Impact of Inclusive College Programs Serving Students with Intellectual Disabilities on Disability Studies Interns and Typically Enrolled Students

Margo Vreeburg Izzo
Amy Shuman
Ohio State University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to confirm and extend prior research on the attitudes and experiences of typical college students towards students with intellectual disabilities who were enrolled in an inclusive postsecondary program. College students enrolled in a Disability Studies Internship class completed surveys, journals, and participated in a focus group to share their perceptions and experiences as educational coaches and mentors with students with intellectual disabilities. The results confirmed previous studies that typical students, with prior experience and high comfort ratings, agree that students with intellectual disabilities have the ability to participate in college experiences such as classes, campus organizations, and living in dorms with support. Additional themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis indicated that the disability studies interns were challenged to balance program requirements and the dignity of risk and self-determination of students with ID; and the disability interns clarified their own career goals by supporting students with ID. Findings suggest that typically enrolled college students benefit from inclusive postsecondary programs that serve students with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: Intellectual disabilities, postsecondary education, inclusion; disability studies

The emergence of postsecondary (PSE) programs for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) is increasing due to federal funding, legislation, and most importantly, advocacy efforts of families, service providers and persons with ID themselves. In Alberta, Canada, inclusive postsecondary programs have been available for students with intellectual and multiple disabilities for nearly 25 years (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012), and employment outcomes of program completers exceed 70% (Hughson, Moodie, & Uditsky, 2006). In the United States, the growth of postsecondary programs for students with ID has accelerated during the past decade. In 2004, Gaumer, Morningstar, and Clark (2004) identified 48 programs for students with ID located at postsecondary institutions for students with ID ages 18-21.

The first national database of PSE options for students of all ages was developed in 2004 by the Institute of Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and 78 programs were described in their searchable database (Zafft, Hart, & Zimbrich, 2004). In 2008, there were 148 programs in ICI's searchable database and in 2009, 244 programs were identified through outreach efforts by the National Center for Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities funded by the National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), also located at ICI (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012). In a qualitative analysis of conference transcripts involving a variety of experts, five themes regarding the state of PSE programs emerged: outcomes for students with ID, self-determination, funding, program design, and

research. Potential outcomes for students with ID included better access to competitive employment, and improved academic performance, self-determination, social engagement, and independent living (Thoma, et al, 2012).

According to a 2013 query of the Think College Database (2013), 202 PSE institutions have submitted information to describe their college program for students with ID. Of these programs, 70 serve students who are still enrolled in high school, 125 serve students who have exited high school, and few programs serve both high school and adult students with ID. All but 8 states have submitted information about their programs to the database.

In a national survey, Grigal, et al. (2012), reported the following characteristics of the 149 program respondents from 39 states: 51% of programs were located in four-year institutions, 40% were in two-year community colleges, and 9% were located in adult vocational programs. Regarding gaining accommodations from disability service offices (DSO) located at each respective university campus, 58% of the respondents indicated that students with ID gained services from their campus' DSO, 39% indicated that students did not, and 3% of respondents indicated that they did not know (n = 128). The types of accommodations the students received paralleled the types of services provided for students with disabilities such as peer note takers, gaining professor notes, priority seating, and tape recording class lectures. The majority of respondents indicated that they offered social skills training, independent living, and life-skills instruction. Regarding academic instruction, "45% of respondents indicated that 76% to 100% of the instruction students received in their program was provided only with other students with ID" (Grigal et al., 2012, pp. 226-227).

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education funded 27 model demonstration grants within the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) program. These grants are required to create or expand inclusive comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with ID, as authorized by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008. The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 defines the term "inclusion" as the right of persons with ID and/or developmental disabilities (DD) to participate in the same community activities as individuals without disabilities so they can learn, work, and enjoy life in contact with their peers without disabilities (Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000).

Growing evidence suggests that inclusive activities promote social acceptance (Siperstein, Glick, & Parker, 2009; Wilhite, Devine, & Goldberg, 1999) and more positive attitudes about people with ID (Hardman & Clark, 2006). Students with ID enrolled in inclusive college programs where students were able to audit or enroll in a variety of college courses, and participate in college clubs and internships that supported their career plans, had a relatively high rate of paid employment after they exited the college program (Grigal & Dwyre, 2010). All of these positive outcomes of inclusive programs reduce the stigma that is often associated with having an ID.

More recent studies report the benefits of inclusive postsecondary programs for students with ID for typical students without disabilities who enroll in classes with students with ID. May (2012) involved 138 traditional college students and eight students with either an ID or DD in her research on the impact of enrolling in inclusive psychology classes (as opposed to non-inclusive classes) on students' attitudes towards diversity, and observed a reliable and positive shift in attitudes on diversity among traditional students without disabilities. Griffin, Summer, McMillan, and Day (2012), surveyed 256 students about their attitudes towards including students with ID in college classes. They reported that typically developing college students expressed positive attitudes toward including peers with ID in college classes: "Respondents who indicated greater comfort with people with ID had more positive perceptions of their abilities, perceived more benefits associated with their inclusion, and were more willing to interact with them," (p. 236). Both of these studies concluded that inclusive postsecondary programs for students with ID have positive benefits for typically enrolled students.

In a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a mentoring program involving students with ID, Jones and Goble (2012) reported that both mentors and mentees found that one of the most difficult barriers to overcome were the stereotypical notions of incompetence people have of individuals with ID. As one mentor witnessed, "The one thing I've noticed is that a lot of people have lower expectations for individuals with disabilities." Professors admitted the initial lack of expectations, as demonstrated when one said, "I didn't know how much to expect a student to do in the class," (p. 274).

