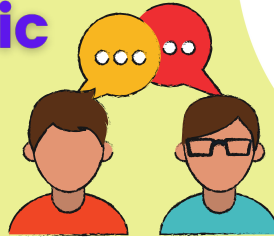


Social Cognition, Social Skill, & Social Motivation Minimally Predict Social Interaction Outcomes for Autistic and Non-Autistic Adults

Therapist Neurodiversity Collective International

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"Social cognition, social skill, and social motivation have been extensively researched and characterized as atypical in autistic people, **with the assumption** that each mechanistically contributes to the broader social interaction difficulties that diagnostically define the condition. Despite this assumption, research has not directly assessed whether or how these three social domains contribute to actual real-world social interaction outcomes for autistic people."

Morrison KE, DeBrabander KM, Jones DR, Ackerman RA, Sasson NJ. Social Cognition, Social Skill, and Social Motivation Minimally Predict Social Interaction Outcomes for Autistic and Non-Autistic Adults. *Front Psychol.* 2020 Nov 25;11:591100. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.591100. PMID: 33324295; PMCID: PMC7723837.



The current study administered standardized measures of social cognition, social skill, and social motivation to 67 autistic and 58 non-autistic (NA) adults and assessed whether performance on these measures, both individually and relationally between dyadic partners, predicted outcomes for autistic and NA adults interacting with unfamiliar autistic and NA partners in a 5 minute unstructured "get to know you" conversation. **Consistent with previous research, autistic adults scored lower than NA adults on the three social domains and were evaluated less favorably by their conversation partners.**



However, links between autistic adults' performance on the three social domains and their social interaction outcomes were minimal and, **contrary to prediction**, only the social abilities of NA adults predicted some interaction outcomes within mixed diagnostic dyads. **Collectively, results suggest that reduced performance by autistic adults on standardized measures of social cognition, social skill, and social motivation do not correspond in clear and predictable ways with their real-world social interaction outcomes.**

Collectively, such findings are consistent with **double empathy** (Milton, 2012) and **dialectical misattunement** (Bolis et al., 2018) theories of social disconnection between autistic and NA people and suggest that **traditional conceptualizations of social cognitive ability may not extend in anticipated ways to autistic-NA interactions.**

Results from this study challenge traditional thinking about the mechanisms of social interaction difficulties for autistic adults.