

The negotiation of footing and participation structure in a social group of teens with and without autism spectrum disorder

*Kristen Bottema-Beutel**

University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco State University, CA, USA

Abstract

This study combines participant observation and discourse analytic methodologies to determine how an adolescent girl with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), referred to here as Sheila, negotiates shifts in footing and participation structure within a small group intervention. The intervention also includes two typically developing, adolescent peers. Video recordings of 11 hours of group session were transcribed and analyzed. Analysis shows that Sheila uses both verbal repetition and physical imitation to structure the mode in which she participates in social group activities. Sheila's repetition serves to shift footing into or out of alignment with her peers depending on the context of the interaction. Through bodily imitation, Sheila reframes a game of charades into a joint performance, and is corroborated by her typical peers and the adult facilitator in doing so as they ratify her shaping of a new game.

KEYWORDS: AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER; PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS; ADOLESCENTS;
PEER INTERACTION

1 Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental syndrome that is characterized by differences in social interaction, communication, and behavior (American Psychiatric Association 2000). The disorder can manifest in symp-

* Correspondence address: Email: kbottema@berkeley.edu

toms such as narrow and perseverative interests, difficulty with conversational pragmatics, social isolation, repetitive motor movements, and what is considered maladaptive behavior; e.g. aggression toward self and others, or being disruptive in school or work contexts in ways not usually expressed in typical individuals. These impairments vary in severity from mild to profound, and can be accompanied by a range of intellectual functioning. Some individuals with ASD are considered intellectually gifted and are highly verbal, while others experience profound cognitive deficits and are unable to speak.

Since autism was defined in the literature in the early 1940s (Asperger 1944; Kanner 1943), researchers have addressed the syndrome primarily through a deficit-oriented clinical model. As such, researchers have defined ASD according to how individuals deviate from the norm, and treatment programs usually target these deviations in order to replace them with 'normal' behavior (McConnell 2002). While this line of investigation has resulted in significant increases in our understanding of the differences that are characteristic of ASD (see Baron-Cohen *et al.* 1985; Happe and Frith 2006; Ozonoff *et al.* 1994 for descriptions of the dominant theoretical orientations) it has shed little light on the particular interactive features of autistic communication and social practices that arise in every-day social activities. More recently, researchers have employed discourse analytic approaches to better understand how the communicative and socialization profiles of those diagnosed with ASD emerge in discursive contexts (Dobbinson *et al.* 1998; Fasulo and Fiore 2007; Local and Wootton 2005; Muskett *et al.* 2010; Ochs 2002; Ochs and Solomon 2010; Ochs *et al.* 2004; Solomon 2004; Sterponi 2004; Sterponi and Fasulo 2010; Stiegler 2007; Stribling *et al.* 2008; Wootton 1999). These approaches locate differences in social and communicative interaction at the interface between interaction partners rather than exclusively within the individual carrying a diagnosis. Likewise, ASD characteristics are not thought to be reducible to internal deficits that can be described apart from the context in which they occur, but rather as emergent from the local interaction. These studies have also tended to describe what individuals with autism can do as opposed to what they cannot do (Ochs and Solomon 2004).

2 Supporting peer interaction in ASD

Without support, the differences that characterize ASD can lead to decreased opportunities for entering into a legitimate peer culture (Wolfberg 1999/2009). The impoverished social lives of individuals with ASD become especially pronounced in the adolescent years, when social interactions become more complex, and forms of interaction that are accepted by peers become more proscribed (Shea and Mesibov 2005). Children and adolescents with ASD

are often unable to form meaningful friendships, leaving few opportunities to experience peer interactions, develop social and communicative competence, and participate in social activities. Research has shown that individuals with ASD do desire to have friends and interact with others, but do not feel successful in doing so (Bauminger and Kasari 2000). A lack of access to peer culture might play a significant role in the divergence of social behavior found in this population so that social differences attributed to 'within child' factors are compounded by exclusion from social situations with peers (Jordan 2003; Muskett *et al.* 2010).

To date, there are many intervention programs that attempt to mitigate social and communicative difficulty by training normative behavior in children with ASD, with varying levels of success (McConnell 2005). For example, applied behavior analysis (ABA) procedures are often used to increase the frequency of pro-social behavior, such as greeting others when entering a room, by reinforcing and shaping its occurrence (Hwang and Hughes 2000). A criticism of these types of programs is that trained behaviors are decontextualized, carry little social meaning, and tend not to be generalized to contexts other than where the behavior was taught. Discourse analysis has been particularly informative in looking critically at intervention contexts, and determining how practitioner strategies help or hinder social-communicative interaction (Fasulo and Fiore, 2007; Ochs *et al.* 2005; Sterponi 2004). Sterponi (2004) suggests that training individuals with autism to behave in a particular manner may not be the most important goal for practitioners. She instead encourages professionals and researchers to consider the social and communicative context within which individuals with autism participate, and how these contexts can be arranged to maximize interaction within an intervention program. The intervention considered here takes just such a stance, and focuses on supporting interactions between adolescents with autism and their peers in social contexts without promoting normative behavior that has little or no meaning to those involved.

