DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 698 EC 170 053

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TITLE Behavioral Attributes and Social Distance of Developmentally Handicapped and Normal Children.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Gatlinburg Conference on Research in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (17th, Gatlinburg, TN, March 7-9, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; *Developmental Disabilities; Intergroup Relations; Junior High Schools; *Mainstreaming; *Peer Relationship; *Social Behavior; *Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

Twenty behavioral attributes which predict social distance were examined among mainstreamed developmentally handicapped (n=8) and normal (n=93) junior high school students. The sample consisted of a predominantly white, middle-class, suburban, midwestern school district. The developmentally handicapped students were mainstreamed into each of six normal classrooms for at least one period of each day. A sociometric nomination measure was used to obtain behavioral attribute profiles of the students which were then used to predict a psychometric measure of social distance. Mainstreamed handicapped students were not found to be more socially distant than their normal peers (p>.05). Factors analysis of the 20 behavioral attributes obtained four significant factors, three of which were found to be significant predictors of classroom social distance, accounting for better than half the variance in social distance (R2=.54, P<.01). The three factors were described as (1) incompetent and unassertive, (2) positive active and assertive, and (3) passive and unassertive. The study concludes that social rejection in mainstreamed classrooms is more a function of perceived behavioral attribute factors rather than the developmentally handicapped label as such. (Author)

BEHAVIORAL ATTRIBUTES AND SOCIAL DISTANCE OF DEVELOPMENTALLY HANDICAPPED AND NORMAL CHILDREN

by

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The development and preparation of this paper was made possible through the support of the Dean of the School of Education and Allied Professions of Miami University and the cooperation of the faculty, administration and children of the William Holmes McGuffey Laboratory School who assisted in the development of the sociometric measurement techniques.

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BEHAVIORAL ATTRIBUTES AND SOCIAL DISTANCE OF DEVELOPMENTALLY HANDICAPPED AND NORMAL CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION. Researchers (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Hallinan, 1981; Coie & Dodge, 1983) have suggested that social status can greatly affect children's social adaptability in classroom settings. Several social interaction factors may contribute to children's social acceptability, one of which is the stigmitization associated with labeling handicapped students. Henri Tajfel's (1982) theories regarding cognitive networks and social motivation as associated with intergroup behaviors would predict this pattern of social rejection. A second factor is that of social competence, regardless of labeling. A third factor is that of an interaction between labeling and social competence. Peer reactions influence students' social development and these labeling and social competency factors may influence peer relations. Another related factor would be that of "situational specificity." Gresham (1983a; 1983b) believes that this factor of situational specificity has great importance when assessing childrens' social skills and peer acceptance.

In order to more completely understand how the previously mentioned factors affect social interactions in regular classrooms, one must focus on the development, the implications, and the fallacies of mainstreaming. The term "mainstreaming" comes from a legal mandate (PL94-142) to educate handicapped students in the "least restrictive environment." Simply stated, mainstreaming involves the reentry of handicapped students into the regular classroom.

The least restrictive environment is that which permits the

students to participate in experiences similar to those experienced by "normal" children, while yet considering the students' specific needs. These needs include both academic and social development. Academic mainstreaming involves placing handicapped students in classrooms with regular academic subjects and with students of similar ages. Social mainstreaming usually involves placing handicapped students in non-academic classes (eg., physical education, art, music) with students of comparable age levels. One problem with academic and social mainstreaming is that students placed in regular classrooms for academic reasons do not necessarily have similar social competence skills and the regular classrooms may not be structured so as to provide the necessary development of social competence skills. Such inadequacies may lead to lack of significant progress by handicapped students, thus influencing the mainstreaming problem of inappropriate placement of handicapped students.

