

Developmental Changes of Social Functioning and Social Participation of Young Children with and without Physical Disabilities



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Background

- Young children with childhood-onset physical disabilities are at risk for experiencing limitations in social functions and social participation, yet research is limited.
- **Social function** refers to the ability and skills to interact and communicate with others.
- **Social participation** involves forming social relationships through engaging in daily activities.

Objective

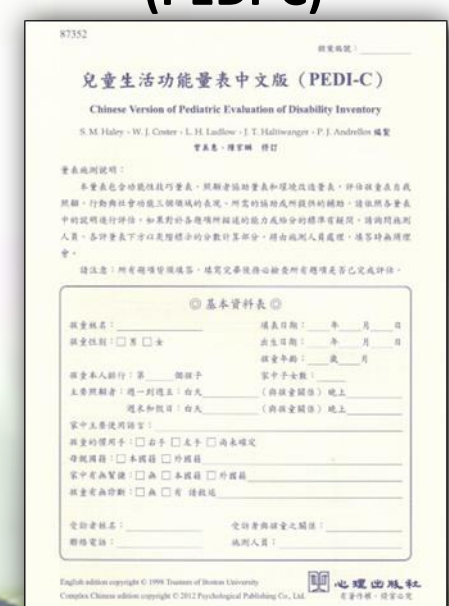