There is evidence that pairing children with ASD and their typically developing peers in authentic social experiences increases social and social interaction possibilities, and promotes membership in a society of peers (Wolfberg 1999/2009). For this intervention, the Integrated Play Groups model developed primarily for young children by Wolfberg (Wolfberg and Schuler 1993), has been adapted to support adolescents aged 12-18 years (Bottema 2009). In this program, which is the source of data for this project, teens are grouped in a 1:1 or higher ratio of typical peers to teens on the autism spectrum. Meetings take place in a supportive and natural environment where teens are likely to already spend their time, such as a community center, after school program, or classroom. During group meetings, participants engage in activities that

they themselves have chosen and designed. The social groups described in this study are intended to respect differences manifested in those diagnosed with ASD rather than to fundamentally change who they are, while recognizing that the ability to engage with others is a vital component of social life. The following four goals are pursued in social group sessions: 1. establish a sense of autonomy in teens with ASD in constructing and maintaining their own social lives by engaging in activities that are mutually agreed upon; 2. foster motivation for teens with ASD and typical teens to engage in socialization together; 3. provide entryway for teens with ASD into a peer culture; 4. educate typical teens about ASD through direct experience.

The principle of guided participation (Rogoff 1990; Wolfberg 1999/2009) is central to social group interactions, in that group members are actively participating in culturally valued activities with the guidance and support of partners who vary in skill and status. Group meetings are supported by a facilitator who gathers supplies, poses suggestions for activities, and encourages interaction between group members. The group is structured so that there are several layers of apprenticeship occurring; the typically developing peers are being subtly guided by the facilitator to accept the individuals diagnosed with ASD as equals within their peer group, while the participants with ASD are in turn guided by their typically developing peers into culturally sanctioned peer activities and modes of interaction. There is very little direct instruction or overt focus on desirable skills; the facilitator instead ratifies most behavior as acceptable and meaningful rather than targeting it as a deficit in need of remediation (this excludes any case where there is a danger of physical harm). Over the course of several sessions, typical peer participants are better able to understand the nuanced and at times atypical communication strategies employed by participants with ASD, and begin to ratify their interactive moves themselves (Bottema 2009). In the present study, I am acting as one of two facilitators for this social group.

3 Navigating the social world: Footing, stance, and participation frameworks

The field of discourse analysis has offered significant contributions to the study of how social actors navigate and construct the social world in everyday interactions (Schegloff 1991). Using a discourse analytic framework, this study will attempt to explore the following research questions: 1. How does an adolescent girl with ASD shift 'footing', or alignment with others, in her talk and non-verbal behavior within the social group context; and 2. how does she construct her own and other group member's modes of participation and the activity at hand? As pointed out by Ochs and her colleagues (Ochs *et al.* 2004), ASD is a disorder that is at once interpersonal and socio-cultural, as person to

person interactions are always situated within broader socio-cultural norms and expectations. Therefore, this analysis will answer these questions with a look to both interpersonal processes and socio-cultural expectations that are brought to bear on group interactions.

Social interaction requires a nuanced application of social knowledge in interpersonal contexts, or what might be called a 'feel for the game' (Ochs *et al.* 2005). These interactional features are developed and negotiated through meaningful, situated experience with others (Lave and Wenger 1991). Participants track and interpret the actions of others; note others' stances toward activities and situations; link actions and stances to expectations; contextualize actions, stances, and participants through time within the general activity; and coordinate several activities occurring at one time. Participants must also know how to project actions and stances to others in culturally understood ways, and when and how to adjust conventional ways of participating to be more attuned with present circumstances (Ochs 2002). Goffman (1981) describes a similar concept that he refers to as 'footing', defined as the alignment, stance, posture, or projected self in interaction. Changes in footing imply the shifting of alignment between speakers and hearers, and are expressed in the ways that interlocutors manage the production and reception of utterances. These changes can involve varying degrees of subtlety or marking in interaction, and are often identifiable by changes in pitch, rhythm, stress or tonal quality.

Prior discourse analytic research has shown that what might be described as autistic communication that expresses disengagement with others is found on further analysis to be aligned with the local context (Local and Wootton 1995; Sterponi and Fasulo 2010; Stribling *et al.* 2009; Wootton 1999). This suggests that individuals with ASD do have some level of motivation to engage with others, as well as some degree of orientation toward interaction partners. I hypothesize that changes in footing will be marked by the social group participant with ASD, although in ways that may stand in contrast to more typical ways of marking relationships between speakers. As such, when interlocutors are supported in perceiving and ratifying atypical changes in footing as they are in the social group context studied here, it is more likely that mutual alignment will occur. The concept of footing seems to rely on each interaction partner having some level of awareness of 'where they stand' in relation to others. Since an absence of this awareness is thought to be exemplary of autism, it will be of particular interest to determine how this plays out in the social group context.

