

Social Network Comparison of College Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Their Undergraduate Peers

Samantha Leonard

Literature Review

- Limited research exists about the social networks of undergraduate college students
- People with intellectual disabilities tend to have smaller less diverse networks than typically developing peers
- Social networks are a source of support, protection and friendship
- There is a trend toward expanding post-secondary opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities

Terminology

- **Social Network:** Defined in terms activities a person participates in and the people they connect with in those activities
- **CLSC:** Career Life Studies Certificate program, 2-year certificate program for students with intellectual disabilities, academic and career instruction

Research Question

What are some of the differences in social networks between students in the CLSC program and their peers?

Methods

- **Participants**
 - 2 years college experience
 - Undergraduate students (n=8)
 - CLSC Students (n=9)

Data Collection

- Semi-structured interview focused on the past year
 - **Social Network Activities**
 - o Location, frequency, purpose, integration
 - **Social Network People**
 - o Relation, sex, time known, how met, close, reciprocity

Analysis

- **Descriptive Statistics**
 - Size and composition of network
 - Number and type of activities

Results

Number of People in Network

	Undergraduate	CLSC
Average	27	20
Range	19-32	7-37

Number of Activities

	Undergraduate	CLSC
Average	8	10
Range	8-9	7-20

Relationship Types

%	Undergraduate	CLSC
Family	15	12
Peers	69	60
Incidental	5	5
Caregiver	0	0
Authority	9	23

Reciprocity

%	Undergraduate	CLSC
Equal	76	63
Receive	14	9
Give	9	16
Mix	0	6
Undecided	0	2

Closeness

%	Undergraduate	CLSC
Very Close	55	44
Sort of	33	43
Mix	0	6
Undecided	12	1

Social Activities

%	Undergraduate	CLSC
Weekly	73	41
Monthly	8	10
Occasional	11	35
Annual	8	14

Discussion Points

Small Exploratory Study

Some differences include:

- CLSC students had more activities but lower weekly frequency of recreational activities
- CLSC students had slightly smaller networks on average with more authority figures
- CLSC students have more variability in their social networks related to both numbers of people and activities

Directions for Future Research

Current Focus:

- Size and composition of networks in comparison

Future:

- Use larger sample
- Look at variables that predict long term outcomes
- Different types of social networks
- Longitudinal analysis

Acknowledgements

- University of Delaware Undergraduate Research Program
- Stephanie Espie, Graduate Advisor
- Laura Eisenman, Faculty Mentor
- CLSC Program