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Students Perceptions of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the Impact of Inclusion

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Students Perceptions of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and

the Impact of Inclusion

Honors Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of The

Requirements of HON 420

By

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Students' Perceptions of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the Impact of Inclusion

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine if inclusion of people identified with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) has an impact on their typically developing peers as well as determining the perceptions that college students at EKU have of people with IDD. A survey was conducted online through Surveymonkey.com and was sent out to EKU students through email. There were 82 respondents to the survey. The survey consisted of questions on age, gender, and status at EKU of each participant and asked them questions about the perceptions they have of those with IDD and if they have been involved with organizations that promote inclusion. Findings suggest that students have a positive perception of individuals with IDD.

Keywords and phrases: IDD, inclusion, social participation, typically developing peer, college students

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of tables and figures

<u>Table 1</u>

What is your age?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
17 or younger	0.0%	0
18-20	54.9%	45
21-29	40.2%	33
30-39	3.7%	3
40-49	1.2%	1
50-59	0.0%	0
60 or older	0.0%	0
	answered question	82
	skipped question	0

<u>Table 2</u>

What year are you in college?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Freshman	13.4%	11
Sophomore	20.7%	17
Junior	35.4%	29
Senior	23.2%	19
Graduate Student	7.3%	6
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
	answered question	82
	skipped question	0

Table 3

College	Frequency	Percent
Arts and Sciences	31	37.8
Health Sciences	21	25.6
Education	14	17.1
Justice and Safety	4	4.9
Business and Technology	7	8.5
Undecided	5	6.1
Total	82	100

Table 4

Major	Frequency	Percent
Accounting	2	2.4
Aviation	1	1.2
Biology	6	7.2
Communication Disorders	3	3.6
Chemistry	2	2.4
Child and Family Studies	2	2.4
Communications	1	1.2
Criminal Justice	1	1.2
Deaf Education	1	1.2
Elementary Education	4	4.8
English	4	4.8
Environmental Sciences	2	2.4
French	2	2.4
General Business	2	2.4
History	3	3.6
Homeland Security	1	1.2
Fire Arson	1	1.2
Horticulture	1	1.2
Journalism	1	1.2
Math	2	2.4
Middle School Education	1	1.2
Music Education	1	1.2
Music Marketing	1	1.2
Nursing	1	1.2
Occupational Science	13	15.6
Occupational Therapy	1	1.2
Paralegal Science	1	1.2
Political Science	1	1.2
Pre-Occupational Science	1	1.2
Psychology	1	1.2
Public Health	1	1.2
Recreation/Park Admin.	1	1.2
Social Justice	1	1.2
Social Work	3	3.6
Spanish	1	1.2
Special Education	2	2.4
Statistics	1	1.2
Wildlife Management	2	2.4
Undecided	5	6

Table 5

Do you have a diagnosis of an intellectual or developmental disability?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	9.8%	8
no	90.2%	74
	answered question	82
	skipped question	0

Table 6

How they know the individual	Frequency	Percent
Friend	32	55%
Relative	18	31%
Work	4	7%
High School	4	7%

Table 7

Have you ever hung out or spent time with someone that has IDD in a social setting such as dinner at a restaurant or going to a movie theater together?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	68.3%	56
no	31.7%	26
	answered question	82
	skipped question	0

Table 8

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel that people with IDD are capable of working and going to college	81	4.21	.720
I feel that people with IDD are just like everyone else	82	3.85	1.032
I feel that people with IDD are the same as those who do not have a disability	82	3.38	1.107
I would allow my child to be friends with someone with IDD	82	4.79	.464
I think that people with IDD should be allowed to be in romantic relationships	82	4.55	.688
People with IDD positively contribute to society	82	4.51	.593

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neutral
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Figure 1

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I feel that people with IDD are capable of working and going to college.

Figure 2

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I feel that people with IDD are just like everyone else.

