

## SEVERITY OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIAL SKILLS DEFICITS

*Elana L. Bloom, Anastasia Karagiannakis, Jessica R.  
Toste, Nancy L. Heath, & Effie Konstantinopoulos  
McGill University*

This study explored the differences in the rated social skills of elementary-aged students at-risk for emotional/behavioural disorders (E/BD) based on severity of academic difficulties. Teachers nominated students at-risk for E/BD who were classified into four groups of academic difficulty based on the Wide Range Achievement Test-3. Students, parents, and teachers completed the Social Skills Rating System. Teachers' ratings indicated that academic strengths did not significantly affect perceptions of students' social competence; all children were rated with notable social skills deficits. Consistent with previous positive research, self-ratings were uniformly positive across groups. Parents' ratings indicated highest social competence for children with most severe academic deficits.

Key words: emotional disorders, behavioural disorders, academic performance, elementary school, social competence, self-perceptions, parent perceptions, teacher perceptions

Cette étude a exploré les différences chez des élèves du primaire présentant des risques de troubles affectifs et du comportement dans l'évaluation de leurs habiletés sociales, par rapport à la gravité de leurs difficultés académiques. Les enseignants ont désigné ces élèves à risque, qui ont été répartis en quatre groupes en fonction de leurs difficultés académiques évaluées en utilisant le *Wide Range Achievement Test-3*. Les élèves, les parents et les enseignants ont rempli le questionnaire sur les aptitudes sociales (*Social Skills Rating System*). Les évaluations des enseignants révèlent que les aptitudes scolaires n'ont pas une incidence importante sur les perceptions des aptitudes sociales des élèves; tous les enfants ont été évalués comme ayant d'importants déficits quant aux aptitudes sociales. Conformément à des recherches antérieures, les auto-évaluations sont uniformément positives dans tous les groupes. Les évaluations des parents font état d'aptitudes sociales plus fortes chez les enfants ayant les déficits scolaires les plus graves.

Mots clés : troubles affectifs et du comportement, rendement scolaire, école primaire, aptitude sociale, autoperceptions, perceptions des parents et des enseignants

Studies have shown that children with emotional and behavioural disorders (E/BD) have difficulty with social skills (Gresham, 1997; Gresham & McMillan, 1997; Guevremont & Dumas, 1994; Magee Quinn, Kavale, Marthur, Rutherford, & Forness, 1999; Olympia, Heathfield, Jenson, & Clark, 2002). Although past research has suggested that a strong relationship exists between social competence and academic achievement (DiPerna & Elliott, 1999; Feshbach & Feshbach, 1987; Green, Forehand, Beck, & Vosk, 1980; Gresham & Elliott, 1990), the degree to which this is true for students at-risk for E/BD remains unclear.

The present study sought to explore differences in the rated social skills of elementary-aged students at-risk for E/BD based on severity of academic difficulties. Children at-risk for E/BD identification based on teacher nominations, were classified into four groups of academic difficulty based on their performance on a standardised measure of academic achievement. In addition, ratings of students' social skills as reported by teachers, parents, and students were examined.

In the literature, the constructs of social skills and social competence are often used interchangeably, leading to much confusion. Social skills have been defined as specific behaviours that an individual displays while performing a social task (McFall, 1982). In contrast, Gresham (1983) conceptualised social competence as the larger construct which embeds social skills, an evaluative term regarding whether an individual is able to exhibit social skill behaviours adequately. Further, within the literature, social competence has been termed as a multi-dimensional, higher-order construct, which takes into account the contribution of development (Vaughn, Hogan, Kouzekanani, & Shapiro, 1990).