Perske (1972) discussed the importance of dignity of risk to promote personal development and growth among persons with ID, that is, reasonable risk taking can and should be a part of everyone's daily living experiences. To deny persons with ID the opportunity to experience risks that are commensurate with their abilities tends to have a deleterious effect on both their sense of human dignity and personal growth. Managing the risk involves the input of many stakeholders including the student, family members, and college personnel (Dwyre, Grigal & Failka, 2010). With careful planning, students with ID have the opportunity to experience new challenges in inclusive college settings that better prepares them for integrated employment and adult life than more traditional sheltered options that are available.

Many researchers agree that more research is needed to understand both the nature of the interactions among traditional students and students with ID, as well as the types of training and supports that may further enhance outcomes for both student populations and reduce the stigma that plagues many students with ID who are often categorized as inferior (May, 2012; O'Connor, Kubiak, Espiner, & O'Brien, 2012). O'Connor et al. recommended in-depth exploration of student views on the learning competence displayed by students with ID as they audit college courses, and Griffin et al. (2012) stated that observational data would enhance our understanding of the interactions among typical students and students with ID.

The purpose of our study is to explore (1) factors that position traditional students enrolled in a Disability Studies Internship class to gain more from their experiences with individuals with ID, (2) how extended engagement with individuals with ID benefits regularly enrolled students, and (3) how educational coaches and mentors articulate the challenges they face in promoting self-determination of individuals with ID. In particular, our work extends the previous research described above by adding observational data in the form of two focus groups and a series of 10 weekly journals where students reflect on their interactions with students with ID.

Methods

College students enrolled in a Disability Studies (DS) Internship class received credit to participate in a class with 10 students with ID, read relevant publications, and write journals to reflect on their experiences as they assisted students with ID who were participating in a PSE program. In addition to providing 3-6 hours of weekly support to students with ID, the DS interns completed the following: (1) weekly journals submitted as partial completion of the DS internship class, (2) a survey completed after the class grades were submitted, and (3) a focus group after the class was completed.

Participants

Participants included eight typical students who were enrolled in a DS Internship class and were interning as educational coaches or mentors to support 10 students with ID in the academic and social components of their college program. For the purpose of this study, the educational coaches and mentors are described as DS interns. All DS interns were undergraduate students ages 20 or 21; all were female but one; two students were majoring in psychology and the other six students were majoring in biology, early childhood education, English, neuroscience, public affairs and special education. They were recruited through email notices and encouraged to enroll in the DS Internship class. DS interns attended the weekly three-hour internship class with students with ID who were required to take the class. The DS interns who served as educational coaches attended a variety of college classes with a student with ID and assisted them to participate fully in the class. Some students interned in the tutoring center to assist students with coursework, and other interns participated in social events on campus with students with ID as mentees. In addition to the eight student participants, a structured interview was conducted with the Director of DS and the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator of the university.

Setting

The TPSID program is located at a large Midwestern university that is a tier 1 research institution. The disability studies specialization is the third largest minor within the university, with an enrollment of 125 students. The DS internship class is designed to involve DS students and students with ID to help stu-

324 Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, *26*(4)

dents gain experiences that connect disability studies to social, political, economic, and educational issues that confront people with ID and to learn how the various issues impact individuals with ID. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to do the following:

1. Describe the role of disability organizations and/or advocates in the lives of young adults with disabilities, including the need to promote self-determination;
2. Gain experience working with students with disabilities as either an educational coach or mentor to help students maximize their college experiences and become contributing members of their communities;
3. Place their internship experience in a larger theoretical and empirical context through reading about disability organizations, current issues, and participation in discussions with internship instructors.

Students with ID learned to use the university's learning management system, email, and other technological tools, as well as practiced the social skills needed to participate in inclusive college courses with the support of their DS intern. The required text was *Think College: Postsecondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*, and DS students submitted weekly journal entries to reflect on their experiences working with students with ID with regard to their professional, personal, and academic development.

Procedures

Survey instrument. We adapted the Undergraduate Student Attitude Survey used in prior research on the attitudes of typical college students toward including students with ID (Griffin et al., 2012; Siperstein et al., 2007). The final survey instrument was composed of 35 items and included demographic information (name, gender, major, age, year in college); interactions with people with ID (previous experience, frequency of contacts, types of relationships, and comfort level); perceptions of abilities of students with ID (six items to rate if students with ID can take classes, eat meals on campus, participate in clubs, live in dorms, play inter-mural sports, and use libraries); willingness to interact with students with ID (eight items to rate their willingness to talk to students before/after class, lend them a pencil, tell them about a lecture, include them on class projects, etc.); level of agreement with eight specific statements to determine positive (e.g., help him find a building on campus, invite him to dinner) and negative (e.g., professor might pay more attention to the new student than other students, new student might not know how to act in a class at OSU) perceptions. The survey was administered to all eight students prior to the focus group and, for students who could not attend the focus group, collected via an email request.

Focus group. We conducted a focus group with five of the eight participants at the end of the semester to learn more about their experiences and attitudes. All focus groups/interviews were videotaped and transcribed in preparation for analysis. The student focus group questions follow:

1. Describe your prior experience in interacting with people with disabilities.
2. What do you want to share about your experiences this past semester?
3. What do you wish you were told prior to starting this internship experience?
4. What were you unprepared for?
5. Let's talk about particular experiences, challenges, moments that were memorable in a good way or moments when you were challenged in a way that made you uncomfortable.
6. What suggestions or recommendations do you have to improve the internship experience for you or the program overall for students with ID?

After the student focus group data were analyzed, we shared the preliminary findings with two university administrators and asked the following questions.

1. How does the PSE program for students with ID benefit regularly enrolled students?
   a. How might the presence of the students with ID affect general attitudes toward students and others with disabilities?
   b. Will the presence of students with ID provide an atmosphere in which students with invisible disabilities might be more willing to disclose?
   c. What adverse consequences might result from the presence of students with ID?

2. What is the best rationale for having students with ID audit classes?
3. How does the ODS address questions of self-advocacy and what are the major challenges?
4. What is the best argument to counter attitudes against including people with disabilities?
5. Does the ODS ever face the concern that these students might "lower the excellence" of the student body?

