



**MEASURING THE FEELING OF INCLUSION WITH ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES;
A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH**

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Recent organizational and policy efforts have been directed at increasing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within our practices as behavior analysts. Specifically, our assessment and interventions are often designed to increase the opportunity for our clients to be included in their educational, vocational, and community settings. As such, the concept of inclusion serves as a key measure of social validity for behavior analytic interventions. However, the feeling of inclusion experienced by our clients is not employed by our field to evaluate the impact of our programming. This research aimed to evaluate the feelings of inclusion experienced by adults with disabilities engaging in a pre-vocational service setting.

Morgan's Multi-Assistance Center (The MAC) aims to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities through comprehensive and coordinated services. The Ambassador program is a volunteer program designed for individuals with disabilities to develop skills to give back to their communities such as pre-vocational skills. Participants included 24 Ambassador Volunteers diagnosed with an intellectual or physical disability. No single measure of inclusion has been

found to adequately measure *all* inclusion domains so researchers employed both a quantitative survey and a semi-structured interview to capture all aspects of inclusion. The quantitative phase included the Social and Community Opportunities Profile (SCOPE: Huxley et. al., 2016), the Brief Sense of Community Scale (Peterson et. al., 2008), and a brief demographics survey. Based on the initial results of the survey, researchers developed a list of 7 semi-structured interview questions that focused on identify the participants definition of inclusion, how they experience inclusion, and how the Ambassador program has impacted their feeling of inclusion. 10 of the participants who completed the quantitative survey took part in the qualitative interviews.

Results from the SCOPE indicate that 64% of participants reported positive feelings about the extent to which they feel included in society. Additionally, participants were more pleased with their access to medical supports for physical health (68% positive) rather than mental health (36% positive). Emergent themes from participant interviews supported inclusion as consisting of multiple aspects including (1) participation in society, (2) feeling of belongingness and community, and (3) representation and citizenship. Future research can further investigate the construct of inclusion as it applies to individuals with disabilities, and long-term impacts of “inclusive practices”.

Table 1. Results of the Brief Sense of Community Scale

Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I can get what I need in this community	3	5	4.72	0.62
This community helps me fulfil my needs	3	5	4.68	0.63
I feel like a member of this community	3	5	4.86	0.34
I belong in this community	3	5	4.90	0.29
I have a say about what goes on in this community	1	5	3.59	1.50
People in this community are good at influencing eachother	3	5	4.67	0.73
I feel connected to this neighborhood	3	5	4.71	0.63
I have a good bond with others in this community	3	5	4.33	1.04

Note: this scale is presented on a Likert scale with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 indicating “strongly agree”

Table 2. Categorization of the Interview Reponses

Theme	Sample Quotes
Participation	“Inclusion is what makes me feel good, and just being able to take part in different responsibilities[...], not being discriminated against”
	“Inclusion means no one feels left out. Everyone has a, has friends. Everyone has people they can talk to.”
	“You have a place of like love and inviting and a place where people can come and feel like they have a place where they can belong in one community and in an in a family environment”
Belonging and Community	“Socialize with everyone, [to] see that he is not the only one that is that way, so that he can see that there are more kids like him”
	“Feeling like I'm a part of something bigger than myself, feeling like I can you know bond with other people of all different abilities”
	“It’s more about friendship and relationship to each other. We just want to be heard.” – Lynn
Citizenship	“I see it as inclusion not just being, not just being a word, but being actual action [...] enacting the change and just not talking about it”
	“I have the choice to, like, go wherever I want to wherever I want to go”
	“It’s all about having respect for one another [...] conscious respect”