- To track and compare social function, diversity and intensity of social participation across 3 consecutive time points for children 1-3 years of age with physical disabilities (PD) and typically developing (TD) peers.

Methods

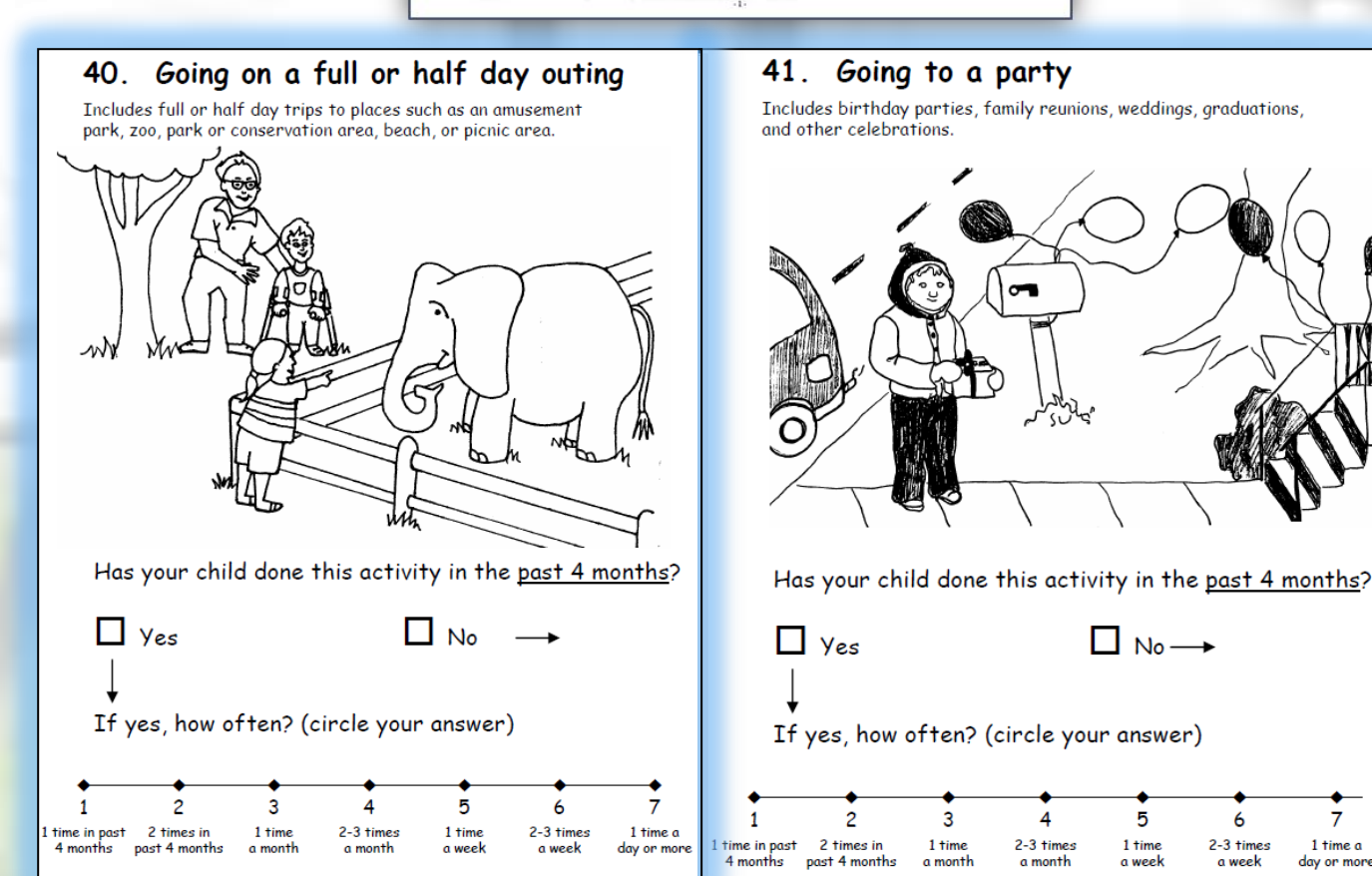
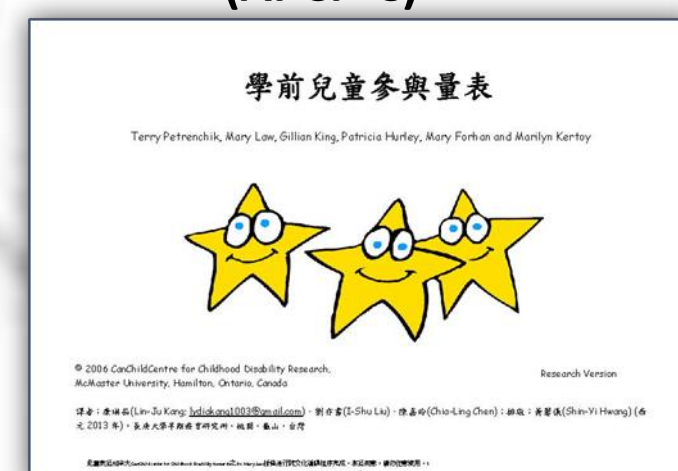
- A convenience sample as part of a larger 3-year follow-up study: **33** children with PD, mean age at study entry=2.8y, 19 (58%) boys
- 46** children with TD, mean age at study entry=2.9y, 28 (61%) boys
- PD: primarily cerebral palsy (39%) and developmental delay (32%)
- Data analysis for group and time difference in **Social Function** and **Social Participation Diversity and Intensity** scores: Two-way repeated measure ANOVA (2 groups x 3 times), $p < 0.05$.