In order to navigate socio-cultural dimensions of interaction, an individual must share a common stock of cultural knowledge with their interlocutors (Ochs 2002). This includes an experiential understanding of the society in which they live; the categories and rules of activities, the explicit and inferred

expectations of these activities, strategies of participating that are stable and those that arise more spontaneously and fluidly, and the conventional parameters that co-exist with flexible interpretations of those parameters. 'Participation framework' is a term used to describe participants' relationship to the larger activity itself (Goffman 1981). Goffman recognized that participants are not simply related to one another as speakers and hearers, but have shifting relationships to entire groups of speakers and hearers that may be present or absent, as well as the activity at hand and the socio-cultural arrangements that are bound up in it. Current conceptualizations emphasize how participation frameworks are inherently tied to the social actions described above, and the extent to which participation frameworks are emergent from temporally unfolding interactions. According to Rae (2001: 255) 'participants' actions make for unfolding contexts within which different actions become relevant ... *frame-work* [is] an activity; the design of conduct in the light of, or to address or change, the relevancies and opportunities of the moment' (emphasis mine). Courses of action within a social situation are not pre-determined or linear; any interactive move opens up multiple possibilities and new relevancies, and it is up to each participant to orient to and act upon how these are taken up through time (Rae 2001; Sterponi and Fasulo 2010).

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' as a way of looking at situated participation in cultural activities, where participants learn cultural ways of being. Central to this view is that there is no activity that is not situated. Learners are not construed as outside observers that receive knowledge about the world from experts, but are instead viewed as individuals involved in practices where agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute one another. Legitimate peripheral participation describes engagement in social practice that entails socio-cultural learning and ultimately leads to full participation. Like Goffman, Lave and Wenger stress that participation status is constantly in flux within a given interaction. Conversely, irrelevant or disengaged participation can be seen as on an opposite pole to peripheral participation, where learning and involvement are not enabled.

Individuals with ASD are thought to prefer modes of participation that are rule based and stable in time, making the dynamic aspects of participation frameworks difficult to negotiate (Ochs *et al.* 2004). However, other research suggests that with support, individuals with ASD can engage in flexible and dynamic construction of group participation frameworks as well as the group activity to accommodate each other's diverse modes of preferred participation (Wolfberg 1999/2009). I hypothesize that a complex negotiation of participation frameworks will also occur in the social group interactions in this study. The exact nature of how this construction will take place will likely involve

some form of guided participation (Rogoff 1990) as varying degrees and forms of participation are legitimated by both the adult facilitator and adolescent participants.

4 Methods

4.1 Data collection and analysis

This study employs an ethnographic discourse methodology that combines participant observation with video recorded data in naturalistic environments (Ochs and Jacoby 1997; Ochs *et al.* 1994, 1997; Solomon 2004). Collected data includes 11 hours of video recordings of social group interactions. Social group meetings took place once per week during the summer of 2009 at a local resource center that provides services and information to families of children with disabilities. The researcher organized and scheduled group meetings through resource center contacts. All sessions were recorded using a Sony handheld camera mounted on a tripod and placed strategically in a corner of the room. Despite best efforts, because the room was large and the participants moved throughout the space, there are some segments where all of the participants remain out of frame of the video. In an effort not to draw more attention to the camera than was necessary, it was only moved at times when it would not disrupt the ongoing activity. During these segments, audio data was still recorded. After an initial viewing of video data, segments of interest were fully transcribed and analyzed using transcription conventions described by Atkinson and Heritage (1984). The techniques of conversation analysis described by Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) were used to uncover patterns in the discourse of social group participants. While individuals with autism may navigate the social world in atypical ways, they do employ their own 'logic of practice' that is evident in the structural regularities of discourse (Ochs *et al.* 2004); these regularities are what I will attempt to uncover here.

4.2 Participants

A total of three adolescents were involved in the study; Jill [All names are pseudonyms], an 11-year-old typically developing girl of Filipino descent; Fran, a 13-year-old typically developing girl of Irish-American decent, and Sheila, a 12-year-old girl of Filipino decent who is moderately affected by autism. Sheila has attended a special day class for children with disabilities for the past several years, and was planning to transition to middle school at the time this data was collected. Sheila exhibits echolalia, which is a common feature of autistic speech defined as the repetition of the speech of others heard in prior interactions (Schuler 1979). Echolalia can either occur immediately following the original utterance, or can appear after a significant delay (days

to years after hearing the original utterance). Both immediate and delayed echolalia can range from exact copies of speech to partially changed or 'mitigated' echoes. Much of Sheila's echolalic speech appears communicative, but there are many occasions when it appears to serve a self-regulatory function that is not directed toward interaction with others. Since echolalia is one of the tools at Sheila's disposal to interact with others, its appearance is central to the analysis. Two facilitators also participated in this study, one of whom is also the researcher (Kristen) and acted as primary facilitator, and another who attended two of the seven sessions and is referred to as Kathy. Both facilitators have several years of experience working with children on the autism spectrum in school and community contexts.

