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AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: INVESTIGATING PREDICTIVE ADAPTIVE
BEHAVIOR SKILL DEFICITS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

By

Emma Feige

B.S.- Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, 2018

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Medicine of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science
in Communicative Disorders

Department of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery and Communicative
Disorders
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

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A Thesis Approved on

April 10, 2020

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DEDICATION

To my sweet Stevie--thank you for showing me the world through a different lens.

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ABSTRACT

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: INVESTIGATING PREDICTIVE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR SKILL DEFICITS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Emma Feige

April 10, 2020

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder that consists of difficulties with social communication and language, as well as the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors. These deficits tend to present in early childhood and usually lead to impairments in functioning across various settings. Moreover, these deficits have been shown to negatively impact adaptive behavior and functioning. Thus, early diagnosis and intervention is vital for future success within this population. The purpose of this study was to further examine the subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior section of the Bayley®-III to determine which of the ten subscales are predictive of ASD in young children (i.e., \leq three years-of-age). A retrospective file review of 273 children participating in Kentucky's early intervention program, First Steps, was completed. The children ranged in age from 18-35 months. A binary logistic regression was used to assess the subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior of the section of the Bayley®-III to determine which of the ten subscales are predictive of ASD in young children (i.e., \leq three years-of-age). The results indicated that individual lower raw scores

in communication, community use, functional pre-academics, home living, health and safety, leisure, self-care, self-direction, and social subscales were predictive of an autism diagnosis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder that consists of deficits in social communication and language, as well as the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Yates & Le Couteur, 2016). ASD is described as a spectrum disorder as it presents differently in each individual. These deficits tend to present in early childhood and usually lead to impairments in functioning across various settings (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016).

The first clinical account regarding autism was published by Dr. Leo Kanner in 1943. Kanner's (1943) research derived from his observations of 11 children and the follow study (1971) that demonstrated a condition characterized by lack of interest in the social world and behaviors he described as "insistence on sameness" (Kanner, 1943, p. 245; Volkmar & Reichow, 2013). With the accumulation of research there was strong evidence to support inclusion of autism as a new condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-3rd edition (DSM-III) published in the late 1970's (American Psychiatric Association, 1985; Volkmar & Reichow, 2013). In the DSM-III, autism was included under the class of conditions called pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) (American Psychiatric Association, 1985). At the time, autism was characterized by impaired social development, impaired communication and language skills, resistance to change or insistence of sameness, and onset within the first five years of life (American Psychiatric Association, 1985).

With the publication of DSM-IV in 1994, changes were made based on sensitivity and specificity of the characteristics of this condition and improved reliability (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Volkmar & Reichow, 2013). Autism continued to be included under the classification of PDD with an additional 3 disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). PDD class of conditions now included: autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, Rett's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Specific characteristics of autism included in the DSM-IV-TR consisted of: impairment in social interaction, impairments in communication, restricted, repetitive and stereotyped pattern of behaviors, interests, and activities, and delays or abnormal functioning in language, play and social interactions with an onset prior to three years of age (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Revisions were made in the publication of the DSM-V by replacing the classification of PDD with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The conditions previously classified under PDD are now termed ASD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The DSM-V defines ASD as a heterogeneous group of disorders characterized by current and/or historical deficits in social communication and the presence of repetitive behaviors that limit and impair everyday functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately 1 in 59 children are diagnosed with ASD crossing all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (Baio et al., 2018). Previous research has reported a steady increase in the prevalence of ASD over the past 2 decades (Xu, Strathearn, Liu, & Bao, 2018). Probable reasons for the

increase include the “broadening of diagnostic criteria and improved case recognition” (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016, p. 513). Moreover, symptomology of ASD tends to present differently in males and females (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016). “Camouflaging theory” suggests that females may “mask socio-communicative impairments due to increased sensitivity to social pressure to fit in, gendered expectations for social behavior, and strengths in some social-communication skills” (Ratto et al., 2018, p. 1711). This could result in females possibly being “missed by current diagnostic procedures” (Ratto et al., 2018, p. 1698). Nonetheless, diagnosis of ASD appears to be 4 times more common in males than in females (Baio et al., 2018).

Secondary to the “heterogeneity of affected individuals and the genetic complexity” of the disorder, it has been difficult to identify the cause(s) of ASD (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016, p. 55). Previous research has suggested several possible etiologies; however, the literature remains inconclusive. Bölte, Girdler, and Marschik (2019) suggest that many genetic and environmental factors and their interactions may contribute to autism phenotypes, but their specific causal mechanisms remain poorly understood. Inasmuch, Yates and Le Couteur (2016) suggest that significant genetic variations have been found in approximately 10% of individuals diagnosed with ASD. Increased paternal and maternal age has also been associated with higher risk of having a child with autism, possibly due to “de novo spontaneous mutations and/or alterations in genetic imprinting” (Johnson, Myers, & American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Children With, 2007, p. 1186). Moreover, strong heritability has been linked with ASD as recurrence rates for siblings has been reported to be up to 18.7% (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016). “Research continues to study neurobiological

differences in ASD considering variation in neurotransmitters, volumetric and functioning differences of various regions within the brain, but the relevance to clinical practice of most identified abnormalities has not been established” (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016, p. 55).