Figure 3

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I feel that people with IDD are the same as those that do not have a disability
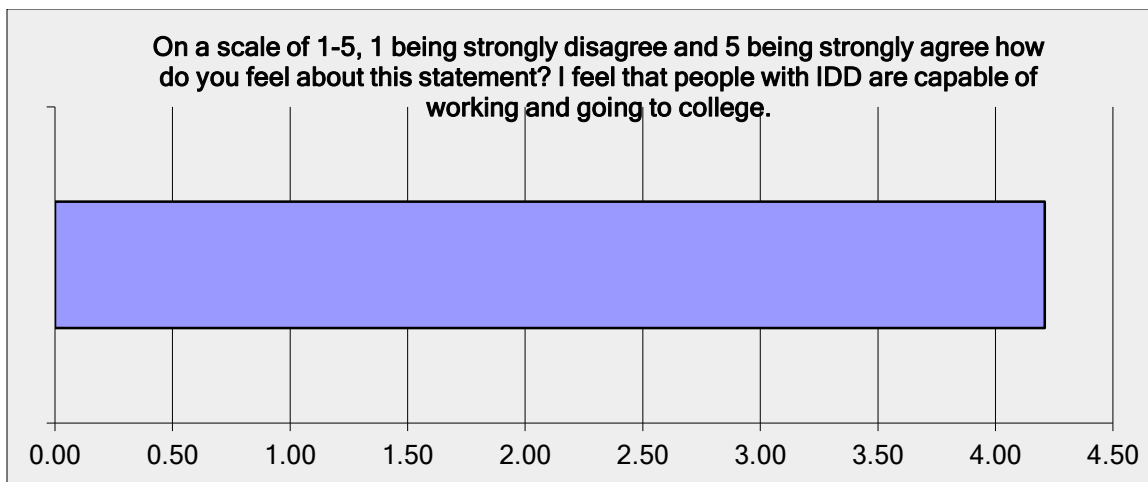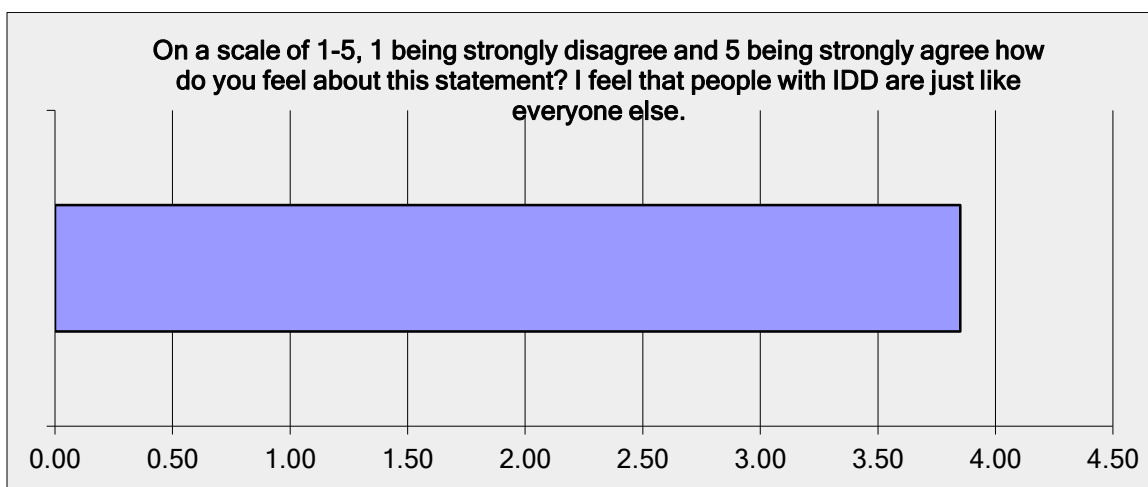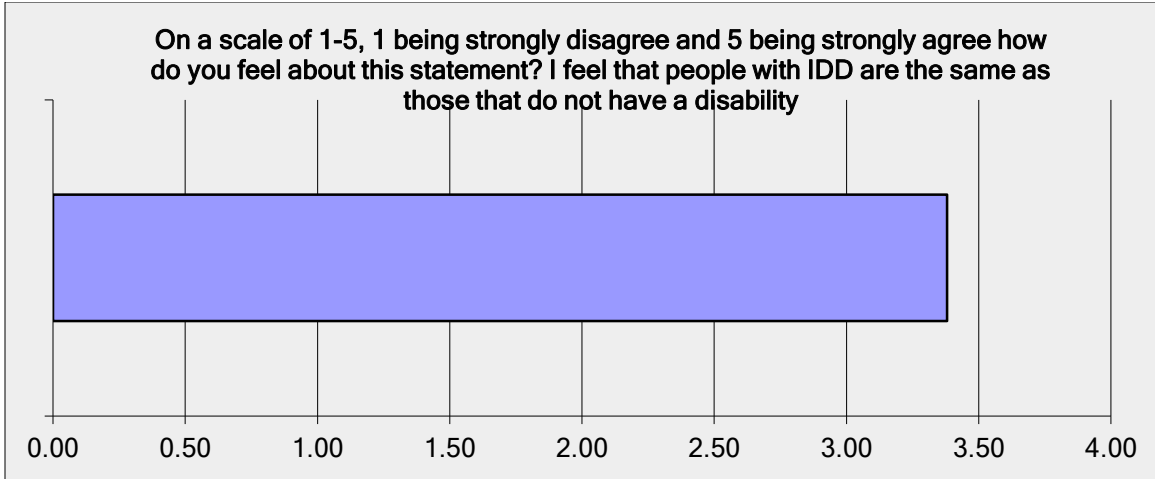
Table 9

Have you ever been involved with a program that fosters inclusion? (Special Olympics, Best Buddies, Circle of Friends)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	28.4%	23
no	71.6%	58
	answered question	81
	skipped question	1

Table 10

Do you feel that you have benefited from including those with IDD in your life?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	97.2%	35
no	2.8%	1
	answered question	36
	skipped question	46

Figure 4

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I would allow my child to be friends with someone who has IDD?

Figure 5

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I think that people with IDD should be allowed to be in romantic relationships?

Figure 6

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? People with IDD positively contribute to society.
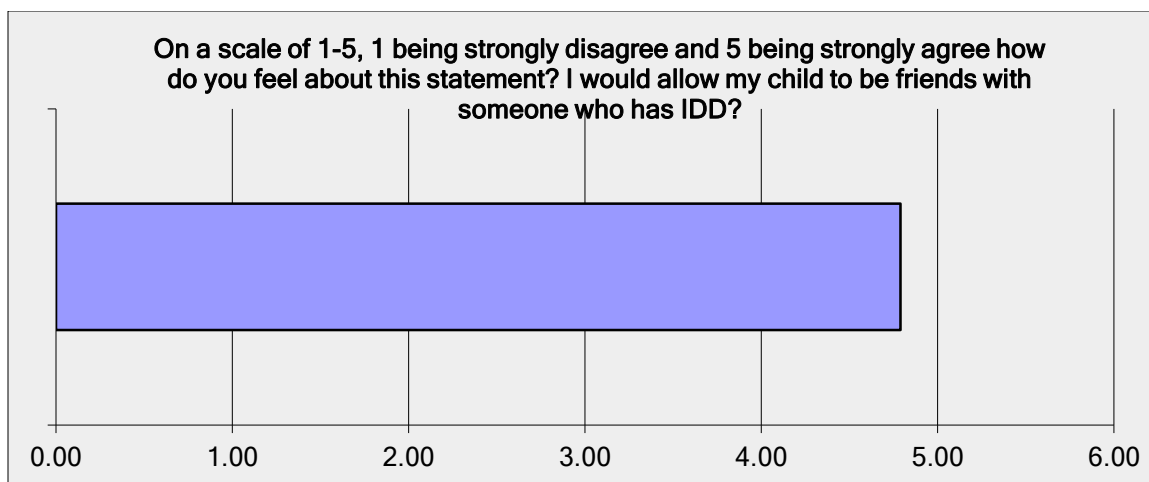
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0.00      1.00      2.00      3.00      4.00      5.00
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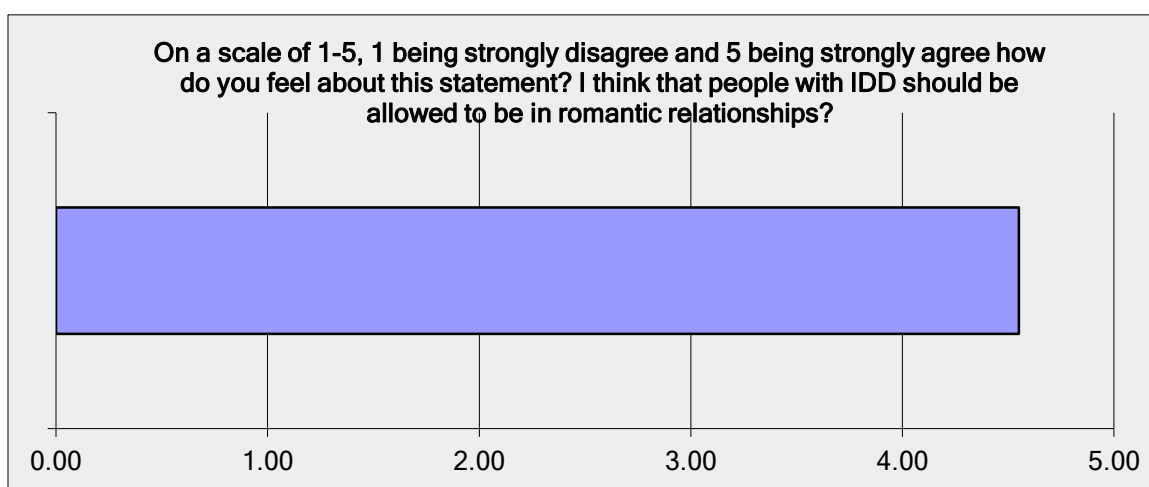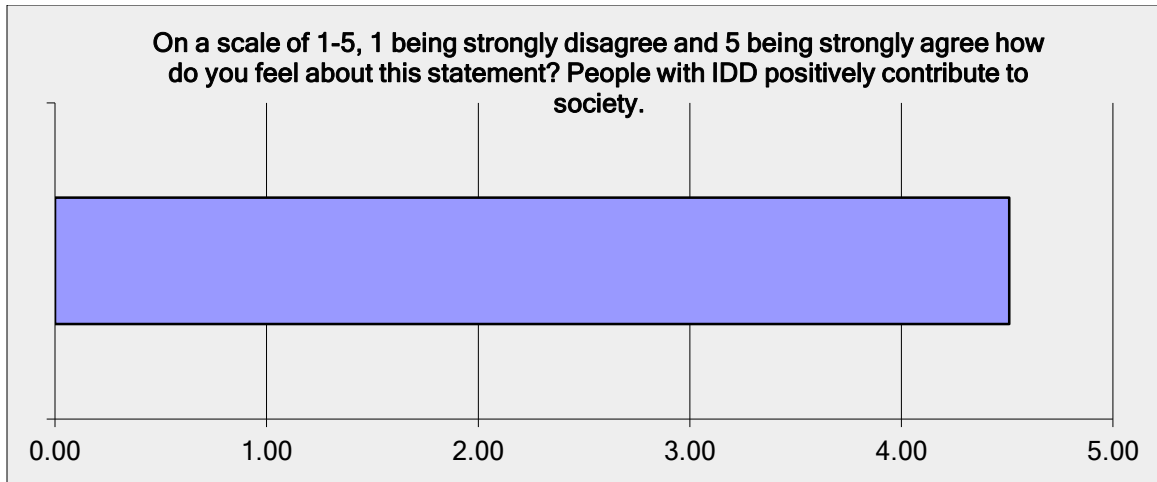
Appendix B: Survey