Among the general population of elementary school students, academic difficulties are related to social competence in a variety of ways. Specifically, studies using standardised measures of academic achievement have found that students who score high on these measures are more accepted, less rejected and disliked by peers, viewed by teachers as less deviant, and engage in more positive interactions than those who score low on achievement (e.g., Hughes, Cavell, & Grossman, 1997; Malecki & Elliott, 2002). Using a pre-selected sample of children who displayed serious social and academic problems as assessed by sociometric and standardised academic achievement tests, Coie and

Krehbiel (1984) examined clinical interventions, focusing on academic skills and social skills training. They measured academic achievement by the California Achievement Test and assessed general social competence, using a sociometric rating on a five-point play preference scale. Coie and Krehbiel observed that children who were in the academic skills training group not only showed significant improvements in reading and arithmetic, but also showed improvements in their sociometric ratings by their peers. Furthermore, children in the academic skills training group increased their solitary on-task behaviour and received significant increases in positive teacher attention following the intervention.

Coie and Krehbiel (1984) contend that improvement in academic skills may influence social competence by reducing off-task behaviours, thus resulting in fewer peers responding negatively to these students. Moreover, when students engage in less disruptive behaviour in class, they may receive more positive attention from teachers and peers, which may in turn enhance students' self-esteem and social status. In summary, Coie and Krehbiel's work suggests that a positive relationship occurs between social skills and academic achievement among the general school-aged population and, most importantly, that changes in academics can contribute to changes in social status.

Similarly, Bryan's (2005) research has demonstrated that certain types of social skills interventions, namely those focused on affect and self-perceptions (i.e., attributions and locus of control), have consistently had positive effects on academic achievement. In addition, Malecki and Elliott (2002) found that social skills were a significant predictor of future academic functioning among elementary students from within the general population. These studies further support the existence of a relationship between children's academic functioning and social competence; however, the directionality of this relationship remains unclear.

Using school records, researchers have reported that children who are rejected by classmates earn lower marks and perform worse on academic tests, fail more total grades, and drop out of school more often than children classified as popular (Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992). Ledingham and Schwartzman (1984) found that aggressive children experienced school failure more frequently, were more often

placed in a special education classroom, and were less liked by peers than non-aggressive and withdrawn children. Chen, Chen, and Kaspar (2001), assessing academic achievement in a sample of Chinese elementary and high school students via performance on Chinese and mathematics examinations, examined the relationship between group social functioning and individual academic, social, and psychological adjustment. They found that children who self-reported that they belonged to a peer group had significantly higher scores on peer- and teacher-rated social competence, sociometric status, and academic achievement than those who did not. In addition, child and peer sociability positively predicted academic achievement, while child and peer aggression negatively predicted academic achievement.

In a similar study, Chen, Rubin, and Li (1997) found social competence in Chinese elementary students, based on peer and teacher assessments and positive sociometric nominations, had a significant positive effect on academic achievement. In addition, they reported that academic achievement had a significant positive contribution to social competence and positive sociometric nominations, while aggressive/disruptive behaviours had a significant negative contribution to academic achievement. Thus, Chen et al.'s (1997, 2001) work highlights the important positive contribution of academic achievement to the social functioning of school-age children within a Chinese sample. However, these authors did not examine the relationship between academic achievement and social functioning among children who also exhibit behavioural problems.

These findings suggest that academic achievement, as rated by students and teachers, is significantly associated with social skills, as well as the more global construct of social competence. However, children who have academic difficulties constitute a heterogeneous group, with children usually exhibiting varying levels of severity in academic achievement. No study has yet examined whether children at-risk for E/BD with varying degrees of academic difficulties will exhibit ranging levels of social skills. Because students with E/BD are known to be at increased risk for a myriad of difficulties, including poor academic achievement and social skills, it is critical to understand whether social skills deficits among this population are potentially a function of the

severity of their academic difficulties. Moreover, it is important to note that schools in China operate within a collectivist orientation, which emphasises the importance of positive social, as well as academic achievement (Chen et al., 1997; *The Goals of School Education*, 1970). It is, therefore, unclear whether differences in academic achievement will have an impact on reported social skills when examining a sample of children at-risk for E/BD in a Canadian context.

