Introduction

- ADHD and ASD have significant overlap in clinical symptoms and functional impairments
- Specifically, social dysfunction is a core diagnostic feature of ASD and is also a common area of impairment for 50-80% of children with ADHD (deBoo & Prins, 2006)
- Additionally, both groups of children commonly have difficulties with academic productivity and success
- Research has shown relations between social problems and academic performance in typically developing children (cf. Wentzel, 2005)
- However, few studies have examined this in clinical samples, particularly in the context of ADHD and ASD symptoms

Research Question

How do social problems mediate the relation between ADHD and ASD symptoms and academic performance?

Methods

Participants
- 135 children (53 girls), ages 8-13 (M = 10.18, SD = 1.46)

Measures
- Behavior Assessment Scale for Children-2 (BASC-2) Social Skills Subscale
- Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) ADHD and ASD Problem Behavior Subscales
- Academic Performance Rating Scale (APRS)

Results

- ASD, but not ADHD symptoms significantly predicted social skills deficits, as well as lower academic achievement
- The direct effect of social skills on academic performance was significant, and the indirect effect was significant for ASD symptoms
- The direct effects of ASD symptoms on academic performance remained significant with social skills included in the model

Conclusion

- Interestingly, just ASD symptoms had a significant indirect effect on academic performance, mediated by social skills
- Contrary to previous studies, ADHD symptoms did not directly predict social skills (deBoo & Prins, 2007) or academic performance (Daley & Birchwood, 2010)
- Some limitations include the reliance on teacher report of children’s symptoms and the correlational nature of the study
- Future studies should use parent and teacher measures to assess child behavior, and use multiple measures to assess each construct

References