The Chinese version of Pediatric Evaluation of Disability Inventory (PEDI-C)

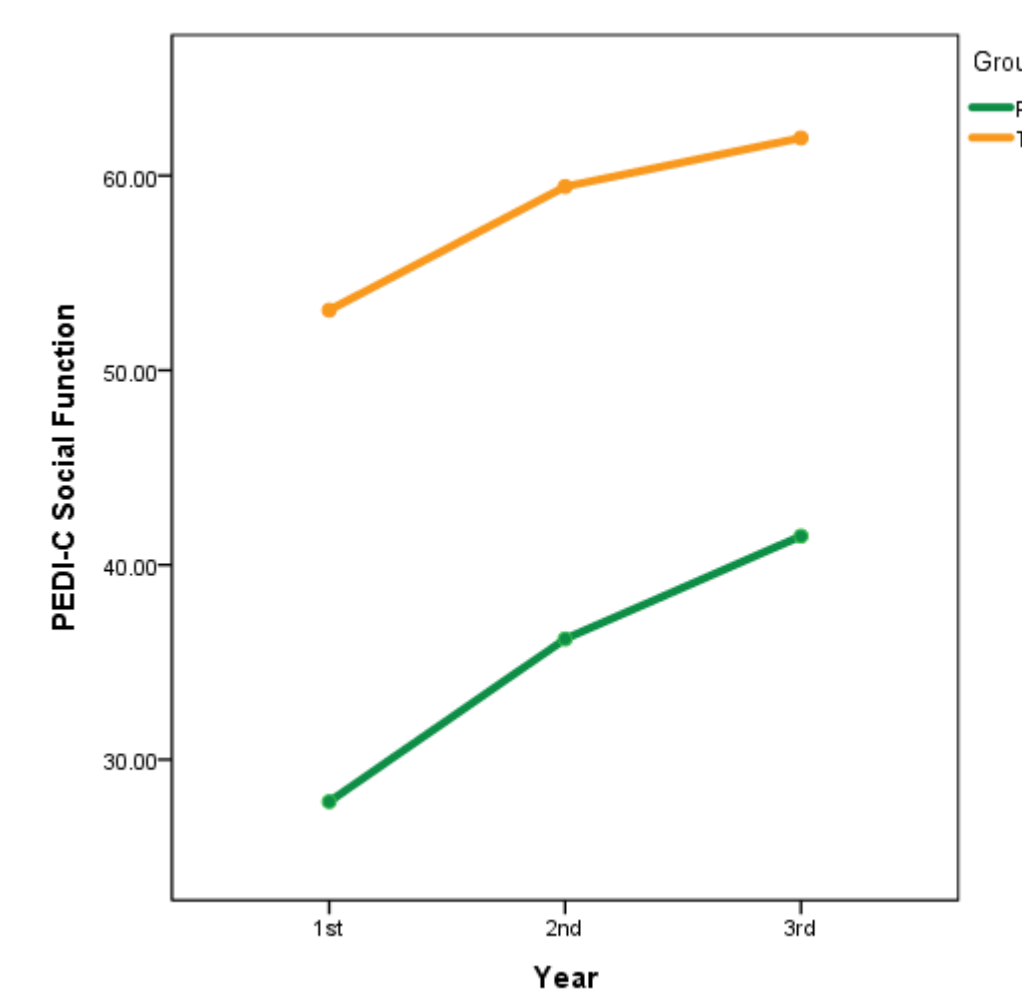


The Chinese version of the Assessment of Preschool Children's Participation (APCP-C)



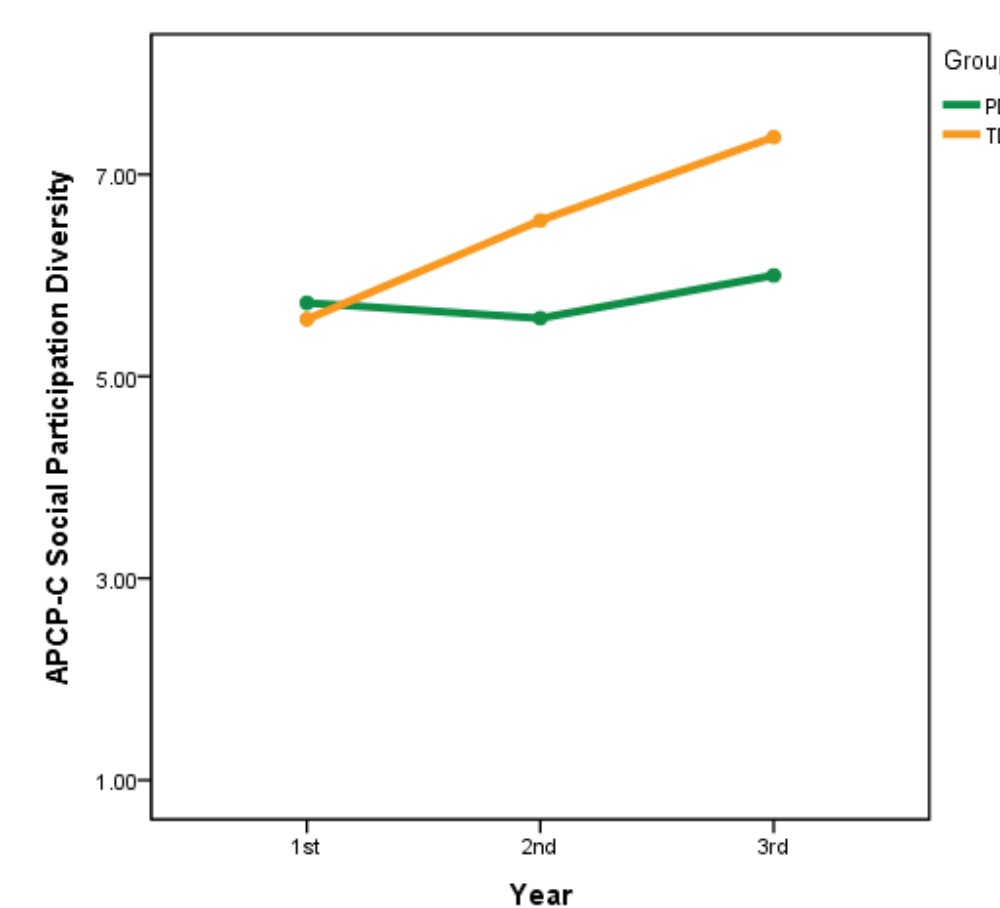
Results

- Diverse patterns were found for **Social Function** and **Social participation** between children with PD and TD.