Students Perceptions of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and

the Impact of Inclusion

This study will serve as research to learn about the perceptions that college students have of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and whether or not they choose to include those with IDD in their social circles. The duration of the survey will last no longer than 15 minutes. Everyone that completes the study must be over the age of 18 and a student at EKU. Participants will be asked to answer the questions honestly and to the best of their ability. There are very minimal risks associated with the survey and you may choose to skip a question if it makes you feel uncomfortable. The results of the study may help the participants understand what inclusion is. The participant will be anonymous to the researcher. If you have any questions or concerns you can contact Marissa Visse at marissa_visse@mymail.eku.edu. Participation in this survey is voluntary and you may choose to leave the survey at any time without penalty.

1.) Are you an EKU student that is currently enrolled in classes at EKU?

2.) How old are you?

3.)What year are you in school?

4.)What is your major?

5.) Are you male, female, or prefer not to answer?

6.) Do you have a diagnosis of an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD)?

7.) Do you know someone that has a diagnosis of intellectual or developmental disability (IDD)? If the answer is no please skip to number 9, if the answer is yes please answer number 8.

8.) How do you know this person (relative, friend, coworker, etc.)?

9.) Have you ever hung out or spent time with someone that has IDD in a social setting such as dinner at a restaurant or going to a movie theater together?

10.)On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I feel that people with IDD are capable of working and going to college.

11.) On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I feel that people with IDD are just like everyone else.

12.) On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I feel that people with IDD are the same as those that do not have a disability

13.) Have you ever been involved with a program that fosters and promotes inclusion such as Best Buddies, Circle of Friends, or Special Olympics or another program that works with individuals that have IDD? If the answer is no please skip to question number 17. If the answer is yes please continue to answer questions 14, 15, and 16.

14.) Please briefly explain why you got involved with the program that promotes inclusion?

15.) Do you feel that you have benefitted from including those with IDD in your life?

16.) Pease briefly explain in a few sentences how you feel that your life has benefitted from including those with IDD into your life or social circle?

17.) On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I would allow my child to be friends with someone who has IDD?

18.) On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? I think that people with iDD should be allowed to be in romantic relationships?

19.) On a scale of 1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree how do you feel about this statement? People with IDD positively contribute to society.

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I would like to thank Dr. Julie Baltisberger for being a great mentor for this project. She has provided feedback, insight, advice, and support throughout the entirety of this project. Without all of her help, this project would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my parents for being supportive of my decision to pursue my college education at EKU. They always encourage me to do my best and to follow my dreams no matter the circumstance.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background and Need

Inclusion of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) is a relatively new concept in today's society and one that has been heavily advocated for in the past few years. It was not until 1975 when public education became inclusive and created equal opportunities for children with disabilities ("A Brief History of…", 2005). In America there are approximately 6.5 million people in the United States that have an intellectual disability ("What is Intellectual Disability?"). Due to the large number of people in the United States with IDD it is important that those with IDD are given the opportunities to be productive members of society. Inclusion of people with IDD gives them the chance to experience many different things such as maintaining a paid job as well as maintaining friendships. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) defines occupations into eight different categories. One of the categories of occupation that AOTA defines is social participation. Gillen and Boyt Schell define social participation as "the interweaving of occupations to support desired engagement in community and family activities as well as those involving peers and friends" (As cited

by the American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014, p.21). Inclusion is important

for people to be engaged in social participation occupations. If people with IDD are

excluded then they may not have the opportunity to work or maintain friendships. Social

participation and inclusion are vital to living a happy and healthy life. Due to the

growing population of people living in America with IDD there has been a large amount

of research recently completed on inclusion that has solely focused on inclusion in the

school setting and specifically on how inclusion benefits the individual with IDD and not

their typically developing peers. For example, Holahan and Costenbader (2000) studied

preschoolers with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and discussed the benefits and

growth of the preschoolers after being in an inclusive classroom compared to other

preschoolers with disabilities that were not in an inclusive classroom. Studies such as the

one conducted by Holahan and Costenbader have led to an increased interest in inclusion

but fail to highlight the benefits that inclusion can have on the typically developing peers

of individuals with IDD. Recently there has been more research on social inclusion of

people with IDD such as programs that promote inclusion and activities with people in

day centers and nursing homes but there is a lack of research that has been completed to

explain the benefits that inclusion of people with IDD can have on their typically

developing peers.