The present study used a sample of students who were at-risk for E/BD. "At-risk" can be defined as a set of presumed cause/effect dynamics that could place a child or adolescent in danger of negative future outcomes. This term designates a negative situation that is not currently occurring (e.g., severe behavioural disorders), but that can be anticipated in the absence of intervention (Bauer, Keefe, & Shea, 2001; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1993). In the province of Québec, the Québec Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2000) defines at-risk students as those experiencing difficulties

...that may lead to failure, exhibit learning delays, have emotional disorders, and have behavioural disorders. The concept of at-risk students is based on a non-categorical view of the educational services provided to the students deemed at-risk, which emphasizes preventative action. (p. 5)

Researchers have shown that students with E/BD have decreased social skills as compared to peers (e.g., Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999). Thus, it is critical to explore avenues for improving these skills through interventions before difficulties develop into serious behaviour disorders. No study has yet explored the differences in the rated social skills of elementary-aged students at-risk for E/BD based on severity of academic difficulties. Further, previous studies have failed to assess students' social competence globally through evaluation of parents', teachers', and children's own perceptions of social skills.

A sample of children who were nominated by their teachers as being at-risk for E/BD were classified into groups of varying degrees of academic difficulty based on their achievement scores on a standardised assessment. The social skills of these children were then investigated

through an evaluation based on a standardised measure from multiple perspectives (child, parent, teacher) simultaneously. Based on the literature, it was hypothesized that children with no academic difficulties would be rated by teachers, parents, and themselves as having better social skills as compared to those with mild, moderate, or severe academic difficulties in sample of children this at-risk for EB/D. Although it is implied based on teacher nominations that children at-risk for E/BD do have some academic challenge, students from the no academic difficulty group did not exhibit academic difficulties based on a standardised measure. This notion may differ from the teacher perception of academic difficulties, which may have resulted in their being nominated at-risk for E/BD.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Participants were 139 elementary school students (99 boys and 40 girls) enrolled in grades 1 through 6, as well as their parents (118 mothers, 11 fathers, 10 guardians/foster mothers) and teachers (46 females, 1 male). The students, who were between the ages of 6 and 12 years ( $M = 111.78$ ,  $SD = 21.26$  months), attended one of six participating schools that varied in socio-economic status (low to middle socio-economic status). Students with developmental delays or physical disabilities were not included in this study.

Teachers were asked to identify students at-risk for moderate to severe emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (see procedure section). The rate of teacher nominations of students at-risk for moderate to severe emotional and/or behavioural difficulties was consistent with previous prevalence estimates (Kauffman, 2001) and ranged from 8 per cent to 12 per cent.

### *Measures*

*Academic Achievement.* Students' achievement in reading, spelling, and arithmetic was measured using the *Wide Range Achievement Test-3* (WRAT-3; Wilkinson, 1993). The WRAT-3 is a standardised academic achievement measure that consists of three sub-tests: Reading, which measures the ability to name letters and pronounce words of increasing

phonological and orthographic difficulty; Spelling, which assesses the ability to write letters of the alphabet, their names, and single words from dictation; and Arithmetic, which assesses mathematical calculation skills such as counting, reading number symbols, and performing written computations. The WRAT-3 possesses strong psychometric properties. Test-retest reliability coefficients are higher than .90 for individuals ranging in age from 6 to 16 years, and the internal reliability coefficients range from .80 to .90 for most age groups (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Nunnally, 1978; Wilkinson, 1993).

*Social Skills.* Students' social skills were assessed using the *Social Skills Rating System* (SSRS) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Students, parents, and teachers completed parallel forms of the SSRS. The student rating form (SSRS-S) consists of one main scale: Social Skills. The parent form (SSRS-P) consists of two main scales: Social Skills and Problem Behaviours; while the teacher form (SSRS-T) consists of three main scales: Social Skills, Problem Behaviours, and Academic Competence. Standard scores for all subscales of the SSRS-S, SSRS-P, and SSRS-T were calculated. Students, parents, and teachers were asked to rate on a four point Likert scale (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = very often) how often a student exhibits various social skills. The psychometric properties of the main scales of the SSRS are excellent, with test-retest reliability coefficients ranging from .85 to .93 and internal consistency reliability coefficients ranging from .90 to .95 (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Concurrent and construct validity is acceptable and moderate correlations with scores on behaviour problem checklists, peer sociometrics, and natural classroom observations have been documented (Elliott, Gresham, Freeman, & McCloskey, 1988; Gresham & Elliott 1990; Gresham, Elliott, & Black, 1987).

