

THE MEASUREMENT OF
ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABLED
PERSONS BY HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS IN THE CLARKSVILLE -
MONTGOMERY COUNTY SCHOOL
SYSTEM

MILDRED ALLENE CAMPBELL

THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABLED PERSONS BY
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE
CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirments for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Psychology

by
Mildred Allene Campbell
May, 1980

ABSTRACT

Due to the passing of Public Law 94-142, mainstreaming has become a legislative reality. Yet, surprisingly, very little attention has been given to preparing the disabled as well as the non-disabled students to cope with the results of this legislation. In the present study, 387 high school students from Clarksville-Montgomery County School System were asked to complete a survey questionnaire dealing with the attitudes held toward disabled persons. The Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) was used in order to assess the attitudes expressed. The subjects were divided into eight groups depending on level of contact with the physically disabled and sex. A two-way analysis of variance yielded a statistically significant difference between the attitudes expressed by male and female subjects. Females were found to hold a more positive attitude than males.

THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABLED PERSONS BY
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE
CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Psychology

By
Mildred Allene Campbell
May, 1980

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Mildred Allene Campbell entitled "The Measurement of Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons by High School Students in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.


Major Professor

Accepted for the
Graduate Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation is extended to Dr. William D. Dannenmaier, Associate Professor of Psychology, Austin Peay State University, who aided the author during the course of study; to Dr. Garland Blair for his help with the computer, and to Dr. Linda Rudolph and Dr. Charles Grah for their comments.

Gratitude is also extended to the students who served as subjects and the Clarksville-Montgomery County School Board and school administrators.

I wish to express special appreciation to my husband and children, for their support, patience, and understanding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	5
III. METHOD	12
Subjects	12
Materials	12
Procedure	13
Analysis	14
IV. RESULTS.	15
V. DISCUSSION	18
REFERENCES	20

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Means and standard deviations of males and females for each level of contact. .	16
2. Analysis of variance for sex and level of contact	17

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The signing of Public Law 94-142 demonstrated an increasing acceptance on the part of society for equal educational opportunities for all handicapped children. Initially, this legislation resulted in the establishment of a large number of special classes designed for the handicapped. Since that initial implementation, however, there has been an increasing tendency to place the handicapped in the regular classroom whenever possible. This "mainstreaming" of exceptional children is frequently accomplished by the use of resource teachers. The resource teacher serves as an advisor to the regular classroom teacher on the special needs and problems of the handicapped student.

Federal and state regulations on the education of disabled persons and the emphasis on mainstreaming have brought a flood of disabled children into the regular classroom setting. Seldom are the children in the regular classroom adequately prepared, either socially or psychologically, to accept the disabled student into their classes or classroom activities. Also, if the disabled child has had limited social interaction with non-disabled children, the disabled child may be inadequately prepared to make the transition

from the special classroom setting into the mainstream. When there is a lack of such psycho-social preparation, the consequences may be harmful to both the education and psycho-social development of all concerned (Wright, 1960). Yet, surprisingly, very little attention has been given to the question of how to develop receptivity in the mainstream toward the disabled children who have or will shortly enter the regular classroom setting (Cohen, 1977).

Many authorities in the field of education feel that the mainstreaming movement will benefit both the disabled and the normal child. The mainstreaming of the exceptional child is expected to bring about the help the child needs in developing the self-confidence to be accepted by the other children. The disabled student should also be strengthened by the experience and be prepared to function in a world of normal people after leaving school (Yang, 1975). It is also believed that the normal child will benefit from mainstreaming in providing the child with the opportunity to realize that there are differences between individuals.

One of the main goals of mainstreaming is to insure that the handicapped child is placed into an accepting classroom environment (Gottlieb & Gottlieb, 1977). Thus, it is part of the responsibility of administrators,

educators, psychologists, and parents to insure that this goal is carried out if mainstreaming is to work. Therefore, these individuals must be ready to deal effectively with the prevailing negative attitudes that exist toward the disabled. One effective way of dealing with these attitudes is to begin by teaching the normal child about disabilities. If an honest attempt is to be made at altering the attitudes being expressed toward disabled persons, those individuals responsible for instituting such a change must first be able to understand and critically evaluate the present attitudes held by the non-disabled individual.