Problem Statement

In today's society, people with IDD are often looked down upon as inferior to

other members of society. Due to the beliefs of some individuals that people diagnosed

with IDD are inferior, they are often not given the same opportunities as their typically

developing peers. Inclusion allows people to be more aware of people with IDD and

provides people with IDD the same opportunities that their typically developing peers

may have. Extensive research has been done on how inclusion benefits those with IDD,

but little has been done on how it can benefit their typically developing peers. If society

were more aware of how including those with IDD in their lives could benefit them then

there would be more people willing to include people with IDD into their lives. Our

society tends to turn away from people, events or activities if they cannot see how

something can contribute to their lives, but if they are shown the contribution inclusion

will make in their lives then they will be more willing to include people with IDD.

Statement of Purpose

        The purpose of this study was to determine the benefits that inclusion of people

with IDD has on their typically developing peers, and to add data to existing research on

the benefits on inclusion of people with IDD. The study was used to see if college

students at EKU have positive perceptions of people with IDD. There is very little

research on how inclusion of people with IDD benefits their typically developing peers

therefore more research is needed. Inclusion of people with IDD is a topic of discussion

that is becoming more and more popular. In a society that is constantly trying to change

and grow it is important to make sure that everyone is included. America cannot isolate

the 6.5 million people diagnosed with intellectual disabilities ("What is Intellectual

Disability?"). Contributing new information about inclusion of people with IDD will

allow others to make the decision to start including people with IDD into their lives. It

will also allow people to be more aware of others with IDD, which can lead to positive

perceptions of those with IDD.

Research Questions

Does inclusion of people with IDD have positive effects on their typically developing peers? If so, what are the benefits of including people with IDD on their typically developing peers? At EKU, do most students have a negative or positive perception of people with IDD?

Defined Terms

Intellectual Disability (ID)- "starts any time before a child turns 18 and is characterized by problems with both intellectual functioning or intelligence, which include the ability to learn, reason, problem solve, and other skills; and adaptive behavior, which includes everyday social and life skills" ("Intellectual and Developmental Dis…", 2012)

Developmental Disability (DD)- "a broader category of often lifelong disability that can be intellectual, physical, or both" ("Intellectual and Developmental Dis…", 2012)

Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD)- "the term often used to describe situations when an intellectual disability and other disabilities are present" ("Intellectual and Developmental Dis…", 2012)

Typically developing peer- "the most appropriate way to describe children that are not receiving special education services" ("Typical is the…", 2015)

Inclusion- "the act of including; the state of being included" ("Definition of Inclusion, 2015)

Social inclusion- "provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training, etc." ("Social Inclusion")

Social participation- Gillen and Boyt Schell define it as "the interweaving of occupations

to support desired engagement in community and family activities as well as those

involving peers and friends" (As cited by the American Occupational Therapy

Association, 2014, p. 21).

Assumptions

       This survey was conducted with the assumption that all participants answered the

questions honestly and accurately. Additionally, the participants were chosen if they are

Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) students that are currently enrolled in classes at

Eastern. It was also assumed that they know the definitions of IDD and inclusion. It was

assumed that they know how to complete a survey through the Survey Monkey database.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate primary and secondary sources to find up to date and relevant research that explains the conversation on inclusion of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). This literature review serves as a tool to give a background on social participation, social inclusion, perceptions that the community has of people with IDD, and inclusive educational settings. The first category explores the background of social participation and how it can enhance people's lives. The subsequent categories explain what inclusion is and how it can affect the lives of people with IDD as well as their typically developing peers.

Social Participation

In the American Occupational Therapy Association's practice framework, eight categories of occupations are defined. Christiansen and Townsend (2010) defined occupation as things that people do to occupy life for reasons such as paid work, unpaid work, personal care, taking care of others, leisure, recreation, or subsistence.   Occupation includes groups of activities and tasks of everyday life, which are given value and meaning by individuals as well as culture. (Christiansen & Townsend, 2010). One of the categories of occupation is social participation. Gillen and Boyt Schell define social participation as "the interweaving of occupations to support desired engagement in community and family activities as well as those involving peers and friends" (As cited by the American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014, p. 21). Social participation is not possible if people do not have opportunities to engage in occupations that are meaningful to them. It is also not possible if one does not have the opportunity to spend

time with others such as peers and family members. Social participation is vital to one's life.

Social participation allows one to live a more meaningful life. Mahoney and Roberts (2009) were able to show how social participation through meaningful activities can make adults with developmental disabilities feel that their lives have more meaning and are happier overall. They studied co-occupation in a day program with adults with developmental disabilities and the supporting staff. Typically co-occupation is discussed between parents and their children. The adults in the day program participated in up to four activities a day that each lasted between 1-2 hours with the help of two staff members per group. Activities consisted of computer time, arts and crafts, music, recreation training, cooking, etc. The results found that when the adults were happy and enjoyed the activity, the staff members felt that their job was more meaningful showing a correlation that when the adults in the day program were satisfied and felt what they were doing had meaning, the staff were satisfied as well and felt that their lives had more meaning (Mahoney & Roberts, 2009). This study stresses the importance of people engaging in meaningful occupations with others.

Similar to Mahoney and Roberts (2009), Channon (2013) stressed the importance of providing opportunities for participation in the community and in activities they are interested in for people with intellectual disabilities. Channon stated that there is a lack of research that has been done highlighting the importance for providing opportunities for participation. Channon discusses how one cannot live up to their full potential if they are not given the resources to do so, and she states that our society has not provided enough opportunities in the past. Providing opportunities for participation for people with

intellectual disabilities will lead to a more inclusive environment.

Moore, Melchior, and Davis (2008) discuss the rights of people with disabilities as the 5 P's. The 5 P's are participation, provision, protection, prevention, and perception. They discuss participation in depth and explain that all people have the right to "fully participate in matters that impact them and to experience their views being heard" (Moore, Melchior, & Davis, 2008). Mahoney and Roberts, Channon, and Moore, Melchior, and Davis all discuss the importance of participation for individuals with IDD, and that it is their right to be able to participate in social activities and occupations that they want to engage in.

Social Inclusion

There has not been much research that has been completed on social inclusion of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities that does not specifically focus on educational settings. Social inclusion is defined as the "provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training, etc." ("Social Inclusion"). The following research is centered on social inclusion in different aspects of the community and points to a lack of research on inclusion in social settings for people with IDD.