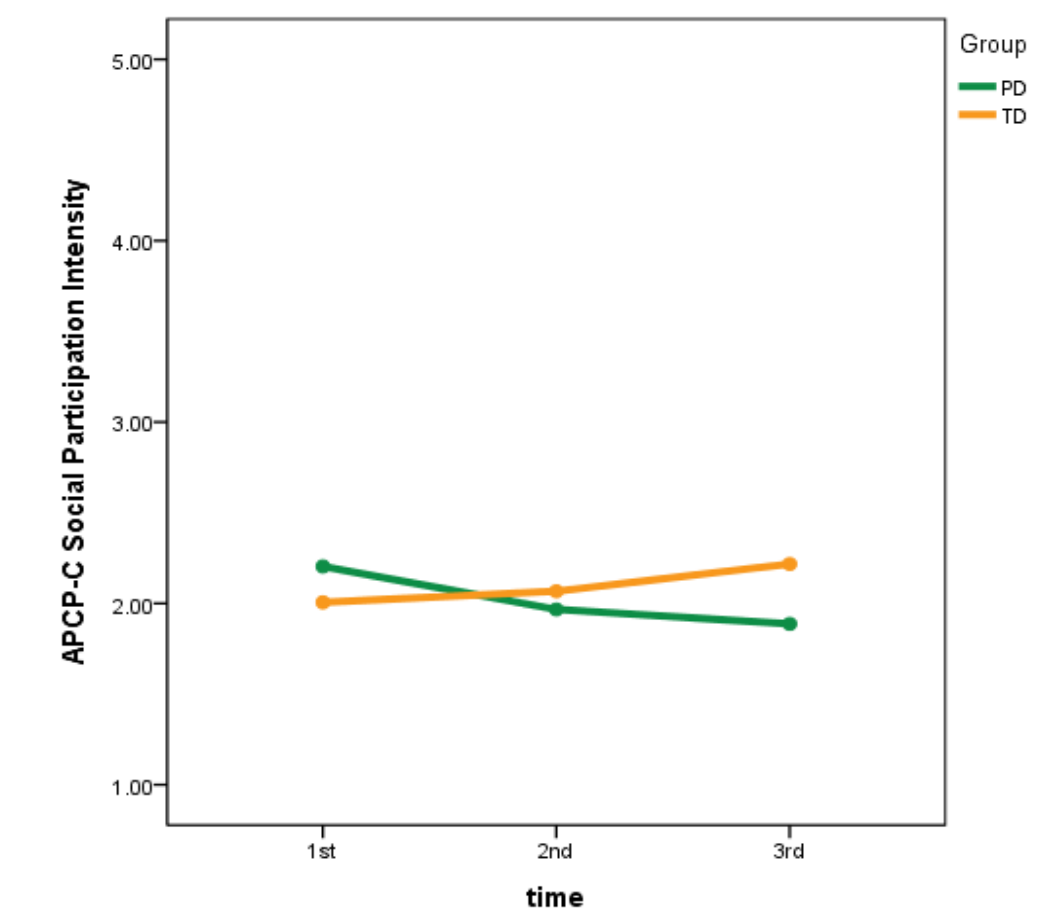
Social Function

- Both the children with PD and TD increased in the PEDI-C social function scores with age ($p < .001$)
- PD children had significantly lower scores than TD children ($p < .001$) [Figure 1]



Social Participation Diversity

- PD children did not differ across 3 time points
- TD children increased significantly across 3 time points ($p < 0.001$) [Figure 2]



Social Participation Intensity

- Both the PD and TD children did not differ across 3 time points ($p > 0.05$) [Figure 3]

Conclusion

- Although social function skills of young children in this study appeared to improve over time, the developmental patterns of social participation were distinct for children with and without PD.
- The TD children have been shown to engage in a greater variety of social activities when they grow, but not the PD children.
- Implications for providing young children, particularly those with disabilities, with supports and activity opportunities that facilitate social participation.
- Families and professionals are encouraged to work as partners to create a rich social and learning environment for young children.

Funding No.:

MOST 104-2314-B-182 -022 -MY3