Environmental factors may also play in a role in possible ASD diagnosis. Al-Hamdan, Preetha, Albashaireh, Al-Hamdan, and Crosson (2018, p. 7925) found that exposure to environmental neurotoxicants during prenatal, natal and postnatal development has been shown to influence the biochemical brain development, resulting in “neurodevelopmental abnormalities that may contribute to ASD”. More specifically, prenatal exposures to “air pollution, heavy metals, pesticides and toxic substances in consumer products” could bring about atypical brain development, resulting in possible neural pathologies such as ASD (Wong, Wais, & Crawford, 2015). Through growing research, it has become more evident that the etiology associated with ASD is multifactorial with genetic and environmental factors playing a role (Johnson et al., 2007).

The heterogeneity of ASD is evident in the early years of development as well (Matson, Wilkins, & Fodstad, 2010; Werner, Dawson, Munson, & Osterling, 2005). Kanner first described autism as being one of an “infantile” type, suggesting that the onset of symptoms occurred throughout the early ages of life (Johnson et al., 2007). Another study examined three possible types/developmental trajectories of ASD in children (Barbeau, 2017). These three types include: early onset, regression and plateau (Barbeau, 2017). ASD symptoms manifest soon after birth in children with the early onset type, whereas children with the regressive type begin to develop normally

until around two years of age proceeded by a regression in development (Barbeau, 2017). This regression is most evident in the child's language and social skills (Barbeau, 2017). Lastly, children with the plateau type, develop normally until approximately six months of age and cease to make any developmental advances (Barbeau, 2017). For example, Rogers (2004, p. 140) describes a halting of development where "babbling was present, but did not continue to develop into speech". Regarding ongoing development and future outcomes, evidence suggests that children who present with the regressive developmental trajectory tend to have more severe deficits across time and in a variety of areas (Matson et al., 2010; Rogers, 2004).

The DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) provides the current diagnostic criteria for diagnosing individuals with ASD. The symptoms include:

1. persistent deficits in social communication and interaction across all contexts (via current and/or historical report),
2. presence of restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviors, interests or activities (via current and/or historical report),
3. symptoms must be present during early childhood,
4. symptoms together limit and impair everyday social, occupational or other aspects of current functioning, and
5. the deficits are not better explained by intellectual disability or global developmental delay.

The DSM-V further identifies severity levels of ASD ranging from level 1 (requires support) to level 3 (requires very substantial levels of support). The levels as

reported on the Autism Speaks website (and used with permission by the American Psychiatric Association) are included in the following table

Table 1

Autism Severity Levels

Severity	Social Communication	Restricted and Repetitive Behaviors
Level 3 “Requiring very substantial support”	Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning, very limited initiation of social interactions, and minimal response to social overtures from others. For example, a person with few words of intelligible speech who rarely initiates interaction and, when he or she does, make unusual approaches to meet needs only and responds to only very direct social approaches	Inflexibility of behavior, extreme difficulty coping with change, or other restricted/repetitive behaviors markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Great distress/difficulty changing focus or action
Level 2 “Requiring substantial support”	Marked deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place; limited initiation of social interactions; and reduced or abnormal responses to social overtures from others. For example, a person who speaks simple sentences, whose interaction is limited to narrow special interests, and how has markedly odd nonverbal communication	Inflexibility of behavior, difficulty coping with change, or other restricted/repetitive behaviors appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress and/or difficulty changing focus or action.
Level 1	Without supports in place, deficits in social communication	Inflexibility of behavior causes significant

“Requiring support”	cause noticeable impairments. Difficulty initiating social interactions, and clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful response to social overtures of others. For example, a person who is able to speak in full sentences and engages in communication but whose to-and-fro conversation with others fails, and whose attempts to make friends are off and typically unsuccessful	interference with functioning in one or more contexts. Difficulty switching between activities. Problems of organization and planning hamper independence.
---------------------	--	--

(Autism Speaks, n.d.)

While the DSM-V provides guidelines and criteria—including severity levels—for diagnosing ASD, it also highlights the fact that symptoms must also be present during early childhood. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), specifically Part C, the law defines the age range for children eligible for early intervention serves as birth-to-three years of age (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association defines early intervention as providing families, toddler and infants who have or are at-risk of a developmental delay, disability or other health condition that inhibits typical development with intervention services.

Evidence suggests that the earlier a child receives intervention, the greater the likelihood of an improved developmental trajectory (Koegel, Koegel, Ashbaugh, & Bradshaw, 2014). In general, intensive intervention implemented before age three has been associated with better communicative, academic and behavioral outcomes at school age (Owens, 2017). Several studies have concluded that children with autism make greater gains in intervention when it begins earlier, between the ages of two

and four, as compared to older children receiving the same interventions, including those with other neurodevelopmental disorders (Rogers, 1996). More recent emerging evidence supports the idea that earlier and more intensive treatment results in more favorable outcomes (Pasco, 2018).

Early intervention services often address the needs of children across five developmental areas, including: cognitive, motor, social-emotional, communication and adaptive development (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Children referred for early intervention services typically undergo an in-depth evaluation process to assess their therapeutic needs prior to intervention. Various assessment measures may be used during this process with differing requirements from state-to-state. Nonetheless, the assessment process should be comprised of a comprehensive set of activities to (1) identify a child's strengths and weaknesses, (2) address the families concerns and priorities, and (3) develop a plan for ongoing treatment strategies for the child (Crais, 2011; Raver & Childress, 2015)

IDEA requires that the evaluation/assessment be completed using a range of tools in a variety of contexts (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The instruments used may include both criterion-referenced and/or standardized properties. One tool, in particular, that is often utilized within early intervention circles is the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development® (3rd Edition) or the Bayley®-III. The Bayley®-III is a comprehensive assessment tool used to identify developmental issues in early childhood (Bayley, 2006). The battery encompasses the aforementioned five developmental domains mandated by IDEA and are described in the table below (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Table 2**Bayley-III® Assessment Scales**