Many critics of the Special Olympics feel that the organization segregates typically developing peers because only those with IDD are allowed to participate. Foote and Collins (2011) argue that the Special Olympics Program provides many different opportunities for people diagnosed with IDD and therefore promotes inclusion. In this article, Foote and Collins use their knowledge of the Special Olympics to explain that it is not segregating people with disabilities but rather providing them with opportunities to be

advocates, leaders, and included in sports programs just like everyone else. Special

Olympics has an Integrated Sports Program, which starts and encourages sports leagues

where people with and without disabilities can play on the same team. Special Olympics

also has a Leadership Program that allows Olympians to go around the world and

advocate for people with disabilities by speaking to various audiences. They also

participate in the r-word campaign along with Best Buddies that advocates for people to

stop using the word "retarded" in everyday language (Foote & Collins, 2011). Foote and

Collins make us aware that this program has more inclusive opportunities than critics

think. The integrated sports program allows individuals with IDD and their typically

developing peers to play on a sports team together. Further research on the integrated

sports program has not been done to show the benefits of the inclusive program on the

individuals involved. The lack of research on how inclusion of people with IDD benefits

their typically developing peers is a common theme in the research found on social

inclusion.

     This lack of research is also demonstrated in a systematic review conducted by

Amado, Stancliffe, McCarron and McCallion (2013). They explained the lack of

research that has been done in the past on social inclusion of people with Intellectual and

Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and what needs to be done in the future. By compiling

research on what has been done in the past, they hoped to answer the question of what

aspects of social inclusion need to be researched more. They argued that there are four

questions/topics that still need to answered by researchers: theoretical frameworks,

approaches to measuring social inclusion, accounting for an individual's preferences, and

whether or not staff should be counted as friends. This article explains that there is a lack

of research that has been done on social inclusion and the need for more to be done.

Some of the same themes as seen above can be seen in Hall's research. Hall (2009) discussed the six themes to social inclusion that he discovered through a qualitative meta-analysis. The six themes of social inclusion that Hall found consist of: being accepted as an individual, relationships, involvement in activities, appropriate living accommodations, employment, and supports. Hall also discussed factors and constraints to social inclusion which consist of: opportunities available, attitudes and awareness of others, the work environment, existence of advocates and volunteers, quality of service providers, and access to information, services, activities and education. It stated that self- advocacy and advocacy of stakeholders increased social inclusion (Hall, 2009).

Community Perceptions of people with IDD

A lot of the studies I have looked at explore the community's perceptions of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the factors that affect the perceptions that people have. Negative perceptions tend to lead to a less inclusive environment while positive perceptions of people with IDD lead towards a more inclusive environment. In a study done by West, Wehman, and Wehman (2005) they found that the perceptions that employers have on their employees that have IDD tend to be positive perceptions. These employers hired employees through the help of the Best Buddies jobs program, a non-profit organization with the mission of inclusion. The study found that the employers enjoyed working with their employees and felt that they were satisfactory in their job performance. Often people are judged on their productivity in the work force and the study showed that people with IDD are just as productive as those that

do not have a diagnosis of IDD. Best Buddies jobs program provides people with IDD

the opportunity to work in an inclusive environment and allows them to enhance their

status and self-worth (West, Wehman, &P. Wehman, 2005). An inclusive work

environment allows coworkers to interact with individuals that have a diagnosis of IDD

that may have never had any prior experiences with people that have IDD.

      Researchers have found that negative perceptions of people with IDD have

correlated with less inclusive environments and vice versa. Ouellette-Kuntz, Burge,

Brown and Arsenault measured the perceptions that people have of those with IDD by

measuring the social distance that people have from people with IDD. They used a

survey that was similar to Bogardus' scale that is used to measure social distance from a

group of people. In this study they measured the social distance, which is defined as a

willingness to recognize, live near, or be associated with. They measured the social

distance that people have of people with IDD. The results of the study were used to

explain the public's attitude towards people with IDD. The results of the study were that

people generally had a positive attitude towards people with IDD. They also found that

age, education, and gender played a role in acceptance of people with IDD. Younger

people, people with higher education status, and females have a smaller social distance

value than others (Ouellette-Kuntz, Burge, Brown, & Arsenault, 2010).

      Programs that promote inclusion of people with disabilities have had a lot of

success in advocating for those with IDD, spreading awareness of the importance of

inclusion, and leading to positive perceptions of those with IDD. Hall (2009) discussed

that there were a lack of opportunities available for inclusion for people with IDD.

Programs such as Special Olympics, Best Buddies, both which were mentioned before, as

well as the Circle of Friends program provide those opportunities for inclusion that are

lacking in our society. Calabrese, Patterson, Liu, Goodvin, Hummel, and Nance (2008)

discuss the Circle of Friends program, which is a program that promotes social inclusion.

The program is run through schools and a school sponsor facilitates the program.

Students with IDD are paired with a buddy that attends the same school that they do.

They hang out together and do different things in the school community. The study

shows that the Circle of Friends Program helps the self-esteem of students with

disabilities increase as they learn to better communicate and become a bigger part of the

school community; the buddies (typically developing students) gain self-confidence and

learn to accept differences in people. The study showed that other students in the school

that were not involved in the program had a more positive attitude towards students with

disabilities after seeing the program at work in their school (Calabrese et al., 2008).

Others have studied how awareness of disability programs has been effective in

the past. Rillotta and Nettelbeck (2007) studied the effectiveness of awareness of

disability programs (ADP). The study found that the longer the ADPs were, the more

positive the attitudes that people have of disabilities are. The study explained that the

more information about those with IDD and exposure to people with an intellectual

disability is accompanied by more positive attitudes (Rillotta & Nettelbeck, 2007). This

study helps to explain that inclusion of people with IDD can lead to more positive

perceptions of people with IDD.

Lindsay, McPherson, Aslam, McKeever, and Wright (2012) created a puppet

show for children in elementary school that displayed typically developing children

(puppets) playing with children (puppets) that have disabilities. A large majority of the

children had never had an experience with a child that had a disability before. After the

puppet show the children stated that they liked learning about bullying and people with

disabilities. The children also stated that it was important to play with people that had

disabilities, to be nice to them, and to be friends with them (Lindsay, McPherson, Aslam,

McKeever, & Wright, 2012). This study showed that awareness opportunities lead to an

increased inclusive environment and positive perceptions of people with IDD, which is

similar to Rillota and Nettelbeck's (2007) findings.

Inclusion in Educational Settings

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) was

passed in 1975. This act ensured that there would be equal access to public education for

children with disabilities. It stated that every child has a right to education and also

stated that there should be full inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream

classes unless the disability was so severe that mainstream classes would not benefit that

student ("A Brief History of…", 2005).