5 Findings and discussion

Each of the excerpts that are analyzed in this paper involve the game of charades, which was played by the group on three different occasions throughout the summer. Charades is a game common to American adolescent recreational life, and usually includes two or more teams of people who compete in guessing words or phrases that are pantomimed by their teammates without the use of spoken words. In this study, the participants engaged in a variant of the game where ordinary words were used; adults traditionally play the game by guessing books, movies, TV programs or names of famous people. These segments were chosen because they illustrate dynamic shifts in both footing and participation frameworks as the game was constructed over the course of several group meetings. The concept of footing will be examined first.

5.1 Footing and repetition

The phenomenon of echolalia is a paradoxical one in terms of its implications for alignment between speakers. For speakers with limited language, repetition can be an effective strategy for expressing alignment or agreement in conversation (Oelschlager and Damico 1998). On the one hand, a speaker must be oriented toward others' speech in order to go about repeating it in the first place. On the other hand, although echolalia can be employed for intentional communication, it does not always appear to be communicative when used by individuals with ASD. As such, it can serve to create interactional distance between a speaker and hearer if the utterance has no clear relationship to the immediate context (Schuler 1979; Wootton 1999). In the following extract, recorded as the group is setting up the room to play a game of charades, Sheila engages in what appears to be mitigated echolalia as she echoes some components of prior speech while transforming others.

Extract 1

- 1 Kristen: Wouldn't want anyone to peek.
- 2 Kathy: No peekin
- 3 Sheila: No shakin (.) shakin whats shakin? what(.) what's
(unclear murmuring)

Sheila is oriented toward what is being said in the room, as she picks up on and reformulates Kathy's comment that there should be 'no peekin' into 'no shakin' using pitch and prosody similar to that of Kathy's. Repetition of the tonal qualities of words has been shown to be characteristic of echolalia that is less likely to serve a discernible communicative purpose (Local and Wootton 1995). Sheila repeats the word without apparent reference to or orientation toward anyone in particular as she wanders through the room, further indicating the non-communicative intentions of her words. The third repetition appears within the phrase 'what's shakin', a colloquial American phrase used to ask others what they're doing. This may be an instance of delayed echolalia, as Sheila is likely to have heard this phrase elsewhere. Although 'what's shakin' could have served a functional purpose in this context, Sheila's lack of eye contact with anyone in particular and idiosyncratic tone produces the effect of shifting the footing out of alignment, evident by the fact that her comments are not taken up by any of the others in the room.

In other instances, Sheila shifts footing so that there is a greater degree of alignment with her interaction partners, by employing the same practice of repetition albeit in the form of bodily actions rather than words. In the following extracts, Jill and Fran are performing words when Sheila stands up and begins to imitate their actions. Sheila laughs enthusiastically while she imitates, and her conduct is met with laughter from the group. In this instance, Sheila's repetition of Jill and Fran's actions creates a moment of mutual enjoyment and engagement.

Extract 2

- 1 ((Jill stands in front of group, holds her hand in front of her with closed palm and makes a downward jerking motion))
- 2 Kristen: Hmm. She's pulling something
- 3 Sheila: ((mimics Jill's hand motion from a sitting position))
- 4 Jill: Uh-huh
- 5 ((Sheila laughs, continues to mimic Jill's hand motions from a sitting position))

- 6 Kristen: A train
 7 ((Jill shakes head no))
 8 Kristen: A fire drill
 9 (4.0) ((Sheila gets up, laughing, begins to mimic Jill's arm and body movements facing Jill with back to Kristen and Kathy. Sheila and Jill giggle loudly while Sheila closely follows Jill's moves.))

Extract 3

- 1 ((Sheila is sitting next to Jill, waving her hands in front of her face in a 'stereotypic' motion as Fran gets up to perform her word))
 2 Sheila: ((mumbles to herself, stands up and imitates Fran))
 3 Kathy: What ↑is she?
 4 Sheila: WOO::OO ↓Tu::rn
 5 ((Sheila imitates Fran's turning around and around, with Sheila and Fran giggling while they spin))
 6 Jill: Ballerina
 7 Kathy: YA:::Y (2.0)She's a ballerina=
 8 ((Sheila walks away from the group))

Sheila does not engage in the game of charades as such in these instances, but expresses an orientation toward Jill and Fran and an affinity to 'do as they do'. Sheila's use of physical imitation is especially interesting given that imitation and pantomime are thought to be weaknesses in individuals with ASD (Rogers *et al.* 1996); this does not appear to be the case for Sheila. In extract 2, Sheila does not face the audience as she imitates the performance, but faces Jill with her back to Kathy and Kristen. Sheila is effectively using her body to frame the interaction as involving her and Jill only while Kathy and Kristen, the two adults, are placed on the periphery. Sheila uses imitation each time the game of charades is played, with the same effect of creating a moment of closeness and a joint performance between herself and her interaction partner. In contrast to the verbal repetition in extract 1, all of the interlocutors in the room take Sheila's imitation as a meaningful part of the activity. This allows a complex and extended interaction to emerge. In extract 3, Sheila's imitation, accompanied by verbal narration of her actions, clearly marks a period of engagement with the group and shared laughter, where before and after her performance she appears unengaged. In another instance, Sheila uses repetition to negotiate a perhaps more complex alignment between herself, the activity of charades, and the group.