Journals. As discussed previously, all DS interns submitted weekly journals to reflect on the content of an assigned chapter in context of their internship experiences working with students with ID enrolled in the college program. At the end of the semester, over 20 single-spaced pages of journal entries were compiled, totaling approximately 16,233 words.

Analysis Process

For this research, we are particularly interested in interactions among regularly enrolled university students and students with ID in a postsecondary program. The survey instrument was designed to learn about students' attitudes toward postsecondary students with ID and descriptive statistics are used to summarize these results. To learn more about these attitudes, we analyzed focus groups transcripts and journal entries from the DS interns who were working closely with individuals with ID. Three readers independently read the transcripts and used discourse analysis to analyze the focus group and journal entry data. Discourse analysis is designed to identify not only what people say but also how they say it (Tannen, 1993). We coded all of the discussion of interactions with individuals with ID and further differentiated between generalized impressions, ideas and opinions, and accounts of particular interactions, told as narratives. We identified all references to students with ID as well as other disabilities and observed patterns (which we refer to as "alignments")[1] both in how the speakers characterized their own attitudes and how they characterized others' attitudes.

Discourse analysis is particularly useful for understanding how people implicitly refer to categories. Tannen (1993) describes these categories as "structures of expectation," and provides a model for studying how people align themselves with or in opposition to these structures. How people describe their position in relation to the structure of the relationship and the performance of others reveals their perceptions (Bamberg, 1997). Further, we draw on Goffman's (1963) frameworks for understanding discourses related to stigma to more particularly assess students' attitudes toward the stigmatized group of individuals with ID. Goffman describes stigma as the "management of spoiled identity," a framework that understands the stigma as the product of cultural interactions rather than as attributes belonging to persons or groups. This perspective, which has been taken up by disability studies generally, considers "normalcy" to be a social fact as well as a biological fact (Davis, 1995).

We analyzed accounts of particular interactions using narrative analysis. Narratives provide data about the complexity of interactions (Shuman, 2005). In our data, we identified narratives told by DS interns about (1) interactions between the DS interns and individuals with ID, and (2) interactions among regularly enrolled students and students with ID that the DS interns observed. We attended to three dimensions of narrative:

1. We observed the "script" of the narrative (what happened first and next and how this order of events implied causality). Scripts are especially useful for identifying the structures of expectation, a priori categories, or available discourses that the respondents bring to their experiences with individuals with ID.
2. We observed how the narrators described the different participants in the account, how they categorized the participants, and how they "positioned" themselves and the others in relation to each other. We used positioning analysis to learn how the educational coaches differentiated between how they viewed their interactions with individuals with ID in contrast to others' interactions.
3. We observed how the narrators qualified or explained the events/actions in the narratives.[2] We used this dimension of our analysis to observe how the educational coaches assigned value (positive or negative) to interactions with individuals with ID.

---

1 "Alignment" is Erving Goffman's term for how individuals position themselves in relation to each other and how they reposition (realign) themselves in relation to what they imagine to be perceptions of themselves, especially when dealing with stigmatized groups (Goffman, 1959).

2 These qualifiers are referred to as the "evaluative" dimension of narrative, a much studied dimension of narrative research beginning with the work of William Labov (1972).

Results

Survey Findings

Of the eight student respondents, five served as an educational coach to support students with ID in academic classes and tutoring centers, and three served as mentors who engaged in social activities. All had prior experience with persons with disabilities. Most experience came from family members with disabilities (two were siblings, one had a cousin with Down syndrome, and one had a grandmother with a disability); seven had prior experience volunteering with Special Olympics or other types of programs for people with disabilities. Regarding frequency of interactions with a person with ID, six respondents reported interacting "nearly every day" and two reported interacting once or twice a week. All respondents reported feeling very comfortable interacting with students with ID.

All eight respondents indicated that students with ID have the ability to take classes, eat meals on campus, participate in clubs, and use the library. On a 5-point scale with 5 indicating "yes" and 1 indicating "no," the means for the above items were 5.0. Two items received a mean of 4.75: living in dorms and playing inter-mural sports. Regarding providing assistance in class or interacting in social settings, all items received a mean of 5.0, indicating that all eight respondents would be willing to assist students with ID in college classes and invite them to dinner or introduce them to other friends. Overall, student respondents indicated low levels of agreement with negative statements such as "the professor might make the class too easy" and "I might not know how to talk to and act around the new student" with mean scores of 1.5 each. The item that was rated most inconsistently by the respondents was "The new student might not know how to act in a class." This item received a mean score of 3.0.

The surveys also provided opportunities to comment on interaction with people with ID. The respondents wrote the following:

1. I learned so much from this experience.
2. Every experience I have ever had with people with intellectual disabilities has been wonderful and I have learned so much from working with them. I wish everyone was as open to learning something too.
3. I believe that people with intellectual disabilities are just like us. Sometimes they may need extra help, but we are all the same.
4. I love spending time with the students with ID. They are a joy to be around and teach me so many things about myself and how to be a better person.
5. I feel that students with disabilities should be included in campus events and courses, but I believe these students will need varying degrees of aid and support.
6. I think a lot of people have a skewed perception of people with disabilities. They think that they are all the same, that they would waste their time, and possibly don't have any potential. I disagree with all of these statements but do know that it is tough to get the messages across to people who are not around people with disabilities as much.

Overall the attitudes of DS interns regarding including students with ID in PSE were very positive. DS interns who worked with students with ID recommended involving students with ID in all aspects of campus. One student commented, "the more visibility … the better campus life will be." We will expand upon these survey findings in our narrative results and discussion sections.

