

# How Do Adults with Williams Syndrome Perceive Their Own Levels of Social Vulnerability?

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## Introduction

### Williams Syndrome (WS)

- Rare genetic neurodevelopmental disorder
- Mild to moderate levels of intellectual disability
- Extreme pro-social drive to engage with others
  - overly-friendly, trusting, lack social inhibition (Little et al., 2013)
  - disinhibited in approach behavior toward familiar and unfamiliar people (Jarvinen et al., 2013)
- highly vulnerable and at risk of victimization (Fisher et al., 2012; Jawaid et al., 2012; Thurman & Fisher, 2015)

### Social Vulnerability in WS

- Experience various forms of victimization
  - Teasing and bullying (Fisher & Lough, under review; Fisher et al., 2013)
  - Theft and giving away money (Fisher et al., 2013)
  - Abuse (Fisher et al., 2013; Rosner et al., 2004)
- Reasons for increased risk
  - Appear vulnerable in looks and behavior
  - Increased parental independence (on and offline)
- Parent Report
  - Existing research uses parent reports
  - Disparity between parent & self-reports in WS
    - No agreement between self- and parent report
    - Adults with WS less accurate in reporting social approach behaviors
    - Parent report more closely related to observed social approach behaviors (Fisher et al., 2014)
- Unclear how adults with WS see and report their own levels of social vulnerability

### Research Question

- *How do adults with WS perceive and report their own levels of social vulnerability?*
- Compared to parent reports, do adults with WS provide significantly different responses when asked about their levels of social vulnerability?



## Method

### Participants

#### Individuals with Williams Syndrome

- N = 28 (6 female, 22 male)
- Mean age = 27.7 years (*SD* = 8.4; range 19-51)
- KBIT-2 FSIQ = 69.11 (*SD* = 15.28)
- 86% lived at home with their parents

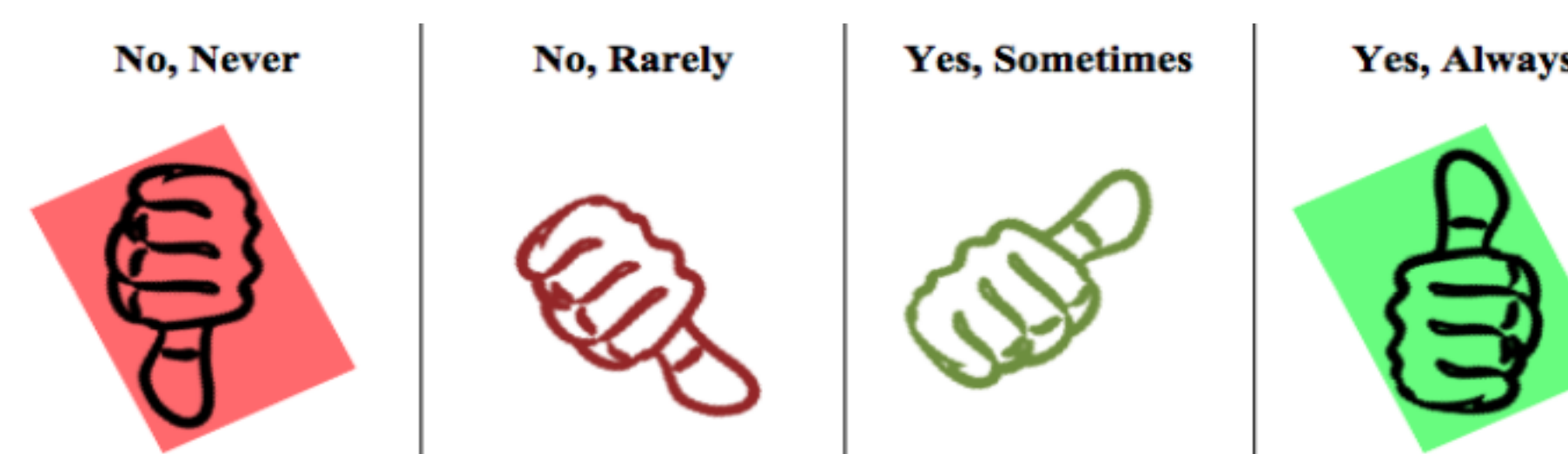
#### Parents of Individuals with Williams Syndrome

- N = 28 (25 mothers, 3 fathers)
- Mean age = 56.9 years (*SD* = 7.4)

### Measures

#### Social Vulnerability Questionnaire (SVQ; Fisher et al., 2012)

- 30 items rated on 4- point scale (1- not true or never to 4- very true or always)
  - Emotional Bullying (score range 5 – 20)
  - Risk Awareness (9 – 36)
  - Social Protection (4 – 16)
  - Vulnerable Appearance (4 – 16)
  - Parental Independence (3 – 12)
  - Credulity (5 – 20)
- High scores = higher social vulnerability
- Parent version adapted for individual with WS
  - simplified language
  - visual aids for likert scale



## Results

### Data Analysis

- Mann-Whitney U tests to compare non-parametric scores

### Differences in Ratings of Social Vulnerability

- Parents rated individual with WS as more socially vulnerable overall than individuals rated themselves
- Significant difference in four out of the six areas of vulnerability
  - Parents reported higher vulnerability levels for risk awareness, social protection, & credulity
  - Adults with WS reported higher vulnerability to emotional abuse (e.g. being picked on by others, peers making fun of him/her)

|                       | Parent       | Adult        | U     | Z     | p   |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
| Total Score           | 67.32 (8.05) | 59.50 (8.57) | 193.0 | -3.26 | .00 |
| Emotional Bullying    | 7.86 (2.06)  | 10.79 (3.8)  | 198.0 | -3.2  | .00 |
| Risk Awareness        | 16.75 (3.69) | 13.46 (2.55) | 173.5 | -3.61 | .00 |
| Social Protection     | 9.57 (3.51)  | 7.46 (3.16)  | 253.5 | -2.28 | .02 |
| Vulnerable Appearance | 12.18 (2.5)  | 10.61 (2.81) | 277.5 | -1.89 | .06 |
| Parental Independence | 7.68 (2.14)  | 7.82 (2.26)  | 362.5 | -0.49 | .62 |
| Credulity             | 13.46 (2.08) | 9.36 (2.9)   | 102.5 | -4.77 | .00 |

### Experiences of victimization

- 54% of parents gave an example of when individual with WS had been taken advantage of in the past year
  - 67% of examples related to money/theft (e.g. being convinced to give money to others)
  - 27% of examples related to teasing or persuasion (e.g. hassle from work colleagues)

## Conclusion

- Current study offers novel insight in to how adults with WS view their own vulnerability
- Adults with WS do not perceive themselves to be as socially vulnerable as parents perceive them
  - May lack insight into their own behaviors that could lead to victimization
  - Higher ratings for emotional abuse indicate adults with WS are aware of how others treat them

### Future Directions for Research

- Interventions to address self-awareness
  - Teach to evaluate situations, then teach how to handle such situations
- More research examining self-report and correspondence between informants



## For More Information

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\*References available upon request