Scales	Scales Explained (Bayley, 2006)
Cognitive Scale	Assesses sensorimotor development, exploration and manipulation, object relatedness, concept formation, memory, and other aspects of cognitive processing
Language Scale	
<i>Receptive Language</i>	Assesses preverbal behaviors, such as vocabulary development, understanding of morphological markers, social referencing, and verbal comprehension
<i>Expressive Language</i>	Assesses the preverbal communication, such as babbling, gesturing, joint referencing, turn taking, and morpho-syntactic development
Motor Scale	
<i>Fine Motor</i>	Assesses prehension, perceptual-motor integration, motor planning and motor speed
<i>Gross Motor</i>	Measures the movement of the limbs and torso
Social-Emotional Scale	Assesses child's mastery of functional emotional skills, such as self-regulation and interest in the word; communicating needs; engaging others and establishing relationships; using emotions in an interactive, purposeful manner; and using emotional signals or gestures to solve problems
Adaptive Behavior Scale	Assesses the child's daily functional skills

Previous research has shown that individual lower subscale scores within the cognitive, language, adaptive behavior, and social-emotional developmental domains on the Bayley®-III were predictive of an ASD diagnosis in children three years of age and younger (Juergensen, Smith, Mattingly, & Pitts, 2018). Due to current literature and ASD

diagnostic criteria, this outcome is not surprising with regards to language and social-emotional domains. A direct connection with the cognitive and adaptive behavior sections; however, may be less clear.

Adaptive behavior appears strongly associated with intelligence in neurotypical individuals; however, “cognitively able individuals with ASD fail to acquire adaptive skills at rates corresponding with gains” in intelligence (Pugliese et al., 2015, p. 467). Moreover, the “gap in daily living skills (i.e., adaptive skills) between children with ASD and typically developing children increased across early childhood” (Pugliese et al., 2015, p. 468) including poorer planning abilities and cognitive flexibility (Phung & Goldberg, 2019). Nonetheless, a review of the literature examining ASD and adaptive functioning conclude that individuals with ASD tend to present with adaptive functioning difficulties as compared to their same-age peers (Kanne et al., 2011; Pugliese et al., 2015; White et al., 2017).

Harrison and Oakland (2003, p. 5), define adaptive behavior skills as “practical, everyday skills needed to function and meet the demands of one's environment, including the skills necessary to effectively and independently take care of oneself and to interact with other people”. Within the subscale of the adaptive behavior skills portion of the Bayley®-III, there are ten subscales. The subscales are comprised of: communication, community use, functional pre-academics, home living, health and safety, leisure, self-care, self-direction, social, and motor (Bayley, 2006). These subscales “assess the daily functional skills of a child, measuring what the child actually does, in addition to what he or she may be able to do” (Bayley, 2006, p. 4). Scores are provided via parent report and are based on the frequency (e.g., is not able, never when needed, sometimes when

needed, always when needed) with which the child performs the behavior when it is needed and without help provided (Bayley, 2006). The following table lists the targeted adaptive behaviors from the Bayley®-III and then defines the skill.

Table 3

Adaptive Skills Subscales

Adaptive Skill Subscales	Subscales Explained (Bayley, 2006)
Communication (Com)	Assesses child’s speech, language, listening, and nonverbal communication skills (Bayley, 2006)
Community Use (CU)	Assesses child’s interest in activities outside the home and recognition of different facilities (Bayley, 2006).
Functional Pre-Academics (FA)	Assesses child’s abilities for letter recognition, counting, and drawing simple shapes (Bayley, 2006).
Home Living (HL)	Assesses child’s abilities in helping adults with household tasks and taking care of personal possessions (Bayley, 2006).
Health and Safety (HS)	Assesses child’s abilities in showing caution and keeping out of physical danger (Bayley, 2006).
Leisure (LS)	Assesses child’s abilities in playing, following rules, and engaging in recreation at home (Bayley, 2006).
Self-Care (SC)	Assesses child’s eating, toileting, and bathing skills (Bayley, 2006).
Self-Direction (SD)	Assesses child’s abilities in self-control, following directions, and making choices (Bayley, 2006).
Social (Soc)	Assesses child’s abilities in getting along with other people, such as, using manners, assisting others, and recognizing emotions (Bayley, 2006).
Motor (MO)	Assesses child’s locomotion and manipulation of the environment (Bayley, 2006).

The purpose of the study was to further examine the subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior section of the Bayley®-III to determine which of the ten subscales are predictive of ASD in young children (i.e., \leq three years-of-age). Improved knowledge of the predictive value of each subscale, or combination thereof, may contribute to an improved understanding of the role adaptive behavior plays in the diagnosis of ASD.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are as follows:

H₁: There will be a statistically significant association between autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age and their adaptive behavior domain standard deviation subscale score on the Bayley®-III.

H_{1a}: The communication subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1b}: The community use subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1c}: The functional pre-academics subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1d}: The home living subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1e}: The health and safety subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1f}: The leisure subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1g}: The self-care subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1h}: The self-direction subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1i}: The social subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1j}: The motor subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses are as follows:

H₁: There will not be a statistically significant association between autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age and their adaptive behavior domain standard subscale score on the Bayley®-III.