Results of Thematic Analysis of Survey and Narrative Data

Four themes emerged from our analysis of the survey, journals, and focus group data. [3]

1. Prior experience enhanced regularly enrolled students' comfort levels with students with ID.
2. DS interns observed others' attitudes towards students with ID.
3. DS interns were challenged to balance program requirements with students with ID's self-determination and dignity of risk.
4. DS interns clarified their own career goals by supporting students with ID.

Each theme includes excerpts from the narratives as supporting documentation.

1. Prior experience enhanced students comfort level with ID. Our narrative analysis confirmed survey

---

[3] Journal entries and focus groups transcripts were coded by a team comprised of Amy Shuman, Leigh Neithardt, and Olivia Caldeira.

data indicating that prior experience enhances DS interns' comfort level with students with ID. In the survey data, journal entries, and focus groups, respondents articulated not only willingness to interact with individuals with ID but also their belief that these interactions were beneficial to them. In the focus group and journal entries, the respondents elaborated on the one or two sentences they provided in the survey to describe their first encounters with individuals with ID. Some of the respondents described interacting as children with children with ID and not recognizing ID as a category until several years later. We observed that through their personal and academic experiences, these respondents had acquired a discourse for talking about the benefits of diversity and inclusion in the academy.

All of the DS interns reported prior experience with individuals with ID. In the focus group, they elaborated on these responses and described how they conceptualized the influence of these experiences. One intern described her mother and her prior long-term experience with someone with ID whom her mother had cared for and then said that several years later, when someone in her family was born with ID, she responded, "It's okay, like, we have experience with students, and with, you know, friends like this, and, you know, we can handle it." In other words, she both recognized how her prior experience shaped her and understood that others, without that experience, might not be able to "handle it" as well. Another intern described how her long-term and very early engagement with someone with ID shaped her acceptance of difference:

> Narrative 1:
> From the very beginning, like, I never understood, like, why… like, I just accepted it, like, I remember being really young and, you know, these were my best friends when I was little, and, you know… we would play together, and even as I grew, got, a little bit older, you know, the… my best friends' interests were still younger, and like, that was okay. And then my sister was born and, you know, they played together, and… and um… I never thought anything of it.

We refer to this as a narrative of emerging recognition of difference, following a period of acceptance. It is epitomized by the DS intern's statement, "I never thought anything of it." Many of the interns positioned themselves in this first narrative script, as individuals who grew up accepting individuals with disabilities as part of the range of human diversity; several interns reported that they did not recognize any significant difference until they were older. We contrast this to a second narrative script in which someone describes first feeling uncomfortable around people with disabilities and then getting to know someone, leading to greater comfort. The survey question is designed more to address the second narrative script and to learn whether experiences with individuals with ID promote greater comfort. Through our focus group research, we discovered this differentiation between the two narrative scripts, and we found that our focus group participants' stories used the first narrative script.

2. Observations of others' attitudes. We coded the focus group transcriptions and journal entries to identify others' perceptions of interactions with individuals with ID. This data revealed not only whether respondents viewed others as having positive or negative attitudes but also (1) What kinds of interactions they had observed; (2) how they assessed those interactions as valuable or most harmful; (3) how the respondents described *potential* interactions among others; and (4) how the educational coaches articulated their views of obstacles and opportunities for the individuals with ID who were auditing classes.

The survey data suggest that individuals with prior experience with individuals with ID are able to produce discourses of acceptance. Discourses of acceptance are one kind of available discourse, contrasted with discourses of intolerance, fear, or rejection. In the focus groups and journal entries, the interns differentiated between their own comfort and the discomfort they perceived among other regularly enrolled students who encountered students with ID in classes.

In the following journal entry excerpt, the educational coach differentiates her alignment from others who *aren't* as open to this learning. The idea that "people with intellectual disabilities are just like us" and "we are all the same" is one available discourse for talking about people with ID. One of the respondents to the survey additionally described how others (with less experience) perceive individuals with ID as "all the same"; in other words, others fail to differentiate and notice the many differences among people with ID. These responses are consistent with how the respondents position themselves as accepting of individuals with ID and as different from other regularly enrolled students who might not be as accepting. In the follow-

ing excerpts from the focus group and journal entries, the DS interns describe their observations of other students. Journal entry excerpt:

> The general public may question why someone with an intellectual disability should be allowed in a college class, let alone act as a participating member. Many people might even say it is a waste of space and money because these students are unlike the 'normal' students. Through my background, I know this idea is far from the truth, but as an educational coach it is my job to help demonstrate to the public [how] a strong transition program from high school will make a tremendous difference for the family and individual with an intellectual disability.

> Narrative 2:
> You will have some students that will just stare and try to figure out the relationship and what y'all are doing there?

> But then there's some, like in (individual with ID's) class last year, one girl, we had to form small groups, and she would always come over and meet with us "cause she would enjoy talking to him."

In both the journal entry excerpt and Narrative 2, the educational coaches imagine what other students might say or think. In Narrative 2, the coach describes a positive interaction and attributes a motive to the student who chooses to engage with the student with ID: "cause she would enjoy talking to him." The educational coaches often reported what they imagined other students might think and why they might learn to have a positive attitude. In many of the focus group discussions and journal entries, the educational coaches articulated a preference for students who chose to interact with individuals with ID without being asked. For example:

> Narrative 3:
> [The professor] had forgotten to do the Power-Point, so everyone had to let him [individual with ID] borrow their laptop. It wasn't the professor telling them, but it was nice that other people noticed that he would need this.

These two examples rely on what we described above in narrative script 2 in which people with little or no prior experience with students with ID are characterized as possibly intolerant or uncomfortable. The educational coaches, all of whom do have prior experience, differentiate themselves from students who might stereotype individuals with ID. According to narrative script 2, when those others actually get to know an individual with ID, they recognize that the ID students have something to offer. In our examination of the narratives, one of the patterns we observed was that individuals who choose, without being asked, to associate with individuals with ID are particularly valued by the DS interns.