The present research examines childrens' social acceptance and rejection in regular junior high, academic classrooms into which developmentally handicapped students were mainstreamed. Past studies (Corman & Gottlieb, 1978; Guskin, 1978) have found that developmentally handicapped students who are mainstreamed tend to be socially rejected. Physical placement of handicapped learners into regular classrooms does not necessarily promote their social acceptance among their peers. The present research attempted to extend these findings by determining if specific attributes of the mainstreamed students tend to lead to social rejection. The study attempted to demonstrate the hypothesis that mainstreamed developmentally handicapped students are socially rejected and that this rejection is due, in part, to a specific cluster of behavioral

characteristics, not merely their labeled status. It is believed that these findings could potentially lead to the development of guidelines for preparing handicapped students with the social skills that may be necessary to appropriately function in regular academic classrooms. The results may also contribute to a better understanding of characteristics that may lead to either social rejection or acceptance of all students in classroom behavior settings. Finally, since developmentally handicapped students are so labeled, partly due to deficits in socially adaptive behavior, this study may offer parents and educators a means by which they can assist handicapped children in coping with deficits in socially adaptive behaviors, thus potentially improving their social status amongst their peers.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE. The sample included 101 students from two junior high schools in a predominantly white, middle class, suburban, midwestern school district. Six regular classroom teachers, who were referred by three district teachers of special developmentally handicapped students, consented to participate in the study. The schools contained grades 7 through 9. Five classes that were used included 7th and 9th grade math, 8th grade English, and 8th and 9th grade science, (of sizes 18, 19, 19, 21 and 19 respectively). One additional 9th grade English class contained 6 students. The normal children (n = 93) included 57 males and 36 females while the handicapped children (n = 8) included 3 males and 5 females. The handicapped children's IQ's ranged from 69 to 87, with a median IQ of 73. All students were between the ages of 12 and 16.

INSTRUMENTATION. Two instruments were used to obtain data for the current study. The Classroom Social Distance Scale (Bureau, 1946) provided social distance scores for each student. The scale is an adaptation of Bogardus' (1928) original instrument and might be described as a sociometric rating technique. Asher and Hymel (1981) suggest this technique as being highly reliable and measuring the overall acceptability or likability within the group as well as the overall extent to which children have best friends. Children were given a survey-matrix in which columns consisted of an alpha-vertical list of the children in their classroom, and the rows were labeled in the margin with an A through E rating continuum. Further descriptions of this instrument are contained in Sherman (1984). Students rated each other by checking off the appropriate categories, thus indicating their perceptions of each other. The categories ranged from wanting to be best friends to not wanting a child in the classroom at all. Although the students chose among lettered descriptions A through E, weighted values of 1 to 5 were actually used in scoring their ratings. The choices were as follows: A = 1, Would like to have him/her as one of my best friends; B = 2, Would like to have him/her in my group but not as a close friend; C = 3, Would like to be with him/her once in awhile, but not often or for a long time; D = 4, Don't mind his/her being in our room but I don't want to have anything to do with him/her; E = 5, Wish he/she wasn't in our room. The social distance index was then computed as the average rating each child received from all other children in their classroom.

After completing the Classroom Social Distance Scale, children

were asked to fill out The Recognition Scale. The Recognition Scale provided a profile of each student based on a list of 20 behavioral attributes. The Recognition Scale is similar to a "Guess Who" nomination technique in which children nominate classmates who fit descriptions of behaviors. It was constructed by combining variables from The Ohio Recognition Scale (Fordyce, Yauch, & Raths, 1946), from research investigating findings similar to the present study (Johnson, 1950; Johnson & Kirk, 1950; Baldwin, 1958), and from the researchers' own experience. This scale included a list of each student in a classroom, and a list of the 20 attributes that described student behaviors. Teachers read a paragraph which described a particular behavioral attribute that corresponded to the name of the attribute found on the form. Students were instructed to check up to 3 different students who might fit the particular description which the teacher had just read to them. They were told that they did not have to choose anyone for a given trait if they felt that it did not fit anyone in their room. Student profiles were obtained by adding the total number of nominations which each child received on each attribute.