#### *Procedure*

Oral and written instructions for nominating students at-risk for moderate to severe emotional and/or behavioural difficulties were given to the teachers. Based on these instructions, teachers nominated students who met one of the following criteria: behaviour that goes to an extreme and is significantly different from what is normally expected; behaviour that affects the student's academic performance; behaviour that is

chronic and does not quickly disappear; behaviour that is unacceptable because of social or cultural expectations; or behaviour that cannot be explained by health and sensory difficulties (Rosenberg, Wilson, Maheady, & Sindela, 1992). Nominations were based on teachers' perceptions of the student's performance, not actual behaviour.

For each student nominated, teachers were asked to indicate the reason(s) for nomination and provide examples of the student's behaviour (e.g., defiance, hitting); rank the student's according to the seriousness of his or her emotional and/or behavioural difficulties; and indicate whether the student's parents were aware of their child's difficulties.

Students' parents or guardians were contacted and the study was explained to them verbally. After parents provided verbal consent to participate in the study, written parental and child consent was obtained. Consent to participate was high across all schools, ranging from 53 per cent to 73 per cent. Students completed the WRAT-3 and the SSRS-S, and teachers and parents completed the SSRS-T and SSRS-P, respectively.

Research assistants were trained to administer the WRAT-3 and SSRS measures. All measures were administered to students individually during school hours. Items on the SSRS-S were administered in interview format and read aloud to students to ensure understanding of each question and to provide clarification when necessary. Students completed the WRAT-3 and SSRS-S. Parents and teachers completed the SSRS-P and SSR-T, respectively. Parents were interviewed either over the phone or in person at their children's school or at their home. Completion of the SSRS-P required approximately 15 minutes. Teachers, were given the SSRS-T to fill out on their own and returned it to the researcher once it was completed.

Based on their performance on the WRAT-3, students were classified into four groups of academic achievement: the "no difficulty" group, consisting of students who obtained a standard score above 85 on all three sub-tests ( $n = 75$ ); the "mild difficulty" group, consisting of students who obtained a standard score below 85 on one sub-test ( $n = 23$ ); the "moderate difficulty" group, consisting of students who obtained a standard score below 85 on two sub-tests ( $n = 18$ ); and the "severe difficulty" group, consisting of students who obtained a standard score



below 85 on all three sub-tests ( $n = 23$ ). (See Table 1 for summary of group information.)

Table 1

*Summary of Age, Gender, and WRAT-3 Standard Scores for the Sample Groups of Students*

Group	Age (months)		Gender		Arithmetic		Spelling		Reading	
	Mean	SD	Male	Female	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No difficulty	111.87	20.43	57	18	94.15	0.43	95.25	10.66	100.95	12.94
Mild	120.39	22.34	13	10	78.07	11.08	90.39	8.98	92.43	11.98
Moderate	106.50	25.86	14	4	78.22	12.90	74.39	10.76	76.06	7.78
Severe	109.39	18.00	15	8	65.30	10.36	66.09	9.48	63.48	9.06

## RESULTS

The purpose of the current study was to examine rated social skills of students within the four identified academic achievement subgroups. Due to unequal cell sizes, assumptions for univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were considered (Stevens, 1996). First, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined to ensure that the normality assumption was met. All dependent variables had approximate normal distributions, with skewness and kurtosis values lying between -1.00 and 1.00. Furthermore, possible violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption were examined using Levene's test and revealed that the variance within each of the four groups was approximately equal on

social skills as rated by child (1.17), parent (0.77), or teacher (0.69). Because no violations to the assumptions were found, ANOVA was used to analyze the data and explore differences in social skills as rated by students, parents, and teachers among academic achievement groups.

To determine whether students' self-ratings of social skills differed as a function of academic difficulty, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. No significant differences emerged between the four groups of academic difficulty based on students' self-ratings of their social skills  $F(3, 135) = 0.68, p = 0.57$ , and the effect size estimated using the partial eta squared was  $\eta^2 = 0.015$ . All students rated themselves as socially skilled regardless of their level of academic difficulty, with group means all being above an average standard score of 100 (see Figure 1).

