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THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WITH AND
WITHOUT AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

By

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M.S.S.W., Western Kentucky University, 2008

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

Social Work
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

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Dissertation Approved on

December 8, 2020

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedication to my father, Kenneth Clark, who passed before he had the chance to see the results but always believed in me and the work that I was doing.

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First, I would like to thank anyone who has provided support, a lending ear, or advice during my tenure as a doctoral student. I am grateful to my family for giving me emotional support and for being understanding of my absences during my work on this dissertation. They have been on the sideline cheering me on since day one of my doctoral studies. I could not imagine going through this process without feeling the love that they have shown me.

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I would also like to thank the participants of this study. Without their willingness to participate, I would not have a dissertation. I hope that I have given you a voice and represented you well. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know all of you and hope that you all continue your friendship journeys.

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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WITH AND WITHOUT AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Rebecca Clark

12/08/2020

Practitioners and researchers are concerned about the limited social inclusion and social networks of individuals with an Intellectual Disability (ID) (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Hardman & Clark, 2006; Knox & Hickson, 2001; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Tipton, 2011). Friendships between those with and without an ID are viewed as opportunities for greater inclusiveness with and connection to the mainstream society (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; McConkey & Collins, 2010). However, little is known about the development of friendships between those with and without an ID. The purpose of this study was to fully explore the process that results in formation, maintenance of as well as satisfaction with friendships between those with and without an ID.

This study is a basic interpretive qualitative study. The researcher used a combination of pair and individual interviews with eight friendship pairs (friendships between those with and without an ID) to gather information on the formation, maintenance, and satisfaction related to these friendships. The researcher chose a dyadic analysis approach utilizing coding to reduce and make meaning of the data. The analysis revealed two themes describing friendship formation: *Being available to new possibilities* and *Having help getting to know each other*; Four themes describing friendship maintenance: *Keeping things light*, *Having each other's back*, *Balancing independence, protection, and advocacy*, and

Regulating personal disclosure; and three themes describing friendship satisfaction: *I want more availability*, *I coping with idiosyncracies* , and *We love big and unconditionally*. Taken together, these themes provide a deeper understanding of the formation, maintenance, and satisfaction related to the friendship. Comparison of these findings with past literature and implications for practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: friendship, ID, adulthood friendships, relationships, social inclusion, friendships between those with and without an ID, quality of life, friendship satisfaction, and friendship theory

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CHAPTER I: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In American culture, it was a long-held belief that the feature of intelligent ability played an important role in rational thinking and was a primary ingredient to a successful and meaningful existence (Copleston & Copleston, 1994). To support this notion, Western philosophy also engaged in identifying rational thought as the distinguishing factor that is responsible for separating intelligent creatures (mankind) from the rest of creation. This ideology and belief about the capabilities of people who possess higher intellect from those who do not, or specifically, from those who are not able to demonstrate at least an average intellectual capability, led to labeling those with such cognitive deficits as “handicapped.” People who are identified with an intellectual disability (ID) have unfortunately become the target and objects of socially cruel mockery (Linneman, 2001). Once labeled as having an intellectual disability, a person became more likely to experience ostracism and social exclusion. Thus, the definition or label of ID remains crucial as it can affect a person’s lifetime of experiences (Hall, 2010). Although the labels and definitions of an ID has changed throughout the years, in the past few decades the American Psychiatric Association (APA) defined an ID in more concrete terms.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) identified mental retardation as having an intelligence quotient (IQ) score below 70 with deficits presented before the age of 18 in at least two areas within communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety. The identifiers included mild, moderate, severe, profound, and unspecified based upon the IQ groupings below 70 (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Fifth Edition (DSM-V) included some changes in wording and specifications. The term intellectual disability is now preferred over mental retardation. The DSM-V described ID as being a disorder with onset during the early developmental period that included an intellectual and adaptive functioning deficit. It reported that a person with an ID could have trouble with problem-solving, planning, abstract thinking, learning, and judgment. Adaptive functioning deficits included deficits in social skills, personal independence, and school/work functioning. The DSM-V stopped specifying the severity of an ID by IQ scores, and began utilizing criteria of adaptive functioning levels in the classification of the severity of an ID (APA, 2013). Patel, Apple, Kannugo, and Akkal (2018) described these levels depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Severity Levels of Intellectual Disability

Severity	Communication/Language	Basic Skills	Supports Needed
Mild	Difficulty in the acquisition and comprehension of complex language concepts and academic skills. Able to do simple multiplications/divisions; write simple letters, and lists	Most can do basic self-care, home activities. Able to complete job application; basic independent job skills (arrive on time, stay at task, interact with co-workers); use public transportation; may qualify for recipes	Support as needed basis, episodic or short-term Can achieve relatively independent living and employment as adults with appropriate support
Moderate	Language and capacity for acquisition of academic skills of persons affected vary but are generally limited to basic skills. Abilities include sight-word reading; copy address from card to job application; match written number to number of items	Some may master basic self-care, and home activities. Abilities include: some independence in self-care; housekeeping with supervision or cue cards; meal preparation, can follow picture recipe cards; job skills learned with much repetition; use public transportation with some supervision	Most require consistent support in order to achieve independent living and employment as adults
Severity Severe	Communication/Language Very limited language and capacity for acquisition of academic skills	Basic Skills May also have motor impairments. Require daily support in and supervision. Some may acquire basic self-care skills with intensive training	Supports Needed Regular, consistent, lifetime support in school, work, or home activities. Care dependent
Profound	Very limited communication abilities. Capacity for acquisition of academic skills is restricted to basic concrete skills	May also have motor and sensory impairments. Require daily support and supervision	High intensity support needed, across all environments. Limitations of selfcare, continence, communication, and mobility; may need complete custodial or nursing care. Care dependent

Note. Patel D. R., Apple R., Kanungo S., & Akkal A (2018). Intellectual disability: definitions, evaluation, and principles of treatment. *Pediatric Med* 1(11), p. 3.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defined an individual with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities” (Ainsworth & Baker, 2004, p. 2). The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) replaced the term mental retardation with intellectual disability in 2008 and defined it as “a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills which originates before the age of 18” (AAIDD, 2010, p. 1).

The terminology and definitions associated with an ID have continued to change over the years. Eligibility for many of the available financial resources for those with an ID are based on current definition or identifiers of an ID. The availability of these resources for people with an ID directly impacted their living situations, education, employment, recreational activities, relationships, etc. (Hall, 2010). Many individuals with an ID depended on those service provisions to meet the needs of daily living, which in turn were reflected in the attitudes of society (Tipton, 2011) towards persons with an ID.

Over the past century, there has been move away from people diagnosed with an ID living in institutions to living in the community. Researchers became increasingly interested in how people with an ID found acceptance in their communities and how the shift in services affected their quality of life (Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek, & Leahy, 2015). Researchers found that quality of life, social inclusion, and friendships were important goals for those with an ID and their families. Those with an ID and their

families wanted their lived community experiences to reach beyond labels and reflect more on the individual strengths they had to offer within the community (Hall, 2010).

Deinstitutionalization

The first institutions designed to house people diagnosed with an ID came about in the late 19th century with the purpose of protecting the individual with an ID from the outside world. By the early 1900s, the societal response shifted to seeing the institutions as being a place to protect the outside world from those with an ID (Wolfsenger, 1980). ID, as recent as the late 19th century, had been described as a plague that needed to be isolated from the public. Institutions became the dwelling place for the majority of those with an ID. Services for those with an ID were scarce, and many spent their entire life in institutions, sequestered from the outside world (Parr, 2000). During the last century, there were those that accepted the need for this practice and mindset; despite the knowledge that individuals with an ID had the same legal and human rights as anyone else in society (McConkey, 2007).

The deinstitutionalization movement reflected a concern for the civil rights of those with an ID and began the shift of housing persons with ID from institutions to communities. There was strong encouragement for deinstitutionalization and community integration by the end of the 1960s (Crane, 2002). Federal and state legislators funded programs that supported these efforts by allowing those with an ID to be eligible for Supplemental Social Security Income benefits. As a result, the number of people with ID living in institutions moved to community settings was over 50,000 (Hall, 2010). Policymakers then implemented laws to assist with community integration, including the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 that required all federal buildings to be physically

accessible, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibited discrimination in employment based upon disability, and the Education for All Act of 1975 that offered equal opportunity for education (Ainsworth & Baker, 2004). This was a pivotal change as it started to remove the responsibility from families and individuals towards holding communities that were utilizing exclusionary practices to deny and/or restrict housing, education, and employment to persons with ID.

As legislative bodies enacted laws emphasizing deinstitutionalization, many state agencies began to utilize the practice of normalization to assist those with an ID into community living (Wolfsenger, 1980). Wolfsenger (1980) defined normalization as follows, “utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible, to establish, enable, or support behaviors, appearances, experiences, and interpretations which are as culturally normative as possible” (p. 8). Other authors reported that normalization does not mean that one is trying to make another like everyone else, but it means to assist those with an ID with unique behaviors, skills, competencies, appearances, and experiences in having culturally integrated lives (Bell & Clegg, 2012; Hall, 2005). Thus, as people with an ID made the shift from institutions to the community, the goals of services, interventions, and outcome measures focused on this principle of integration.

Social Inclusion Trends

Practice trends in the 1980s reflected the concept of normalization. Then, in the late 1980s, the European Commission consisting of Australia, the Republic of Seychelles, and Denmark (McConkey & Collins, 2010) began expanding the idea of normalization to include a broader understanding of social inclusion. It noted that social inclusion was a broad scale term that involved being accepted beyond disability, having significant

reciprocal relationships, having inclusive living arrangements, and having access to employment and education (Simplican et al., 2015), and for those with an ID, lack of it was a significant social problem (Duvdevany & Arar, 2004). Policymakers and service providers throughout Europe responded with actions likely to increase social inclusion for those with intellectual disabilities (Silver, 1994).

The United States began to recognize and act on the knowledge that those with an ID experienced social exclusion in the 1990s' (Sibley, 1998). The U.S. Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) [Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328] in 1990 which made it illegal to discriminate against persons with developmental disabilities (Hall, 2005). Additionally, the Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C* 527 U.S. 581 in 1999 required states to offer services in an integrated community setting. In response, many states established waiver programs to implement, fund, and monitor the support given to those with an ID (Perry & Felce, 2004).

The years between 2000 and 2010 proved to be crucial in bridging the gap between policy, practice, and research concerning social inclusion. Service providers began to focus on individual interventions and strategies that might increase social inclusion for individuals with an ID. Some of the interventions included person-centered planning, supported employment, behavior supports, case management, occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, adult day training, and crisis intervention (Jones, Prout, & Kleinert, 2005). As a result, people with ID and those caring for them reported gaining more physical access to community organizations, job opportunities, and transportation (Duvdevany & Arar, 2004).

Despite these advances and more opportunities for social inclusion, researchers in 2010 were still publishing findings indicating that people with an ID still experienced social exclusion (McConkey & Collins, 2010). There were converging definitions of social inclusion at the time, with researchers agreeing that social inclusion was multi-dimensional and more than mere community presence; it included an assessment of the quality of social interactions, levels of community participation, and degrees of social integration (Wiesel & Bigby, 2015). Bell and Clegg (2012) noted that it was not enough to extend legal affordances to promote social inclusion for those with an ID; it required a shift in assumptions and allowances by the social or cultural environment for which the individual with an ID inhabited. The definition also included community presence, friendships, and having a sense of belonging. Although the governing policies theoretically eliminated social exclusion for those with an ID, organizations and communities held fast to the exclusionary thoughts, attitudes, and processes that inhibited social inclusion (Bigby & Craig, 2017). Researchers reacted to this reality and began to focus more on exploring the social interactions, community participation, and social integration of those with ID (Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts, Embregts, & Hendriks, 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Wilson, Jacques, Johnson, & Botherton, 2017).

Problem Statement

As researchers sought a better understanding of the actual lived experiences of those with an ID through studying their social interactions, community participation, and social integration, they initially found that many people with an ID reported having few to no friends outside of paid staff or family and experienced a marked sense of isolation (Amado, 2013; Duggan & Linehan, 2013; Mahar, Cobigio, & Stewart, 2016). However,

later studies showed that this trend has shifted somewhat, and researchers reporting that individuals with an ID experienced an increase in the number of friendships and overall sense of community participation (Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017, Giesbers, Hendriks, Jahoda, Hastings, & Embregts, 2019; Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2016, Wilson et al., 2017).

The National Core Indicators (NCI), a multi-state collaboration that follows various outcome measures for those with ID, reported that over 70% of those with an ID had friends. Within those friendships, 81% of those with an ID reported they could visit or share activities without restriction with their friends, including shopping, errands, entertainment, eating out, religious service, and exercise (Human Services Research Institute, 2016). These were encouraging outcomes as it represented enhancement in quality of life and social inclusion for those with an ID.

While the NCI project provided positive feedback to the present social environment for those with an ID, researchers are still specifically interested in the experience of friendships between those with and without an ID as it represents progress towards further social inclusion (Giesbers et al., 2019; Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2016, Simpican et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2017). One of the indicators of social inclusion is having a robust and integrated social network (Wiesel & Bigby, 2015). The presence of a good friend without an ID, who is a member of the community where people historically shunned them, is an integral marker of progress and appreciation (Ware, Hopper, Tugenberg, Dickey, & Fisher, 2018). The presence of this type of friendship indicated that community members celebrated differences and were supportive of expansive social networks (Lakon & Valente, 2012).

Upon further study, the consensus among researchers is that in spite of the increase in the number reported friendships, the majority of people with an ID continue to experience significant challenges in forming integrated community friendships; most of their social networks are still limited to family, those with an ID, or support staff (Amado, 2013; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Giesbers et al., 2019; Mahar et al., 2016). This is consistent with previous research that indicated people with an ID struggled to have integrated social networks in communities due to the historical prejudices and perceptions that surrounded the diagnosis of an ID (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Duvedevany & Arar, 2004; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Hall, 2010). However, in spite of those struggles, there is some documentation that friendships are occurring between those with and without an ID. Researchers are looking to expound upon this to enhance knowledge that can produce continued growth in social inclusion for those with an ID (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Hardman & Clark, 2006; Knox & Hickson, 2001; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Tipton, 2011; Wilson et al., 2017).

The limited research available that explores the friendships between those with and without an ID predominantly has focused on the count of these friendships, the types of community activities they engage in, barriers to friendships formation, and the level of consumer satisfaction with support services (Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017). This is an incomplete picture with regards to the overall process of how these friendships were formed and maintained. In order to identify change strategies that could positively result in greater social inclusion for those with an ID, researchers must produce knowledge that clearly outlines the details of how

these friendships are formed and maintained, so as to inform practice and key players engaged in change efforts (Cobogio, Kuntz, Lysaght, & Martin, 2012).