As will be noted in the chapter on related literature, considerable attention has been given to the attitudes expressed by the non-disabled toward target populations and particular emphasis has been placed on those attitudes expressed toward the mentally retarded. However, this author has found no research in which a systematic attempt was made to analyze the attitudes held by high school students toward the disabled and the amount of contact they have had with disabled individuals.

The purpose of this study is to assess the attitudes of those persons most affected by mainstreaming, the non-disabled student and the disabled student.

It is believed that the findings in this study

will help educators in dealing effectively with the disabled, who are to be a part of the mainstream and their non-disabled peers. It may also be used to assist in developing programs to bring about positive attitude change in both groups of students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Thurman and Lewis (1979) studied preschool children and their rejection of handicapped children. It was demonstrated that preschool children, as young as nine months, were able to distinguish between normal and handicapped children, and thus they responded differently to those perceived differences as not being like themselves. It was also found that when a negative label was attached to the different child prejudice was more likely to appear in the older preschool child. Similarly, Simon and Gillman (1979) found that when handicapped preschoolers were placed in the normal preschool setting, the normal children tended to isolate the handicapped child from the regular school and play activities. They also found an increase in negative attitudes expressed toward the handicapped child. In contrast, Weinberg (1978) found that children under the age of five years did not distinguish between normal and orthopedically impaired children but by the age of five the child knew the differences and demonstrated a preference by selecting a non-disabled child, more often, as his friend.

Centers and Centers (1963) determined that negative attitudes were expressed by normal children toward the

amputee child more often than negative attitude expressed toward the normal child. The amputee child was seen as being the saddest child, was not nice looking, and was less fun to be with than his non-disabled peers. Bryan (1974) found the same attitudes expressed toward the learning disability child as did Centers and Centers in their 1963 study on amputee children. Richardson, Dornbusch, Goodman and Hastorf (1961) found that when children were given the opportunity to rank non-handicapped and handicapped children there was cultural uniformity in the rankings of the children. The non-handicapped child was ranked in the most favorable position consistently across cultures. The handicapped children were ranked according to the nature and severity of the handicapping condition by both the handicapped and non-handicapped subjects used in the study. Barker (1964) also found negative attitudes expressed toward disabled people in general, but the degree of negativity expressed depended on the severity of the type of disability in question. Soldwedel and Terrill (1975) investigated the attitudes of non-disabled and disabled students in the same elementary school and found no difference in the attitudes expressed toward the disabled. The disabled were ranked lower on both acceptance and selection of friends

scales by both groups. Similarly, Parish, Ohlsen and Parish (1978) assessed the attitudes of elementary school children toward handicapped children in general. They found that all disabled children were seen by the non-disabled in a negative manner regardless of the type of disability. However, physically handicapped children were ranked higher than learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, or mentally retarded children.

Richardson, Ronald and Kleck (1974) investigated the effects of visibility of the handicapping condition on attitudes held by non-handicapped peers. The experiment was carried out in a summer camp for boys where both handicapped and non-handicapped were encouraged to attend. A negative attitude was found to exist toward all handicapped boys regardless of whether they were visibly or nonvisibly handicapped. Boys who were visibly handicapped were ranked lower than nonvisibly handicapped outside of their bunk groups, and nonvisibly handicapped boys were ranked lower than visibly handicapped boys inside their own bunk groups. Siperstein and Gottlieb (1977) found that physical appearance greatly affected the type of attitude expressed toward the mentally-retarded. Negative attitudes were more often expressed toward individuals seen as physically unattractive. Also, those disabled individuals seen as being more

competent were viewed in a more positive light. They found that females held a negative attitude toward the mentally retarded regardless of physical appearance.