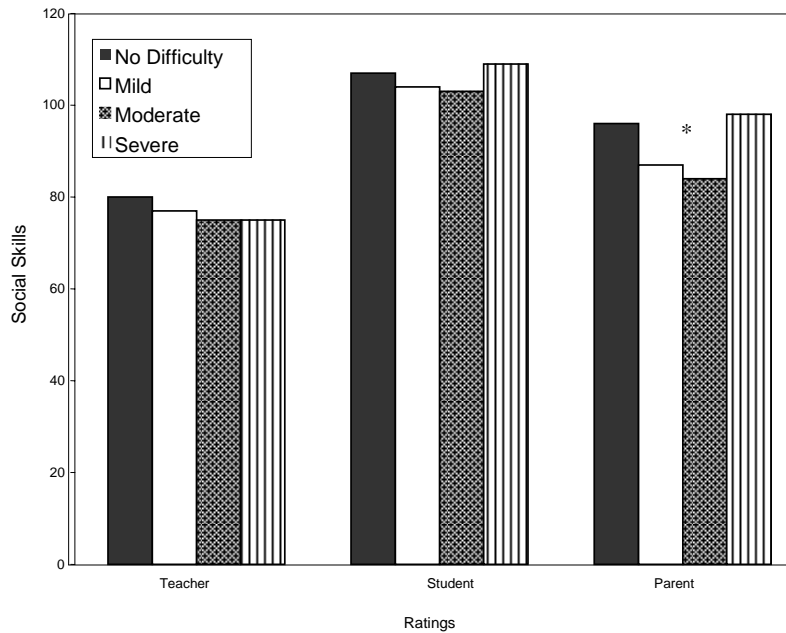


Figure 1. Mean standard score teacher, student, and parent ratings of social skills on the SSRS for no difficulty ( $n = 75$ ), mild ( $n = 23$ ), moderate ( $n = 18$ ), and severe ( $n = 23$ ) academic difficulty groups as assessed by the WRAT-3.

\* $p < 0.05$

A second one-way ANOVA was performed to assess whether teachers' ratings of students' social skills differed as a function of their level of academic difficulty. The four groups did not differ significantly from one another in terms of the teachers' ratings of students' social skills  $F(3, 133) = 1.78, p = 0.15$ , and the effect size estimated using the partial eta squared was  $\eta^2 = 0.039$ . However, in contrast to the students' uniformly positive self-ratings of their social skills, teachers rated all students as exhibiting poor social skills regardless of their level of academic difficulty (see Figure 1).

Finally, to assess whether parents' ratings of students' social skills differed as a function of their level of academic difficulty, a third one-way ANOVA was performed. A significant main effect for level of academic difficulty group was obtained,  $F(3, 124) = 3.67, p = 0.01$ , and the effect size estimated using the partial eta squared was  $\eta^2 = 0.082$ . Scheffe post hoc analyses were conducted to determine the differences among the means. A significant difference emerged between groups 3 and 4. Specifically, parents rated students with severe academic difficulties as functioning significantly better socially than did parents of students with moderate academic difficulties. No significant differences were observed between any of the other academic difficulty groups on the parent ratings of student social skills (see Figure 1).

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine the differences based on severity of academic difficulties in the rated social skills of elementary-aged students at-risk for E/BD. Teachers nominated students at-risk for E/BD who were then classified into four groups of academic difficulty based on their performance on a standardised measure of academic achievement. The mean ratings of students' social skills as reported by teachers, parents, and students were also examined.

No significant differences in self-reported social skills were found between groups based on academic difficulty. The finding that students at-risk for E/BD rated themselves as socially skilled regardless of their level of academic difficulty, with group means generally being average to above average, is consistent with existing research. Several studies have found that children with behaviour disorders have a positively

distorted view of their social functioning (Grinberg, 2001; Hughes et al., 1997; Hughes, Cavell, & Prasad-Gaur, 2001; Prasad-Gaur, Hughes, & Cavell, 2001; Yoon, Hughes, Cavell, & Thompson, 2000). Specifically, children with behaviour disorders have been found to rate themselves higher on social competence than do others' reports of their social behaviours (Hughes et al., 1997; Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993). This idealised self-perception of social behaviours reported by children with E/BD may act as a resiliency factor, protecting their self-esteem when they encounter negative life experiences that threaten their sense of social competence (Hughes et al., 1997; Hymel et al., 1993).