Furthermore, there is a lack of research available on the overall sense of satisfaction experienced in friendships between those with and without an ID (Akin, Akin, & Arar, 2016; Wilson et al., 2017) Reciprocal and fulfilling friendships form mutually and add a significant sense of improvement to a person's mental and physical health. They also diminish the sadness that can accompany a person when they feel lonely or anxious (Wrzus, Zimmermann, Mund, & Neyer, 2016). Conversely, friendships with lower levels of reciprocity and fulfillment can produce feelings of disconnection, conflict, and insecurity that could increase the sense of exclusion (Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2016).

Therefore, to better understand all of the important aspects of friendships between those with and without an ID, one must look at the process that brought the friends together, the process that keeps the friendship going, and the overall sense of satisfaction experienced in the friendship (Akin et. al., 2016; Gleckel, 2015). The lack of detailed information available on the lived experience of friendships between those with and without an ID presents an obstacle to the progression of initiatives to increase social inclusion for those with an ID (Wilson et al., 2017).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants' description of their satisfaction within that friendship using qualitative methods. The study will attempt to answer three research questions:

1. How do friendships form between those with and without an ID?
2. How are friendships maintained between those with and without an ID?
3. How do the participants describe their satisfaction with the friendship?

Significance of the Study to Social Work

The significance of this study is that it gives individuals with an ID a voice in the research, provides informative accounts of the experience of these friendships published in a manner that promotes awareness and education about the value of diverse friendships, and contributes to the theoretical knowledge of friendships. Most past research about individuals with an ID has not included their perspectives in the research, which inadvertently disempowered and silenced their voice (Furman, Collins, Garner, Montanro, & Weber, 2009). Experts agree that including individuals with an ID in research is crucial to increasing a sense of empowerment for those with an ID and gives them a sense that their voice is important and valued (Barnes, 2003; Booth & Booth, 1996; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Carpenter & Austin, 2007; Carrick, Mitchell, & Lloyd, 2001; Hammel, Magasi, Heinemann, Whiteneck, Rodriguez, & Bogner, 2008; Kitchin, 2000).

The literature on friendships between those with and without an ID has primarily focused on the barriers to social inclusion for those with an ID, the effectiveness of interventions to increase quality of life for those with an ID, or the various contributing factors of support persons for those with an ID (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Duvedevany & Arar, 2004; Hall, 2010). However, there is a lack of knowledge about the experience of friendships between people with and without an ID (Asselt-Goverts, Embregts, Hendriks, & Frielink, 2014; Hall, 2010; Knox & Hickson, 2001, Wiltz, 2005). Amado (2013) wrote that education, raised awareness, and positive exposure are key elements to

fight social exclusion for marginalized populations. Wiesel & Bigby (2015) noted that further inquiry into the friendships between those with and without ID was important because there has long been a documented social stigma associated with having an ID, and many people unfortunately are not aware of the value these friendships bring to both parties (Brostrand, 2006). For those parties who have found the value of forming and fostering these friendships, their voices have been minimally documented in research (Allman, 2013; Loyd, Gatherer, & Kalsy, 2006; Weheymer, Bersani, & Gagne, 2000).

The integrative conceptual model of friendship developed by Bleiszner & Adams (1992) is used in this study to frame the review of the literature as well as a theoretical backdrop for understanding the study findings. There is an overwhelming need to add a theoretical foundation to current practice approaches with persons with intellectual disabilities (Furman et al., 2009; Gilbert; 2004; Gilson & Depoy, 2002; Wiltz, 2005). Most theories and conceptual frameworks for understanding friendships continue to be in the early stages of development, and researchers have done very little to individualize these theories or frameworks specific to individuals with an ID (Hammel & Finlayson, 2003).

Literature on friendships between those with and without and ID is limited. Most previous studies, although qualitative in nature, recommended further exploratory research (Amado, 2014, Wilson et al., 2017) into understanding friendships between persons with and without ID. Therefore, this qualitative study sought to explore the experience of friendships between those with and without an ID by gathering perspectives on friendships from the person with ID as well as the person without an ID

through semi-structured interviews to identify key themes reflective of these types of friendships to inform practice and further social inclusion of persons with ID.

Social work has been known as one of the few professions that assist people in creating meaningful social contexts (Furman et al., 2009). Social work research has informed the development of effective strategies to build resources for individuals, families, groups, and communities. However, research on developing friendships using the lens of social work has been lacking. This is especially true when it comes to research on friendships between those with and without an ID (Walsh, 2008). This study is a start in filling the gap in the research on friendships between those with and without an ID.

Key Terms and Definitions

Adult is a person who has reached the age of independence specified by law (Hall, 2010). For the purpose of this study the age range is 18–65. Persons under this age are considered adolescents and children, and those above this age are considered older adults.

Friendship is defined as being an “intimate and self-disclosed relationship characterized by companionship, similarity of activities, interest, values, and personalities” (Mokhtari, 2008, p. 6).

Friendship patterns include the structure and phases of friendship and the friendship processes that occur to inhibit or foster the friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Friendship phases are the three phases that adults move through in the friendship development that includes formation (beginning/acquaintance), maintenance (factors to maintain an established relationship), and dissolution (ending) (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Friendship processes include “the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors involved in acting as friends” (Blieszner & Adams, 1992, p. 4).

Friendship structure is the form of ties linking friends, such as proximity, hierarchy, solidarity, number of friends, similarity, and network configuration (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Intellectual disability defined as a “disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills which originates before the age of 18” (AAIDD, 2010, p.1).

Social inclusion for people with disabilities “consists of three elements: being involved in the community, maintaining reciprocal relationships, and having a sense of belonging. Involvement in the community includes the use of community amenities and participation in structured recreation, leisure, church, and volunteer activities. Developing and maintaining reciprocal relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances in the community is important for people with disabilities. A sense of belonging is developed when a person is accepted by others, seen as an individual, has positive interactions with others, and is not excluded through marginalization, teasing, or bullying.” (Hall, 2010, p. 17)

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Friendship is a thing most necessary to life, since without friends no one would choose to live, though possessed of all other advantages”- Aristotle

The primary goal of this chapter is to review the literature on friendships and to explore what is known and not known about friendship patterns between those with and without an ID. This chapter presents a brief review of the research on quality of life, social inclusion, and friendships, which serve as the backdrop for this study. Moreover, the chapter explores the development of friendship and friendship patterns from a theoretical perspective, analyzes the present literature regarding friendships between those with and without an ID, and concludes with a rationale for conducting the proposed study. This review was undertaken by first conducting a search of the databases EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, PSYCINFO, MEDLINE, and Google Scholar, using the following keywords: friendship, ID, adulthood friendships, relationships, social inclusion, friendships between those with and without an ID, quality of life, friendship satisfaction, and friendship theory.

Quality of Life

The interest in research regarding friendships between those with and without an ID stemmed from investigations about how those with an ID experienced social inclusion. So, before discussion of friendships, it is important to first understand the

broader concepts of social inclusion within the context of quality of life (Ferdinand & Marcus, 2002; Hatton, 1998). Quality of life is a gauge of one’s happiness or satisfaction with one’s current life situations (McKnight, 2002; Perry & Felce, 2004). The concepts of quality and life includes characteristics or variation grades in a person’s perceived satisfaction in an environmental, physical, mental, and spiritual sense (Schalock & Alonso, 2002).

Although researchers have struggled to agree on the definition of quality of life, there appears to be general consensus that there are several dimensions or domains of quality of life (Hills, LeGrand, & Piachaud, 2002; Jones et al., 2005; Kavanaugh, 2002; Labonte, 2004; Weheymer & Schalock, 2001). Hughes and Hwang (1996) initially found 15 indicators of quality of life but Schalock and Buntinx (2010) narrowed these down to eight core domains. These eight domains included emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, rights, and participation (Schalock & Buntinx, 2010) with associated indicators assigned to each (Table 2).

Table 2

Quality of Life Domains

Domain	Indicator
Personal Development	Activities of Daily Living
Self-Determination	Choices, Decisions, Personal Goals
Interpersonal Relations	Friendships
Rights	Human and Legal
Participation	Social Inclusion/Community Involvement
Emotional Well-Being	Safety and Security
Physical Well-Being	Health and Nutrition
Material Well-Being	Financial Status and Employment

While researchers continued to narrow the definition and domains of quality of life, others focused on the defining and measuring concepts within each quality-of-life domain (Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008; Zapalla & Lyons, 2009). Specifically, those interested in research regarding those with an ID focused upon the concept of participation and interpersonal relationships. The de-institutionalization movement triggered the practice of normalization, and subsequent studies on the subject exposed the challenges individuals with an ID faced with participation with an emphasis on social inclusion and integration (Bates & Davis, 2004; Shalock, Gardner, & Bradley, 2007). This in return moved the focus of research attention to understanding social inclusion experiences of those with an ID (Simplican et al., 2015).

Social Exclusion/Inclusion

Originating in France, social inclusion, as a policy and program priority emerged in reaction to practices that engaged in *exclusion* of individuals who were not covered under the country's social service delivery system (Silver, 1994). As defined:

Exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions—economic, political, social and culture—and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country, and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to inequalities. (Popay, Escorel, Hernandez, Johnston, Mathieson, & Rispel, 2008, p. 2)

Previously, the definition of exclusion encompassed more than denial of opportunities based upon socioeconomic status, gender, race, and other individual characteristics. It included structures that facilitate limited rights, low citizen participation, and few community connections (Burchardt, LeGrand, & Piachaud, 1999; Friendly & Lero, 2002; Gilbert, 2003; Hanvey, 2003; Hughes, 2011). Some argue that

the definitions of inclusion/exclusion have failed to capture the emotional experience of the phenomena and moved toward defining inclusion to include feelings of belonging (Galvin, 2004; Duffy, 1995; Renner, Prewitt, Watanabe, & Gascho, 2007; Richardson & LeGrand, 2002; Room; 1995).

Mahar et al. (2016) conceptualized belonging to be integral to current concerns regarding the well-being of those with an ID and defined it as:

A subjective feeling of value and respect derived from a reciprocal relationship to an external referent that is built on a foundation of shared experiences, beliefs, or personal characteristics. These feelings of external connectedness are grounded to the context of referent group, to whom one chooses, wants, and feels permission to belong. This dynamic phenomenon may be either hindered or promoted by complex interactions between environmental and personal factors. (p. 1026)

This definition emphasized the importance of having reciprocal and available relationships. It also highlighted the potential of ecological factors that could promote or impede the formation of these relationships (Ballin & Balandin, 2007; Evans, Bronheim, Bynner, Klasen, Magrab, & Ransom, 2001). The presence of friends played a major role in a person's sense of belonging and that satisfying friendships are an important factor to fostering feelings of belonging (Clement & Bibgy, 2009; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Nicholson & Cooper, 2013; Rosetti & Keenan, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017).

A couple of researchers attempted to merge the definitions of social inclusion to include the subjective nature of the feeling of belonging by stating that social inclusion is "society's acceptance of people with disabilities within school, work, and community settings" (Walker et al., 2011, p.15). Cobigio et al. (2012) noted that inclusion consisted of having a sense of belonging in a social network, experiencing a valued social role, and being trusted to perform in basic social roles in the community. Regardless of the definition, researchers concurred that inclusion encompassed domains that included

social interactions, social integration, social capital, community participation, independent living, and a sense of belonging (Amado, 2014; Cobigio et al., 2012; Duggan & Linehan, 2013).

As noted in chapter one, the focus of research in regard to social inclusion for those with an ID shifted toward the domains of social interactions, integration, and community participation because researchers reported isolation and limited friendships as a significant issue for those with an ID (Amado, 2013; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Giesbers et al., 2019; Mahar et al., 2016). Burns, Hull, Everett, and Njozela (2018) noted that friendships that form despite differences and cultural barriers within a community are a significant indicator of increased social inclusion as it overlaps among several domains. These integrated types of friendships showed one's ability to join the social networks of the community and feel welcomed and safe (Zucchetti, Camacho, & Ciairano, 2012). Social networks that included friendships within the mainstream culture was a crucial part of successful integration (Walker et al., 2011). Lakon and Valente (2012) emphasized that social integration was a process to mend social exclusion and fragmentation. The friendships of the disengaged with the mainstream community members was of most interest in measuring the level of inclusion, cohesion, and integration.

Friendships

Aristotle proclaimed that friendships are a basic human need as people want to strive toward goodness, empathy, charity, love, and self-understanding (Thomas, 1987). Ancient philosophers often understood friendship as a type of love. Greek philosophers identified three types of love to include *agape*, *eros*, and *philia*. *Agape* encompassed a

love that was unconditional and inspired growth for each individual. Conversely, eros and philia were conditional and based upon merit. According to friendship researchers, reciprocal and quality friendships fall under the *agape* type of love (Nehamas, 2010).

More recently, the term *friends* was defined early on as people who spent time with one another, participated in social activities together, and exhibited high levels of cohesion (Bowker, 2004). Mokhtari refined the definition of friendship as an “intimate and self-disclosed relationship characterized by companionship, similarity of activities, interests, values, and personalities” (Mokhtari, 2008, p. 6). Some focused on the reciprocal nature of friendships (Kempner, 2008), while others also highlighted the importance of quality in the friendships (Berndt, 2002). Regardless of the definition, Eisenberger and Lieberman (2004) noted that a term for “friendship” is available in every language, but the meaning that an individual placed on the term varies tremendously. Petrina, Carter, and Stephenson (2014) recently combined these various views on friendship and summed it as:

- Dyadic.
- Recognized and desired by both members of the relationship.
- Not obligatory.
- Typically, egalitarian in nature with each having about the same amount of power or authority in the relationship.
- Almost always characterized by companionship and shared activities.

Types of Friendship

Aristotle postulated three types of friendships: utility, pleasure, and perfect. The friendships based upon utility and pleasures are fallible because of the basis of personal motive, while perfect friendship is a mutual admiring of each other's goodness (Kasari, 2011; Kenny & Barton, 2003; Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Mitchell, 1969). Bigby, Fyffe, and Ozanne (2007) also acknowledged the existence of three types of friendships: best friends, good friends, and casual friends. The frequency of contact, intimacy level, and affection felt toward each other differentiated these three types of friendship. High levels of reciprocity, support, security, closeness, self-disclosure, trust, commitment, and low levels of conflict characterized close friends. Good friends were less intimate than close friends, but they still had the basic elements of affection, reciprocity, interest, and respect. Casual friends had less contact and closeness and were characterized primarily by limited support, intimacy, and self-disclosure (Bigby, Fyffe, & Ozanne, 2007). According to Kenny & Barton (2003), an ideal situation is when people had a balance of all three types of friendships.

Theoretical Perspectives on Friendships

Three theoretical perspectives contributed to the understanding of friendship dynamics in this study that included the developmental, social psychology, and systems perspectives.