H_{1a}: The communication subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1b}: The community use subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1c}: The functional pre-academics subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1d}: The home living subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1e}: The health and safety subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1f}: The leisure subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1g}: The self-care subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1h}: The self-direction subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1i}: The social subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

H_{1j}: The motor subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

This study utilized a retrospective file review of children ($N = 273$) that participated in Kentucky's early intervention program, First Steps, between 1/1/2012 and 6/1/2019. The sample included children between the ages of 18-35 months and comprised 203 males and 70 females. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) recommend a sample size of at least 80 where $N > 50 + 8m$ (m is the number of predictor variables). Moreover, Babyak (2004) suggested a minimum sample size of 10-15 observations per predictor variable. Children with and without ASD diagnosis were represented. ASD diagnosis was determined by Intensive Level of Evaluation (ILE) as completed by the University of Louisville Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center (WCEC). For the purpose of this study, an ILE is equivalent to a multidisciplinary evaluation that typically involves—in Kentucky—a Speech-Language Pathologist, Psychologist, and Developmental Pediatrician. An Occupational Therapist may also be involved on a case-by-case basis. Approval for this study was granted by the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of the University of Louisville and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

The researchers were granted access to the *Technology-assisted Observation and Teaming Support* (TOTS) database, an electronic record used by the Kentucky Department of Public Health to track children as they are referred, evaluated, and—in some cases—receive services through the early intervention program. The researchers

used TOTS to query children referred to—and evaluated by—First Steps between the aforementioned date range. Specific interest centered on ASD diagnosis. Demographic information included each child’s age (in months) at evaluation and gender. Paper-based files were reviewed at the Kentuckiana Point of Entry office. The Bayley-III protocols were pulled from each file (for children diagnosed as having ASD) and randomly for children with developmental delay. The raw scores for the ten adaptive behavior subsections and the overall standard deviation scores for the overall adaptive behavior section were anonymously compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then exported to IBM SPSS for Windows, version 25 (IBM Corp., Armonk, N.Y., USA) for statistical analyses. Separate spreadsheets were created for children diagnosed with ASD and those that did not carry the diagnosis. The “cleaned” data was stored on a password protected computer behind a locked door; a master-code was never created. Gender was coded where 1 = male and 2 = female. ASD diagnosis was coded in the same manner where 1 = not diagnosed and 2 = diagnosed. No identifying information was recorded.

Data Analysis

A binary logistic regression was used to assess the subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior section of the Bayley®-III to determine which of the ten subscales (e.g., communication, community use, functional pre-academics, home living, health and safety, leisure, self-care, self-direction, social, and motor) are predictive of ASD in young children (i.e., \leq three years-of-age). A binary logistic regression analysis was used, as the criterion variable—ASD diagnosis—is dichotomous (Warner, 2013). Descriptive statistics, assumption testing, and the results of the logistic regression analyses are provided in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This study comprised a retrospective file review of 273 children in the state of Kentucky; 74.4% ($n = 203$) were male and 25.6% ($n = 70$) were female. The ages ranged from 18-35 months ($M = 24.04$, $SD = 5.30$). Forty-eight percent ($n = 131$) of the children were diagnosed with ASD; 52% ($n = 142$) did not have an ASD diagnosis.

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviations for the ten subscales of the adaptive behavior section of the Bayley-III (Bayley, 2006). Consistent with regression-based analyses, the ten subscales are referenced as predictor variables. ASD diagnosis served as the criterion variable.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics Adaptive Behavior Subscale Raw Scores ($N = 273$)

Subscale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Communication	25.0	10.0
Community Use	9.6	8.4
Functional Pre-Academics	6.6	7.9
Home Living	22.7	15.3
Health and Safety	23.6	11.5
Leisure	28.5	10.2
Self-Care	35.8	9.4
Self-Direction	29.1	11.0
Social	31.6	10.0
Motor	51.5	11.0

Logistic regressions are sensitive to multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when two or more predictor variables are highly correlated, meaning one variable can be

linearly predicted from the other variables with a relatively high level of accuracy. It is not uncommon to have issues with multicollinearity using subscales from the same measure. When multicollinearity is a concern, centering the variables may correct the issue.

“When data are not centered, the regression coefficients that are estimated and tested may be irrelevant and misleading. Centering, thoughtfully done, can diminish the almost inevitable multicollinearity problems in regression, thus increasing both the precision of parameter estimation and the power of statistical testing of those parameters (Kraemer & Blasey, 2004, p. 142).”

As previously suggested, the continuous variables were mean centered by subtracting the mean from the value for each variable. The dichotomous variable—ASD diagnosis—was also centered. This was completed by changing the values of 0 to -.5 and 1 to .5. Variables were centered as a strategy to prevent errors in statistical inference.

A correlation matrix (Pearson) was calculated to assess multicollinearity presence. Mukaka (2012) was used to interpret the size of the correlation coefficient. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) suggest that as long as correlation coefficients among independent variables are less than 0.90 multicollinearity is less likely to have occurred. The results are presented in Table 5

Table 5Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Matrix ($N = 273$)

	ADP	CO	CU	FA	HL	HS	LS	SC	SD	SOC
ADP										
CO	<i>.57</i>									
CU	<i>.47</i>	<i>.56</i>								
FA	<i>.36</i>	<i>.55</i>	<i>.49</i>							
HL	<i>.51</i>	<i>.59</i>	.72	<i>.49</i>						
HS	<i>.44</i>	<i>.62</i>	<i>.61</i>	<i>.40</i>	.78					
LS	<i>.55</i>	<i>.64</i>	<i>.49</i>	<i>.41</i>	<i>.64</i>	<i>.68</i>				
SC	<i>.42</i>	<i>.58</i>	<i>.49</i>	<i>.26</i>	<i>.63</i>	<i>.69</i>	.74			
SD	<i>.49</i>	<i>.54</i>	<i>.57</i>	<i>.29</i>	.70	.75	.81	.74		
SOC	<i>.59</i>	.76	<i>.57</i>	<i>.44</i>	.70	.70	.76	.70	.75	
MO	<i>.17</i>	<i>.40</i>	<i>.45</i>	<i>.23</i>	<i>.60</i>	<i>.68</i>	<i>.61</i>	<i>.64</i>	<i>.67</i>	<i>.62</i>

Moderate Positive (Negative) Correlation $|r = .50 - .70|$ in *italics* .High Positive (Negative) Correlation $|r > .70|$ in **bold**.