Extract 4

- 1 ((Sheila is imitating Jill as she wiggles her body in a wave-like motion, with hands in the air))
 2 Kristen: Um (.) is it shimmy? Frog?
 3 Jill: No.
 4 Kathy: Oh, you should tell her like [person place (.) thing
 5 Kristen: [category
 6 Jill: Ok thing (.) its sort of a placeish thing
 7 Kristen: A <place ish thing> Oh boy (.) can you give me a clue? What do you think—wh what are you doin' Sheila? How are you feelin' inside?
 8 Sheila: ((laughs, continues to mimic Jill))
 9 Kristen: Roller coaster
 10 Jill: No
 11 Kristen: Wind mill
 12 Sheila: It's a shimmy (.) tells what she's doing

Sheila again shows that she is oriented to others' talk, and repeats Kristen's initial suggestion in line 2 that she is performing 'a shimmy'. This is one of few segments where Sheila appears interested in performing the game of charades as opposed to performing an imitation game where she is not concerned with guessing the answer or even knowing the word that she is performing through imitation. Her comment in line 12, 'tells what she's doing', a reformulation and answer to Kristen's question in line 7, is evidence that she is aware that she is using her body to recreate the meaning of a word. Sheila is effectively tracking and coordinating the stances of her interlocutors, as well as drawing upon socio-cultural expectations for how charades is played. In this case, Sheila's physical and verbal repetition is both meaningful and constructive.

5.2 Constructing the performance of charades

Since the game of charades was played several times throughout the summer, it is possible to look at multiple instances to determine how the game itself and the participation status of each player is constructed by the group. When the participants decide to play the game for the first time, they engage in a discussion about how the room will be set up to accommodate a stage for performers and chairs for guessers (Fran did not attend this session):

Extract 5

- 1 Kathy: Alright(.) we're gonna need (2.0) a stage
(7.0)
- 2 Kathy: We'll all sit like this
- 3 Jill: From right there to (unclear)
- 4 Sheila: ((slightly higher pitched than usual voice))
What's that thing do?
(2.0) What does this [thing do?
- 5 Jill: [Entry point (.) goes right there.
- 6 ((Sheila is moving around the room while other set up
the charades area))
- 7 Sheila: ((in higher pitch)) What does this thing do?
What does this thing do? What does this thing do?
- 8 ((Sheila is facing away from group, not looking at
anything in particular and moving her head from side to
side))
- 9 Kathy: Kristen (.) I'm gonna move our stuff out of the
way=
- 10 Kristen: =Okay
(4.0)
- 11 Kristen: Oh, wow, this is serious (2.0) So where's the
stage area?
- 12 Kathy: huh?
- 13 Jill: Sta:age area over there (.) there's also chairs.
Well we can be on the sides.
- 14 Kristen: Do you wanna, maybe we'll-three people sit and
one person on the stage in here? Does that sound good?
- 15 Jill: mmm mmm. ((murmur sounds like 'I don't know'))
- 16 Kristen: We'll line up (0.2) okay (.)Perfect.

Sheila's input as to how the room will be arranged in order to play the game is noticeably absent in this conversation. She does not appear to be oriented to what the other players are doing, and her participation can be described as unrelated or irrelevant (Lave and Wenger 1991) to the task of setting up the room for a charade game. Her repetition in lines 4 and 7 of the question 'what's that thing do?' in a slightly higher pitch than her typical speech is characteristic of delayed echolalia (Wootton 1999); it is plausible that she is again repeating a phrase that she heard elsewhere. Sheila does not look to the others in the room as she repeats this phrase or wait expectantly for an answer. It is not clear what 'this thing' refers to as her gaze does not fall on any particular object. Likewise, unlike the previous extracts where unconventional behavior is accepted and built upon by the group, in this instance none of the other participants take up her comments or provide an answer. In

contrast to Sheila, the other participants are actively engaged in re-arranging the chairs and setting up a makeshift stage to create two distinct parts of the room meant for those who are guessing and those who are performing. The game of charades in this context indexes the game as it has been played historically, as a particular genre which entails specific expectations as the game is enacted (Bakhtin 1986). The three players organizing the game are drawing upon their socio-cultural knowledge of what must occur in order for the game to be able to take place (Ochs *et al.* 2004). Since this is the first instance that the game was played by the group, Sheila may not yet have a common fund of knowledge about charades as an activity category that requires a particular spatial arrangement, or simply may not be interested in this aspect of the activity. Once the game gets started, the group discusses who can guess as each word is performed:

Extract 6

- 1 Kristen: Okay you guys go first (.) Sheila you come with me ready? (2.0) We're gonna guess first so I need you to take your thinking cap and get it on your head (.) and we'll be ready.
- 2 ((Sheila moves to the chairs with Kristen))
- 3 Jill: There might be (unclear) (5.0)
- 4 Sheila: Get the cap and we'll be ready.
- 5 Kristen: >Get it on get it on<
- 6 Kathy: Let's see (.) what she gonna be?
- 7 Kristen: Okay so can everybody guess or just we guess? Everybody can [guess?
- 8 Sheila: [Close the door
- 9 Kristen: Okay.
- 10 Kathy: It's just you.
- 11 Kristen: Oh just- just us two=
- 12 Sheila: =Almost there=
- 13 Kristen: ((to Sheila)) =Watch she's gonna act it out

In this segment, Sheila is being encouraged to participate in the act of guessing while Jill performs her word. Kristen and Kathy determine that Sheila and Kristen can guess while Jill and Kathy's team act out the motions, establishing game rules in line with a prototypical charades game. Kristen and Kathy guide Sheila to participate as a guesser by suggesting where she should sit (line 1), who she should look at (line 13), and what she should do (line 1 and line 7). In line 4, Sheila reformulates Kristen's command in line 1 to put on her thinking cap to be ready to guess at Jill's performance. This instance of

echoing looks more like repetition used in typical conversations, and marks Sheila's alignment with the activity and her role in it. It is not clear if Sheila understands the symbolic meaning of 'thinking cap', but her utterance indicates her willingness to participate in both the actions and the talk required by this activity. However, as soon as Jill begins to perform her word, Sheila stands up and begins to perform it with her, abandoning her role as guesser.

Sheila's perhaps delayed echolalic utterance 'close the door' in line 9, which is again repeated at a later point in extract 7, line 7, is ignored by the other participants as it is not discernibly related to the game at hand. By not responding to this utterance, the participants tacitly indicate their focus on keeping the activity going, and help to co-construct the groups' participation structure as being involved in the game.

Extract 7

- 1 Kristen: What the?
- 2 Jill: ((Laughing))
- 3 Kathy: I know it I know it
- 4 Kristen: What is that?
- 5 Sheila: A twister
- 6 Kristen: Uh (0.2) swimming
- 7 Sheila: Go and close the door
- 8 ((Loud laughter from group as Sheila stands up and mimics Jill. They both sway back and forth, wiggling their bodies with arms raised above their heads))
- 9 Kristen: (laughing) This isn't-this isn't helping me guess.
- 10 Kathy: Wait, how does it go again?
- 11 ((loud laughter from group))

Despite the group's original efforts to construct a prototypical game, Sheila makes an initial guess of 'twister' and then quickly decides to change the game into a joint performance. Her move is ratified when she stands up and begins to mimic Jill and all four group members laugh loudly with approval. This move counters Kristen's assertion in Extract 1, 'three people sit and one person on the stage'. Kristen acknowledges that this is a deviation from the usual goal of guessing the correct answer that the game entails when she remarks in line 9 that 'this isn't helping me guess', although her laughter indicates approval. Sheila competently shapes and changes the way the game is played, despite her lack of involvement in the discourse about the game rules in extract 5. Although Sheila was present during this discussion, it is difficult to discern how much she heard or understood. Even so, Sheila's participation status is firmly within her own control, and she transforms from peripheral to full

participant with a strategic act of imitation. In a future social group session, the group again plays a game of charades, and Sheila repeats her reconstruction of the game:

Extract 8

- 1 ((Jill is miming her word. She begins in a crouched position on the floor, and slowly rises to a standing position))
- 2 ((Sheila giggles, gets up and mimics Jill's actions))
- 3 Sheila: () °a flower°
- 4 Kathy: ↑What did you say?! (3.0) I THINK SHE SAID IT (2.0) ((leans close)) °You're (hhh) what°?
- 5 Sheila: ba-ba-ba- flower

In this segment, Sheila mimics Jill's performance, effectively abandoning the dichotomy between guesser and performer once again. Sheila also shows that she is capable of guessing the correct word, as she whispers 'flower' in line 3 which is the word that she and Jill are performing (although Jill is the only one who saw the assigned word). Therefore, Sheila's desire to shift the structure of the game and reformulate her status cannot be related to incompetence in the task of guessing at charades. Instead, she does not have an apparent interest in saying the word 'flower' as a guess, as she first whispers it so quietly that almost no one can hear, and then repeats it in line 5 in such a way that it no longer sounds like the word flower (ba-ba-ba-flower). This is in contrast to the emphatic, rapid guessing of words employed by other participants when they make a guess. Possible reasons for Sheila's particular way of guessing could be that she doesn't yet truly understand how the game is conventionally played, she may be sub-vocalizing to help her think through what is happening around her, or she may not want to risk being incorrect. Another hypothesis as to why Sheila does this is that she is maintaining the framework as a joint performance and narrating this scene; once she guesses the word aloud, the turn is effectively over. In a later segment, Sheila draws Jill into mimicking her own performance of being a mouse, a complementary move to her act of mimicking Jill which reaffirms that she prefers to play the game with all participants joining in the performance. In this segment, Jill also gives away what she is performing in line 5, by saying 'we'll be tiptoeing mouse please', again suggesting that she is more oriented toward a group performance than to a guessing competition. Sheila also exhibits understanding of the meaning of her performance, as she answers Kristen's question in line 4 about what a mouse has on its face with 'whiskers'.