3. DS interns were challenged to balance program requirements with students with ID's self-determination and dignity of risk. The DS interns had extensive interactions with students with ID; most worked one-on-one with one or more students with ID in the PSE program. In their journal entries and in the focus group, the interns described their frustrations and achievements and, especially in the journal entries, offered their understandings of the complex goals of transition programs. The DS interns, who unilaterally reported a high comfort level with students with ID, wrestled with what appeared sometimes to be conflicting goals related to the dignity of risk. In the focus group, the interns expressed their frustrations and confusions in trying to balance the different goals for individuals with ID, including meeting expectations and responsibilities, encouraging self-advocacy, assessing strengths and limitations, and identifying goals and interests.

The focus group and journal entries provided opportunities to better understand how the DS interns wrestle with the complex, intersecting, sometimes competing goals of self-determination, self-assessment, and self-advocacy with program procedures and safety guidelines. In a focus group discussion of some of the challenges faced in working with students with ID in a PSE program, one of the respondents described negotiating independence when an individual with ID wanted to find his way across campus at night:

> Narrative 4:
> B was, like, trained to like, uh, walk certain places he would want to walk, like, from the [program office] to the [recreation center] at night. And, I knew that he wasn't allowed to do that and he would be

telling me, like, "No! I can do it!" And I'm like, "No! You really can't, like, you're not allowed to yet, like, you're not trained to be walking around, like, this huge campus at night when you can't see that well."

When asked how she felt about this, she continued:

> Well, I felt bad, because I kept thinking that he just thought that I didn't think he was capable of walking, but that wasn't the problem. I just knew he wasn't allowed. And I didn't want, like, something to happen, like, he got lost or something, and then, like I would be freaking out and everything like that and I would feel terrible, like, it was my fault and it was like, I felt bad that he… I was getting the sense that he thought I just didn't think he was capable of doing it. Which, that just wasn't it. It was just that he wasn't… you know, like… they had told me that he couldn't go wandering off, like, at night by himself, so I was just following, like, what I knew was right. But, he was getting more, like, flustered with me for not letting him.

In narrative 4, the DS intern positions herself as someone who thinks that B is capable, but she worries that he does not know that she thinks he is capable. Her position is compromised by her responsibilities for monitoring an activity not permitted (walking alone at night to the destination across campus). The coach is careful both to explain that she regards B as capable and to express concern that he knows that: "I felt bad that he… I was getting the sense that he thought I just didn't think he was capable of doing it."

The intern describes herself as "freaking out" and B as "flustered with me." In this narrative, B's competence and independence are in conflict with the intern's sense of responsibility, and interestingly, she works hard to maintain his position as competent. She does not position him as someone who cannot cross campus by himself but rather as someone who does not understand that "he couldn't go wandering off, like, at night by himself." Importantly, this phrase is not her own but is attributed to "they," presumably the supervisors of the program. To go "wandering off" is not an account of competence. There are many reasons why a person goes "wandering off," for example as a choice not to comply with a direction or as a lack of ability to stay on the directed path. In

either case, describing someone as "wandering off" provides a warrant for monitoring them.

One way to understand narrative 4 is that it puts the narrator's alignment in conflict. She wants to validate B's competence and independence; she has been taught that it's important that he be a good self-advocate, which she may be interpreting as arguing for his own competence. In our focus group conversation with administrators, they stressed that self-advocacy must begin with self-awareness: "The absolute root of self-advocacy is self awareness." In their journals, the students in the internship class often described self-advocacy as speaking for themselves. For example, "Advocacy has always been important to me. I have always been in a position of ensuring that those who cannot advocate for themselves have a voice loud enough and unignored." Several of the interns equated self-advocacy with being able to describe their goals. For example, one intern wrote in her journal about a student she was mentoring, "She talks about exactly what she wants to do and is vocal about her wishes and interests and I think that is one important reason why she is thriving in the program." Another wrote, "I want to help these students to discover their passions. Every person, regardless of ability, has something that they are utterly passionate about doing." Several expressed concern or confusion about how and when to facilitate and/or permit the person with ID to fail. One wrote:

> It is not my job to speak for the student, but to provide them with "out of class" advice in order [to assist them to develop]...their skills to speak for themselves. Furthermore, by facilitating conversations between the student and myself about any questions in class, I will help provide the tools to the student to succeed independently in their education through the postsecondary option.

These comments demonstrate the interns' understanding of the central goals of the postsecondary program, and they also reveal one of the complicated dimensions of their relationships with students with ID. The interns see themselves as understanding and supportive of independence and self-advocacy for students with ID, but they express frustration about trying to balance self-advocacy, independence, and the desire of students with ID to self-advocate with meeting requirements or expectations of the PSE program.

Another intern described a similar situation about her effort both to be a responsible coach and to respect the student with ID's independence.

Narrative 5:
My biggest concern is whether W will have finished the reading and reading response in time in order to then be ready to discuss what he has read...At our meeting, we printed off one of the articles due Thursday to see how long it was and then I encouraged W to come up with goals for his weekly goal sheet. I was disappointed to learn he had not finished and turned in his first assignment (due the day before), but was given an extension by the professor. It was challenging because I had intended to move forward on the next assignments at our meeting, but we were still dealing with late assignments, making us fall even more behind. I hope that writing the goals down in addition to me checking up on W will result in better time management. I also hope that W does not show up late to class! It is obviously frustrating as an educational coach to go to your student's class without your student. I mentioned this to him at our meeting and I know he already feels very badly about it, but I wonder how to make him more motivated to take his class more seriously. I wondered how important is it then that W "passes" his class? What should be of greater emphasis: encouraging W to participate fully in all of the class's expectations or getting the experience and discovering career interests?