Few studies have directly investigated the relationship between children's reports of their own level of social skills and level of academic achievement. For example, D'Ilio and Karnes (1992) reported that students who are performing well academically perceive themselves as functioning well socially. Consistent with this finding carried out within the general population, findings from the current study indicate that children at-risk for E/BD also report average to above average levels of social skills regardless of their level of academic performance.

When teacher perceptions were examined in the present study, the degree to which academic performance had an impact on social skills as previously reported within the general population (Chen et al., 1997, 2001; McGee, Williams, Share, Anderson, & Silva, 1986) was not supported. Specifically, no significant difference was found between the academic difficulty groups for teacher ratings of social skills, which indicates that teachers viewed all students as having social skill deficits, regardless of level of academic achievement. Although previous studies have reported that students at-risk for or diagnosed with E/BD have social difficulties (Kamps, Kravits, Stolze, & Swaggart, 1999; Lambros, Ward, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 1998), the finding that teachers reported all students whom they nominated as being at-risk for E/BD as exhibiting equally poor social skills regardless of their level of academic difficulties was unexpected. One possible explanation for this finding is that children nominated for E/BD, who are at-risk for social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, may display such poor social skills that their teachers view them as performing poorly socially, regardless of their level of academic strength. The present results highlight a need to

further study the possible contribution of academic achievement to skills in children at risk for E/BD. If previous studies documenting the potential contribution of achievement improvement to social status (Chen et al., 1997, 2001; Coie & Krehbiel, 1984) do not apply to samples of children at-risk, this finding clearly suggests the need to develop a different approach to enhancing the social skills of these children.

Surprisingly, parents rated their children who had severe academic difficulty as exhibiting significantly better social skills than those with moderate academic difficulties and as similar to those children with mild or no academic difficulty. One possible explanation for this unexpected finding is that parents of children with severe academic difficulties may positively distort their children's social skills to compensate for the fact that their children are performing poorly in all academic areas. Given that their children are struggling in multiple areas, these parents may search for another area (i.e., social skills) where their children appear to be doing relatively well. On the other hand, parents whose children exhibit only moderate academic difficulties may not feel the need to engage in such positive distortions. Just as children with behaviour disorders report positive and distorted views of their social skills (Grinberg, 2001; Hughes et al., 1997; Hughes et al., 2001; Prasad-Gaur et al., 2001; Yoon et al., 2000), parents of children with severe academic difficulties may positively distort their perception of their children's social functioning to protect both their own self-esteem and that of their children. Future studies need to explore this possibility because there are clear implications for working with parents of children with severe academic difficulties.

Although differences between teacher and parental perceptions of the children's social skills were not directly examined, in general when investigated separately, the teachers and parents did not perceive the children's social skills similarly. Specifically, teachers viewed all children as exhibiting poor social skills regardless of their level of academic difficulty, whereas the parents of children with severe academic difficulties viewed their children as being significantly better in their social skills than did the parents of children with moderate academic difficulties. Teachers and parents have been found to report different perceptions of children's social skills from the general population

(Buzzelli, 1989; Soyster & Ehly, 1987). However, this is the first study to find dissimilar perceptions of social skills among a sample of children at-risk for E/BD with varying degrees of academic difficulty. One explanation for the divergent perceptions may be that parents and teachers employ different referent groups with which to compare these children. Teachers are likely to compare their students to the more diverse array of children present in their classroom; whereas parents may be more likely to compare their children to a smaller, less diverse group of the children's social peers or siblings.