The Developmental Perspectives

Human behavior theories primarily focused on the understanding of an individual's thoughts, motivations, and emotions and to understand the context in which

these elements occurred (Brown, 1991; Buckley, Bird, & Sacks, 2002; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). There are several theorists that have offered insight into understanding successful formation and maintenance of adult friendships. Adlerian psychologists believed that all humans are socially embedded within networks (Stein & Edwards, 1998; Watts, 1999). People learned and developed a sense of self through interactions with people within those social networks (Bradburn, 1969; Burns, 1998; Cairns, 1986; Meyers & Sweeney, 2004). The primary network began with the family, then expanded to friends, neighbors, communities. Those people in that person's primary social network either fostered or hindered a person's sense of self by how they reacted to someone's behavioral attempt to belong (Kottman, 2003).

Practitioners of Adlerian psychology also suggested that people will work toward acquiring a sense of belonging within their social networks. Through positive interactions within those networks, people develop a sense of connection, courage, capability, and value (John, 2011). They also noted that when a person does not achieve a sense of connection, courage, capability, and value through positive behavior, the person will then attempt to gain them through discouraged behavior. These discouraged behaviors include attention seeking, proving inadequacy, engagement in power struggles, and seeking revenge (Dinkmeyer, McKay, & Dinkmeyer, 2007). These discouraged behaviors tend to be problematic in the development of friendships (Kottman, 2003). Lew and Bettner indicated that there is a positive correlation between a child's development of connection, capability, courage, and value and having strong adult friendships (2000).

Another perspective comes from Bowlby's attachment theory which postulated that relationships are directly related to the attachment style a person formed with their primary caregiver (Bowker, 2004). Ritzer & Goodman (2004) proposed that the attachment style-- secure, avoidant, and anxious-- directly impacted how close or distant people became to others. Developmental psychologists applied these attachment styles to understanding adult relationships, including friendships (Anderson, Carter, & Lowe, 1999). When a person did not have the opportunity to form a secure attachment, data suggested that he/she was at risk of having barriers to friendship development in later years (Huitt & Dawson, 2011). Effective connection (Kottman, 2003), positive self-perspective (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), ability to have empathy (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004), beneficial social interactions (McWilliams & Blumstien, 1991), and attachment styles (Huitt & Dawson, 2011) were found to play a significant role in the formation of social relationships in adulthood.

Social Psychology Perspectives

George Herbert Mead, in his theory of Symbolic Interactionism, suggested that we are all social beings who interact based upon shared symbols and meanings. He believed that reality was a product of social construction (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Reality was influenced by the meanings people place on symbols learned through social interactions (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2012). Within this framework, the idea of "self" was introduced, which Mead stated developed from reflexivity or the ability to put oneself into another person's place, and from the ability of a person to be able to view him or herself from the generalized other's view (Gagne & Medsker, 1995; Klunkin &

Greenwood, 2006). The development of the “self” began at birth and continued through a dynamic process of social interactions (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

The process of developing the “self” was important in understanding friendships. Leary et al. (1995) noted that the degree of the developed self was the marker of the degree of social inclusion and successful relationships. Theorists stated that it is important for one not only to have a well-developed sense of self but also to have the ability to see the other’s point of view to engage in successful relationships (Klunkin & Greenwood, 2006; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

George Homan as well as Peter Blau and Richard Emerson founded and expounded on social exchange theory. Social Exchange theory was unique as it intertwined ideas, principles and concepts from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics (Robbins et al., 2012). The basic assumption of social exchange theory indicated that people would behave in ways that produce the most profit, which is defined as rewards minus costs (Braeckman, 2006). Rewards in social exchanges included not only material items but also emotional items such as attention, advice, support, affection (Frank; 1984; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Moreover, cost was not just monetary, but it also included emotional punishments or withholdings. People interacted or exchanged time with the purpose of gaining profit; people must see the benefit as being greater than the cost or they won’t engage (McGraw & Tetlock, 2005; Robbins et al., 2012).

In order to understand a profit in terms of social exchanges, Laursen & Hartup (2002) noted two important concepts: satiation and scarcity. Satiation encompassed the idea that a reward that has been consistently received may diminish in value over time. Scarcity was a term that insinuated that the less available a reward is, the more valuable

the benefit becomes over time (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). People have utilized satiation and scarcity to gain profit in relationships by withholding valued rewards in hopes to decrease the likelihood of satiation (Robbins et al., 2012). Others gain power by simply having inherited rewards such as monetary value or social status that others want and find hard to achieve (McGraw & Tetlock, 2005). Again, this theory underscored that people will only behave in a way that is profitable; meaning that people only give with the expectation of getting something in return (Robbins et al., 2012; Sen, 1992; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Another important concept in social exchange theory is what is known as “status” defined as the perceived rank of the individual in the social exchange process (Luhmann, 1997; MacIntyre, 2008; McGraw & Tetlock, 2005). People preferred exchanges with others who were of the same status and most theorists indicated that socially congruent relationships produced the most profit (Douglas, 2007; Monchy, Pijl, & Zandberg, 2004).

In regards to friendships, Blau noted that people innately desired friendships. However, one of the key factors in friendships was still the cost-to-benefit ratio (McGraw & Tetlock, 2005, Meyers, Ager, Kerr, & Myles, 1998). When a relationship costed someone time, money, energy, and emotional deprivation and did not provide any reward, that relationship dissipated (Barrett, Haycock, Hick, & Judge, 2003; Bogdan & Taylor, 1989). Relationships that had frequent exchanges that fulfilled a need for mutual concern, intimacy, and social bonds, experienced better outcomes (Laursen & Hartup, 2002). People had tendencies to make friends with people who were viewed as “equal,” with equality viewed as having similar abilities, performances, characteristics, and status

(Robbins, et al., 2012). Friendships end, start, or grow stronger based upon the satisfaction of each party (Douglas, 2007).

Social Systems Perspectives

Ludwig von Bertalanffy created controversy within the scientific world when he challenged conventional thinking about linear causality of behavior and suggested that life was a series of processes, cycles, and interconnectedness (Connors & Caple, 2005). He proposed that individuals, relationships, families, communities, states, nations, and the universe were all systems that are interconnected (Bertalanffy, 1973). Systems are in continual evolution as interactions between systems occur, and systems seek to gain new qualities because of changing input (Robbins et al., 2012). Systems theory postulated that systems take into consideration extrinsic variables and attempt to anticipate its environment to maintain stability (Bertalanffy, 1973).

Systems theory focused on important concepts such as organization, mutual causality, constancy, spatiality, and boundaries. Organization included the notion that the connectedness of elements was not random. Mutual causality suggested that inputs into one part of a system will affect all parts of the system, creating interdependence (Klasen, 1998; Midgley, 2008). One part of a system cannot be understood without understanding the whole; the entire system is affected by environments and elements, which in turn are affected by the entire system (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). As for constancy, it referred to the amount of time the elements of a system have interacted, the larger the time the more substantial the system. Spatiality gave observable indications of the concreteness of the system. Lastly, boundaries filtered the input and output of a system (Midgley, 2008).

Social systems theory asserts that one cannot separate the individual from his or her social interactions. All interactions are interconnected and constantly changing as input is received (Putz, 2012). When two people join to form a friendship, that friendship becomes the system or the interconnected being (Midgley, 2008). As stated by Connors and Caple (2005), “relationships breathe, exchange input and output, and change like all living systems” (p. 4). Interpersonal interactions became the channels to give feedback and receive input. People in relationships work on creating patterns that avoid chaos and maximize benefit as they deal with changing of life events (Robbins et al., 2012).

Integrative Model of Friendship

Blieszner and Adams (1992) formed an integrative conceptual model of friendship depicted in Figure 1 that incorporated the numerous theoretical approaches discussed above. The framework suggests that individual and social characteristics directly affect friendship patterns. It also indicated that within the friendship patterns, there are cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes constantly interacting to shape the structure and phases of friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Figure 1 Integrative Conceptual Framework

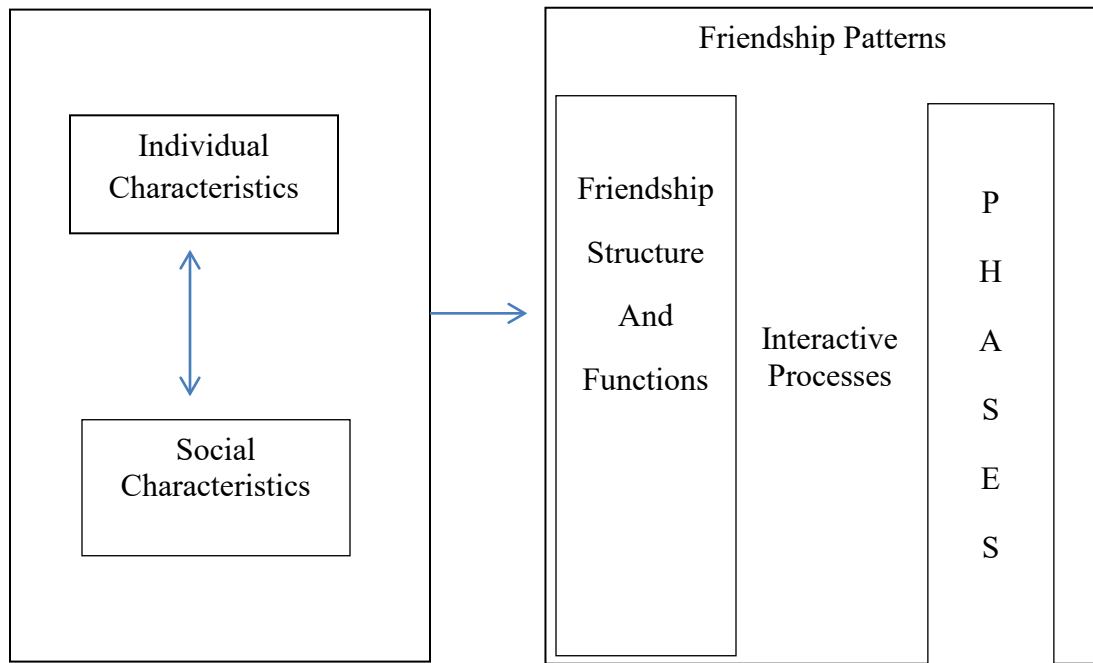


Figure 1. The integrative conceptual framework for friendship research

Adapted from “An integrative conceptual framework for friendship research,” by Adams, R. G. and Blieszner, R. 1994, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 11(2), p. 165.

Individual and Social Characteristics

Within this integrative framework, individual and social characteristics, when combined, influence friendship patterns (Adams & Blieszner, 1994). Individual characteristics include self-perceptions, attachment styles, personality, personal motives, and social skills (Carlson & Slavik, 1997). Other individual attributes include age, gender, and race. As for social characteristics, they include the societal structures that shape social behaviors. The individual and social characteristics directly affect the friendship pattern.

Structural Aspects of Friendship

Blieszner and Adams (1992) suggested that friendship patterns consisted of structures, functions, and phases that influence one another through interactive processes.

Each part of the friendship patterns affect and are affected by other elements of the integrated model (Matheson, Olson, & Wiesner, 2007). McWilliams and Blumstein (1991) identified four major structural aspects of friendships: power hierarchy, status hierarchy, homogeneity, and solidarity. Power is the probability that a person in the friendship will be in a status place to act out his or her own personal agenda despite any conflict from the other. Similarly, status hierarchy reflects the distance between individuals in terms of prestige and social rank (Adams, 1993). As for solidarity, it is the aspect of friendship that depicts the proximity of the people involved in the friendship. Homogeneity refers to the closeness of individual characteristics. The degree of power and status differentials, solidarity, and homogeneity are likely to vary throughout the formation and maintenance of the friendship (Adams & Blieszner, 1994). The various structural components have a significant influence on the likelihood of friendship formation and maintenance.

Functions of Friendship

Blieszner & Adams (1992) wrote that friendship functions are important to consider when investigating friendship patterns. Several recurrent themes appear in the literature on functions of friendship maintenance. They include supportiveness, closeness, positivity, and shared activity (Oswald, Clark, & Kelly, 2004). Supportiveness includes friends being willing to promote the other's good for his or her sake without ulterior motive (Berndt, 2002; Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Oswald et. al, 2004, Warren, 2005; Watkins, 1994). Closeness in friendship includes the level of disclosure and trust experienced between the friends (Kempner, 2008; Nehamas, 2010; Thomas, 1987; Tipton, 2011). Thomas (1987) noted that mutual self-disclosure and trust places friends

in a place of vulnerability that enhance intimacy toward the other. Positivity is another important function of friendship. Hartup and Stevens (1999) described it as social exchanges where both sides have rewards and benefits. That said, researchers have found that when a person perceived the lack of positivity or the potential for reward, they ended the friendship (McClimens & Taylor, 2003, McConkey, 2007). Lastly, shared activities, such as talking on the phone, going on entertainment outings, and exchanging emails (Kempner, 2008) are means by which people experience togetherness. The lack of shared activities can often result in the dissolution of friendships very quickly (Levitas et al., 2007; Locke, Ishijima, Kasari, & London, 2010).

Friendship Phases

The second aspect of friendship patterns are the phases of friendship: formation, maintenance, and dissolution. The formation phase are the processes that occur in order for two strangers to become acquaintances. The maintenance phase encompasses processes that result in acquaintances becoming good friends with a desire to sustain the friendship. Lastly, dissolution entails the processes that lead to the end of the friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). The length of time that friends stay in any phase varies by each dyad.

Interactive Processes

The interactive processes in friendship dyads varies based upon individual and social characteristics, structural positions, and friendship functions. The three interactive processes include the obvious behaviors, cognitive filters, and affective responses that occur as people relate to each other (Adams & Blieszner, 1994). The obvious behaviors in friendships are the social interactions that occur between two people to initiate,

maintain, or end the relationship. The cognitive processes include the internal thoughts that each may have about the other, and the affective processes include the emotional responses to one another (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). The emotional reactions are either encouraging or objectionable and occur in the friendship at different rates and intensities (Barber & Hupp, 1993). These three processes can either strengthen or weaken friendships. Each person brings relationship values, norms, and beliefs about the other person that affects how they approach the friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Overall, the framework declares that each person brings an individualized set of characteristics that affect the friendship. Their social context coincides with these individual characteristics to influence friendship patterns. The friendship patterns are structural components, functions, and interactive processes at play throughout the formation, maintenance, and dissolving of any friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Friendship Satisfaction

Although friendship satisfaction was not identified concretely in the original integrative conceptual framework, several researchers have recognized its importance in understanding the experience of friendships (Berndt, 2002). They noted that friendship satisfaction is a mitigating concept that influences the interactive processes, phases of friendships, and the overall person's sense of inclusion (Berndt, 2002; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Rodriguez, Mire, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003; Thein, Razak, & Jamil, 2012). High levels of friendship satisfaction have been found to enhance feelings of belonging, inclusion, quality of life, prosocial behaviors, and low levels of conflict and betrayal (Akin et al., 2016; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Berndt, 2002). Additionally, high levels of friendship satisfaction were found to predict increased self-esteem, decreased

depression and anxiety, and increased ability to cope with stressors in adulthood (Akin et al., 2016; Gleckel, 2015). Conversely, low levels of friendship satisfaction were observed to be associated with anti-social behaviors, feelings of rejection or isolation, and poor conflict management skills (Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2003). In other words, these findings suggest it is the level of friendship satisfaction, not just having a friend, that is indicative of friendship longevity or social inclusion (Thien et al., 2012).