Logistic Regression Analyses

Individual logistic regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between the overall adaptive behavior scale and the associated subscale raw scores with the diagnosis of ASD. Logistic regression allows the use of outcome variables that are categorical and predictor variables that are continuous or categorical. Logistic regression analysis is the most appropriate statistical measure since the criterion variable is dichotomous. Table 6 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis examining the overall adaptive behavior scale as a predictor of ASD. The complete results of the logistic regression analyses for the individual subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior scale are presented in Table 7.

Table 6

Predicting ASD Diagnosis Based on Adaptive Behavior Scale Standard Dev.

Subscale	Odds Ratio	95% (CI)	% Variance	<i>p</i>
Adaptive Behavior	.12	.08 - .20	53%	<.001

Table 7

Predicting ASD Diagnosis Based on Adaptive Behavior Subscale Raw Scores

Subscale	Odds Ratio	95% (CI)	% Variance	<i>p</i>
Communication	.86	.83 - .90	34%	<.001
Community Use	.91	.88 - .95	15%	<.001
Pre-Academics	.93	.89 - .97	8%	<.001
Home Living	.96	.94 - .98	11%	<.001
Health/Safety	.95	.93 - .98	9%	<.001
Leisure	.92	.89 - .95	18%	<.001
Self-Care	.93	.90 - .96	13%	<.001
Self-Direction	.95	.92 - .97	10%	<.001
Social	.88	.85 - .91	31%	<.001
Motor	.98	.96 - 1.01	1%	.14

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Scale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1—entered the *adaptive behavior scale* standard deviation scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .12, 95% CI = .08 - .20, $p < .001$) and explained 53% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who receive lower standard deviation scores on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher standard deviation scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Communication Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1a—entered the adaptive behavior *communication* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically

significant (odds ratio = .86, 95% CI = .83 - .90, $p < .001$) and explained 34% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the communication subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher communication subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Community Use Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1b—entered the adaptive behavior *community use* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .91, 95% CI = .88 - .95, $p < .001$) and explained 15% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the community use subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher community use subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Pre-Academics Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1c—entered the adaptive behavior *functional pre-academics* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .93, 95% CI = .89 - .97, $p < .001$) and explained 8% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the functional pre-academics subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher functional pre-academics subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Home Living Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1d—entered the adaptive behavior *home living* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .96, 95% CI = .94 - .98, $p < .001$) and explained 11% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the home living subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher home living subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Health and Safety Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1e—entered the adaptive behavior *health and safety* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .95, 95% CI = .93 - .98, $p < .001$) and explained 9% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the health and safety subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher health and safety subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Leisure Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1f—entered the adaptive behavior *leisure* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .92, 95% CI = .89 - .95, $p < .001$) and explained 18% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the leisure subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher leisure subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Self-Care Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1g—entered the adaptive behavior *Self-Care* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .93, 95% CI = .90 - .96, $p < .001$) and explained 13% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the self-care subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher self-care subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Self-Direction Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1h—entered the adaptive behavior *self-direction* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .95, 95% CI = .92 - .97, $p < .001$) and explained 10% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the self-direction subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher self-direction subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Social Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1i—entered the adaptive behavior *social* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were statistically significant (odds ratio = .88, 95% CI = .85 - .91, $p < .001$) and explained 31% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. The results suggest that children who scored lower (raw scores) on the social subscale on the Bayley®-III adaptive behavior scale are more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis than children with higher social subscale raw scores.

Bayley®-III Adaptive Behavior Motor Subscale and ASD Diagnosis

Logistic regression—step 1j—entered the adaptive behavior *motor* subscale raw scores as a predictor of ASD diagnosis. The results were not statistically significant (odds ratio = .98, 95% CI = .96 – 1.01, $p = .14$). Although statistical significance was not achieved, the model explained 1% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance of ASD diagnosis. Motor subscale raw scores do not seem to vary substantially across ASD diagnostic categories. Per this sample, children with an ASD diagnosis did not appear to have significantly lower motor subscale raw scores than their non-ASD peers.