Gottlieb and Gottlieb (1977) assessed the attitudes of junior-high school students toward mentally retarded individuals as opposed to congenitally crippled children and found no difference in the attitudes expressed on a social distance scale, but did find that the crippled child was ranked higher on an adjective checklist than the retarded child. Jaffe (1966) demonstrated similar findings in an experiment using normal adolescents. He found that the normal adolescent viewed a paragraph description of a mentally retarded sketched person more favorably than a person labeled as mentally retarded. It was shown that individuals who had greater contact with the mentally retarded reported a greater number of favorable traits for the retarded person regardless of the label. Girls were found to ascribe a higher adjective checklist favorability rating to the retarded than boys ($t = 2.45$, $p < .02$ level). Gottlieb and Siperstein (1976) used female undergraduate students in special education to determine the influence of severity of the disability on the attitudes held toward the mentally retarded. They found that mildly retarded children were viewed more favorably than the severely retarded child.

was in a positive setting, that scores of adult subjects on the ATDP scale changed significantly in a positive direction ($F = 3.82$, $df. 2, 54$; $p < .05$) in an analysis of covariance. In comparison, Feinberg (1967) found that the attitudes expressed by college freshman on the ATDP scale were a reflection of the individual's desire to express socially acceptable attitudes. Subjects were found to express the attitudes they did because they wished to be acceptable to society and felt that their attitudes were in keeping with those expressed by society in general, regardless of whether they were in a positive or negative direction.

Weinberg-Asher (1976) demonstrated that the handicapped saw themselves basically in the same way as normal individuals viewed themselves. They, however, felt that they needed other people's help more often, saw themselves as more religious, and more opposed to abortion on demand. However, when non-handicapped were asked to rank handicapped individuals they viewed them much the same way they viewed themselves. Linkowski and Dunn (1974) and Linkowski (1971) demonstrated that the handicapped individual's attitudes toward themselves reflected the degree to which they had accepted their disability. They found that the disabled saw themselves more often than non-disabled people, lacking in social

skills and felt uncomfortable in social settings. Thus, an expressed positive attitude on an attitude measurement would reflect a greater acceptance by the handicapped individual of his disability, and a low score would indicate a non-acceptance of the disability.

)

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects used in the survey were from the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System. A total of 387 high school students responded to the questionnaire. Seventeen subjects were eliminated from the analysis because of incomplete or invalid responses. Two classes of students from each of the sophomore, junior and senior grade levels in each school participated in the study. The classes used were either English or social studies classes, courses required of all students. All students in the designated classes participated as subjects.

Materials

The Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) Form B, developed by Yuker, Block and Young (1970), was used as the instrument to measure the attitudes of high school students toward the disabled. The ATDP is a 30 item questionnaire using a six-point Likert scale format. All forms of disabilities are classified as a single target population, physically disabled, by the scale. The scale items include the amount of special treatment the participant feels is required by disabled individuals and evaluation of the degree to which the

subject sees the adjustment of disabled persons to be different from that of normal persons. An overall score is then obtained and the degree of acceptance-rejection is viewed on a continuum. A low score would indicate the rejection of the physically disabled and a high score would indicate acceptance.

Procedure

A brief description of the survey and a definition of physical disability was read to the students before each testing session. The instructions informed the subjects that an attitude survey of high school students was being conducted in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System. As a part of the survey, they were asked to complete a questionnaire. Each subject was asked to consider those individuals they may have seen, may have had classes with, or who may be members of their families and who are physically disabled. A physically disabled person was defined as a person who is deaf, partially deaf, blind, partially sighted, crippled, someone who may walk with the aid of crutches or braces, someone with a badly scared face, someone who is paralyzed, someone who sits in a wheelchair, and who does not have full use of their arms or legs, or someone who is missing an arm, a leg, a hand, a foot, or their fingers or toes. The instructions accompanying the test were

then read to the students and all questions were answered. The students were then instructed to complete the data sheet indicating the amount of contact they had with the physically disabled.