Friendship satisfaction generally revolves around the type of friendship, which includes best, good, or casual; the level of affection felt toward the other person be it high or low; and the degree to which that person meets the expected functions of that friendship (Berndt, 2002). Friendship satisfaction fluctuates across time and circumstances (Mendelson & Aboud, 2012). The expectation of how a person meets the functions of friendship was found to be directly related to the level of affection felt and the perceived type of friendship experienced (Desousa & Santos, 2012). For instance, best friends with high levels of affection reported higher expectations for maintenance in the friendship versus those who reported the friendship as casual (Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2008). Shared activities, help/mutual support, intimacy, acceptance/reciprocity, and emotional security were expectations from those considered good or best friends. One of the dissatisfying features of a friendship was conflict (Gleckel, 2015; Mendelson & Aboud, 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2003). Conflict often came about when the level of affection was not reciprocated, or the friend was not meeting the expected functions based upon the person's perception of the friendship type (Akin et al., 2016; DeSousa & Santos, 2012; Woods et al., 2008).

In summary, when investigating friendship experiences, researchers indicated that it was critical to consider the individual characteristics of each person, the social environment in which the friendship takes place, the processes that influence the formation and maintenance of the friendship, and the overall satisfaction experienced by those involved in the friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992; Burndt, 2002; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Rodriguez et al., 2003; Thein et al., 2012).

Friendships Among Adults Without an ID

Friendships in adulthood differ from those in early childhood, adolescence, and older age because life-span events change (Wiltz, 2005). Duarte and Souza (2010) indicated that young adults often go through many changes, which include loosening connections from family and becoming independent, exploring job opportunities or going to college, and changing their living situations and commitments. These changes often force people to disconnect from high school friends and look for new friendships in their new context (Duarte & Souza, 2010). People who managed to make new friends reported being happier, better adjusted, and mostly free from social obligations that might hinder friendship development (Bonoir, 2013). During these years, people had fun, and friends were likely partners in adventure and social networking.

The nature of friendships changed in adulthood. Friendships in adulthood are described as homogeneous in aspects such as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, personality traits, interest, and shared activities (DeSousa & Santos, 2012). They often revolve around issues such as marriage, children, and career (Wiltz, 2005). Most adults report having fewer friends after getting married and having children; this is especially true for

friends of the opposite sex. Friends that may have been present before marriage and parenthood dissolved if one person in the friendship had not yet moved into this stage of life (Tipton, 2011). Divorce is also a common occurrence that forced people to readjust and make new friends (Bonior, 2013). The workplace becomes a common area for developing friendships. However, friendships in the workplace for adults can be difficult to maintain. Moreover, Furman et al. (2009) noted that it is hard to determine the difference between networking and true friendships in the workplace due to the competitive nature of career development. Thus, the numbers of friends that people consider “close” narrows during young and middle adulthood.

Most of the research on satisfaction of friendships comes from studies on children and adolescents. However, there are some studies that investigated relationship satisfaction in adults. DeSousa and Santos (2012) interviewed 124 young adults regarding friendship satisfaction. In general, they found that if a friend was noted to be a best friend, it meant that he/she had positively met all the friendship functions and those involved in the friendship had high levels of affection toward each other. There was not one specific friendship function that was more predominant, valued, or fulfilled than another.

Weeks (2013) examined gender differences in friendship satisfaction. Results indicated that women reported friendship satisfaction more than men. Naslund and Reinholdson (2016) found that adults valued balance, safety, closeness, support, understanding, trust, communication, and similarities. Thirty-four percent of the 94 adults they interviewed noted they were satisfied, 42% indicated a neutral response, and

14% noted dissatisfaction with friendships. They did not note differences based upon age, gender, ethnicity, etc.

Friendships Among Adults With an ID

Although there has been documentation regarding barriers to friendships, the literature indicated that people with an ID can have meaningful relationships (Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, & Rosenburg, 1994; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993; Wolfsenger, 2011). Emerson and McVilly (2004) documented that individuals with an ID were more likely to have friends with another person with an ID than without an ID. Friendships among individuals without an ID often develops within the context of a daily routine as individuals transition from adolescence to adulthood through educational progression, relationship changes, or career moves (Tipton, 2011). The transition from adolescence to adulthood for those with an ID is somewhat different from those transitions of individuals without an ID. While many people without an ID head to college and/or live independently, people with an ID historically have attended a day program and/or live in supported independent living arrangements. Most of the friendships between individuals with an ID develop in the context of day programs and structured living environments such as group homes, many of which do not extend into community settings (Knox & Hickson, 2001).

Knox and Hickson (2001) conducted an in-depth study of four friendships between persons with ID who attended a day program or lived in a structured housing situation. Each of the participants were interviewed as a pair. These researchers found that friendships were vital to each person's quality of life and that sharing common interests, helping each other, and providing reciprocal support to one another were key

factors in the relationship. Through attending common events where differences were celebrated and not criticized, individuals with an ID identified positive traits about each other that attracted them to the friendship. The study also highlighted the empathy that individuals with an ID felt for each other's situations and the desire to aid one another.

Wiltz (2005) also noted the value and importance of friendships among peers with an ID. The purpose of the study was to further understand the nature of these friendships. Wiltz found that the nature of peer friendships for those with an ID included low aggression, sociability, helpfulness, reciprocity, and similarity. The study emphasized that people with an ID needed the additional support of a family member, volunteer, or caregiver to assist with access and navigation of the social environment for friendship formation and maintenance. This included transportation, verbal social cues, assistance with utilizing technology, and assistance with monetary management, just to name a few. The type and consistency of the support looked different based on the individuals involved.

Matheson et al. (2007) conducted a study similar to Knox and Hickson (2001) and interviewed 27 individuals with an ID regarding the characteristics of their friendships. They reported 11 themes through coding of the semi-structured interviews. Those themes included doing things together, a familiar location, shared interests, stability, being near each other, individual traits, intimacy, supportiveness, reciprocity, loyalty, choice, and conflict resolution. Johnson, Douglas, Bigby, and Iacono (2012) built upon this study and reported that finding humor about daily struggles was also an important aspect of friendship between those with an ID. They noted that being able to use vulgarity and play pranks with each other gave the friendships more intensity. They

also indicated that just the physical presence of someone with whom the person felt safe was an important aspect of the relationship.

There was very limited research available on the experience of friendship satisfaction among those with ID. Knox and Hickson (2001) noted that friendships between those with an ID were characterized by satisfaction with shared experiences and support. Other researchers noted that friendships between those with an ID were somewhat different than those between people without an ID as the friendships were reported to have lower levels of satisfaction with intimacy and connectedness (Chappell, 1994; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Wiltz, 2005). Asselt-Goverts et al. (2015) conducted a study to obtain more information regarding social networks of those with an ID. In their results, they emphasized that those with an ID were satisfied with their social networks as well as the importance of those with an ID to expand their networks and experiences to enhance the quality of friendships.

Friendships between Those with and without an ID

Exploring friendships between those with and without an ID is relatively a recent focus of researchers. This is partly due to many people with an ID living in institutional type settings and lack of available data on their community networks (Jameson, 1998) and friendships. As the deinstitutionalization movement progressed, and individuals with an ID began to have a stronger community presence, researchers began to study the community networks of those with an ID. Table 3 lists nine studies that directly explore friendships between those with and without an ID that were found in the research literature. Lutifiyya (1991) has noted that prior to her study, the only accounts

available on friendships between those with and without an ID were those of testimonials, personal accounts, or isolated case studies.

Table 3

List of Studies: Friendships between those with and without an ID

Study	Method	Participants	Summary	Results
Kennedy, Horner, & Newton (1990): “The study of social networks and Activity Patterns of Adults with Severe Disabilities”	Qualitative	20 adults with an ID along with 40 staff members who supported those participants and assisted with the interviews.	The researchers utilized qualitative interviews and the assistance of two staff members to gauge the social network size of individuals with an ID using the Social Network Analysis Form (SNAF). The researchers also used a Pearson r correlation coefficient to study the co-variation among the number of friends and activity patterns.	The results indicated that people with a severe ID had an average of 1.4 friends that did not have an ID excluding family and paid staff. Their activities of social networking predominantly happened at home 89% of the time and 11% in the community. The number of friends did not have any correlation with the activity pattern (community or home). This was attributed to the small amount of people in this category.
Lutfiyya (1991): “A Feeling of Belonging between People with and without Learning Disabilities.”	Qualitative	In depth interviews with 19 participants alone and participant observations of four pairs of friends with and without an ID together	A study was conducted to understand how people with and without an ID experienced friendships. The interviews questioned how the individuals met and formed the relationship. They noted information was more abundant from the participants without an ID. The observations took place watching the friends interact in a social setting. The data was analyzed using coding and	The results portrayed 8 themes that came from the interviews regarding the characteristics of the friendship that included mutuality, exclusivity, reciprocity, rights, obligations, responsibilities, and positive regard.

themes.

Study	Method	Participants	Summary	Results
Emerson & McVilly (2004): “Friendship Activities of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities in Supported Accommodation.”	Quantitative	Retro data was analyzed using key words on 1542 participants with an ID in conjunction with a service audit.	The Northwest Audit of Quality in Residential Supports collected information regarding the nature of social networks for those with and without an ID. They collected demographic data, living arrangements, Index of Community Involvement, and the Learning Disability Case Mix Scale. They utilized this data to examine the characteristics of social networks.	They reported the median number of friendship activities with persons without an ID was zero. They noted variables associated with the lack of community friendships included staff transport issues, hostile environments, challenging behaviors, staff turnover, and participant tenacity.
Abbott & McConkey (2006): “The Barriers to Social Inclusion as Perceived by People with Intellectual Disabilities.”	Qualitative	Focus groups were held with 68 persons to identify the barriers to friendships in the community.	The purpose of this study was to investigate barriers to community relationships for those with an ID in Northern Ireland. They included individuals with an ID, their family, and their caregivers in the focus groups. Participants were included from various living settings and service providers. They utilized coding and categorizing to analyze the data.	The study revealed that four overarching barriers included, participants’ abilities and skills, the community attitude, the lack of resources, and lack of autonomy offered from staff.

Study	Method	Participants	Summary	Results
Bigby, Clement, Mansell, & Brown (2009): “It’s Pretty Hard with Our Ones, They Can’t Talk, the more Able Bodied Can Participate: Staff Attitudes About the Applicability of Disability Policies.”	Qualitative	The study utilized an ethnographic approach to explore the lives of 25 individuals with an ID.	The purpose of this study was to understand the daily experiences in the community for those with an ID. It also looked to explore the staff attitudes that supported them. The data was collected primarily through observing staff side by side for several shifts. They followed up with 8 interviews with families and staff using open ended questions to provide more participant-oriented information. The researchers utilized field notes, codes, and themes to analyze the data.	The results of this study indicated that the support staff did not believe that community friendships were feasible for those with an ID. Their behavior and body language pointed that they thought those with an ID were too different and “child-like” to have own choice and participate independently in the community. They did not feel that what they did made a difference. The researchers along with the staff supervisors they interviewed reported that the staff needed additional training and awareness to increase the opportunity for inclusion for those with an ID.
McConkey & Collins (2010): “The Role of Support Staff in Promoting the Social Inclusion of Persons with an Intellectual Disability.”	Quantitative	The researchers gathered information from 245 support staff members. A questionnaire with 44 items was administered to gauge how employees ranked the services they provide as important.	The purpose of the study was to examine the staffs’ attitudes about their role in helping those with an ID have social networks. They were given surveys to rank the importance of inclusion tasks versus caregiving tasks.	The results indicated that staff rated caregiving as top priority versus inclusion activities. They ranked low priority as community activities, volunteering, family events, social skills training, and shopping and high priority as medical, hygiene, communication skills, safety, and housekeeping.

Study	Method	Participants	Summary	Results
Asselt-Goverts, Embregts, Hendriks, & Frielink (2014): "Experiences of Support Staff with Expanding and Strengthening Social Networks of People with Mild Intellectual Disabilities."	Qualitative	The researchers interviewed six groups totaling 27 professionals.	The researchers utilized semi-structured interviews to inquire about effective strategies to increase social networks of those with an ID. There was a range of professionals including psychologists, social workers, direct care staff, and administrators. The interview was guided by an interview protocol. A content analysis was used along with use of categorizing and coding to create themes.	The researchers found that prior to social interactions the staff provided some things with their clients that included a model of social skills, education about contacts and how often to contact others, a map of social network possibilities, positive emotional support, and a discussion of possible barriers. They found that staff noted getting individuals involved in volunteer activities, community leisure activities, and having discussions about the experiences helped in expanding networks. They also noted that they are most successful friendships occurred with volunteers, neighbors, other individuals with an ID, and roommates.

Study	Method	Participants	Summary	Results
Asselt-Goverts, Embregts, Hendriks, & Frielink (2015): “Social networks of people with mild intellectual disabilities: characteristics, satisfaction, wishes, and quality of life.”	Quantitative	33 participants with a mild intellectual disability	The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of those with an ID and their satisfaction with this network. The network included families, friends, and co-workers. The researchers used the Maastricht Social Network Analysis to gather information about the network size. They utilized the ID Quality of Life -16 scale to gauge participants satisfaction with their quality of life and social networks. They used the Pearson r to compare.	The results indicated that overall, 73% of the participants with an ID were satisfied with their social networks that included family, acquaintances, and professionals. These results were from 26 participants as some of the participants did not have family or acquaintances in their networks. The wishes for a change in social activities overall was for better contact or quality visits and for some they did not want anything to change.
Bigby & Craig (2017): “An Intentional Friendship Between a Volunteer and Adult with Severe Intellectual Disability.”	Qualitative	1 Friendship Pair (one with and one without an ID)	The authors utilized a social construction and perspective to examine the things that formed and maintained the friendship between an individual with and without an ID. Semi-structured interviews, with follow up interviews to understand the experience of this friendship. They utilized grounded theory coding to analyze the data.	The friendship evolved from a volunteer to friends. They learned to accept each other and communicate through increased activities with the assistance of a staff person. Later, they found they could communicate and participate in activities without the presence of staff. They found each other as equal partners.

