



**SUSANN ARNELL** is a registered physiotherapist with more than 25 years' experience of working with children and adolescents with disability. Physical activity has been a central topic throughout her physiotherapy studies in Finland (1993), her master's degree (2010) from Mälardalens Högskola and now also her thesis. She began her doctoral studies in Disability Science at the Faculty of Medicine and Health, Örebro University in 2015, and she has been working as a physiotherapist in combination with her doctoral studies ever since.

Physical inactivity is considered to be one of the biggest public health problems of our time. Few adolescents achieve the recommended levels of physical activity, and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are even more inactive, which is a cause for concern. They are less fit, participate less in physical activity and engage in fewer types of physical activities compared to their peers. Participation in physical activity can be challenging for adolescents with ASD. To get a more comprehensive understanding of their participation in physical activity, various perspectives should be included. This thesis considers participation in physical activity among adolescents with ASD from the perspectives of the adolescents, parents and professionals, and is based on four studies. The results of the studies highlight a conditional participation behaviour among adolescents with ASD. These individual-specific conditions for participation need to be recognized if participation in physical activity among adolescents with ASD is to be enhanced. The results further indicate the importance of perceived control, motivation and tailored coordinated support. The results in this thesis contribute to a greater understanding of participation in physical activity among adolescents with ASD and may provide valuable information for various stakeholders when future interventions are planned.

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SUSANN ARNELL Participation in physical activity among adolescents with autism spectrum disorder

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Doctoral Dissertation

# Participation in physical activity among adolescents with autism spectrum disorder

## - the perspectives of adolescents, parents and professionals

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*Disability Science*

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