DESIGN AND ANALYSES. A non-experimental, criterion group design was used to analyze mean social distance scores of mainstreamed and normal children. Social distance scores were assumed to be continuous measures and therefore an independent sample t-test was used to decide whether mainstreamed children were significantly (alpha<.05) greater in mean social distance when contrasted with normal children. Also, mainstreamed and normal children's mean nominations to the 20 attributes contained in The Recognition Scale were contrasted with

each other by use of independent sample t-tests. The remaining analyses were correlational in design. The nominations which the children received from each other on the 20 behavioral attributes of The Recognition Scale were subjected to a factor analysis using the Statistical Analysis System's (Barr, Goodnight & Sall, 1979) FACTOR ANALYSIS program. A "PROMAX" rotation was used to generate the expected factor structure. This solution was then used to generate factor scores which were then subjected to a stepwise-multiple regression analysis in which they were used as predictors of the criterion variable, mean social distance.

RESULTS

Twenty-one independent sample t-tests displayed in TABLE 1 obtained four statistically significant ($p < .05$) results. The mean social distance scores for the mainstreamed vs. the normal children was not found to be statistically significant ($p > .05$, one-tail t-test), thus concluding the null-hypothesis that mainstreamed children are not significantly different from their normal peers with regard to classroom social distance. However, mainstreamed children do appear to be significantly ($p < .05$, two-tail t-tests) different from their normal classroom peers on four of the 20 behavioral attributes. These include being perceived by their classmoom peers as far less "outgoing, unselfish" and less likely to be "rude to teachers" as well as much more "calm." They are also more likely to be perceived by their normal peers as more "bashful/shy" ($p < .07$).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

An intercorrelation matrix of the twenty behavioral attributes is

displayed in TABLE 2. This matrix also displays the intercorrelations of the the children's social distance ratings with each of the 20 attributes. Means and standard deviations for the entire sample are contained in the last two rows of the matrix. The sequential order of the variables has been permutated so as to parallel the order of factor selection which was determined from the factor analysis of the 20 attributes. Using a "promax" rotation solution the four primary factors displayed in TABLE 3 were determined. The first factor contained nine non-prosocial behaviors and was thus labeled as "NEGATIVE/IRRITATING/ANTISOCIAL". Since the second factor contained four attributes of a non-active and somewhat withdrawn nature we chose to descibe it as "PASSIVE/UNASSERTIVE." The third factor drew upon five attributes which were more actively prosocial and we labeled it "POSITIVE/ACTIVE/ASSERTIVE." The fourth factor drew primarily on three of the attributes which appeared to be related to socially incompetent behaviors and was labeled "INCOMPETENT/UNASSERTIVE."

INSERT TABLES 2 & 3 HERE

Factor scores for these four factors were then subjected to a stepwise multiple regression analysis and used as predictors of the children's mean social distance scores. This procedure found that three of the four factors were significant predictors of social distance. TABLE 4 shows that the attributes clustering to form the group labeled "INCOMPETENT/UNASSERTIVE" accounted for nearly 1/3 of the variance of social distance. With the addition of the factor "POSITIVE/ACTIVE/ASSERTIVE," the squared multiple correlation coefficient increased 12%, accounting for half of the variance in social distance. With the addition of the "PASSIVE/UNASSERTIVE" factor, the R2 increased an additional 4%, helping to account in all

for over half of the variance in social distance. These three factors included 15 of the 20 attributes. The remaining five attributes, labeled as "NEGATIVE/IRRITATING/ANTISOCIAL," did not significantly contribute to the prediction of social distance. Thus, the second hypothesis of the study was supported. A specific cluster of behavioral traits was significantly ($p < .05$) associated with social distance.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

One additional analysis included an examination of the interactive effects of the raters sexes and the sexes of the children whom they rated. Kane & Lawler (1978) suggest that one source of bias in peer rating scales is the sex of rater by sex of ratee influence. Since this source was so strongly found in earlier studies (Sherman, 1981; Sherman, 1984), a within-subjects, repeated measures analysis of variance was done. Each subject received ratings from their own sex as well as the opposite sex. Cross/sex ratings were found to be significantly higher than same/sex ratings ($p < .01$) and this was so whether males or females were doing the rating, thus indicating a reciprocal rejection pattern for children of the opposite sex. While acknowledging this source of bias, if one is interested in the overall classroom social distance pattern, it would seem that the behavioral trait factors are not diminished in importance.