In this narrative, the intern demonstrates respect for the student with ID, concern about his not meeting class expectations, and concern about her role. In both the journal entries and the focus group, DS interns explored the complexity of the "dignity of risk" described in Chapter 6 of *Think College* text (Grigal & Hart, 2010, p. 208). The educational coach describes W's failure to meet the expectations of the class in some detail. She describes her own frustration with the professor who gave W an extension and describes her efforts to help W to create goals. Throughout the narrative, the educational coach describes her reluctance to position W negatively. For example, she reports that W feels badly about letting her down when he doesn't show up. She is equally worried that she is letting him down. When she wonders "how to make him more motivated to take his class more seriously," she is asking about

how to do her own job better. Throughout the narrative, the educational coach avoids stereotypes and expresses concern for the integrity of W's decisions and actions. At the end of the journal entry, the coach asks whether she should just help W to discover his career interests.

All of the students' journal entries demonstrated careful reading of the text and included interesting questions based on their experiences working as DS interns. The experiences helped them to understand the complexity of the issues presented. Narrative 5, like several other entries for this theme, addressed the complexity of the concept of dignity of risk. The educational coach in Narrative 5 asked an important question that implies a possible choice between meeting class expectations or discovering career interests. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and journal entries such as these, combining comments on the chapter and discussions of actual interaction with individuals with ID, are helpful for identifying some of the challenges the educational coaches faced.

The DS interns who took part in the survey, class and journal writing, and focus group all expressed a strong comfort level in their willingness to interact with individuals with ID. They were all able to articulate the value of these interactions and to observe the obstacles individuals with ID faced in interactions with students who were less comfortable or whose interactions were based on stereotypes. Beyond this, through their engagements in prolonged interactions with individuals with ID, they experienced and had insights about more complex uncomfortable situations. For example, they were able to ask questions such as those posed in Narrative 5 about self-determination.

This narrative and others we collected in the journals and focus groups are evidence of the potentially complex relationships between regularly enrolled students and students with ID. The focus group afforded the possibility of an extensive and nuanced discussion of the interrelated questions of competence and independence for students with ID in the PSE programs.

4. DS Interns clarified their own career goals while assisting students with ID. A major goal of the program is the development of career and employment skills of students with ID. To facilitate this goal, typical students engaged in the DS internship to serve as educational coaches or mentors to support students with ID's academic and social development. All of the students with ID participated in internships to develop

these skills, and specially trained job coaches provided direct instruction and supervision during these internship sites. Ongoing topics of discussion within the DS internship class ranged from developing employability skills (e.g., following directions, communication, self-management, problem-solving) to exploring careers and selecting appropriate internship sites that were a good match to the individual's skills, abilities, and interests and may result in competitive employment. The student journals and transcripts revealed that these discussions had a positive impact on typical college students involved in the program in two areas: (1) Typical students embraced improving employability of students with ID, and (2) The career development of typical students was enhanced.

Improving employability skills. The DS interns expressed their desires and plans to assist students with ID to develop and improve their employability skills. One student wrote:

> As an ed coach, I will help sharpen communication skills. Communication skills are crucial in any environment we find ourselves in. It is very important that all persons can express themselves through words, writing, or sign language. I would like to help them to develop social ties as well. It is also super important in the "real world" and the workforce to be able to work well with others...I want to expose the students I work with to the many opportunities and options available to them, whether those opportunities are here on campus, in the community, or in the workforce. Introducing students to the numerous opportunities out there will hopefully help them find their "niche"...something they are interested in and could possibly turn into a career.

A second DS intern wrote, "I think it will be fun and beneficial to [help W] plan for future careers and find what is most interesting to W. In turn that could really motivate him to work hard in his class." A third DS intern wrote:

> Meaningful work is so important, which is why programs like this should exist everywhere and students with ID should be just as prepared as the next student for the workforce…. As an ed coach, I want to help them channel those passions and find what they need to do to succeed in their field … learning how to be independent, keep

schedules and appointments, communicate and set goals is so important to becoming successful.

A fourth DS intern wrote:

> It is crucial that we give them the utmost support and encouragement during these next 15 weeks... Whether it is advice on interviewing, writing a resume, how to dress for the first day of work... we need to...help them succeed.

A fifth DS intern wrote, "Some goals I have … is to make sure I really encourage my student to do the best that he can do at all times… and help [my student] feel comfortable asking for help." Finally, a sixth DS intern wrote, "By helping these students build a strong academic and social base, they will flourish in their career..."

The majority of students who served as DS interns were passionate about connecting the academic and social components of the program to employment. DS interns assisted students with ID to develop the employability skills that will enhance their success in competitive employment.

Career development of typical students. Students shared how participation in the program enhanced their own career development, as evidenced by the following journal excerpts.

> For the past two years, I have been struggling with how I am going to utilize my degree in Public Affairs to make the difference that I strive to make in the world. I volunteered and interned at several non-profit organizations, trying to find my niche -- the field of non-profit organizations that will allow me to reach my full potential and be passionate about what I am doing. After reading Chapter 2, I am coming to realize that I can easily combine my two passions -- public sector work/legislation and working with people with IDs. With pieces of legislation such as the Higher Education Opportunity Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, I can put my knowledge of government and the legislative process to work, while continuing to work with persons with disabilities. This is very important to me because I do not want to and should not have to jeopardize my passions for a career. This gets me excited for the future and what is to come.

A second DS intern wrote, "My ideal career would be to teach high school students with special needs. It is my hope that such programs will continue to evolve and improve..." while a third DS intern indicated, "As a future speech language pathologist, I love inspiring children..."