Many studies have been done in inclusive school settings to show the effects it

may have on the students with IDD as well as their typically developing peers.

Dessemontet and Bless (2013) looked at the performance of students when people with

IDD were in their classrooms throughout the day. The study found that including

children with IDD in the primary general education classrooms with support does not

have a negative impact on the progress of students without a disability. Many people fear

that inclusive school settings would lead to lower test scores but this study shows that is

not the case (Dessemontet & Bless, 2013).

Another study that showed positive results from an inclusive school setting is one

completed by Jorgensen and Lambert (2012). They found that students who were

actively engaged in inclusive school settings showed great improvements in their ability

to learn and their communication skills. The article stressed the importance of engaging

students with IDD by using the Beyond Access Model in the classroom (Jorgensen &

Lambert, 2012). This study shows that there are positive effects of inclusive school

settings for students with IDD as well as their typically developing peers.

Administrators and education can really influence the way a school system

implements inclusive education. Idol (2006) studied the perceptions of educators and

their ideas on inclusion in the school system. Idol found that educators are ready to take

the steps to move more toward inclusion. It also discussed that the main concern parents

have is that the statewide test scores will be affected but the study found that they were

not affected which was also seen in Dessemontet & Bless (2013). The researchers also

discussed that as teachers have more practice with inclusion, their acceptance and

tolerance of students with disabilities in their classrooms seems to improve (Idol, 2006).

This study explains that inclusive school settings can lead to positive perceptions of

people with IDD in teachers.

Some classroom environments may be less inclusive due to teachers that are not

comfortable with teaching students that have IDD which may be due to a lack of

awareness or a lack in an ability to make accommodations for students with special

needs. McCray and McHatton (2011) found that if education majors were in a course

before graduation that is specifically dedicated to learning about special education and

how you can make accommodations for students, the education majors felt much more

comfortable in their potential role as a teacher of an inclusive classroom. The study

found that a teacher's lack of comfort in an inclusive classroom setting is often due to a

lack of awareness and knowledge about special education (McCray & McHatton, 2011).

College Students Perceptions of People with IDD

Perceptions of people with IDD tend to correlate with the amount of experiences

that one has had with an individual that has IDD. The more experiences one has had then

the more likely that his or her perception will be a positive one and vice versa. A large

majority of people has their first experience with someone that has IDD in elementary

school that was inclusive, although there are many people that do not have that

experience until much later in life. Some people have their first experience with someone

that has IDD in college. A few studies have been done on college students' perceptions

of people with IDD. One study done on college students' perceptions of people with IDD

by Casale-Giannola and Kamens (2006) focused on a 21-year-old female named

Jacqueline that took her first college course, which was a speech communications course.

Not only did Casale-Giannola and Kamens find that Jacqueline's communication skills

and confidence improved, they also found that college students enjoyed having

Jacqueline in their class. Other students in the class began to value college more because

they saw how important it was to Jacqueline and they realized they were taking it for

granted. The students also said they saw Jacqueline as the same as everyone else with the

same abilities. The students took a pre and post survey which asked whether or not they

believed a professor would have to devote more time to a student with a cognitive

disability and it would take time away from other students. After the students

participated in the course with Jacqueline there was a significant change in the answer,

students felt that their professor would not have to devote more time to a student with a

cognitive disability and in turn take time away from other students (Casale-Giannola &

Kamens, 2006). Overall, students had a more positive perception of fellow students that

have an Intellectual or Developmental Disability after being in the same class as

Jacqueline.

   May (2012) conducted a study on college students that were enrolled in inclusive

courses, which means the class consisted of students with IDD as well as typically

developing peers. May specifically looked at changes in attitudes of students after they

participated in an inclusive introductory psychology course compared to students that did

not participate in an inclusive psychology course. The Miville-Guzman Universality

Diversity-Scale (M-GUDS) was given to typically developing students in inclusive and

non-inclusive courses at the beginning of the semester. There were no differences in the

surveys at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester both groups were

given the survey again, this time there was a significant increase in the scores on the M-

GUDS completed by the students enrolled in the inclusive course (May, 2012). The

results indicated that students enrolled in an inclusive course were more likely to be

comfortable with diversity and have a more positive attitude towards diversity. The

students that were not enrolled in an inclusive course showed no change in the survey

results. This study shows that experiences with a student that has IDD in a college course

leads to more positive perceptions and is similar to the results found in Casale-Giannola

and Kamens (2006).

   Baker, Bowland and Nowik (2009) conducted a survey and sent it out to the

students and faculty of a small liberal arts women's college in Pennsylvania. The survey

was created with questions that centered on attitudes towards students with disabilities

and how they felt students with disabilities were treated at their school. The survey found

that faculty and students have different perceptions of how students with disabilities are

treated in the classroom. The faculty felt that college students with disabilities were

treated fairly and with respect, but the students felt differently. A majority of the students

felt that their college was not a positive climate for students with disabilities due to

negative perceptions of those with disabilities. Three-quarters of the students felt that the

professors focused more on students with disabilities, yet a large majority of the faculty

and students felt that students with disabilities were not a distraction in the classroom

(Baxter, Bowland, & Nowik, 2009). The notion that students with disabilities are not a

distraction in class is similar to what Casale-Giannola and Kamens (2006) found in their

study. Unlike the other studies, this study showed that college students understand that

other students on campus may treat students with disabilities as inferior; yet similar to the

other studies Baxter, Bowland, and Nowik (2009) found that students with disabilities

were not a distraction in the classroom.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a mixed qualitative and quantitative one group, after only survey. Questions attempted to gather data to determine if EKU students have positive perceptions of people with IDD; if they have been involved in programs that foster inclusive relationships such as Best Buddies, Special Olympics, etc., and if they have been involved with those programs, then do they feel they benefitted from them. The survey questions consisted of some yes or no questions, some open-ended questions, and questions using the Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The results of the study were evaluated to see if there seems to be any trends, correlations, or themes that stand out.

Sampling Design

Participants for the survey were recruited through an "EKU Students Today Announcement" which is sent out daily to all students that attend EKU through email. In the announcement there was a link to the survey. The participants were selected through a non-probability convenience sample. There were 84 respondents to the survey, two participants' results were thrown out because they were recent graduates of EKU and not currently taking classes at EKU.

Data Collection

A survey was created through an online survey database at Surveymonkey.com. The survey consisted of a total of 19 questions, six yes/no questions, four questions that were specifically asked based on demographics, three open-ended questions, and 6 questions using the Likert scale (see Appendix B). The survey was accessed through the

online database, Survey Monkey and could also be accessed through the link provided in

the "EKU Students Today Announcement". The particpants were anonymous to the

researcher and were allowed to leave the survey at any time. Participation was voluntary.