Extract 9

- 1 Kristen: Okay guys, we're ready
- 2 Jill: Kay
- 3 Sheila: Tiptoe tiptoe tip
- 4 Kristen: ((Kristen holds thumb and forefinger together on each hand, and brushes them outwards across her face starting from her nose)) What do we have on our face? We have little-
- 5 Sheila:-whiskers (1.0) We'll be tiptoeing mouse please
- 6 Jill: Mouse
- 7 Kristen: Yes (.) But we were good mice right?
- 8 Kathy: You were ↑very good
- 9 Sheila: Could we tiptoe
- 10 Kristen: Should we do it all together? (2.0)
- 11 Sheila: Jill tip [tiptoe
- 12 Jill: [okay
- 13 ((Kathy, Jill, Kristen, and Sheila all pretend to be mice))

Many of these extracts involve work being done by the facilitator to legitimate Sheila's construction of her own version of charades in the eyes of her peers. In extract 8, Kristen follows Sheila's suggestion in line 9 that 'we tiptoe', and helps incite Kathy and Jill to follow along in performing a mouse. Notably, Sheila specifically asks Jill to join her, suggesting that she is especially interested in interacting with her age-mates and underscoring the motivational value of including peers in social intervention contexts. Encouraging peer interactions, as opposed to adult-child interactions, is the more fundamental (and perhaps more difficult) goal of facilitation. In extract 10, Kathy makes a similar move in line 4, saying 'we'll all be big flowers'.

Extract 10

- 1 Sheila: =Are you going to be a big flower?
- 2 Kathy: YOU'RE ↑RIGHT (0.6) GOOD JOB (0.2) [GIVE ME FIVE
- 3 Sheila: [Are you going to be a big flower?
- 4 Kathy: We'll all be big flowers alright ↑come on
- 5 ((Gets up, stands next to Sheila))
- 6 Let's go. (1.0) We're going to start off small=
- 7 Sheila: =°Fl-fl-f-fl-flower°
- 8 ((Sheila and Kathy act out a flower 'growing' and blossoming))
- 9 Kathy: Big flower (1.0) Good guess (0.6) That was a ↑hard One

Kathy congratulates Sheila in line 2 for guessing the correct word, reverting to a more traditional ‘intervetionese’ form of talk that is often characterized by frequent praise and a heightened pitch (Ochs *et al.* 2005). Sheila does not acknowledge the congratulations, but moves right into asking the other group members to continue performing a flower with her. Kathy’s overt verbal reinforcement appears somewhat out of place, as it would not likely be present in a game involving only typically developing children. This sort of adult talk also appears in extract 3, line 7, and marks the end of Sheila’s interaction with the group. In both of these instances, we see a tension between Kathy’s work to shape Sheila’s participation in a prototypical charades game with guessers and performers, and Sheila’s work to reshape the game into a joint performance. This tension is indicative of the balancing act that a facilitator must do in order to promote group ratification of unexpected or idiosyncratic behavior, and still maintain an organic experience that is not too heavily colored with adult influence. Kathy must maintain the trust of the typically developing peers while also encouraging them to widen their scope of the kinds of actions that are deemed acceptable. If they do not accept Kathy’s ratification of Sheila’s actions, the immediate interaction and the social group dynamic itself would fall apart. However, the manner of delivery appears to be important, as these examples of verbal reinforcement are ultimately not acknowledged by the group and may even serve to put further interaction in jeopardy. In line 4, Kathy quickly adjusts to Sheila’s direction, and enacts a flower blossoming with Sheila while encouraging the other participants to follow suit. This move is important, as it confirms Sheila’s agency as a social actor who has power in shifting and subverting expectations, and ultimately leads to her full participation in the activity. The round of charades ultimately ends when Jill stops ‘being a big flower’, and takes the lead in organizing another round, which both Sheila and Kathy accept.

