

Reducing Stereotyping and Prejudice among High School Students

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Abstract:

I want the students to learn from my presentation how he or she can reduce one's own stereotyping behavior. I would like the students to understand ways to reduce prejudicial beliefs. The results that students will demonstrate are a more overall acceptance of people with differences by increasing one's own openness to individuals with differences.

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Estimates done in 2011 by the United States Census Bureau show that approximately 306, 560, 685 individuals have some disability or long lasting health condition. This population spreads through every ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and social economic status. An individual with a disability is a concerning topic as depicted in Dunn, Fisher, & Beard (2011) because it provokes a feeling of uncertainty in many able-bodied individuals (Dunn, Fisher, & Beard, 2011). It may be that those able-bodied individuals are scared, worried, or merely naïve that individuals have such differences. For example, should a person acknowledged or ignored the disabled individual? Will the actions be welcomed or perceived as insensitive or insulting? Is it better to remain unconcerned or to engage those with disabilities? Hopefully from this independent study I can help the limited research expand on individuals with differences. If the term disability is ubiquitous, then why is the discrimination still displayed by society (Dunn et al., 2011)?

Research on the physically disabled is limited (Asch, 1988; IRB, 2011). The research idea was provoked by being positively and negatively stereotyped from able-bodied individuals. I hope the research will give a better understanding of why individuals stereotype and to whom may be a victim. This paper focuses on reducing prejudice and stereotyping against individuals with physical differences or disabilities. Then the paper displays description of self-concept of disabled individuals. The paper then follows with the method, results, concluding with the discussion. Given, the lack of research on this type of population is even more of a motivation for this study.

The theory that applies is perceptual-social-cognitive model that indicates individuals with disabilities trigger a dispositional analysis of a person, place, or thing (Dunn, 2011). A

dispositional analysis can be thought of as a negative belief about a certain group and that belief is applied to each individual within that cluster. As one's schema about a disabled person (e.g., physical handicap) stays the same for every individual in that group.

High school classrooms are a microcosm of diversity (Fineburg, 2011). Each student does vary in one's own background and abilities to take a class and learn to work together. As illustrated by Wei and Marder (2012) self-confidence and important beliefs in high school are at the lowest in the three domains of school (e.g., elementary, secondary school, and high school) for individuals with disabilities (Wei & Marder, 2012). The researchers found that self-confidence declined in elementary school but rebounded in secondary school and then continued to go down in high school(Wei & Marder, 2012)..

It is also imperative to be cognizant of the mental processes of the frontal lobe when discussing any controversial topic in a classroom. Studies have shown the frontal lobe is involved in one's higher level thinking (e.g., making decisions) about a person. In other words, a person's frontal lobe does not even begin to think about abstract concepts (e.g., physical disabilities) until age12 (Parkin & Java, 1999).

Defining disability

The term disability can mean many things from physical (e.g., an impairment that limits physical function) to mental (e.g., a psychological pattern displayed in behavior) that detour an individual from completing a task. Specifically, the word "disability" is largely socially constructed by a product of ingroup and outgroup processes that help categorize information rather quickly and easily (Dunn, 2009, 2010; Peterson & Elliott, 2008; World Health Organization [WHO], 2001).

At a point in one's lifetime he or she may suffer some physical disability (e.g., traumatic brain injury) and then meet the scrutiny of society always judging. If everyone in society may or has a disability then why is it not being addressed? The American society is just uncertain and does not want to put the cognitive effort into getting to know a disabled person. Situational factors, especially environmental (e.g., availability of ramps) constraints pose more problems for people with disabilities than the disabilities themselves. This is the case because every disabled individual had developed one's own coping mechanism for a condition.

Defining prejudice

The term prejudice depends on one's frame of reference for the term. As Gardner (1994) proposes, the word prejudice when taken literally to indicate a judgment or evaluation about something or someone (Gardner, 1994). When taking a more specific look at the word prejudice it can be inferred as a negative assessment of a person in this case a physically disabled individual. For example, if a person has a negative evaluation of an individual with a cane or wheelchair without getting to know him or her can that person effectively interact and get to know a disabled individual?

Define stereotyping

In the social science world, stereotype means to describe the tendency of people to think of someone or something in similar terms such as an attribute or physical characteristic (e.g., a cane or wheelchair) based on some general categorization by other individuals. In Weinberg (1976) research found that physical disability is a more salient description in defining a non-friend with a disability than is a race or gender.

In all respect, stereotypes do serve a purpose by allowing humans to process information very quickly. On the other hand, stereotypes tend to confirm pre-existing categorizes by paying

attention to stereotype consistent information and disregarding information that is inconsistent with one's already formed beliefs. As humans, can we put forth the effort to go against pre-existing stereotypes and interact with individuals with disabilities?

Self-concept

The behavioral and physical disruptions affect the individual's sense of self (Livneh & Antonak, 1997; Dunn et al., 2011). Self-concept is the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings has on him or herself. Given the important role of self-concept of a disabled individual makes it clear how a person feels when interacting with these individuals.