DISCUSSION

This study presents evidence suggesting that mainstreamed devolopmentally handicapped children are not necessarily more socially rejected than their normal peers. Ratings from the Classroom Social

Distance Scale indicated that handicapped and normal students had similar social distance scores. This finding clearly disagrees with the social rejection patterns found by Jordan (1959), Strauch (1970), Goodman et al (1972), Gottlieb and Davis (1973), and Gottlieb and Budoff (1973). These past studies established that handicapped students were socially rejected. Even though the current study disagrees with past research, the findings do not lessen the importance of looking further into possible relationships between behavioral attributes and classroom social acceptance and rejection. As expressed earlier, Johnson (1950), Johnson & Kirk (1950), Baldwin (1958) and Gottlieb et al (1978), all attempted to find relationships between social rejection and factors such as behavior, academic incompetence, and grade level. They found that misbehavior tended to predict social rejection of retarded students. The current study also found that many behavioral attributes predicted social distance; however, in contrast to earlier research, peer perceived behavioral attributes were found to be associated with the total sample of classmates, rather than with only the handicapped students.

Behavioral attributes were found to cluster into four factors that strongly predicted social distance. The strongest single predictor of high social distance was the factor labeled "INCOMPETENT/UNASSERTIVE," which included the traits (a) poor in games, (b) sissy, (c) not creative, (d) poor thinker, (e) poor committee worker, and (f) poor sport. All of these attributes describe students who are unable to perform adequately in competitive, artistic, cognitive, and social activities. These traits seem to closely parallel Tajfel's (1982) construct of positive group distinctiveness. "INCOMPETENT/UNASSERTIVE" attributes associated with

some students tend to threaten the status or security of their classmates who perceive them in this way. The threatened peers reject the incompetent students in order to protect their own social positions. Lippitt & Gold's (1959) research would also suggest that they are not seen as social resources.

The second predictor of social distance was the factor labeled "POSITIVE/ACTIVE/ASSERTIVE." The related traits were (a) friendly, (b) loyal to group, (c) good leader, (d) unselfish, and (e) outgoing. These attributes are indicative of students who enhance positive classroom environments and group cohesiveness. These traits are quite opposite from the "INCOMPETENT/UNASSERTIVE" attributes in that they suggest confidence and competence in social situations. These positive attributes support Lippitt & Gold's (1959) findings that high status students exhibit supportive and friendly behavior. These children may indeed be seen as assets which might enhance what Tajfel (1982) describes as a group's positive "social identity" as well as "positive group distinctiveness."

The third contributing factor was labeled "PASSIVE/UNASSERTIVE." It included (a) bashful/shy, (b) calm, (c) unhappy, and (d) modest/doesn't brag. These traits appear to describe withdrawn behavior of students who are distant in group situations. The calm and shy qualities possibly lead classmates to believe that they are unhappy. Modesty may be the result of timid behavior. Based on Tajfel's (1982) construct of positive group distinctiveness, students may reject classmates percieved as unassertive simply because they, (the shy students), do not enhance the social status of their peers.

The late Henri Tajfel's (1982) theories of intergroup behavior depend upon four key constructs: (1) social categorization, (2) social

identity, (3) social comparisons, and (4) positive group distinctiveness. The social categorization construct assumes that people socially create a network of varibus categories of classification of other humans. The social identity construct assumes that individuals who socially categorize others also attempt to define their own membership within those categories. Social comparison assumes that evaluative characteristics are assigned to various positions within the category network and that an individual's place within this network establishes a referent point from which they engage in both self evaluation and evaluaton of others. The fourth construct, positive group distinctiveness, assumes that if people engage in social comparison, there arises a motive to protect and enhance positive evaluation by preservation of a posivitely valued distinctiveness from other categories.