Summary

The intent of this study sought to examine the subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior section of the Bayley®-III to determine which of the ten subscales are predictive of ASD in young children (i.e., \leq three years-of-age). The results found that lower standard deviation scores on the adaptive behavior scale on the Bayley®-III was a statistically significant predictor of ASD in young children. Moreover, lower raw scores on the communication, community use, functional pre-academics, home living, health and safety, leisure, self-care, self-direction, and social subscales of the adaptive behavior scale of the Bayley®-III were found to be statistically significant predictors of ASD in young children. The communication and social subscales were found to contribute the greatest amount of variance in predicting ASD at 34% and 31% respectively. The tested null hypotheses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Summary of Tested Null Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	Overall Model/R^2	Result
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H₁	There will not be a statistically significant association between autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age and their adaptive behavior domain standard subscale score on the Bayley®-III.	2.6%	Reject
H_{1a}	The communication subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	4.1%	Reject
H_{1b}	The community use subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	4.5%	Reject
H_{1c}	The functional pre-academics subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	.1%	Reject
H_{1d}	The home living subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	0.8%	Reject
H_{1e}	The health and safety subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	.5%	Reject
H_{1f}	The leisure subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	8.2%	Reject
H_{1g}	The self-care subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	2.6%	Reject

H_{1h}	The self-direction subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	0.3%	Reject
H_{1i}	The social subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	1%	Reject
H_{1j}	The motor subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III will not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age.	.1%	Failed to Reject

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that one in 59 children between the ages of three and four years are diagnosed with ASD crossing all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (Baio et al., 2018). However, most children are not diagnosed until after the age of four years (Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network Surveillance Year Principal, Centers for Disease, & Prevention, 2014). Deficits associated with ASD include impaired social communication skills as well as the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These deficits usually present themselves in early childhood and lead to impairments in functioning across various settings (Yates & Le Couteur, 2016). Given that these deficits are present in early childhood, it's imperative to emphasize the importance of early intervention for these individuals. Evidence suggests that the earlier a child receives intervention, the greater the likelihood of an improved developmental trajectory (Koegel et al., 2014). Early intervention has also been associated with better communicative, academic and behavioral outcomes at school-age, if implemented before the age of three (Owens, 2017). Thus, an early diagnosis is vital in order to receive the appropriate early intervention services (Koegel et al., 2014). The purpose of this study was to further examine the subscales that comprise the adaptive behavior section of the Bayley-III to determine which of the subscales are predictive of ASD in young children (i.e., \leq three

years-of-age) in hopes to contribute to the specificity of autism characteristics in early childhood as it relates to adaptive behavior.

The current study examined individual logistic regression analyses which determined that lower standard deviation scores on the adaptive behavior scale on the Bayley®-III was a statistically significant predictor of ASD in young children. Moreover, lower raw scores on the communication, community use, functional pre-academics, home living, health and safety, leisure, self-care, self-direction and social subscales were found to be statistically significant predictors of ASD in young children. The social and communication individual subscale scores contributed the greatest amount of variance when predicting the diagnosis of ASD. As these two deficits are specified within the current diagnostic criteria and there is a vast amount of literature discussing these deficits among the ASD population; these results come as no surprise.

Social and communicative deficits have been diagnostic hallmarks since the first clinical accounts of ASD were recorded (Volkmar & Reichow, 2013). The first clinical accounts were recorded by Dr. Leo Kanner (1992) wherein he referenced difficulties with socialization among the observed group of children (Volkmar & Reichow, 2013). Presently, one of the first symptoms that is commonly found in children with ASD is their lack of social interaction (Miskam et al., 2014). Studies examining the relationship between communication skills and corresponding levels of adaptive behavior in individuals with ASD are limited (Kjellmer, Hedvall, Fernell, Gillberg, & Norrelgen, 2012). However, Kjellmer et al. (2012) concluded that non-verbal communication skills may be related to severity of autism symptoms as well as adaptive functioning. Further,

Owens (2017), lists the common autism symptoms related to social-communication.

These include:

“Abnormal social interactions and difficulty adjusting to different social situations; abnormal reaction to and difficulty integrating sensory information such as verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication; difficulty with the give-and-take of conversation; and poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication, including poor eye contact and body language, echolalia or repetition of others’ speech, and repetition of certain expressions” (Owens, 2017, p. 32).

The lack of communication skills displayed by children with autism are the greatest cause of concern for parents (Owens, 2017). As limited communication skills are associated with ASD, these individuals are more likely to display challenging behaviors and/or aggression as this may be their only means of communication, indirectly resulting in increased parental psychological distress (Salomone, The C. S. T. Italy Team, Settanni, Ferrara, & Salandin, 2019). One study examined how parents modified the environment in order to meet the needs of their child with ASD who demonstrated challenging behaviors (Elizabeth, Francesca, Kris, Hannah, & Ilse, 2017). The study revealed that parents limited social activities and outings with the child (i.e., shopping, visiting restaurants) (Elizabeth et al., 2017). Further, parents avoided taking their child to new and different environments, limiting their exposure into the community (Elizabeth et al., 2017).

The community-use and home-living subscales of the Bayley-III measure a child’s ability to participate in activities and interests throughout the community as well

as completing household tasks and taking care of personal possessions. (Bayley, 2006). According to parent interviews, factors contributing to decreased community and home participation include, but are not limited to, displaying tantrums in community settings as well as demonstrating difficulty with following directions (LaVesser & Berg, 2011).

One study examined participation patterns in preschool children with ASD, specifically within the domains of community mobility and domestic chores (LaVesser & Berg, 2011). The results indicated that children with ASD participate in significantly fewer activities in all domains compared to typically developing children (LaVesser & Berg, 2011). Further, the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors (RRBs) have been shown to set these individuals apart resulting in increased risk for reduced participation in everyday activities (LaVesser & Berg, 2011). Behaviors included in the category of RRBs are:

“repetitive motor mannerisms (i.e. hand flapping); persistent occupation with parts of objects (i.e. spinning wheels on toy car); encompassing preoccupations/restricted patterns of interest (i.e. an intense interest in trains); and inflexible adherence to nonfunctional routines/rituals (i.e. insisting that items are arranged on the dinner table in a precise way)” (Richler, Bishop, Kleinke, & Lord, 2007, pp. 73-74).