Further, the poor social skills of children with severe academic difficulties may be more obvious to teachers than to parents because teachers are likely to spend more time focusing on social skills within the classroom and have the opportunity to view a child interacting with a variety of peers. Although teachers have the opportunity to observe a child's social difficulties within the broader context of the classroom, parents may be more eager to identify areas of strength in their children and subsequently may focus only on their children's interactions within their selected peer group of friends. Because these at-risk children may be more likely to select friends who also display poor social skills (Brown, 1990; Hymel et al., 1993), their parents may perceive them as having relatively good social skills in comparison to their peer group. This difference in reporting is less likely to be the case for parents whose children display only moderate academic difficulties because they may feel less of a need to look for another area where their children are functioning well (i.e., social skills). In addition, children with only moderate difficulties may be less likely to select peers with poor social skills and are therefore less likely to provide their parents with a referent group that differs significantly from the referent group of their teachers.

The present study was the first to simultaneously assess the different perspectives (i.e., child, teacher, parent) of social skills among a sample of children at-risk for E/BD who also displayed different levels of academic difficulties (i.e., no difficulty, mild, moderate, and severe). The present findings highlight the differential ratings among students, teachers, and parents of social skills for children at-risk for E/BD with varying degrees of academic difficulty. In summary, consistent with existing research, findings from the current study indicate that children

at-risk for E/BD also report average to above average levels of social skills regardless of their level of academic performance. This is the first study to extend this finding to children at-risk for E/BD. In contrast, it was found that teachers viewed all students as having social skill deficits, regardless of level of academic competence. This finding suggests that previous studies examining general samples of children that have highlighted the importance of academic functioning in moderating social skills may not play as vital a role for teachers working with children at-risk for E/BD.

The fact that teachers in the current study rated the social skills of all children poorly regardless of their level of academic difficulty highlights the vulnerability of this at-risk population because it suggests that a significant strength (e.g., age-appropriate academic performance) is insufficient to counteract these children's social deficits. One interesting aspect of this study is that among children that teachers identified as being at-risk for E/BD, academic strengths failed to moderate teachers' perceptions of children's social skills. Given these findings, future studies could focus on the sociometrics of these children with academics as a key factor within the context of parent/child perceptions to tease apart more specifically the role that social skills and academics play within the social context of the classroom.

Further, within the areas of risk and resilience, severity of academic difficulty has been hypothesised to constitute a relative risk and the possibility exists that having deficits in all three areas of academic achievement (i.e., severe academic difficulties) instead of just one area poses less of a risk for these children (Wong, 2003). Students at-risk for E/BD who have severe academic difficulties form a distinct subgroup of children who may be viewed differently by their parents and teachers, which may influence the type of intervention they receive. Given the divergent ratings of the children's social skills as reported by parents and teachers in the current study, parents of these students may want the focus of the intervention to be academics, whereas teachers may wish to focus more on social skills. Such dissimilar goals could have grave implications for the design and implementation of interventions for these students and subsequently impact their future successes. A possible direction for future studies would be to examine both, quantitatively and

qualitatively, the perceptions that parents and teachers possess regarding the social skills of children at-risk for E/BD. Specifically, it is of interest to determine the reasons why parents view their children with severe academic difficulties as being socially skilled, a view that does not appear to be held by teachers.

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*Elana L. Bloom*, Ph.D., is a Psychologist at the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal, Canada. She is also a sessional instructor in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Her research interests focus on learning disability subtypes, recognizing and understanding emotions, and social functioning in youth at-risk.

*Anastasia Karagiannakis*, M.Ed., is a Doctoral Candidate in Educational Psychology, Special Populations of Learners at McGill University. She is a Psycho-Educational Consultant at the Learning Associates of Montreal. Her research interests include behaviour and academic difficulties, peer tutoring, self-perceptions, and intervention research.

*Jessica R. Toste*, B.Ed., M.A., is a doctoral student in Educational Psychology at McGill University. Her research interests focus on resilient functioning and positive classroom experiences of youth at-risk.

*Nancy L. Heath*, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Her research program explores resilience and adaptive functioning in youth at-risk.

*Effie Konstantinopoulos*, M.Ed., is Coordinator of Remedial and Tutorial Services at the Learning Associates of Montreal. Her interests are related to educational interventions for children and adolescents with learning disabilities.