Perhaps the labels "developmentally disabled" and "mainstreamed" were not nearly as relevant in the eyes of the normal children as were the actual behavioral traits which they could readily perceive in their classmates. It would appear that the results of the present study indicate that these children's cognitive networks are based more so upon various behavioral traits, rather than labels. Peer popularity, acceptance, rejection and social distance in general, are phenomena quite reliably established in the most recent research literature (see Merril-Palmer Quarterly, 1983, volume 29, No. 3, the entire issue.). Related literature on the development of and training for social competence suggest the importance which these behaviors have in influencing peer acceptance (Wine & Smye, 1981; Dodge, Schlundt, Schocken & Delugach, 1983; Asher & Hymel, 1981). If training in social competence can effectively be used with

developmentally handicapped children (Gresham, 1981), then the present findings could provide an important aspect in the support we give to these children when they are "normalized" and re-introduced into regular classroom environments. The positive factors described in this study may be important behavioral characteristics to focus in on when attempting to train children for greater social competence. Obviously the negative factors should be discouraged. Of course, even so-called normal children who are having difficulties involving peer acceptance could benifit from such training. The end result may be what Schmuck & Schmuck (1983) refer to as a more healthy or positive classroom climate. Schmuck & Schmuck (1983) also suggest that greater cognitive achievement on the part of all children in a classroom may also be the reward for improved classroom social climate.

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TABLE 1

Mean Social Distance for Peer Ratings and Mean Nomination Frequencies for 20 Attributes of Mainstreamed and Normal Children

	Mainstreamed n=8		Normal n=93		Independent Sample t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Bully	.50	1.41	1.48	3.01	
2. Rude to teacher	.50	1.41	2.30	3.76	2.84*
3. Bothers others	1.00	2.07	2.40	3.37	
4. Lazy	1.63	2.20	1.97	2.35	
5. Poor thinker	2.25	3.33	2.05	2.42	
6. Poor committee worker	2.50	4.34	1.35	1.90	
7. Copy cat	1.38	1.41	1.56	1.76	
8. Poor sport	1.13	1.64	1.89	2.82	
9. Bashful/shy	3.75	3.99	1.53	3.33	-1.79**
10. Calm	4.50	3.96	1.60	2.75	-2.76*
11. Unhappy	1.86	3.04	1.33	2.37	
12. Modest/doesn't brag	1.00	1.07	1.54	2.20	
13. Friendly	2.25	1.91	2.11	2.09	
14. Loyal to group	1.38	1.51	1.55	1.48	
15. Good leader	.75	1.04	1.08	1.25	
16. Unselfish	2.75	2.19	1.55	1.53	2.06*
17. Outgoing	.62	.74	2.11	2.35	4.14*
18. Poor in games	2.63	3.62	1.57	2.14	
19. Sissy	2.50	4.34	1.74	2.19	
20. Not creative	1.38	1.60	1.13	1.62	
Social distance	2.87	.83	2.76	.62	