Liss et al. (2001) studied individuals with ASD as they completed the Wisconsin Card Sorting Task (WCST) and found these individuals participating in perseverative behaviors throughout the task, affecting their accuracy and completion. Whereas this task was completed for an experimental purpose, it can emphasize the role repetitive and

perseverative behaviors play on the accuracy and completion of everyday tasks such as domestic chores and self-care routines (South, Ozonoff, & McMahon, 2007)

Moreover, the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors most clearly related to deficits in executive function (Griffith, Pennington, Wehner, & Rogers, 1999). In a study conducted by Pennington and Ozonoff (1996), individuals with autism completed executive functioning tasks with a higher number of perseverative errors as well as exhibited rigid and inflexible problem-solving strategies.

Executive functioning (EF) closely pertains to the cognitive domains of attention, reasoning and problem-solving (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996). Particularly, “set-shifting and set-maintenance, interference control, inhibition, integration across space and time, planning, and working memory” are that of a few executive functions (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996, p. 55). Liss et al. (2001) further included the processes of “forming abstract concepts, having a flexible sequenced plan of action, focusing and sustaining attention and mental effort, rapidly retrieving relevant information, being able to self-monitor and self-correct as a task is performed, and being able to inhibit impulsive responses” as EF components (p. 261). An individual’s level of executive functioning has been shown to correlate with academic skills (Liss et al., 2001). Wenz-Gross, Yoo, Upshur, and Gambino (2018) affirms that EF comprises of “cognitive processes thought to support academic achievement through top down control of attention and behavior” (p. 2). In general, learning is characterized by the executive functioning tasks of “seeing relationships between pieces of information, identifying central patterns or themes, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, and deriving meaning” (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996, p. 70). As it relates to the present study, the functional pre-academic

domain within the Bayley-III assesses pre-academic skills such as letter recognition, counting and drawing simple shapes (Bayley, 2006). The results of this study can be explained by the theory of executive dysfunction, as it is known that individuals with ASD display difficulties with EF as it pertains to academic skills (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996). Conceptual understanding of the main idea or big picture of a topic is often lacking among this group of individuals (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996). Lopez, Lincoln, Ozonoff, and Lai (2005), state that individuals with ASD exhibit difficulties to “execute mental control necessary for maintaining a problem-solving strategy to obtain a future goal” as well as deficits in cognitive flexibility and planning (p. 445).

The self-care and health and safety domains encompass the skills used in order to complete functional tasks of daily living in addition to the ability to complete those tasks safely and avoid physical dangers (Bayley, 2006). Cavkaytar and Pollard (2009) report that many individuals with autism require multiple repetitions of instructions and demonstrate deficits in independently completing daily living skills. One study explored possible reasons for these deficits and included the following; lack of motivation, habits/performance patterns, communication abilities, sensory processing difficulties and variability in performance (Kern, Wakeford, & Aldridge, 2007). Individuals with autism may not find the value in the self-care task itself nor its outcome and are unlikely to become motivated to finish the task merely to “please an adult or conform to social standards” (Kern et al., 2007, p. 44). With these individuals demonstrating perseverative and stereotyped behaviors, this population tends to stick to strict rituals and routines (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Therefore, incorporating new routines to complete tasks of daily living may be difficult to an individual with autism (Kern et al.,

2007). Additionally, difficulty understanding the task at hand and the inability for the child to express his/her own needs can affect the completion and/or accuracy of said task (Kern et al., 2007).

Additionally, it is common for individuals with autism to demonstrate difficulties regarding sensory processing (Rogers, Hepburn, & Wehner, 2003). Sensory difficulties may interfere in with self-care tasks in a number of ways, one of which being unable to teach the child the self-care task (Kern et al., 2007). Hand-over-hand assistance will likely be resisted by the child with sensory processing deficits (Kern et al., 2007). Lastly, a variability in performance demonstrated by the child and the inconsistencies of adult responses can influence both “task performance and trajectories of progress” in the realm of completing tasks of daily living (Kern et al., 2007, p. 44).

The self-direction and leisure subscales pertain to skills such as self-control, following directions and rules, making choices, playing, and participating in recreational activities within the home (Bayley, 2006). A study conducted by Bachevalier and Loveland (2006) found that individuals with ASD demonstrated difficulties with self-regulation of social emotional behavior. Self-regulation is defined in the aforementioned study as “the ability to select and initiate complex behaviors in response to the specific condition of the social environment” (Bachevalier & Loveland, 2006, p. 98). The ability to self-regulate depends greatly on making inferences about the people and the environment surrounding one’s self (Bachevalier & Loveland, 2006). With these individuals demonstrating deficits in social communication and social-emotional behavior, self-regulation then becomes difficult (Bachevalier & Loveland, 2006; Juergensen et al., 2018). The results of an additional study concluded that children with

autism had significant deficits in the “stability of self-regulation and affective expression” as compared to that in individuals with Down syndrome (Bieberich & Morgan, 2004, p. 439). Further, with measures assessing attention, flexibility, engagement and goal-directedness during play activities, individuals with ASD demonstrated greater deficits within these realms relative to the group of individuals with Down syndrome (Bieberich & Morgan, 2004). More specifically, the ASD group exhibited difficulties in the ability to sustain attention and concentration to facilitate appropriate play activity (Bieberich & Morgan, 2004).