Kennedy et al. (1990) study was one of the first studies that took interest in mapping the friendship patterns of individuals with an ID using social network analysis. They highlighted the inability to truly assess social networks and catalysts to community friendships because there were so few cases of friendships documented. Lutfiyaa (1991) was the first author that encouraged researchers to take notice of the entire experience of friendships between those with and without an ID. She conducted individual interviews with 19 participants (mixture of those with and without an ID) and participant observations with eight pairs of friends. The study indicated that the nature of the relationships predominantly started as staff/educator-to-client and later developed into friendships. The results of the study confirmed that there are genuine friendships that develop between those with and without an ID characterized by mutuality, reciprocity, positive regard, and a sense of responsibility toward each other as is found in most friendships. In this study, both participants reported commitment to making the friendship work, but the individual without an ID held the primary responsibility to maintain the friendship activities and bear the emotional strain. Lutfiyaa concluded that those with an ID should not be protected from disappointment and frustration as it is a natural part of friendships and fosters resiliency. Overall, these friendships tended to increase autonomy for those with an ID and inspiration for those without an ID (Lutfiyaa, 1991).

These two early studies paved the way for further research in understanding friendships for those with and without an ID. During the early 2000s, published studies focused on barriers that hindered the development of friendships between those with and without an ID. Topics focused by researchers included challenging behaviors of persons

with an ID, attitudes and roles of staff, community attitudes, and lack of accessible resources (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Duvedevany & Arar, 2004; Emerson & McVilly, 2004). Researchers stressed the importance of utilizing paid support staff in active mentor roles to overcome barriers and facilitate successful and sustainable friendships between those with and without an ID (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Duvedevany & Arar, 2004; Emerson & McVilly, 2004).

Emerson and McVilly (2004) published that for the 1542 participants with an ID they collected friendship information on in Northern England, the average number of friendship activities between the participants and community members was zero. They also identified that the environment or living arrangement and level of intellectual disability had an impact on the presence of community friendships for persons with ID. Duvedevany and Arar (2004) reported that people with an ID, regardless of level of intellect still experienced high levels of prejudice and discrimination within friendships with community members. Those with an ID reported receiving verbal and non-verbal cues that they interpreted or felt were intimidating and hurtful from others without an ID. Abbott and McConkey, (2006) related that some of the biggest challenges to social inclusion for those with an ID included lack of self-confidence, the support staff not providing opportunities for choice and independence, the location of their residence, and the attitude of the community members. Community members noted it was difficult to maintain friendships with those with an ID due to the friend with an ID having the need for extensive support although personal characteristics such age, gender, and ethnicity did not seem to affect the formation of friendships between those with and without an ID.

Bigby et al. (2009) focused on the role of support staff in assisting individuals with ID in making friends in the community. They reported that the staffs' mentality regarding the abilities of their clients, the burnout resulting from daily tasks, and the failure to allow the client to make independent choices hindered the process of community inclusion for those with an ID.

McConkey and Collins (2010) also examined the role of support staff in supporting friendships between those with and without an ID. They interviewed 245 staff that worked with individuals with an ID in various living arrangements and receiving various support services. They gauged the staff's acceptance of 16 tasks that were considered helpful for assisting individuals with an ID make community friends. Only three of the 16 tasks were highly endorsed by staff. In response to these findings, Amado (2013) called for the importance of offering skills training to individuals with an ID, providing education to support staff on the role of being an advocate and not just a caregiver, and educating the community about values and diversity. Some researchers responded with publications discussing the role of support staff and agencies in facilitating friendships between those with and without an ID (McConkey & Collins, 2010; Asselt-Goverts et al., 2014). Most agencies that provided supports to individuals with an ID worked diligently to train staff members on concepts of person-centered planning and positive behavior supports to shift the staff's mentality from caregivers to advocates and mentors (Amado, 2014). Asselt-Goverts et al. (2014) published a promising article where a group of 27 professionals, working as support persons for those with an ID, were able to identify some activities that were successful at increasing social networks. Asselt-Goverts et al. (2015) published a follow up article that was

encouraging regarding the success of expanding social networks of those with an ID. This quantitative study examined the number of the people in the social networks for those with an ID, the satisfaction with the network, and the overall quality of life for those with an ID. The results indicated that 73% of the 26 individuals were satisfied with their overall social network. However, 32% noted they would like to have better contact with acquaintances and improve their social skills.

Bigby and Craig (2017) conducted a similar study to that of Lutifiyaa (1991) but instead of utilizing interviews with multiple friendship pairs, they chose to focus on one friendship between a young woman with an ID and a volunteer. They interviewed and observed the friendship pair together and interacting with each other. They found that this friendship went through three stages identified as introduction, consolidation, and autonomy. The results of this study also emphasized the need for support and structured organizational support for the friendship to move beyond introduction. They wrote that friendships between those with and without an ID are likely to form and progress naturally like other friendships. However, they also noted that these friendships may require a unique set of interventions, supports, or allowances to overcome some of the unique challenges in the friendship. Other researchers have agreed about facilitating friendships through intentional and committed supports (Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017). Again, the literature has reiterated that friendships between those with and without an ID can be meaningful and long lasting. It also underscored the idea that they are unique and complicated, requiring additional supports that might otherwise not be needed in other friendship dyads.

There were no published studies available on friendship satisfaction between those with and without ID. Asselt-Goverts et al. (2015) discussed satisfaction with overall social network size, but they did not delve into the satisfaction experienced within a specific friendship. The literature that is available has mainly focused on children and adolescent friendships between those with and without an ID (Barber & Hupp, 1993; Rosetti & Keenan, 2017; Tipton, 2011). It is not surprising that there is dearth of research on friendship satisfaction between adults with and without an ID, as research on understanding how these friendships are formed was only recently conducted (Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017). Lastly, researchers have indicated using a multi-dimensional approach to fully understand friendship satisfaction between those with and without ID.

Gap in Literature

Most of the research investigating friendships between those with and without an ID came from lack of social inclusion for those with an ID (Hall, 2010) although community friendships were being formed by those with an ID (Amado, 2013). In reviewing the literature on friendships between those with and without an ID, there were several observations and findings that guided and directed subsequent studies. First, there was a consensus that friendships between those with and without an ID were prevalent, valuable, and worthy of further research (Asselt-Goverts, et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Wilson et al., 2017). Practitioners noted that building more acceptable and inclusive communities started with one relationship at a time (Amado, 2014). Many experts agreed that the research momentum toward understanding the friendships between individuals with an ID and their community members should not be

discontinued or ignored; it should be embraced and enhanced until people with an ID experience full inclusion in their communities with higher levels of integration (Asselt-Goverts, et al., 2015; Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Hardman & Clark, 2006; Knox & Hickson, 2001; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Tipton, 2011; Wilson et al., 2017).

There were only two studies (Bigby & Craig, 2017; Lutifiyya, 1991) that delved deeply into the experience of friendships between those with and without ID. They indicated that friendships between those with and without an ID are characterized by mutual caring, shared activities, physical and emotional support from those without an ID to increase autonomy for those with an ID, and assistance from family or caregivers of the individual with an ID to move beyond introductions. Amado (2014) also noted that in friendships between those with and without an ID, those without an ID were likely to initiate and bare most of the responsibility for the maintenance of the friendship. Unfortunately, these studies are few leaving this topic still in exploratory phases of research.

Other studies reviewed did not explore the entire experience of the friendship between those with and without an ID, but they did document various factors that may affect those friendships. Some important factors identified include the level of disability, community living versus residential living, and the type of support needed to enhance social networks of those with an ID (Asselt-Goverts et al., 2014, Asselt-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Wiesel & Bigby, 2015; Wilson et al., 2017). Emerson and McVilly (2004) and Abbott and McConkey (2006) noted that there were no indications that factors such as age, ethnicity, and gender affected

friendships in those studies. Furman et al. (2009) concluded that more qualitative studies are needed to explore the entire experience and not just one variable effecting friendship between those with and without an ID.

There were studies that identified barriers to friendships between those with and without an ID. These included social and structural differences, negative community attitudes, differences in personal characteristics, and limited access for those with an ID (Abbot & McConkey; 2006; Emerson & McVilly, 2004). Further, there was discussion of the characteristics and processes that assisted in the formation of these friendships including a third-party coach or mentor, the willingness of the person without an ID to adapt and coach, and the provision of natural settings for meeting (Amado, 2013; Asselt-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017).

However, friendships are often preserved and maintained through profitable exchanges and decrease when there are low levels of benefits or satisfaction (Douglas, 2007). One cannot understand the full friendship patterns and the “what works list” without studying friendship satisfaction in combination with friendship formation and maintenance (Akin et al., 2016; Gleckel, 2015; Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2003). Ritchie (2001) argued:

The point is not to collect information – it is to learn enough about how things are going so we can keep going or change direction with confidence. We want monitoring which leads to action to improve . . . [practice], and to have a positive impact on people’s lives. (Ritchie, 2001, p. 177)

In order to fully understand friendships between those with and without an ID, researchers need more descriptive knowledge about how the friendships are formed and maintained along with the satisfaction experienced specifically in these friendships.

Rationale for this Study

Researchers are calling for more qualitative studies examining the full experience of friendships between those with and without ID (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Bigby & Wiesel, 2015; Hall, 2010; Hardman & Clark, 2006; Knox & Hickson, 2001; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Tipton, 2011; Wilson et al., 2017). The study of friendships between those with and without an ID is still in the exploratory phase. Thus, quantitative type studies may not uncover the actual lived experiences as the experience of friendship is not well documented or understood and is difficult to quantify (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010).

Furman et al. (2009) firmly proclaimed the need for development of solid theory regarding friendships especially regarding the unique qualities of friendships between those with and without ID. Berndt (2002) wrote that information regarding friendships between those with and without ID was imperative as researchers sought to replace theories about friendship quality. He indicated there must be efforts to move beyond generalized assumptions to more specific theories relevant to those with an ID. In order to develop theory to make connections among observed phenomenon, one must gather explorative data (Marshall & Rossman, 2015).

Considering the gaps in the literature, the purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants' description of their satisfaction within that friendship. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that qualitative inquiry was appropriate when a topic is in exploratory phases, a complex understanding of the topic is needed, a desire to empower a population was present, a flexible style of reporting was required, a theory to address gaps is requested, and a lack of fit between quantitative measures and the topic exists. Therefore,

this study utilized qualitative methods to explore the friendships between those with and without an ID as this study meets all those criteria.

Chapter Summary

As research on friendships evolved, investigators attempted to define and conceptualize friendships. Blieszner and Adams (1992) presented a framework that integrated sociological, psychological, and social perspectives in conceptualizing friendship patterns and processes. This framework provides a broad conceptual approach to understanding friendship patterns and dynamics. People with ID have struggled to find a socially inclusive space in their communities, and thus experienced a continued limitation of friendships with people who do not have an ID (Hall, 2010; McConkey, 2007; Tipton, 2011). Although the research literature reviewed indicated the growing presence of friendships between those with and without an ID, there is still a gap in understanding the lived experience of this friendship (Hall, 2010; Tipton, 2011; Wiltz, 2005). Therefore, it is important to study and further explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants' description of their satisfaction within that friendship.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

“One person can make a difference, and everyone should try”-John F Kennedy

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants’ description of their satisfaction within that friendship. Using basic interpretive qualitative methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), the study attempted to answer three research questions:

1. How do friendships form between those with and without an ID?
2. How are friendships maintained between those with and without an ID?
3. How do the participants describe their satisfaction with the friendship?

Qualitative Inquiry

There are some agreed upon basic tenets common to studies using qualitative methods. Qualitative researchers agree that a study begins with philosophical assumptions and utilizes specific frameworks to inform the approach to inquiry, the data collection and analysis process, and the presentation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that in a qualitative study it was “imperative to include the voice of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and a call for change” (p. 44). Others wrote that a qualitative design tended to be holistic, inquired about relationships, included first-hand descriptions and face to face interactions, gave opportunities to understand and develop theories, and were avenues to increase awareness and understanding of an identified phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Although many scholars avoided having a fixed definition of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined it as follows:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Discussions regarding the qualitative research process generally highlight the importance of recognizing the researcher’s subjectivity, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In other words, researchers bring their own worldview into the study and apply a framework for understanding, then the researchers develop a set of questions based upon that understanding and analyze the data in designated ways (Hallberg, 2006). In this study, the researcher presented the problem statement and a review of the literature in chapter two that discussed the theoretical considerations and an integrative model to understand friendships. The researcher developed a set of research questions based upon a gap identified through the literature review. The designated analysis is discussed later in this chapter based upon the nature of the research questions. Before

describing data collection and method of analysis, the philosophical tenets that shaped and guided the qualitative inquiry and methodology in this study is presented.

Social Constructivism

In studying methodology, Ezzy (2002) suggested that one must look at the paradigm or worldview that guided what was important and valid in the process of inquiry. The ontology includes the nature of reality as seen through multiple views or the claim the researchers make regarding the nature of reality (Miriam & Tisdell, 2016). Epistemology refers to what is considered knowledge and how one obtained that knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The methodology is the process of studying the desired phenomena (Creswell & Poth 2018; Crotty, 1998).

The four basic paradigms typically guiding research inquiry are positivism, post-modern, transformative, and social constructivism (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). The paradigm identified for this study is social constructivism. Crotty (1998) notes that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interpretation between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). Constructivists argue that reality is a product of social context and meanings people give to interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These meanings are shaped by an individual’s social and historical experiences subject to multiple interpretations (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). The constructivist approach desires to understand this reality by discovering and describing the experienced phenomena by participants. It also provides an understanding that there are multiple realities merged in any inquiry as the researcher

and any participants bring their unique view of the world to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Basic Interpretative Research

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) view methodology as a way of thinking about and studying reality. Constructivists often rely upon qualitative inquiry as it allows people to adequately describe how they experience a phenomenon utilizing the researcher as the mediator of the information. Common types of qualitative inquiry include phenomenology, grounded theory, case studies, narratives, and ethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman; 2015, Merriam & Tisdell; 2016; Saldana & Omasta; 2018). However, some qualitative researchers avoid the specific methodological labels (phenomenology, grounded theory, etc.) and simply indicate the study as basic interpretive qualitative research. This type of basic qualitative research is “interested in how people interpret their experiences, construct their world, and what meaning they attribute top their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24).

Shank (2002) argue that basic qualitative researchers are “discoverers and reconcilers of meaning where no meaning has been clearly understood before” (Shank, 2002, p. 7). Percy, Kostere, and Kostere (2015) explain that basic interpretative studies seek to understand outwardly what happened and the participants’ reflections or opinions. It is not an attempt to predict, but a way to understand (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This basic approach to qualitative inquiry like most other qualitative methods also utilizes the researcher who is adaptive and reflexive as the primary instrument in data collection, data reduction and interpretation, and rich descriptive reporting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants' description of their satisfaction within that friendship. The goal of this study was not focused on understanding the sociological aspects of the friendship, developing a specific new theory, understanding how history influenced friendships, or uncovering the essence of the experience of the friendship. Therefore, basic interpretive qualitative research rather than one of the other qualitative inquiry approaches is most appropriate to guide the study. Basic interpretive qualitative methods give the researcher an opportunity to understand a phenomena or process through rich descriptions from the perspective of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Collection

Data collection entails a set of interrelated activities with the goal of gathering data to answer a research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). More specifically, Creswell and Poth (2018) identified data collection as including identifying participants, developing rapport with the participants, deciding on a sampling method, collecting data, recording information, minimizing issues in the field, and safely securing the data.