As the above examples demonstrate, the DS interns often integrated discussion of the students' goals with their own goals. In particular, discussions of the students' potential was connected, in many of the journal entries and focus group comments, with their own assessment of potential. Further, some of the DS interns found that reading Think College and working with the students provided an opportunity to articulate their own goals, itself an accomplishment for an undergraduate student. In the focus group, the DS interns had an extensive discussion of how to assess expectations and whether or not it would be helpful to have more knowledge about each student's abilities and limitations. They expressed concern about prior labeling of students and at the same time felt that more prior knowledge would make coaching more productive. One educational coach said, describing her expectations for one of the students:

> One thing is that you can set your expectations differently if you know, um, and if you don't know, I feel like I had really high expectations and I really pushed him really hard, and so, if I had known stuff it wouldn't had been the same. And, I mean, I don't know if that's good or bad, because, I don't know if that was fair.

In summary, the DS interns all expressed the desire to help students to reach their goals. The survey data revealed a group with positive attitudes toward the inclusion of individuals with ID. The narrative data provided observations that described both how the DS interns and students with ID benefit from inclusive PSE programs that establish high expectations for all students.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to confirm and extend prior research on the attitudes and experiences of typical college students who were enrolled in a DS Internship class towards students with ID who were enrolled in an inclusive PSE program. The results indicate that the majority of typical students who served as disability interns had extensive prior experience, high comfort ratings, and stated that students with ID had the ability to participate in college experiences such as participating in classes, campus organizations, and living in dorms. These findings confirm prior studies of positive attitudes of typical students towards including students with ID in college (Griffin et al., 2012; May, 2012). Additional themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis indicated that the disability studies interns were challenged to balance program requirements with the dignity of risk and self-determination of students with ID, and the disability interns clarified their own career goals by supporting students with ID. Findings suggest that typically enrolled college students benefit from inclusive PSE programs that serve students with ID.

The narrative data was particularly useful for elucidating the survey results about "comfort level" with individuals with ID. Griffin et al. (2012), reports that college students who were less comfortable with students with ID were more concerned about knowing how to act whereas students who indicated greater comfort had more positive perceptions of students with ID's abilities. Our survey findings confirm earlier findings that individuals who have had more contact with individuals with ID are more comfortable with their participation on campus. The narratives illuminate that DS interns suggested that exposure leads to both greater visibility and greater acceptance of individuals with ID.

Narrative analysis supports the survey data finding that "positive perceptions of abilities" is related to "comfort level." However, in our data, the DS interns ascribed this connection to *other* regularly enrolled students with presumably less exposure to people with ID. The DS interns described situations in which, in their view, regularly enrolled students became more comfortable with students with ID through the course of a semester. In their narratives about their own interactions with individuals with ID, the DS interns were more concerned with trying to help the students fulfill their goals and achieve greater self-determination. In these narratives, the DS interns' positive perceptions were equated with working hard, doing well on assignments, self-advocacy, independence, pride, and high expectations. This equation became problematic and especially frustrating when the DS interns worried that the students with ID were not meeting expectations. For the DS interns, this presented a potential conflict between self-determination and high expectations.

The DS interns wanted to motivate the students, but they first wanted to know that these were the students' goals, not just the goals of the intern. The problem was exacerbated by the problem that the students with ID were not necessarily adequately assessing their own abilities. The concerns of DS interns parallel the questions that a variety of experts expressed at a 2009 conference when they asked, "Is a student able to have characteristics of self-determination – self awareness?" and "Do the postsecondary experiences increase self-determination and then does that further enhance those outcomes [such as employment, independent living, academic performance, and social engagement]?" (Thoma et al., 2012, p. 1225).

The ten students with ID who were supported by the DS interns in this study had between 3 and 12 months of experience within the PSE program. Although this study does not focus on changes in self-determination of the students with ID within the program, the anecdotal evidence shared by DS interns, program staff, and parents indicates that many of our students are choosing college classes and activities appropriately and, in many cases, negotiating the transportation and supports needed to successfully participate in a variety of classes and activities across campus. DS interns provided support directly to students with ID and modeled for regularly enrolled students how to support them. Ultimately, these results indicate that DS interns have an important role to increase comfort levels and acceptance of students with ID across campus.

The narratives of DS interns help us to move beyond these questions of willingness to interact to better understand some of the complexities of those interactions. The population of DS interns we studied made a commitment to working with individuals with ID and report that those interactions have benefited them. We owe it to them to better understand how the available discourses of acceptance and positive value can be confusing, especially when, during specific instances, program requirements and restrictions appear to be in conflict with concepts of high expectations and self-determination. Understanding the limitations some people with ID face in assessing their own abilities is one part of that confusion. However, further clarifying for both the DS interns and students with ID how to increase their independence on campus may increase self-determined behaviors of students with ID such as their self-awareness and ability to advocate appropriately.

This study highlights the importance of establishing inclusive PSE experiences for students with ID. Previous research indicates that many PSE programs delivered the majority of instruction to students with ID in segregated programs involving only students with ID (Grigal et al., 2012; Papay & Bambara, 2011; Thoma et al., 2012). This study supports previous researchers who highlight the benefits of inclusive programs for the typical students on campus (Griffin et al., 2012; May, 2012). Clearly, the DS interns involved in this study gained valuable experiences with diverse student populations and clarified their own career goals, as they provided support and direction to the students with ID. If programs remain separate and self-contained, opportunities to increase diversity among the campus that have a positive impact on the attitudes and comfort levels of their nondisabled peers will be missed. Given the need to reduce stigma associated with persons with ID, inclusive PSE show promise that may lead to more inclusive communities, at large. In addition, inclusive programs increase opportunities for students with ID to experience the dignity of risk with supports from typical students.

Several limitations of this study include the small sample size of DS interns who had positive previous experiences with persons with ID, and the fact that the majority of DS interns were female. Because the sample of involved students who had selected the Disability Studies specialization, their perception of disabilities is most probably more positive than that of typical students who did not have prior experience with people with disabilities. Also, the use of the journals that were collected during a class for which students would earn a pass/fail grade brings to question the social desirability of the self-report data. Researchers attempted to control for this by collecting the survey responses and conducting the focus group after the grades were submitted and clearly explaining that participation in the research would not impact grades.