*$p<.05$ **$p<.07$

TABLE 2

Intercorrelations of 20 Attributes and Social Distance

Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1 Bully																				
2 Rude to teacher	.64																			
3 Bothers others	.84	.77																		
4 Lazy	.56	.56	.64																	
5 Poor thinker	.49	.57	.68	.66																
6 Poor committee worker	.47	.51	.56	.69	.62															
7 Copy cat	.41	.51	.59	.52	.49	.42														
8 Poor sport	.41	.59	.61	.51	.59	.63	.50													
9 Bashful/shy	-.21	-.23	-.27	-.09	-.12	-.12	-.29	-.21												
10 Calm	-.25	-.34	-.37	-.22	-.27	-.22	-.36	-.29	.81											
11 Unhappy	-.18	-.15	-.10	.15	.12	.11	-.07	.04	.76	.56										
12 Modest/doesn't brag	-.18	-.26	.27	-.29	-.32	-.28	-.29	-.27	.47	.68	.17									
13 Friendly	-.21	-.17	-.29	-.36	-.37	-.40	-.05	-.32	[illegible]	.09	-.19	.38								
14 Loyal to group	-.13	-.13	-.24	-.25	-.36	-.23	-.04	-.24	-.04	.11	-.16	.28	.72							
15 Good leader	-.02	-.15	-.17	-.26	-.31	-.26	-.31	-.26	-.08	.04	-.17	.28	.62	.61						
16 Unselfish	-.16	-.19	-.31	-.26	-.34	-.19	.49	-.23	.04	.24	-.11	.35	.57	.45	.34					
17 Outgoing	.31	.36	.24	.10	.06	.03	.30	.08	-.31	-.30	-.26	-.17	-.43	.47	.42	.17				
18 Poor in games	-.03	.03	.18	.30	.47	.45	.18	.48	.24	.16	.54	-.06	-.32	-.23	-.32	-.14	-.31			
19 Sissy	.09	.20	.30	.39	.66	.49	.29	.29	-.10	-.14	.23	-.24	-.41	-.36	-.33	-.25	-.21	.71		
20 Not creative	.09	.23	.36	.47	.45	.18	.48	.24	-.06	-.12	.19	-.21	-.37	-.29	-.29	-.21	-.12	.58	.53	
Social distance	.09	.10	.22	.39	.45	.46	.11	.37	.20	.09	.44	-.13	-.53	-.50	-.49	-.31	-.38	.61	.50	.42
Mean	1.41	2.16	2.29	1.94	2.07	1.38	1.54	1.83	1.70	1.83	1.38	1.50	2.19	1.53	1.05	1.64	2.00	1.65	1.80	1.15
SD	2.92	3.66	3.30	2.33	2.48	1.96	1.73	2.75	3.41	2.95	2.41	2.14	2.07	1.47	1.24	1.61	2.30	2.29	2.40	1.61

Note. Coefficients greater than .20 are significant at $p < .05$

TABLE 3

Factor Pattern Matrix of 4 Factors Derived from 20 Behavior Attributes

Attributes	Factors 1 Negative irritating antisocial attributes	2 Passive unassertive attributes	3 Positive active assertive attributes	4 Incompetent unassertive attributes
1. Bully	.95	.10	-.08	-.30
2. Rude to teacher	.91	.01	-.01	-.10
3. Bothers others	.83	-.04	-.07	.08
4. Lazy	.72	.13	-.10	.22
5. Poor thinker	.53	-.01	-.09	.50
6. Poor committee worker	.55	.06	-.04	.42
7. Copy cat	.53	.17	.27	.35
8. Poor sport	.47	-.08	.02	.50
9. Bashful/shy	.08	.96	-.10	-.06
10. Calm	-.03	.92	.09	-.06
11. Unhappy	.03	.76	-.07	.34
12. Modest/doesn't brag	.02	.68	.35	-.13
13. Friendly	-.11	-.00	.87	-.02
14. Loyal to group	.03	-.03	.87	.03
15. Good leader	.03	-.00	.75	-.08
16. Unselfish	-.15	.12	.70	.12
17. Outgoing	.48	-.19	.58	-.15
18. Poor in games	-.10	.24	.05	.91
19. Sissy	-.05	-.12	-.05	.87
20. Not creative	.05	-.07	.00	.77

TABLE 4

Stepwise Multiple Regression Using Four Derived Factor Scores as Predictors of Social Distance

Factors	R^2	R^2 Increase	F Ratio
Incompetent unassertive attributes	.38		35.03*
Positive active assertive attributes	.50	.12	24.24*
Passive unassertive attributes	.54	.16	8.06*

*p<.001