When examining the participation patterns in preschool-aged children with autism, parent interviews revealed children with ASD participate in fewer preschool activities of vigorous leisure (LaVesser & Berg, 2011). Specific factors affecting decreased participation in leisure include, but are not limited to, the child’s inability to follow directions as well as the child’s disinterest in the leisure activity (LaVesser & Berg, 2011).

The motor component assesses a child’s locomotive abilities as well as his/her ability to manipulate his/her environment (Bayley, 2006). Contrarily, the motor subscale raw score on the Bayley®-III did not significantly contribute to the variance in predicting autism spectrum disorder diagnosis in children \leq three years-of-age. Presently, the literature is mixed on whether or not motor deficits are a diagnostic characteristic of ASD. Within various studies examining motor coordination, arm movements, gait, and postural stability deficits, individuals with ASD were found to have significant deficits among these motor domains (Fournier, Hass, Naik, Lodha, & Cauraugh, 2010). Likewise, difficulties with postural control, fine and gross motor coordination and gait

abnormalities have been shown to co-occur with an ASD diagnosis (Mody et al., 2017). However, in contrast to the aforementioned literature, Ming, Brimacombe, and Wagner (2007) found no significant association between a diagnosis of ASD and motor deficits. Furthermore, within this study, only 14 children (9%) among the sample group had a history of a gross motor delay and all 14 of these children achieved gross motor milestones by the enrollment of the study (Ming et al., 2007). Additionally, Hanaie et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between abnormal Corpus Callosum (CC) connectivity and its effect on socio-communicative and motor deficits in children with ASD. This study displayed abnormal CC connectivity relative to socio-communicative deficits but not as it related to motor deficits in children with ASD (Hanaie et al., 2014). Previously, a study was conducted examining a predictive relationship between the five main developmental domains within the Bayley-III assessment and a diagnosis of ASD (Juergensen et al., 2018). The results indicated that the motor standard deviation subscale were not significant as an individual predictor of an ASD diagnosis, supportive of the present study's findings (Juergensen et al., 2018).

Several factors within this study pose possible limitations. The adaptive behavior portion of the Bayley-III is assessed based on a questionnaire that is to be filled out by the child's parent, guardian and/or clinician. This could result in biased data and understanding of the participants. In this case, self-reporting bias may be present (Althubaiti, 2016). Self-reporting is a common approach utilized by researchers to obtain data (Althubaiti, 2016). Examples of self-reporting include questionnaires, surveys or interviews (Althubaiti, 2016). Two different types of bias can result from self-reporting—social desirability bias and recall bias (Althubaiti, 2016). When researchers use self-

reporting as a means of data collection, the questions asked may concern private or sensitive topics, in this case, questions were asked regarding the child of the participants development (Althubaiti, 2016). Thus, answers to these questions can be “affected by an external bias caused by social desirability or approval” (Althubaiti, 2016, p. 212).

Further, self-reporting measures may require participants to recall past events (Althubaiti, 2016). Participants may provide errors in this response and result in a recall error (Althubaiti, 2016).

Additionally, the evaluation and diagnostic processes for early intervention vary by state. This study obtained files and data from Kentucky’s early intervention program—First Steps (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2017). Other states may have different protocols and procedures in place when assessing children three years of age and younger for autism. There are various tools available to early interventionists for the assessment of children three years of age and younger. This study utilized results from the Bayley-III due to availability. While this is a popular tool utilized by early interventionists, opportunities for future research can include results from other standardized assessments.

Currently, the literature regarding motor deficits within this population is varied and limited. Future research among this realm will allow for increased specificity in motor characteristics in young children with ASD. As previously mentioned, future research can incorporate other popular assessment tools to examine the different domains and determine if they are predictive of an autism diagnosis. This can allow for a more descriptive analysis of early diagnostic characteristics of autism in young children.

The intent of this study was primarily to contribute to the specificity of early diagnostic characteristics in young children with ASD. More specifically, the study's focus was on the diagnostic characteristics relative to that of adaptive behavior skills. The study encompassed children three years of age and younger. The findings were consistent with the current body of literature on ASD with respect to deficits in social, communication, functional pre-academics, leisure, self-care, self-direction, health & safety, home-living, and community use (Bachevalier & Loveland, 2006; Cavkaytar & Pollard, 2009; Juergensen et al., 2018; Kern et al., 2007; LaVesser & Berg, 2011; Liss et al., 2001; Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996; Volkmar & Reichow, 2013)

It is the researchers' belief that with increased knowledge of ASD characteristics in young children there will be an increase in a definitive ASD diagnosis at an earlier age. Concurrently, this will allow for these individuals and their families to benefit from early intervention services which have been shown to greatly improve the individual's developmental trajectory. It is our hope that the limited knowledge base on early ASD diagnosis in young children has been increased and the gap in the available literature narrowed.

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APPENDIX: ABBREVIATIONS

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AUC	Area Under the Curve
Bayley-III	Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development, 3 rd Edition
CC	Corpus Callosum
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CI	Confidence Interval
COM	Communication
CU	Community Use
DSM-III	Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3 rd Edition
DSM-IV	Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4 th Edition
DSM-V	Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5 th Edition
EF	Executive Function
FA	Functional Pre-Academics
HL	Home Living
HS	Health and Safety
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ILE	Intensive Level of Evaluation
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LS	Leisure

MO	Motor
PDD	Pervasive Developmental Disorder
PDD-NOS	Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified
RRB	Restrictive and Repetitive Behaviors
SC	Self-Care
SD	Self-Direction
SOC	Social
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TOTS	Technology - assisted Observation and Teaming Support
WCEC	Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center
WCST	Wisconsin Card Sorting Task

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