In conclusion, DS interns and regularly enrolled students can serve as important partners in assisting students with ID increase their self-awareness, make choices, and negotiate the supports needed to safely pursue their goals of attending college, preparing for employment, and living independently. Will participation in inclusive PSE programs increase the self-determination and adult life outcomes of students with ID? Further collection and analysis of narratives of interaction would no doubt yield more insights on

this and other issues. Given the limited opportunities and abysmal adult life outcomes that individuals with ID currently experience, inclusive PSE programs described above show promise in creating more diverse communities that enhance the participation and adult life outcomes of all students.

Future research should examine the attitudes of typical students' attitudes towards college students with ID who do not have extensive prior experience with persons with disabilities to determine how their attitudes and perceptions compare to students with extensive experience. Further collection and analysis of surveys, narratives and focus groups of these students, family members, faculty, and students with ID themselves will provide insights into the effects of PSE programs on students with IDs' self-determination and ultimately, the impact of such programs on increasing students' employment and independent living adult life outcomes.

References

Bamberg, M. (1997). Positioning between structure and performance. J*ournal of Narrative and Life History. 7*(1-4), 335-342.

Davis, L. (1995). *Enforcing normalcy: Disability, deafness, and the body*. London: Verso.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. (2000). Pub. L. 106–402, §1809, 114 Stat. 1677.

Dwyre, A., Grigal, M., & Failka, J. (2010). Student and Family Perspectives. In M. Grigal & D. Hart, (Eds.). *Think college: Postsecondary education options for students with disabilities* (pp. 189-227). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Goffman, E. (1959). *Relations in public*. New York: Harper & Row.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: The management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Griffin, M., Summer, A. H., McMillan, E. D., & Day, T. L. (2012). Attitudes toward including students with intellectual disabilities at college. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 234–239.

Gaumer, A. S., Morningstar, M. E., & Clark, G. M. (2004). Status of community-based transition programs: A national database. *Career Development of Exceptional Individuals, 27*, 131–149.

Grigal, M., & Dwyre, A. (2010). Employment activities and outcomes of college-based transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities. *Think College Insight Brief, Issue No. 3*. Boston, MA: Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

Grigal, M., & Hart, D. (2010). *Think college: Postsecondary Education options for students with intellectual disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Weir, C. (2012). A survey of postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 223–233.

Hardman, M. L., & Clark, C. (2006). Promoting friendship through Best Buddies: A national survey of college program participants. *Mental Retardation, 44*, 56-63.

Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. PL 110-315, 122 Stat. 3078.

Hughson, E. A., Moodie, S., & Uditsky, B. (2006). *The story of inclusive post-secondary education in Alberta, final research report 2004-2005*. Retrieved from http://www.steps-forward.org

Jones, M. M., & Goble, Z. (2012). Creating effective mentoring partnerships for students with intellectual disabilities on campus. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9,* 223–233.

Labov, W. (1972). *The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. Language in the inner city.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 354-396.

May, C. (2012). An investigation of attitude change in inclusive college classes including young adults with an intellectual disability. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 240–246.

O'Connor, B., Kubiak, J., Espiner, D., & O'Brien, P. (2012). Lecturer responses to the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities auditing undergraduate classes. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9,* 247–256.

Papay, C. K., & Bambuar, L. M. (2011). Postsecondary education for transition-age students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities: A national survey. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 46,* 78-93.

Perske, R. (1972). The dignity of risk and the mentally retarded. *Mental Retardation, 10*(1), 24-17.

Shuman, A. (2005). *Other people's stories: Entitlement claims and the critique of empathy.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Siperstein, G. N., Parker, R. C., Bardon, J. N., & Widaman, K. F. (2007). A national study of youth attitudes toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 73,* 435-455.

Tannen, D. (1993). What's in a frame: Surface evidence for underlying expectations. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Framing in discourse* (pp. 3- 56). New York: Oxford University Press.

Think College Database of Postsecondary Programs. (2013) Retrieved from www.thinkcollege.net/databases/programsdatabase

Thoma, C., Austin, K., Achala, E., Batalo, C., Carlson, D., Boyds, K., Bozeman, L., & Wolfe, D. (2012). The state of postsecondary education for persons with intellectual disabilities: What are the perceptions of key stakeholders? *Creative Education 3*, 1122 – 1127.

Uditsky, B., & Hughson, A. (2012). Inclusive postsecondary education: An evidence-based moral imperative. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9,* 298-302.

Wilhite, B., Devine, M., & Goldberg, L. (1999). Self-perceptions of youth with and without disabilities: Implications for leisure programs and services. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal, 33*, 15-28.

Zafft, C., Hart, D., & Zimbrich, K. (2004). College career connection: A study of youth with intellectual disabilities and the impact of postsecondary education. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 1*, 45–54.

About the Authors

Margo Vreeburg Izzo received her B.A. degree in psychology from D'Youville College, her M.A. in Special Education from George Washington University and her Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Her experience includes working as a Principal Investigator and Project Director for the Ohio State University Nisonger Center and serving on the boards of the Association of University Centers on Disability and the Division of Career Development and Transition. She is a National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) Switzer Fellow. Her research interests include career development and transition to college and careers for students with disabilities. She can be reached by email at: Margo.Izzo@osumc.edu

Amy Shuman received her B.A. degree in philosophy and anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz and Ph.D. from The University of Pennsylvania. She is Director of Disability Studies and Professor of Folklore, English, Women's Studies and Anthropology, chair of the Consumer Advisor Council of the Nisonger Center (UCEDD), a core faculty member of Project Narrative and the Center for Folklore Studies and a fellow of the Mershon Center for International Security at The Ohio State University. She is the author of three books and many articles on narrative, disability, human rights, literacy, and ethnographic methods of research. She is a Guggenheim Fellow. She can be reached by email at: shuman.1@osu.edu.