Analysis

For purposes of analysis the subjects were divided into eight groups: by sex and amount of contact with persons who were disabled. Group 1 was designated as those individuals having had no contact with the physically disabled. This group consisted of 245 subjects, 118 females and 127 males. Group 2 was defined as those persons having had low contact with the physically disabled. Low contact was defined as someone who attended classes with someone who was physically disabled, someone who attended church regularly with someone who was disabled, or conditions similar to these. The group consisted of 56 subjects, 28 females and 28 males. Those subjects assigned to Group 3 were those who had moderate contact with the disabled. This group was identified as those persons having a family member who was physically disabled or a close friend of the family's who is physically disabled. The group consisted of 61 subjects, 37 females and 24 males. Group 4 consisted of eight physically disabled students, five females and three males.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for males and females at each of the four levels of contact were calculated and the results are presented in Table 1.

From a visual inspection of the means in Table 1 it can be seen that males expressed a more negative attitude toward the disabled than did females. The only exception occurring in the moderate contact group where males held a more positive attitude than females. There also appears to be very little change in the type of attitude expressed toward the disabled, by females, across the different types of contact that were measured in this survey.

A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the results for statistical significance. The results of this analysis appear in Table 2.

A significant difference was found to exist between males and females and the attitudes they expressed toward the disabled, $F(1, 362) = 6.9591, p < .01$.

TABLE 1
Means and standard deviations of males and females
for each level of contact

	Mean	SD	N
No Contact			
females	100.4410	18.9428	118
males	92.5748	18.4982	127
Low contact			
females	98.1786	20.2083	28
males	95.0714	19.9591	28
Moderate contact			
females	101.1620	27.8453	37
males	104.0830	23.6163	24
Disabled			
females	98.0000	24.0624	5
males	97.3333	34.0637	3

TABLE 2
 Analysis of variance
 for sex and level of contact

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	<u>p</u>
Sex	2927.00	1	2927.000	6.9591	$p < .01$
Level of contact	1769.75	3	589.917	1.4026	$p > .05$
Interaction	1117.50	3	372.500	0.8856	$p > .05$
Residual	152258.00	362	420.601		

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results obtained in this survey indicate that females generally hold a more positive attitude toward the physically disabled than do males. This result is consistent with the results from studies of adults and elementary school children. One reason that is given in other studies is that females generally show more orientation toward the personal and emotional aspects of an individual whereas males focus more on the physical abilities and competence of individuals. However, when amount of contact was increased and the opportunity provided for personal interaction was increased, the attitudes expressed by males appear to shift in a more positive direction but not to a statistically significant level. Similar findings were obtained by Anthony (1969) and Evans (1976) when amount of contact with the disabled was manipulated and attitudes toward the disabled were assessed.

No real difference could be found to exist between the attitudes of disabled students surveyed and those of the non-disabled students. Thus, it could be said that the disabled viewed themselves much the same way

19

as the non-disabled students saw them. This type of relationship was found to exist among individual attitudes evaluated by Weinberg-Asher (1976). However, the total number of disabled persons surveyed in this study was extremely small. If a large population of disabled persons was incorporated, a significant difference might have been obtained.

Even though a generally positive attitude toward the physically disabled was found to exist among high school students, attitudes could still be changed in a more positive direction. Programs designed to increase awareness and knowledge of disabling conditions and that provide increased personal interaction with disabled persons should help to bring about attitude changes in the desired direction.

There is one additional factor that should be mentioned. During the course of the study, it became obvious that some schools administrators and counselors were unaware of the presence of individuals who had physical disabilities and could profit from special assistance. If these persons are to receive the rights legislated by Congress and implied in the concept of mainstreaming, they must be first identified. The problem of non-identification could become a serious handicap to disabled students in programs in which mainstreaming is practiced. Further exploration of these

as the non-disabled students saw them. This type of relationship was found to exist among individual attitudes evaluated by Weinberg-Asher (1976). However, the total number of disabled persons surveyed in this study was extremely small. If a large population of disabled persons was incorporated, a significant difference might have been obtained.

Even though a generally positive attitude toward the physically disabled was found to exist among high school students, attitudes could still be changed in a more positive direction. Programs designed to increase awareness and knowledge of disabling conditions and that provide increased personal interaction with disabled persons should help to bring about attitude changes in the desired direction.