Recent research was conducted to examine the previously learned cultural beliefs and attitudes that may reduce prejudicial beliefs instead of Allport's contact hypothesis. The cultural beliefs and attitudes were examined through classroom assignments where this type of learning can be explored. The data showed through a process of cultural self-knowledge development and later through contact with a disabled person has the potential to reduce a person's prejudice (Hosokawa, 2012).

“Good” service learning theory proposes that effectiveness in changing negative social attitudes towards an outgroup (Erikson and O'Connor, 2000). Changing ones ready formed schema or interpretation of how a disabled person should act because it is more salient characteristic than ever before.

METHODS

Participants

The study had 16 students from a local school in the Green Bay, Wisconsin area. The gender ratio was six males with eleven females. The control group was located in Marinette,

Wisconsin. The gender ratio was eight males and nine females. The research project has Institutional Review Board approval.

Materials and Procedure

Materials = First the survey, Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (ATDP) Scale Form B, was administered to the control group at Marinette High School.

The second presentation was done at Pulaski High School. A Microsoft PowerPoint was constructed using pictures from age two to 25. A question-and-answer followed the Microsoft presentation.

Scoring

Scoring was not conducted after the testing of the students.

Procedure

An overview was discussed first to give the audience an idea of where the presentation was going. Then followed by a Microsoft Office PowerPoint presentation with various (e.g., 15) pictures of myself growing up from age two to age 25. Then an article was read to participants written in a local newspaper in 2005 one year after my accident, followed by a question and answer to students and faculty. Then participants took a reliable six-point Likert scale used to measure participants' overall attitude towards persons with disabilities (Yuker & Young, 1966). Survey to assess how effective are my presentation skills at eliminating or dampening the stereotypical attributes made by able-bodied individuals. This is a sample survey that was used: the instructions that a teacher can read to his or her students during time of administration: "Each of the items on the scales should be answered with which a person might agree or disagree with a statement. The items were used to form a Likert scale in which a respondent is asked to

indicate his or her reactions in terms of a response category ranging from +3 to indicate "I agree very much," to -3 to indicate "I disagree very much."

These items are scored on a Likert scale.

+3 I agree very much

+2 I agree pretty much

+1 I agree a little

-1 I disagree a little

-2 I disagree pretty much

-3 I disagree very much

ATDP-B

1. Disabled persons are usually friendly.
2. People who are disabled should not have to pay income taxes.
3. Disabled people are no more emotional than other people.
4. Disabled persons can have a normal social life.
5. Most physically disabled persons have a chip on their shoulder.
6. Disabled workers can be as successful as other workers.
7. Very few disabled persons are ashamed of their disabilities.
8. Most people feel uncomfortable when they associate with disabled people.
9. Disabled people show less enthusiasm than nondisabled people.
10. Disabled people do not become upset any more easily than nondisabled people.
11. Disabled people are often less aggressive than normal people.
12. Most disabled persons get married and have children.
13. Most disabled persons do not worry any more than anyone else.

14. Employers should not be allowed to fire disabled persons.
15. Disabled people are not as happy as nondisabled ones.
16. Severely disabled people are hard to get along with then are those with minor disabilities.
17. Most disabled people expect special treatment.
18. Disabled person should not expect to lead normal lives.
19. Most disabled people tend get discouraged easily.
20. The worst thing that could happen to a person would be for him or her to be severely injured.
21. Disabled children should not have to compete with nondisabled children.
22. Most disabled people do not feel sorry for themselves.
23. Most disabled people prefer to work with other disabled people.
24. Most severely disabled persons are not as ambitious as other people.
25. Disabled persons are not as self-confident as physically normal persons.
26. Most disabled persons do not want more affection and praise than other people.
27. It would be best if a disabled person would marry another disabled person.
28. Most disabled people do not need special attention.
29. Disabled persons want sympathy more than other people.
30. Most physically disabled persons have different personalities than normal persons.

Results

Results section = the analysis focuses.....

Discussion

The first boundary that this study broke was that stereotyping against certain individuals are not always accurate. The story and progress that has been made from a traumatic brain injury

in January 28, of 2004, was remarkable. The underlining motivation that has given the strength to persevere over able-bodied individuals labels is a perseverance to be the best that a person can be every day. Times, even though, are undoubtedly more difficult than ever before the accident but a person can infer that the attitude shown as undoubtedly positive.

In order to import some understanding of disability, students and faculty need to learn from or about an individual with a disability(s). Many disability studies argue that the individuals have been disregarded like many other minorities in this country and the community's radical reactions to cultural prejudice and discrimination met the social patterns established by the woman's rights movement, civil rights movement for African Americans, and the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian issues.

Disability is often not talked about let alone in class so how can this population gain legitimate rights. I propose this final question to why has individuals with physical disabilities been demoted by most of society. It may be that the able-bodied individuals have learned these negative stereotypes towards such individuals from a young age. From this research it is hoped that individuals with physical disabilities are not scared to admit to able-bodied individuals that the physical disabled person battles every day and should not continue to go unrepressed.

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It is also taken into consideration that all stereotype and prejudice research has biases to such perspectives of being stereotyped against and the implications. I do suffer from a physical disability suffering a traumatic brain so that from this research proposal can and will expand individuals who want to listen and examine past beliefs to see if there is some accuracy. After this is completed it is also important to note that a person should be open to new things, experiences, and people and not judge on superficial characteristics.