Participants not over the age of 18 and not currently taking classes at EKU had their

results thrown out of the study, a total of two respondents were thrown out of the study.

Data Analysis

 The results of the survey were carefully evaluated by analyzing the percent of

frequencies reporting for the questions that are closed-ended questions and yes or no

questions. Questions that are open-ended were analyzed qualitatively. Questions based

off of the likert scale were analyzed further by looking at the mean of the answers.

Chapter 4

Results

Survey results will be analyzed in relation to the purpose of this study, which is to see if students at EKU have positive perceptions of individuals with IDD as well as if they have been involved in programs that promote inclusion and if they feel they have benefitted from those inclusive programs. Out of the 82 participants answers that were analyzed, 73 people (88%) indicated they were female, 8 people (9.6%) male, and 1 person (1.2%) agender. Ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 49. People within the age range of 18-20 completed the majority of the responses, which was 45 people or 54.9% of respondents, followed by the age range 21-29, which was 33 people or 40.2% (see Appendix A, table 1).

Respondents ranged from freshmen in college to graduate students with 11 freshmen (13.4%), 17 sophomores (20.7%), 29 juniors (35.4%), 19 seniors (23.3%), and 6 graduate students (7.3%) (see Appendix S, table 2). There was a wide range of majors from 5 different colleges at EKU. The colleges represented were Arts and Sciences, Health Sciences, Education, Justice and Safety, and Business and Technology (see Appendix A, table 3). Five respondents skipped the question what was your major so they were considered undecided for the purpose of this study. Thirteen people or 15.6% were occupational science majors, which was the major with the most responses to the survey, with a total of 38 majors represented (see Appendix A, table 4). Question 6 on the survey asked if the respondent had a diagnosis of IDD, 74 (90.2%0 answered no, with 8 people (9.8%) answering yes (see Appendix A, table 5).

Question 7 asked the respondent if they knew someone with a diagnosis of IDD, 59 (72.8%) responded yes, 22 (27.2%) responded no. Respondents were then asked how they knew the person with IDD, there were four answers that were repeated through out,

the most common answer was friend with 32 people (55%), relative with 18 people

(31%), 4 people (7%) answered work, and 4 people (7%) responded with high school (see

Appendix A, table 6). Question 9 asked if respondents had ever spent time with or hung

out with someone who had IDD in a social setting, 56 (68.3%) responded yes, 26 (31.7%)

responded no (see Appendix A, table 7) meaning they had hung out with an individual

that has IDD in a social setting such as a movie, going out to eat, etc.

Respondents were asked to rank on a scale of one to five if they felt people with

IDD are capable of going to work and college. Options were given ranging from

"strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and numeric values were placed on options

ranging from 1 to 5, 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. The

average response was 4.21 with a standard deviation of .720, which falls between agree

and strongly agree. Only one participant responded that they disagree and one

respondent skipped the question (see Appendix A, table 8, figure 1). This value shows

that respondents feel that people with IDD are able to go to work and college and should

be able to do so.

Respondents were asked to rank their agreement with the statement "I feel that

people with IDD are just like everyone else" with the same range as mentioned before

from 1 to 5. Respondents' answers were an average ranking of 3.85 with a standard

deviation of 1.032, which falls between neutral and agree but closer to agree, which

shows that a large majority of the respondents feel that people with IDD are just like

everyone else (see Appendix A, table 8, figure 2). 27 respondents (33%) ranked the

statement with a 4 or agree and 27 respondents (33%) ranked the statement with a 4 or

strongly agree. Although the average ranking was in agreement with the statement, there

were 11 respondents (13%) that disagreed and 17 (21%) were neutral showing that some were not agreement with the statement. Respondents were also asked to rank another statement that was very similar to this one. The statement was "I feel that people with IDD are the same as those that do not have a disability" and was again ranked on the same 1 to 5 scale. The respondents' average was slightly lower than the question above with an average ranking of 3.38 with a standard deviation of 1.107 (see Appendix A, table 8, figure 3). This lies between neutral and agree but is a bit closer to neutral. Although this question was very similar to the one before, 1 respondent (1.2%) marked strongly disagree, 21 (25.6%) marked disagree, 22 (26.8%) marked neutral, 22 (26.8%) marked agree, and 16 (19.6%) marked strongly agree. The change in respondents' answers may be due to the use of the word disability, which often has a negative connotation to it that indicates that something is wrong with that individual.

Respondents were asked if they had ever been involved with a program that fosters inclusion such as Special Olympics, Best Buddies, Circle of Friends program etc. 23 people (28%) responded yes and 58 (72%) responded no (see table 9). There was one respondent that skipped the question. Respondents that answered yes were then asked to go on to the next question, which asked them to briefly explain why they got involved in the program. One respondent that answered yes to the previous question skipped the question but the other 22 responded. Many respondents stated they did it for a family member who has IDD or because of their major and some even stated they were involved in inclusive programs because they wanted to work with people that have IDD in their future career. One respondent wrote, " I truly believe those with IDD deserve to be treated the same as those without. I want to be a part of that". Another respondent wrote,

"I am a strong believer that everyone should have the same opportunities in life", and someone else wrote, "Although they are slightly different, they are still normal people and deserve to be included". After they answered this question they were asked if they felt that they had benefitted from including those with IDD in their life. There were 36 participants that answered this question, and 46 that skipped the question. Respondents that answered no to being involved in a program that fosters inclusion were asked to skip this question. Out of the 36 that answered, 35 (97%) marked that yes they feel they have benefitted from inclusion, and 1 respondent (3%) marked no (see Appendix A, table 10). Some respondents did not skip the question, but answered because they may have felt that they have benefitted from including someone with IDD into their life.

Respondents were then asked to briefly explain how their life has benefitted from including those with IDD into their social circle or life. There were 30 participants that answered this question and 52 skipped it. Many respondents recorded ways in which their lives had changed or had been impacted by someone with IDD. For example one respondent wrote, "I feel from being friends with individuals with IDD I have a different outlook on life. I have a love for life and the little things", another wrote, "They make you feel loved". Another respondent wrote "I stopped being so judgmental" many others wrote that it makes them more aware, have a broader world view, allowed them to be a more understanding person, value diversity, and helped them become a more positive person. Another participant wrote, "It is important to understand that being different does not make a person ill-equipped to function in the world, nor does it mean they are of lesser value than someone else. Interacting with people who have different perspectives is what leads to acceptance of others, and through that compassion one can gain a better

understanding of oneself." Someone else wrote, "My life has benefitted through

including those with IDD in my life through teaching me patience, making me more

inclusive, and showing me what is most important in life. Without the presence of both

my cousins (who have Down's Syndrome) and people with IDD, in general, I would have

missed many learning opportunities and chances to be a better person." Through these

responses we are able to see that people were changed by their experiences with people

that have IDD and after them they have more positive perceptions of people with IDD.