There is one additional factor that should be mentioned. During the course of the study, it became obvious that some schools administrators and counselors were unaware of the presence of individuals who had physical disabilities and could profit from special assistance. If these persons are to receive the rights legislated by Congress and implied in the concept of mainstreaming, they must be first identified. The problem of non-identification could become a serious handicap to disabled students in programs in which mainstreaming is practiced. Further exploration of these problems is needed.

References

- Anthony, W. A. The effects of contact on an individuals attitude toward disabled persons. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 1969, 12(3), 168-171.
- Barker, D. G. Concepts of disabilities. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1964, 43(4), 371-374.
- Bryan, T. H. Peer popularity of learning disability children. Journal of Learning Disability, 1974, 7(10), 621-625.
- Centers, L., & Centers, R. Peer group attitudes toward the amputee child. Journal of Social Psychology, 1963, 61, 127-132.
- Cohen, S. Improving attitudes toward the handicapped. Educational Forum, 1977, 42(1), 9-19.
- Evans, J. H. Changing attitudes toward disabled persons: An experimental study. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 1976, 19(4), 572-579.
- Feinberg, L. B. Social desirability and attitudes toward the disabled. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1967, 46(4), 375-381.
- Gottlieb, J., & Gottlieb, B. W. Stereotypic attitudes and behavioral intentions toward handicapped children. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1977, 82(1), 65-71.

Gottlieb, J., & Siperstein, G. N. Attitudes toward mentally retarded persons: Effects of attitude referent specificity. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1976, 80(4), 376-381.

Jaffe, J. Attitudes of adolescents toward the mentally retarded. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1966, 70(6), 907-912.

Linkowski, D. C. A scale to measure acceptance of disability. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 1971, 14(4), 236-243.

Linkowski, D. C., & Dunn, M. A. Self-concept and acceptance of disability. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 1974, 18(1), 28-32.

Orlansky, M. D. Active learning and student attitudes toward exceptional children. Exceptional Children, 1979, 46(1), 49-52.

Parish, T. S., Ohlsen, R. L., & Parish, J. G. A look at mainstreaming in light of children's attitudes toward the handicapped. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 1978, 46, 1019-1021.

Richardson, S. A., Dornbusch, S. M., Goodman, N., & Hastorf, A. H. Cultural uniformity in reaction to physical disabilities. American Sociological Review, 1961, 26(2), 241-247.

Richardson, S. A., Ronald, L., & Kleck, R. E. The

social status of handicapped and non-handicapped boys in a camp setting. Journal of Special Education, 1974, 8(2), 143-152.

Simon, E. P., & Gillman, A. E. Mainstreaming visually handicapped preschoolers. Exceptional Children, 1979, 45(6), 463-464.

Siperstein, G. N., Bak, J. J., & Gottlieb, J. Effects of group discussion on children's attitudes toward handicapped peers. The Journal of Educational Research, 1977, 70(3), 131-134.

Siperstein, G. N., & Gottlieb, J. Physical stigma and academic performance as factors affecting children's first impressions of handicapped peers. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1977, 81(5), 455-462.

Soldwedel, B., & Terrill, I. Sociometric aspects of physically handicapped and non-handicapped children in the same elementary school. Exceptional Children, 1975, 23(9), 371-383.

Thurman, S. K., & Lewis, M. Children's responses to differences: Some possible implications for mainstreaming. Exceptional children, 1979, 45(6), 468-470.

Weinberg-Asher, N. The effects of physical disability on self-perception. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 1976, 20(1), 15-20.

Weinberg, N. Preschool children's perceptions of orthopedic disability. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 1978, 21(3), 183-189.

Wright, B. A. Physical disability: A psychological-social development. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.

Yang, D. Welcome the handicapped to your classroom and enrich it. Teacher, Dec. 1975, pp. 13, 20-21.

Yuker, H. E., Block, J. R., & Young, J. H. The measurement of attitudes toward disabled persons. Albertson, N.Y.: Human Resources Center, 1970.