Sample Selection

The researcher utilized purposive sampling to select participants for this study, as the goal of the study was not for the sample to be representative of the general population (Creswell & Poth, 2018) but meet certain criteria as much as possible in order to obtain viable data (Saldana & Omasta, 2018) about friendships between persons with and without ID. Participants were recruited if they were part of an existing friendship pair (friendship between persons with ID and person without ID) and would be able to

verbally articulate their friendship experiences. The researcher also considered the type and length of the friendship, age of the participants, intellectual ability and residence status of the participant with ID in selecting the friendship pairs. Bigby et al. (2007) have stated that the friendship type (best friends, good friends, and casual friends) is important when understanding how the friendship is experienced and maintained. Hall (2019) reported it takes 160 hours together to go from friends to good friends and approximately 200 hours together to move to close friends. In this study, all the friendships were categorized as at least “good”, had been ongoing for at least one year, with at least 160 hours of time spent together.

The researcher included age as a sampling criterion as Blieszner & Adams (1994) reported that age and lifespan issues can impact the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of friendships. The initial criterion was between 18 and 29 years of age to try to narrow down the age range to just young adults for the purpose of minimizing variation. Pottie and Sumarah (2004) reported that the nature of friendships change throughout life development and that young adulthood was the optimum time frame for friendships as they move from being superficial in adolescence to more complex and meaningful in young adulthood. However, upon recruitment efforts, the researcher found that most of the participants without an ID were over 29. They were mostly in middle age.

Most of the studies that examined various aspects of friendships between those with and without an ID including the network size, friendship activities, and friendship satisfaction either did not discuss age as a factor in sampling or did not note age as a significant factor on the results. Upon review of the literature available that discussed

age as a criterion, Emerson & McVilly (2004) noted that age was identified as a possible predictive factor affecting friendship activities between those with and without an ID. However, age was not found as a significant factor in influencing friendship activities. Asselt-Goverts et al (2015) looked at social network size and satisfaction of young adults with mild ID. They did not consider the age of the people in the social network only that of the participant. They did not note age as being a possible substantial factor in social network size or satisfaction with the social network. The other studies simply mentioned the age range of their participants and were all noted as being adults (Asselt-Goverts et al., 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Kennedy et al., 1990; Lutfiyya, 1991; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Wilson et al, 2017). Therefore, the researcher chose to use the age sampling criterion as adults (18 and over). Those under 18 were not included as most research indicated that the factors affecting friendship patterns in adolescent are significantly different than those in young and middle adulthood (Blieszner & Adams, 1998; Knox & Hickson, 2010; Tipton, 2011).

Another criterion was intellectual disability. There were several studies that indicated that the level of intellectual disability impacted the outcomes (Asselts-Goverts et al., 2015, Bigby & Craig, 2017; Kennedy et al., 1990, Lutfiyya, 1991). This study utilized a qualitative approach that required individuals to be able to verbally articulate, in some depth, their experiences. Individuals with a mild ID have higher levels of functioning with communication and basic interpretation (Patel et al., 2018) Therefore, the researcher chose to narrow the sample to those with mild intellectual ID to meet the purpose of the study.

The last criterion was that the participant with an ID live at home. There were several studies that investigated friendship outcomes between those with and without an ID and found living arrangements to be a significant factor. Those living at home had larger social networks outside of support personnel (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Bigby et.al, 2009; Emerson & McVilly, 2004). The researcher chose the living arrangements at home for the specific criterion for this study based upon participant availability.

With these considerations in mind along with the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to set the following sampling criteria:

- a. There was a friendship between an individual with an ID and an individual without an ID for at least one year and they had spent at least 160 hours together.
- b. Both participants had the ability to verbally articulate their experiences.
- c. Both participants were over the age of 18.
- d. The participant with the ID had a mild intellectual disability.
- e. The participant with an ID lived at home.
- f. Both participants were willing to participate in a one-hour interview as a pair, and a follow up thirty- minute individual interview.

Sample Size

The researcher proposed to interview at least eight pairs of friends. Most qualitative researchers estimated that a sample size of five to 25 participants is enough to reach saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2015, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Saturation occurs when researchers can no longer gain

new insights from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Saturation for this study was met at seven pairs, but the researcher had already discussed and scheduled interviews for the eighth friendship pair. Therefore, the eighth pair was also included and met the proposed initial number of friendship pairs.

The researcher initially utilized opportunistic and snowball strategies to recruit participants. Creswell & Poth (2018) noted that snowball strategies rely on finding participants through people that know participants who could offer rich descriptions. They noted opportunistic strategies as finding participants through new leads and taking advantage of the unexpected. The researcher chose snowball as the initial strategy as the researcher wanted to be sensitive to the screening of the criteria regarding the level of ID and the ability to communicate the experience of the friendship.

Initially, the researcher reached out to all known contacts through current and past employment at Donalsonville Hospital in Georgia, LifeSkills Inc. in Kentucky, and SARCOA in Alabama. The researcher gathered names and contacts for 10 pairs based upon the initial contacts. The researcher reached out to the guardians of the possible participant with an ID and discussed with them the criteria of the study as well as its purpose. Of the 10 pairs, the researcher found that five pairs met the criteria and were willing to meet to discuss informed consent and participate in the interviews. There were five other friendship pairs that were screened and not included in this study. Two of the five pairs had a participant that could not verbally articulate the experience, two pairs had an individual that had severe intellectual disability with minimal communication ability, and the fifth pair was excluded due to the guardian declining participation. The

researcher was able to contact and schedule five friendship pairs: one from Alabama, one from Kentucky, and three from Georgia.

From the initial five interviews, the researcher was able to get three additional pairs through their contacts as some participants wanted their friends participate in the study as well. One of the last three interviews was from Georgia, one from Alabama, and one from Kentucky. The researcher stopped recruitment after interviewing the eighth pair as saturation was met.

Informed Consent

Any research with human subjects requires it to be conducted in a manner that is respectful to the human rights of the participants, which include autonomy and freedom of choice (Freedman, 2001; McCarthy, 2003). Experts in qualitative research specifically noted that respecting a persons' privacy, welfare, and right to equitable treatment must be incorporated throughout all phases of research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2015, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana & Omasta, 2018). Purdon (2005) stated that researchers must also tend to the informed consent and make provisions for the sensitive needs of the participant, unexpected emotions, and unanticipated revelations. It was also noted that one must constantly monitor the benefit to risk ratio as the research develops especially in qualitative research (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001).

For this study, approval from the IRB at the University of Louisville was obtained on August 5th, 2019 before participant recruitment began. Once the researcher obtained approval, the recruitment process began. During recruitment, the researcher encouraged the participants to have an advocate of choice or the legal guardian that he/she trusts to

witness the informed consent process. All the participants were also notified that the interviews would be audiotaped. All the eight participants with an ID had a legal guardian who attended the consent process and agreed to being audiotaped. All eight legal guardians signed the informed consent (see Appendix A) as well as all eight participants with an ID. All eight participants with and ID also signed the assent form (see Appendix B). None of the participants with an ID chose to have an advocate present. All participants without an ID did not have a legal guardian and had capacity to give consent. All eight participants without an ID signed the informed consent and agreed to being audiotaped.

Prior to participants signing the informed consent or the assent, the researcher had a face- to- face conversation with the participants and the legal guardian (when applicable) where both the informed consent and assent were read and discussed (Appendices A and B). The participants were given opportunities to ask questions about the study. All participants agreed and noted understanding of the study except for one who was confused about the study. The researcher reviewed the consent form again with the participant and answered questions to clarify the purpose any confusion about the study. Once this was done, the participant agreed and signed the assent. The signed consents were kept in a locked box only accessible to identified key personnel.

Data Collection Methods

Writers who utilized a qualitative approach cautioned that while implementing data collection, it was imperative that the researcher listens to the participants and allows them to be the experts in describing their rich experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2015, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana

& Omasta, 2018). In order to fully capture participants' experience, the researcher utilized individual and dyadic interviews. Interviews are often the data collection of choice due to their effectiveness at offering opportunities for valuable information pertinent to the specific study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2015, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana & Omasta, 2018). Brinkmann & Kvale (2005) stated that an "interview is where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interview and interviewee" (p.4). Researchers noted that conducting an interview can be like a "craft" that is perfected over time (Borghatti, 1996).

Interviews can be anywhere from highly structured to completely unstructured; highly structured have preset questions while unstructured have no preset questions. Semi-structured interviews provide a middle ground that structures data but is not so rigid that the individual's experience or voice is not heard (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Charmaz (2014) wrote that by creating open-ended, non-judgmental questions, you build a rapport and encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge. Scholars established that building a rapport with the participants increased the comfort level of the participants and offered more opportunity to get a vivid picture of the experience being explored (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

This study utilized a dyadic data collection and adapted analysis method. Eisikovits and Koren (2010) argued that although individual interviews produced high quality data, the dyadic interview provided an opportunity to gather more rich and broad content as well as increasing trustworthiness. The dyadic interview allowed the interviewer to observe interactions, the participants to draw off each other's statements,

and the pair to co-construct their version of the phenomena of study (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pederson, 2013). Giorgi (2009) argued that the inclusion of both individual and separate interviews was a way to benefit from both methods at the same time. The combination was best served when a topic can be sensitive in certain areas and when interactions are important to the study (Eisikovits & Kohen, 2010).

The researcher chose to do a combination of both dyadic and individual interviews. The dyadic interview questions (Appendix C) were chosen not only to get the story of how the friendship was formed and maintained from a combined perspective, but also to gather more information through prompting memories or clarifying content, which might not surface during individual interviews. As for the individual interview questions (Appendix D), they were chosen because the researcher was looking into gathering information about sensitive topics that may include feelings about the overall satisfaction experienced in the friendship and to statements that may cause discomfort in a dyadic session.

The questions regarding the formation and maintenance of the friendship were derived from the general Integrative Conceptual Framework of Friendship. They were geared toward understanding the process of how the participants managed the structural aspects and met the functions of the friendship in the formation and maintenance phases (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). There are a few tools still under exploratory research that focus on the experience of friendship satisfaction among adults. The Network of Relationships Inventory, (Gleckel, 2015), The Friendship Quality Questionnaire (Dowse, 2009), and The McGill Friendship Questionnaire (Mendelson & Aboud, 2012). Although these scales correlated with the constructs identified with friendship satisfaction, they

have not been validated for sensitivity to age, race, gender, ethnicity, intellectual functioning, or other individual factors (Gleckel, 2015; Mendelson & Aboud, 2012; Dowse, 2009). However, these tools can still be useful guides when investigating friendship satisfaction for any population (Akin et al, 2016). The researcher chose to adapt portions of the McGill Friendship Questionnaire as it includes questions that prompt discussion on the feelings about how well the friendship is meeting the desired functions and the level of commitment in keeping the friendship alive (Mendelson & Aboud, 2012).

Procedures

Once the informed consent was signed for this study, the researcher gave the participants a copy of the general interview questions (Appendices C and D). Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that researchers may opt to give a written copy of the interview questions to participants who may need some time to collect their thoughts or get assistance with communicating the information. The interviewer chose to give the questions ahead to give time for participants that may need assistance from family or friends in understanding the nature of the questions and documenting some thoughts ahead to make sure they are included in the verbal interview. The interviewer also gave the participants the demographic data form (Appendix E) to complete. Both the signed consents and the demographic data forms were collected at that time. Participants' names were not gathered in the demographic data form and instead, each participant was given a pseudonym. A key code to the pseudonyms was stored on a separate password protected flash drive and stored in a locked box.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about the participants' experience in the friendship. As it is important to establish rapport, the researcher gave the participant the opportunity to choose the time, date, and location of the initial interview. Four of the friendship pairs chose to do the interview in the researcher's office located at Donalsonville Hospital in Donalsonville Georgia. Two of the interviews occurred at a case manager's office at LifeSkills Inc. in Kentucky. The other two interviews were conducted at an office at SARCOA in Dothan Alabama. The interviews were conducted in person and recorded electronically. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher within 72 hours of the interview for the purposes of accuracy. The initial pair interview lasted approximately 35 to 40 minutes. The individual interviews lasted on average 20 minutes. The interviewer audiotaped the interview for the purpose of analysis, accuracy, and ease of transcription. The audio files and transcriptions were stored on a password protected flash drive separate from the pseudonym key and stored in a locked box.

Upon review and reflection on the collected data from the initial interviews, the researcher decided to conduct a second round of participant interviews. The dyadic interviews in the first round provided great information about the friendship activities and provided the interviewer with the opportunity to watch the interactions between the dyad. However, the individual interviews were shorter than originally anticipated or expected. The researcher determined this may have been a result of the lack of further exploration by the interviewer and the possible fatigue of the participants since all the interviews were conducted in one day. Therefore, the researcher scheduled the second rounds of interviews on an individual basis to seek more in-depth descriptions and on separate days

to reduce fatigue potential of the participants. The second interview also served the purpose to clarify and fine tune some of the themes found in the analysis of the first interview sets. The basic outline for the second interviews is included in Appendix F and G. For the same purposes noted above, the participants were given a copy of the questions ahead of time and were allowed to choose the date, time, and location of the interview. All of the participants chose to do the interviews at the researcher's office in Donalsonville GA.

The second round of interviews were also conducted in person and recorded electronically. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher within 72 hours of the interview for the purposes of accuracy. The audio files and transcriptions were also stored on a password protected flash drive stored in a locked box. On average for the participants without an ID the second interview lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. For the participants without an ID the interview lasted between 30 to 35 minutes.

Memo writing happened throughout the data collection process. Researchers noted that memoing can be helpful to code development, sketch reflective thinking, and summarize field notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The memos from this study were typed and stored on the same flash drive as the transcriptions for the purpose of an audit trail in the future if needed.

Charmaz (2014) indicated that one type of memo writing is the intermediate step between coding and themes; the process captures the researcher's attempts to understand the data, refine categories, and define relationships between categories. Memoing differs from note taking and it is not just a description but a synthesis of the data to gain analytic meanings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The researcher wrote memos after each

interview with reflections and ideas about code development and categories. An example is included below

Figure 2 Sample Reflective Memo

I originally noted 4 themes for friendship formation. However, after re-reading the transcripts and looking back at the integrative model of friendship, I realized some of the behavioral, affective, and cognitive processes occurring during formation were a part of the same larger theme. For instance, I initially had the idea that being in a community environment was a separate theme than having an open mind to new connections. However, after some consideration, I determined that being in a community setting was a part of the process of opening your life to the possibility of new social interactions. Similarly, I had connecting through a mutual friend a separate theme than needing a mediator to assist with getting to know each other. Ultimately, the two were similar. Although the mutual friend may have not been the one that assisted later down the road with establishing communication, they were still a part of the process that assisted the two individuals in getting to know each other. Therefore, I reduced the number of themes for formation down to two.