6 Conclusion

During the game of charades, Sheila’s footing in relationship to the other participants in this social group is not characterized primarily by a lack of alignment. Rather, Sheila shifts footing over the course of each interaction in dynamic and complex ways, and shows that she can and does track others’ stances and their association to her own. Essentially, Sheila appears to indeed know ‘where she stands’ in relation to the group. Sheila marks shifts in footing in somewhat atypical ways as she uses more direct means, including repetition in both physical and verbal modalities rather than the more subtle markers originally described by Goffman. The extent to which repetition produces alignment appears to depend on at least two things; the degree to which

Sheila is oriented to the group activity and the degree to which her orientation toward and actions within the group are perceived and taken up by the group members. Had the other participants not been willing to play an unconventional version of charades, Sheila may not have become a full participant.

This analysis also illustrates the dynamic and active nature of participation frameworks; Sheila is not simply guided to participate in a particular way by others. She does her own share of the work in guiding others to play the game in a way that she prefers, and her guidance and restructuring of the game is ratified by the group. Throughout each game, her status shifts from peripheral to full, with brief moments of being unengaged. Full participation is not correlated with 'normative' behavior on Sheila's part, but instead with flexibility on the part of the other participants who do not adhere to a rigid interpretation of the game rules initially set out. As the girls spent time together and learned each other's preferred modes of participation, a common fund of knowledge unique to the group was created and relied upon in new interactions. This analysis reaffirms that intersubjectivity is an interactional achievement, and depends on resources mobilized by each participant in an interaction. Therefore, communication and social deficits should not be thought of as lying exclusively within the child with ASD, but as distributed across interaction partners. This is not to say that biological correlates of ASD do not exist or are not important, only that the extent to which the particular characteristics of ASD function to inhibit social interaction can vary according to the interaction partners and the situational context. In the examples discussed here, echolalic utterances appeared in multiple forms and served multiple purposes, and could produce alignment as well as dis-alignment. Likewise, physical imitation and a preference for an unconventional version of charades also served to produce alignment. In many other situations, both of these types of behavior may have been viewed as idiosyncratic and indicative of poor social competence; this perception itself would have surely jeopardized the achievement of intersubjectivity.

It should be acknowledged that the interactions that occur in this analysis were at least in part engineered by the adults who arranged the social group and facilitated the session; it is not likely that the participants would have been in contact with each other or interacted at all without the adult arrangements that brought the group together. The participants also may not have responded as positively to Sheila without adult support. Importantly, although the facilitator appears to play a significant role in ensuring that unconventional modes of behaving are ratified into new group norms, it is also possible for facilitation strategies to veer too far into more clinical modes that can hinder sustained participation and reduce the natural feel of peer interactions. While it is the intention of the social group to create an authentic peer interaction context, the reality is that while these interactions are likely more authentic than clini-

cal exchanges that do not include peers, they are not entirely naturally occurring. However, it may still be possible that facilitated social groups could serve as a bridge to complex interactions between typically developing adolescents and adolescents diagnosed with ASD outside of a pre-arranged social group. This illustration of social interaction can help guide further analysis of both the study of ASD and educational models implemented to encourage peer relationships between adolescents with and without ASD.

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About the author

Kristen Bottema-Beutel is a Ph.D. candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Special Education at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University. Kristen received a master's degree in special education from San Francisco State University, with an emphasis in autism spectrum disorders. Her research focuses on social and communicative interaction in children and adolescents with autism spectrum and related disorders, and the design of social interventions in inclusive settings. Kristen is also interested in typically developing adolescent's reasoning about whether or not to include individuals with social disabilities in their peer groups. Kristen has assisted on several large-scale research projects in each of these areas during her graduate career. She is currently implementing a mixed methods study designed to further examine the effectiveness of social groups for teens with and without autism spectrum disorder that will serve as her doctoral dissertation. Contact: Kristen Bottema-Beutel, University of California at Berkeley, 5643 Tolman Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720. Email: kbottema@berkeley.edu

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions (adapted from Atkinson and Heritage 1984).

| | |
|-------------|---|
| . | Period indicates a falling, or final, intonation contour, not necessarily the end of a sentence. |
| ? | Question mark indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question. |
| , | Comma indicates 'continuing' intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary. |
| ↑↓ | Upward and downward pointing arrows indicate marked rising and falling shifts in intonation. |
| ::: | Colons indicate stretching of the preceding sound, proportional to the number of colons. |
| - | A hyphen after a word or a part of a word indicates a cut-off or self interruption. |
| <u>word</u> | Underlining indicates some form of stress or emphasis on the underlined item. |
| WORD | Upper case indicates loudness. |
| ° word ° | Degree signs enclose whispered speech |
| = | Equal sign indicate no break or delay between the words thereby connected. |
| (()) | Double parentheses enclose descriptions of conduct. |
| (word) | When all or part of an utterance is in parentheses, this indicates uncertainty on the transcriber's part. |
| () | Empty parentheses indicate that something is being said, but no hearing can be achieved. |
| (1.2) | Numbers in parentheses indicate silence in tenths of a second. |
| (.) | A dot in parentheses indicated a 'micropause', hearable but not readily measurable; ordinarily less than 2/10 of a second. |
| [| Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicates a point of overlap onset. |