical students, it’s amazing who we see come out from behind that curtain.”
- “I find it difficult at the middle school level to have [a social skills program] in place that’s sustained.”

Theme 2

“DIAGNOSES”

Theme:
“Diagnoses”

Ideas:
Getting a diagnosis;
Comorbid diagnoses –

- “What I’m hearing is sometimes misdiagnosis and seeing some behaviors and wondering if they are on the spectrum or haven’t been identified...Even as much as attachment disorder.”
- “[S] has anxiety issues, mood issues, so she has this comorbid diagnosis, umbrella of mood disorder, Asperger’s and anxiety.”
- “[T]he co-occurring difficulties seem to be what really stands out. I can’t think, in fact, of an Asperger’s or autistic girl I’ve worked with who doesn’t also have anxiety or depression on and off. Even younger than 10. In the pre-teen and teen years you could say hormones have to do with it.”

Theme 3

“THE ADULTS”

<u>Theme:</u> “The Adults”	<u>Ideas:</u> Teachers; Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“...advocating with people who work with the kid, so teachers and other staff who know they are not being difficult to be difficult, that is just part of who they are. So, doing some work with staff and regular communication with parents is helpful because they can kind of reinforce what you’re trying to do at the school and you can learn from them.” • “[W]hat I’ve experienced because I’ve worked with plenty of boys on the autism spectrum, I sense what appears to me to be a lot more flustered, stressed out, extreme worry associated with these two female students that I speak of [and their families].” 	

Theme 4

“THE FUTURE”

<u>Theme:</u> “The Future”	<u>Ideas:</u> Fears – transitions, assault, comorbidity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“Their not being able to cope, leading to anxiety which then would lead to the depression because they feel so unsuccessful and then just shutting themselves out.” •“...anxiety and depression.” •“I worry about assault.” •“Transition out of high school, too, I think is a big thing.” 	

Theme 5

PARENTS



OVERVIEW OF THEMES FOR PARENTS

	Theme	Ideas included:
1	“My Daughter”	Gender expectations; characteristics
2	“Resources”	Access to resources; experiences with resources
3	“Bullying”	Experiences; school programs
4	“School”	Public school; home school; “navigating”
5	“The Future”	Dreams; fears



“MY DAUGHTER”

Theme:
“My Daughter”

Ideas:
Gender; Characteristics;
Social skills; Abilities

- “[S]he gets along really well with bossy kids because they are very clear about what they want her to do...”
- “I find as the older she’s getting the more the gap is as far as with her peers and that type of thing.”
- “Everything is very black and white.”
- “She mimics and that’s how she navigates her way through life.”

Theme 1

“RESOURCES”

Theme:
“Resources”

Ideas:
Access to;

- “I really could have used more hand holding than that [first 100 days booklet] the first 6 months and even now I feel like we’ve just sort of been thrown to the wolves to sink or swim.”
- “It’s kind of like great, we find out a lot of medical things but it’s a new frontier, we’re on another new frontier. I’m tired of being on a new frontier. I don’t like being a cowboy or cowgirl.”
- “...[I]t’s kind of like there’s no book. There’s no, like, okay here’s all your information. It’s like you have to go through this swamp to get to it.”
- “She’s been seen by neurologists and psychologists and almost every other ‘-ist’ that there is.”

Theme 2

“BULLYING”

Theme:
“Bullying”

Ideas:
Experiences; School
programs

• “[The school] did ask some different kids to be in a group once a month at lunch that meets. She says she doesn’t...some of those kids don’t know why they’re there. They’re not in special groups or anything. She said one kid decided he thinks it’s anybody that’s been bullied..”

• “She wants to do something as far as psychologist or something like that. She’s...with the bullying issue, it bothers her that other kids get treated badly and she’s been saying that she wants to do something on that order.”

Theme 3

“SCHOOL”

Theme:
“School”

Ideas:
Public school; home school;
“navigating”

• “She has timed out [eating] during lunch to eat until the bell rings because if you’re done eating before the bell rings, the kids go up and gather in groups and socialize and she doesn’t want to have to do that ...”

• “Well, the one thing that I find myself continue to say to the school that I don’t understand why it doesn’t make a bigger impact to them is... I can’t go out and find a group of kids and they have the kids there already. And even if a child doesn’t have a diagnosed disability...why social skills aren’t important enough to teach just escapes me.”

Theme 4

“THE FUTURE”

Theme:
“The Future”

Ideas:
Dreams; Fears

•“You know, my biggest hope for her is that she is happy with herself and satisfied that she’s able to make the choices she wants to make, that she has the ability...to find the path that works for her.”


•“Her biggest goal right now is to find a friend...and that’s my goal too for her.

Theme 5

COMBINING GROUP THEMES

OVERLAPPING THEMES

Theme	Girls	Educators	Parents
"Me"	X		
"My Daughter"			X
"The Girls"		X	
"Resources"			X
"Friends"	X		
"Diagnoses"		X	
"Bullying"	X		X
"School"	X	X	X
"The Future"		X	X
"Adults"	X	X	



DISCUSSION



IMPLICATIONS

- Intervention
- Practice
- Research
- Methodology



QUESTIONS?



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