Memoing is also noted as a sort of audit trail documenting the researcher's thoughts on the observations, evaluation of the process, hunches about interactions, and relations to personal experiences (Saldana & Omasta; 2018). An example of this type of memo that the researcher noted during this study is included below

Figure 3 Sample Audit Trail Memo

My therapeutic background drives me to want to hit those "light bulb moments" that is important in a therapy session where the person suddenly realizes something, they were not aware of prior to that conversation. So, I am constantly reminding myself to remember the purpose of the study and that it is not a therapy session. I also have to be cautious to decipher between reflection of content and feeling, versus drawing a conclusion. I want to make sure what I am saying back is actually a true reflection of what they were trying to say about their thoughts and feelings and not what I assume they are saying or feeling. I want to make an extra effort in my next interview to watch those two things.

Field Issues

When conducting qualitative interviews, it is important to anticipate common field issues (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Booth and Booth (1996) warned that structuring the interview in a way that is not constricting to the narrative yet remaining focused on the topic is an inevitable challenge. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) also warned that unexpected emotional responses such as transference, countertransference, and fatigue may occur, and it would require the interviewer to respond appropriately. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) advised researchers to make themselves aware of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee and to address potential asymmetric power.

As mentioned before, to control for possible field issues, the participants were given a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview to increase participants comfort level and to help them understand the purpose the interview and study prior to the interview. The researcher also allowed the participants to choose the date, time, and location of the interview to create a collaborative approach to the interview process. Participants were informed at the beginning of the interview that they can stop the interview, ask questions, or seek clarification at any time. They were also asked at the end of the interview if there was anything else, they wanted to add that was not addressed in the interview questions.

During one of the interviews, the participant asked the researcher to turn the recorder off as she was sharing a story that she felt was embarrassing. The interviewer agreed and stopped the audio recording. The information stated off the recorder was not used for analysis or publication.

The researcher is a licensed clinical social worker with five years of experience in direct practice conducting various therapeutic interviewing techniques. She also received training in clinical interviewing in her undergraduate and graduate studies in the field of Social Work. She has also educated students pursuing graduate level degrees on the clinical interviews for five years and conducted in-services at her employment for the past four years. She has practiced approaching every interview with a non-judgmental and open-minded attitude. She relied upon this experience to assist in minimizing interviewer subjectivity and disrupted fluidity due to unexpected emotional responses.

During the interviews there was one situation where the participants began crying while discussing a traumatic event they went through together. The researcher was able to utilize her clinical interview skills to validate feelings and allow participants to tell the story through the emotion. The researcher utilized reflection of feelings and content and did an emotion's check after they completed the story to make sure participants were comfortable with continuing the interview. The researcher also relied on her training to capture moments where her experience with furthering, appreciating the silence, and recognizing immediacy would help encourage deeper revelations about the relevant topic.

Data Analysis

Data analysis includes a process of organizing the collected data for analysis, reducing the data into themes using coding mechanisms, and then representing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) reported that the process of data collection, data analysis, and data reporting are all a part of the research process but are not necessarily independent of each other; they reported they may be interrelated and simultaneously done through a research project.

The researcher chose an adapted dyadic analysis approach as the friendship dyad was the unit of interest. Dyadic analysis utilizing a combination of individual and dyadic interviews is still a new concept, so the researcher adapted some of the current procedures documented in literature. The participants were a combination of individuals with and without an ID. The participants with an ID presented information both in the paired and individual interviews that was less in depth and complex than the participants without an ID. This created a challenge in the comparative analysis portion which resulted in fewer themes and some themes that were not equally represented by both parties. The fact that dyadic analysis is a new concept, the researcher is a novice, and the limitations of some participants all presented obstacles to performing a pure dyadic analysis. The researcher predominantly drew upon some of the procedures used by Eisikovits and Koren (2010). They recommended that following initial individual level analysis of each interview transcript, the researcher compare the stories of the participants and identify similarities and differences between the two versions.

This enabled the examination of similarities and differences between the two individual perspectives, to capture the dynamics between I-ness and We-ness.

This can be viewed when presenting the individual perspective of each member of the dyad alongside the dyadic perspective created by the researcher as the third party (Eisikovits & Kohen, 2010, p.1645).

Individual Analysis

The first phase of the individual analysis is initial coding that includes exploring the data without preconceived ideas (Saldana, 2009). Charmaz (2014) instructed to “remain open, stay close to the data, keep your codes simple and precise, construct short-

codes, preserve actions, compare data with data, and move quickly through the data” (p. 49). These initial codes emerge from the data and are not prefigured from existing literature (Miles et al., 2014). The primary goal of initial coding includes breaking down the data, incident to incident, to compare for similarities or differences.

The researcher began the process of analysis by first utilizing initial coding. The researcher utilized the method suggested by Saldana and Omasta (2018) by carefully reading and re-reading the transcripts in order to make sense of the data and reduce data into meaningful statements. The researcher read and re-read the transcripts, then provided a line by line code. The initial coding resulted in over 100 codes. Creswell and Poth (2018) wrote that initial coding typically results in between 75 and 120 open codes. Once all transcripts were coded and the researcher found no new codes emerging from the data, the researcher proceeded to process coding.

Saldana (2009) stated that the first phase of coding rarely ends with initial coding; he reported that a researcher would likely need to utilize more than one form of first cycle coding to reduce the data. Marshall and Rossman (2015) indicated that a researcher may need to adjust the code names, condense codes, or delete some codes that became irrelevant in order to reduce the codes to core categories. Saldana (2009) indicated that process coding includes looking at some sort of action and would typically use gerunds (words ending in -ing). The purpose of this study was to investigate how friendships are formed and maintained between those with and without an ID. Blieszner & Adams (1992) indicated that the formation and maintenance of friendships is a set of interactive behavioral, cognitive, and affective processes. Therefore, the researcher utilized process

coding as a second first phase coding process. This resulted in 20 core categories under six themes addressing research questions one and two.

Next, the researcher utilized values coding. This is a type of affective coding that focuses on the values, attitudes or beliefs someone has about themselves or someone else (Saldana, 2009). The third research question of this study was related to the satisfaction experienced in the friendship between those with and without an ID. Therefore, the researcher found this type of coding to be helpful in notating the attitudes, values, and beliefs the friendship pair had about the friendship itself. This resulted in two additional core categories and one theme.

Saldana and Omasta (2018) indicated that after first phase analysis, there are typically around 25 core categories with six to eight themes. Creswell & Poth (2018) also suggested no more than 25 to 30 initial core categories and to only expand upon those that required more detail. First phase coding ends upon the emergence of core categories (Saldana & Omasta; 2018).

A codebook was created and maintained throughout the study. Codebooks are a way to capture the definition, boundaries, and examples of each code (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Saldana (2009) wrote that each codebook contained “the code, a brief definition, a full definition, guidelines for when to use the code, guidelines for when not to use the code, and examples” (p.21). The codebook was kept on the password protected flash drive along with audio files and transcribed interviews and kept in a locked box. The researcher provided the inter-rater coder with the code book for clarity and accuracy purposes

Prior to beginning the dyadic analysis phase of coding, the researcher utilized an inter-rater coder. Saldana and Omasta (2018) noted that inter-rater reliability is simply the amount of agreement between two or more coders for the codes applied to the text. It is a measure of reproducibility across coders. For inter-coder reliability to be valid, it must be two coders with similar abilities operating in isolation from one another (Campbell et al., 2013). Miles and Huberman (1984) wrote that code agreement was the number of times all coders used a code in the same text divided by the total number of agreements and disagreements. Campbell et al. (2013) applied this to multiple texts and indicated that the overall interrater reliability of all coding for semi-structured interviews was best calculated by the total number of code agreements divided by the total number of agreements plus disagreements.

For this study, the researcher utilized a master's level student currently doing qualitative research to try to match abilities. The second coder performed the operation separate from the researcher (coder 1). Although there are several formulas and calculations available on intercoder reliability, Campbell et al. (2013) wrote that for interviews, a basic percentage of agreement to calculate reliability presented in Miles et al. (2014) was the best practice. Their formula indicated that reliability was the total number of agreements divided by the total number of agreements plus disagreements. They also reported that an 80% agreement over 95% of the codes was enough for reliability. The results of the inter-rater coding reliability for this study utilizing this formula was overall 94% and Table 4 depicts the percentage for each code. There was at least 80% agreement on 21 of the 22 codes, which is 95% of the codes.

Table 4

Inter-Rater Reliability

Code	Coder 1 #	Coder 2 #	# Agreements	# Disagreements	Reliability %
Contacts	24	22	22	2	97
Effort	21	19	19	2	90
Connection	23	24	23	1	96
Communicate	11	12	11	1	92
Inside	5	4	4	1	80
Talking	30	32	30	2	93
Celebrating	38	36	36	2	95
Together	39	37	37	2	95
Laughing	9	11	9	2	81
Tokens	11	12	11	1	91
Carefree	18	19	18	1	95
Affection	92	97	92	5	95
Back	49	47	47	2	96
Protecting	28	26	26	2	93
Intimacy	43	41	41	2	95
Independence	28	29	28	1	97
Compromise	26	25	25	1	96
Idiosyncrasies	15	16	15	1	94
Catering	7	10	7	3	70
Accessibility	28	27	27	1	96
Forever	22	23	22	1	96
Wishing	13	13	13	0	100
Total	583	582	563	36	94

Dyadic Analysis

After the individual analysis was completed and inter-rater reliability was assessed, the dyadic analysis was further examined. The dyadic analysis portion was to examine how the themes were addressed across the board on a dyadic level. Eisikovits and Koren (2010) reported that dyadic analysis is more than just the sum of the two individual interviews or versions of the events. It involved a comparison of the overlaps and contrasts. Koss (2016) also reported that a dyadic analysis approach looked at three separates but overlapping versions for each pair, which included two individuals, and the

researcher as the third party that puts it all together. Eisikovits & Koren (2010) reported that although the researcher puts together the dyadic version, it does not take away from the individual versions.

An important element of dyadic analysis, according to Eisikovits and Koren (2010), is understanding the “we” or the “I” ness of the experience and which parts of the phenomena are experienced together or separate. This can be assessed by looking at overlaps and contrasts. Overlaps or contrasts can occur on a descriptive or experiential level. In other words, individuals can describe or experience something similarly or differently. They also reported that there could be an overlap in description but contrast in experience and vice versa. They further suggested that there could be a complete contrast in description and experience that complements each other, which creates a balancing mechanism (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). Furthermore, Eisikovits and Koren emphasized the importance of considering the level of awareness and unawareness of what the partner is experiencing when assessing togetherness versus separateness.

The adapted dyadic analysis piece was completed resulting in changing and re-organizing some of the core categories and category names based upon the contrasts and overlaps. Lastly, the researcher went back to the transcripts and re-read the information to make sure that the newly derived categories were connected and relevant in the original data (Saldana; 2009). Saldana and Omasta (2018) noted that this final phase of coding was the process of making all the core categories fit together into themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) described the process as “pulling the data apart and putting it back together again in more meaningful ways” (p.163). The final analysis resulted in condensing the 25 core categories into eight themes, which will be discussed in depth in

the results section of chapter four. It is noted that six to eight themes were a recommended number for the final representation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2009).

Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Creswell & Poth (2018) stressed the importance of validating and evaluating any qualitative study. They indicated that although one could not apply the traditional quantitative terms of validity and reliability to qualitative inquiry, they cautioned about not taking measures to publish accurate and good quality work. Validation is “an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings as best described by the researcher, the participants, and the readers” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 259). There are several noted validation techniques and experts recommended using more than one (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to the definition of validation in Creswell & Poth (2018), there are three perspectives important to assessing validation, which included the researcher, the participant, and the reader. This study will utilize validation techniques from each perspective that includes clarifying researcher bias, member checks, peer review, and inter-rater coding.

Strategies from a researcher’s lens included clarifying researcher bias. Creswell & Poth (2018) suggested that the researcher include a subjectivity statement that communicates any bias, values, or experiences that he/she may have brought to the study. The researcher presents a subjectivity statement at the end of this chapter.

This study utilized member checks as validation strategies from a participant’s lens. Lincoln and Guba (1995) noted that member checks were the most valuable strategies to establish the credibility of the study. Member checks involved taking the

data, the data analysis, research findings, and the researcher's interpretations back to the participants to have them judge the accuracy. The researcher presented the participants with the results including themes and interpretations to get opinions regarding accuracy and any potential themes or descriptions that may be missing. The results are depicted in table 5 below.

Table 5

Member Checks

Participant #	Date	Agreement Y or N	Comments
1	10/19/2019	Y	I think this is spot on
2	10/19/2019	Y	It's okay.
3	10/20/2019	Y	I hope people read this. I think its words from my mouth.
4	10/20/2019	Y	That is correct.
5	10/20/2019	Y	This is helpful. What do you plan to do next?
6	10/20/2019	Y	Yes. That's right. I like we have each other's back.
7	10/19/2019	Y	It's amazing how when you see it, you feel some sort of pride in your work. You feel like you made a difference.
8	10/19/2019	Y	I like it.
9	10/20/2019	Y	I hope we were able to be helpful.
10	10/20/2019	Undetermined	I don't know
11	10/19/2019	Y	This is interesting. I would have never thought about somethings that you brought out until I saw it on paper.
12	10/19/2019	Y	I'm okay with that. Can I get a copy?
13	10/17/2019	Y	I hope that you can use this in some way to help others understand how wonderful it is.
14	10/17/2019	Y	I don't have anything more.
15	10/18/2019		I think you did a great job.
16	10/18/2019	"I guess"	I think its fine.

This study addressed validation from the reader's perspective through peer review and inter-rater coding. The researcher utilized an inter-rater coder discussed earlier in this chapter with a 94% agreement rate. Lincoln and Guba (1995) reported that full objectivity is impossible, but it is helpful to have another non-partial observer ask the hard questions about the study and results to keep the researcher honest. For additional review purposes, the researcher also utilized the same coder along with a Master's prepared Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a background in working with individuals with an ID to review the transcripts, analytic memos, code book, and the finalized dyadic themes for this study for an additional feedback. Both the reviewers indicated that the themes identified for this study were applicable to the content and appeared to capture the essence of what the participants conveyed in their interviews. The researcher also kept the code book and memos for the examination in the future if an audit trail is needed.

Self as the Researcher-Subjectivity Statement

When I think about the things in life that are most important to me, my family and close relationships there are two things that stand out as being irreplaceable. I consider the people in my life that have provided me with support, companionship, and guidance, priceless. When I remember times in my life when I have laughed, cried, danced, shouted, celebrated, mourned, or did nothing but enjoyed the moment, my friends and family always played a prominent role in those situations. Relationships and connections with people, whether birth family or friends, have certainly brought value and meaning into my circumstances of life. I consider myself blessed and favored to reap the benefits of precious relationships in her life. I also respect and give due importance to the role that friendships play in the lives of other people.