These responses also show that although every individual's experience was different with

inclusion, they had similar responses on the survey on how inclusion changed or

benefitted their lives.

The last few questions were Likert scale questions. Respondents were asked to

rank the following statement on a scale of 1 to 5; " I would allow my child to be friends

with someone that has IDD". The average ranking for the statement was a 4.79 with a

standard deviation of .464 with all 82 respondents answering the question (see Appendix

A, table 8). This average falls between agree and strongly agree showing that overall the

respondents would allow their children to include those with IDD into their social lives.

This is important because many people do not have their first inclusive experience with

someone who has IDD until later in life. If children are given the chance to include those

with IDD at a young age then they will be more likely to continue to include people with

IDD throughout their adult lives. 67 respondents (82%) marked strongly agree, 13 (16%)

marked agree, and 2 (2%) respondents marked that they felt neutral about the statement

(see Appendix A, figure 4). Respondents were than asked to rank the following

statement on a scale of 1 to 5; I feel that people with IDD should be allowed to be in

romantic relationships. All 82 respondents answered the question with an average ranking of 4.55 and a standard deviation of .688 (see Appendix A, table 8). This ranking falls between agree and strongly agree with 53 participants (65%) marking strongly agree, 22 (27%) marking agree, 6 (7%) marking neutral, and 1 (1%) marking disagree (see Appendix A, figure 5).

Respondents were asked to rank the following statement on a scale of 1 to 5; "I feel that people with IDD positively contribute to society". The average ranking for the statement was a 4.51 with a standard deviation of .593 with all 82 respondents answering the question (see Appendix A, table 8). This ranking falls between agree and strongly agree with the majority of respondents marking strongly agree. 46 respondents (56%) marked strongly agree, 32 (39%) marked agree, and 4 respondents (5%) marked neutral (see Appendix A, figure 6). This shows that a majority of respondents feel that people with IDD positively contribute to society.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Conclusion

I found that a majority of the respondents of the survey had a positive perception of people with IDD. Through the survey, I also found that many of the respondents that had experiences with inclusion in the past or had been involved in programs that foster inclusion felt that their lives had benefitted from including those with IDD. Including those with IDD made respondents more aware of people with IDD, more accepting of them, and allowed them a greater understanding of the world and allowed them to value diversity in their lives. I found that an awareness of people with IDD and more exposure to a person with IDD leads to more positive perceptions of people with IDD (Rillotta and Nettelbeck, 2007). Respondents felt that people with IDD are the same as people without disabilities and are capable of doing what others were doing (Casale-Giannola & Kamens, 2006). Overall most of the respondents had positive perceptions of those with IDD, felt that inclusion was beneficial to their lives, and felt that people with IDD are capable of working, going to college, and being in romantic relationships.

Before I began this study I did not expect such positive perceptions of people with IDD. I hypothesized that there would be a negative bias or stigma surrounding people with IDD at Eastern Kentucky University. Fortunately, based on the results of this study, students seem to have a positive perception of individuals with IDD and feel that inclusion can benefit their lives although further research would need to be done to reach a larger majority of the campus community. This study shows that although there are many stigmas of people with IDD in society, those stigmas are not represented in the population at EKU that responded to this survey.

Limitations

There were several limiting factors associated with this study. Factors such as a limited sample size, ability to access the survey, demographics, and a personal relationship to the author of the study may have influenced some respondents' results. A sample of 82 students at Eastern Kentucky University is very small compared to the over 16,000 students at EKU (EKU, 2010). The survey was available through an email announcement that is sent to all students at EKU. People had to have received this email and had access to the internet. Respondents were able to see the author of the study's name in the announcement. People that know the author may have felt obligated to complete the study. Respondents were primarily female (88%), with only 9.8% male and 1.2% agender. Demographics, economic, political, and cultural characteristics specific to Eastern Kentucky University may have impacted the results of the study significantly. Due to the nature of the questions, respondents may have felt obligated to answer the questions in a certain way such as more positively so they may appear more inclusive to the author. This study should not be generalized as it is only meant to be representative of a small portion of the EKU community.

Implications and Future Research

The results show that being around people with IDD can lead to increased awareness and positive perceptions of people with IDD. Including people with IDD appears to have benefits on typically developing peers such as an increased value of diversity, positive perceptions, and a broader view of the world to name a few. More research needs to be done to see if the larger majority of EKU has positive perceptions of people with IDD and if individuals with IDD are included into their lives. If further research found that EKU was not as inclusive as found in this study, an awareness of

disabilities program such as Rillotta and Nettelbeck's (2007) would be useful on campus.

Rillota and Nettelbeck (2007) showed that a simple awareness of disabilities program

such as reading about people with IDD and then watching a video correlated with a

positive perception of people with IDD. The longer the awareness program was then the

more positively people felt about people with IDD. They also found that exposure to

people with IDD led people to have a more positive perception of people with IDD. If a

further research study found that EKU's community was not inclusive and did not have a

positive perception of people with IDD then an awareness program could be added to all

freshman orientation classes.   The program could be as simple as a few readings and a

video about people with IDD or someone with IDD coming in and talking to them about

the importance of inclusion. On a larger scale there could be government policy

implemented on the basis of inclusion and perceptions of people with IDD. If a

university receives funding from the federal or state government they should be required

to implement an awareness program for all students. The awareness program could be as

simple as the one I mentioned before but it would allow them to further their education

because when they graduate and begin their career they may have a coworker that has

intellectual or developmental disability. Being able to work as a team is an important

skill in any career and if one has a negative perception of people with IDD they will not

be able to work as a team with their coworkers. When employees are able to work

together as a team they are happier at work and the company will have more productive

employees. An inclusive work environment would not only benefit the employees but

also the company.

Overall, this study found that EKU students have a positive perception of individuals with IDD.   The study also shows that individuals that include those with IDD in their lives feel that they have benefitted or grown in some way due to including those with IDD.   The study represented a very small proportion of the EKU student body so further research needs to be conducted to see if the results are in alignment with the rest of the student body.   This study can be used to help understand the importance of social inclusion for individuals with IDD and also understand that the more experiences one has with individuals that have IDD can lead to positive perceptions of individuals with IDD.

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