I would like to begin with a discussion about my experience with individuals with an Intellectual Disability (ID). I grew up in a rural area where my experience with interactions with anyone who had an ID was very limited. I did not have anyone in my family that had an ID, and the educational system I attended did not have any inclusive classrooms. My first experience in forming friendships with someone with an ID began in my work experience. I went into the field very nervous about my experiences because I lacked an awareness about the experience of anyone with a disability. As I began my career as a direct support professional in a residential program that provided services for individuals with an ID, I experienced an immediate unconditional regard for the people I served in the program. I had the benefit to engage in community activities and shared interest with my clients on a day-to-day basis. Throughout this process, I considered some of my clients my friends. I would often drop by my off days to pick up one of my friends and take them to church, outings, shopping, etc. because I enjoyed the company.

As I worked alongside these individuals, I sadly also noticed the heart-breaking reality that those with an ID seemed to have few friendships with others who did not have an ID outside of paid staff. I listened as clients and their family members talked about the struggles of finding inclusion and relationships in their community. Finding a friend or developing friendships often became the goal noted on many of their individualized plans. I remember sitting in the living room of a mother and her daughter in a rural town listening to them talk about the rejection they faced every day. They indicated that the pastor asked them to sit in the back of their church or keep “the disabled child” at home. I sat on their sofa and held back my tears, battling the knowledge and feeling of being

unequipped to help this family. I am certain that I am not alone and that many family members and support staff experienced this same feeling.

I advanced in my career to become a case manager and ultimately a behavior support specialist serving individuals with an ID. My total career experience in this field was roughly ten years. Throughout those years, I noticed the same pattern. I grew fond of many of my clients, but I continued to see the struggle they experienced in finding community inclusion. What seemed to be a vicious cycle of exclusion led me to my curiosity about the phenomenon of social exclusion. I often found myself having conversations with other staff and community members about the barriers people with ID faced in finding belonging in their community. It was during this time of questioning that I decided to leave the official career field and pursue my doctoral education. So, it is of no surprise to me that this topic was at the top of my curiosity list.

Throughout my literature search and my pursuit of research on this topic, I have found it to be a real struggle to find relevant research. It does not seem to be a topic of interest for many people. When professionals inquired about my topic, I could see the cloud of indifference that seemed to form around the conversation. It seemed as if this topic was only for those with the passion. However, this has only inspired me to further pursue this topic. For a variety of reasons, people with an ID struggled to form and maintain friendships. It is my hope that this study would raise awareness and understanding of friendships between those with and without an ID and have a positive influence on the available literature to assist social inclusion for those with an ID. Hopefully as more people take interest and publish positive results regarding friendships between those with and without ID, the world will become more aware and drawn toward

the rare gem of having these types of friendships in their lives. I recognize the subjectivity that my extensive work and personal experience with individuals with an ID brings to this study. These experiences led me to pursue this topic, but my hope is to set them aside as much as possible and present to the readers the lived experiences of the friendships between individuals with and without and ID.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants' description of their satisfaction within that friendship. A list of research questions was set to guide the study and in order to answer these research questions, the researcher utilized a basic interpretative qualitative methodology as research available on the friendships between those with and without an ID was noted to still be in exploratory phases (Amado, 2014, Bigby & Craig, 2017; Wilson et al. 2017). The study utilized pair and individual interviews to gather information about the rich descriptions of the experience of the friendships. The data analysis included individual and dyadic coding, which provided a means of reduction, synthesis, and presentation of the data (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). The results were validated and evaluated before the data was published to help ensure its "fit" of the actual data and intention of its participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study offered an opportunity for those with an ID to have a voice in the research geared toward a better understanding of the lived experiences of friendships with community members.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

“Stay close to people who feel like sunshine”- Anonymous

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants’ description of their satisfaction within that friendship using qualitative methods. The study answered three research questions:

1. How do friendships form between those with and without an ID?
2. How are friendships maintained between those with and without an ID?
3. How do the participants describe their satisfaction with the friendship?

As discussed in chapter three, this is a basic interpretive qualitative study using adapted dyadic analysis. Creswell and Poth (2018) presented an approach to reporting results that included the possibility of reporting them by themes, by analytical integration into larger themes, or by narrowing the focus to a description of the phenomena followed by a description of how that phenomena were experienced in life situations. They noted that it is up to the writer to decide the best approach or the combination that best suits the purpose of the study. The researcher chose a cross method between a thematic approach and narrowing the focus; the thematic approach focuses on the essential aspects of the phenomenon under study and the narrowing of focus allows the writer to describe the phenomenon followed by examples in real life (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The writer chose this cross method so that the results reflected the essential processes of friendship

formation, maintenance, and satisfaction and also displayed how those processes manifested in the friendships under study.

Description of the Friendship Pairs

This study consisted of eight pairs of friends that included one individual with an ID and one without an ID. Prior to the interviews, the participants were asked to complete a demographic data sheet (Appendix D). The demographics of each participant is listed below in Table 6. The pairs and profiles are listed in the order by which they were interviewed.

Table 6

Participants

	Name	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Ethnicity	Employment	Education	Residence Status	Legal Status	Length of Friendship
Pair 1	Dorinda	55	Female	Single	White	Full Time	Associate	Home	Own Guardian	16 months
	Aqua	24	Female	Single	White	Day Program	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	16 months
Pair 2	Thelma	71	Female	Married	White	Retired	GED	Home	Own Guardian	12 years
	Louise	24	Female	Single	White	As Needed	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	12 years
Pair 3	Chanel	38	Female	Single	White	Full Time	Bachelor's	Home	Own Guardian	2 years
	Galleria	26	Female	Single	White	Day Program	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	2 years
Pair 4	Michelle	47	Female	Divorced	White	Full Time	Bachelor's	Home	Own Guardian	2 years
	Romy	25	Female	Single	White	As Needed	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	2 years
Pair 5	Maverick	47	Male	Married	White	Full Time	Bachelor's	Home	Own Guardian	15 years
	Goose	46	Male	Single	White	Part Time	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	15 years
Pair 6	Cher	63	Female	Widowed	White	Retired	Master's	Home	Own Guardian	10 years
	Sony	23	Male	Single	White	None	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	10years
Pair 7	Bonnie	23	Female	Single	White	Full Time	Bachelor's	Home	Own Guardian	5 years
	Clyde	42	Male	Single	Black	Part Time	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	5 years
Pair 8	Kojak	39	Male	Married	White	Full Time	Master's	Home	Own Guardian	12 years
	Crocker	41	Male	Single	White	Day Program	High School	Home	Legal Guardian	12 years

*Own Guardian is that you have legal authority for decision making in your best interest

*Legal Guardian is when someone has the legal authority for decision making in your best interest

The participants ranged in age from 24 to 71 years of age. Participants who had an ID mostly ranged in age from mid to late 20s, while the participants without an ID were mostly middle aged. There was one pair, Bonnie and Clyde, where the participant without an ID was significantly younger than the other. The majority of the participants were females (n=10) with only six male participants. Of the eight pairs, six were paired with the same gender. Two of them were female and male with the female participant being without an ID. All participants except for one were of White ethnicity (n=15); the one participant was of African American ethnicity.

All the participants with an ID (n=8) were single. The marital status of participants without an ID varied to include single (n=3), married (n=3), divorced (n=1), and widowed (n=1). Although it was not something that was collected on the demographic sheet, most of the participants without an ID did not have children (n=6). Of the two who had children, the child was either estranged (n=1) or no longer living in the home (n=1).

All the participants with an ID (n=8) had a high school education, lived at home, and had legal guardians. Most of them also either worked part time (n=2), as needed (n=2) or attended a day program (n=3). One participant with an ID did not work or attend a day program. All of the participants without an ID worked full time (n=6) except for two, who were retired. The education level of the participants without an ID also varied and included some with a GED (n=1), associate's (n=1), bachelor's (n=4), and a master's (n=2) level education. All the participants without an ID (n=8) lived at home and were their own responsible party. The length of the friendships varied from two years to 15 years.

Profiles of Friendship Pairs

This section consists of the stories of the eight pairs of friends who participated in this study. Each participant's story outlines a brief description of the longevity and nature of the friendship and a basic discussion about pertinent participant characteristics that are relevant to this study. Lastly, the researcher describes why the participants chose their pseudo names.

Dorinda and Aqua-Pair 1

Dorinda and Aqua have been friends for about two years. Dorinda and Aqua's mother share their place of employment. Aqua attends a day program on Tuesdays and Thursdays and volunteers at the hospital on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. It was during her time at the hospital doing volunteer work that she introduced herself to Dorinda and started conversation. Dorinda's office door was open one day and Aqua made the effort to walk in and introduce herself one day while strolling down the hallway. They started having daily conversations, and those conversations led to weekly lunch dates. Since then, they have developed a circle of friends and they meet once a week for lunch. They utilize these lunch dates to celebrate holidays, birthdays, and special occasions and to invite others whom they want to include in their friendship experience.

During the interviews, both Dorinda and Aqua were very enthusiastic. They began the interview by immediately hugging each other and giving fist bumps. Throughout the interview, they both laughed on several occasions as they recounted their memories together. They were both relaxed and it was apparent that their comfort level with each other was very high. Aqua is a huge fan of the Cheetah Girls. She has named

several people in her friends' group according to various members of the Cheetah Girls. Thus, when discussing pseudo names to be used for the study, they chose the Cheetah Girls' names, Dorinda and Aqua. They both wore bracelets that signified their membership to the Cheetah Girls. At the beginning and end of the paired interview they bumped wrist and yelled "Cheetah Power."

Thelma and Louise-Pair 2

Thelma and Louise have been friends for 12 years. The friendship started when Louise's dad moved across the street from Thelma and her husband. Louise would often come outside when her dad mowed the lawn, and eventually, Thelma decided she would make the effort to get to know Louise better and spend some time with her. Louise loves to bake cupcakes and follows an Elvis impersonator, Terry Turner. Thelma often helps Louise with her cupcakes and has actively been a part of a recruitment to help sell them for a small profit for Louise. Thelma and her husband also attend Terry Turner concerts with Louise and her mom. These two things seem to be a common interest that bonded them together.

Louise volunteers at her church and at her mother's baking business. Louise's mother has limited mobility and relies on Louise to do some of the groundwork for the business. Louise has attended a day program off and on since high school but has not attended consistently due to transportation issues. Thelma is retired and enjoys volunteering at her church or local events. Thelma also attends the local senior citizen center and will sometimes take Louise to the day program on her way. Thelma understand the importance of Louise being able to socialize with some of her friends and

build some vocational skills. Thelma was very nurturing toward Louise and thinks of her as a daughter.

The nurturing atmosphere was evident throughout the interview. She would often state “go ahead honey” when she wanted to encourage Louise to talk. Other times she would pat Louise on the hand when she was talking about on of Louise’s accomplishments. Louise smiled at Thelma as she was talking about the positive things. It was obvious that she felt the affection and genuineness of her remarks. Thelma cried as she talked about how much she enjoys Louise.

When discussing what they would want their pseudo names to be, Thelma was the one who chose Thelma and Louise. Thelma had not seen the movie in years but remembered that Thelma and Louise had a great connection and one that was “for the books”. Both herself and Louise have traveled several places together and “stir up a little trouble” wherever they went. So, Thelma thought it is was a good fit and Louise agreed with her opinion.

Chanel and Galleria-Pair 3

Chanel and Galleria met through the church about two years ago. Chanel had just moved to Donalsonville GA for a job opportunity. She began attending the same church as Galleria and met Galleria during activities there. The friendship began with conversations at church and sitting next to each other at church functions. Galleria told Chanel about weekly lunches she attended with Dorinda and Aqua and invited her to join. Chanel began attending those lunches with Galleria and began to get to know her better. This is how Chanel and Galleria got inducted into the Cheetah Girl’s circle of friends.

They, like Dorinda and Aqua, wear the Cheetah Girl bracelets. They like to go out to eat, attend church, volunteer at community events, and go shopping together.

Chanel is a single female without children and being friends with Galleria made her time in Donalsonville GA less lonely. The connection with Galleria kept her from missing her home in Oklahoma. However, Chanel was in the process of moving back to Oklahoma over the next few weeks and has been a topic of concern for Galleria for several weeks prior to the interview. She cautioned me that it may come up quite a bit in the individual interview with Galleria. The friendship pair was still in the process of dealing with the upcoming change and getting comfortable with the idea of a long-distance friendship.

Galleria attends a day program throughout the week, but she would often take some time off to stay home or just relax. She is 24 and her mind often revolves around talking about boys and wanting to have a boyfriend. She showed pictures of her recent trip to Tim Tebow's prom in Dothan Alabama. She was so excited that she got to attend and that she got to dance with a boy there whom she thought was very good looking. She was very light-hearted, and the conversation flowed smoothly. She laughed and made jokes and was very forthcoming with her feelings. When asked about their pseudo names, they, of course, chose the other two Cheetah Girls: Galleria and Chanel. They indicated that the circle of friends was important, and they wanted to be on board with the scheme.

Michelle and Romy-Pair 4

Michelle and Romy have been friends for about three years. When Romy and Michelle arrived for the interview, they came together in the same car. They were laughing and chatting on the way to the door. They were teasing each other about who ate the most over dinner prior to our interview. Michelle was complaining that she was stuffed and bloated, and Romy quickly said, “stop talking down about yourself.” Michelle told the interviewer that she often makes jokes about her weight so that Romy can tell her how beautiful she is (while they both laughed). They were at ease and seemed to have the flow of laughing and having fun mastered.

Romy and Michelle met through Romy’s volunteer time at SARCOA. Michelle was working one day, and Romy “out of the blue” struck up a conversation with her. Romy was interested in making more friends and asked Michelle if she wanted to be friends. Michelle and Romy both gave the impression they were immediately good buddies. They typically go out to eat, go shopping, go to the movies, or get manicures/pedicures together. They did more activities the first year, but over the last year, they only get to see each other about once every two weeks due to conflicts in the work schedule.

Michelle is a divorced mother with one son. Around the time that she met Romy, her son had recently left home to attend college. She mentioned her empty nest several times throughout the interview. When she first met Romy, she worked a stationary job at SARCOA, but she has since moved into a position where she travels and is out in the field more often. This has limited her ability to schedule outings consistently with Romy.

Romy volunteers at SARCOA as needed to help with welcoming visitors and keeping the front lobby clean. She loves to do that because she is a very friendly person. She has been volunteering at SARCOA for almost five years. Her mother indicated that prior to that she attended a day program, but they did not feel she was getting enough opportunities there to grow. Romy has met a lot of people by volunteering there and meeting Michelle was her favorite memory.

When asked about their pseudo names, Michelle chose the names. She said she preferred those names because when she and Romy are together, they would laugh and cut up like a bunch of schoolgirls. Romy laughed and said, "I can agree with that."

Maverick and Goose-Pair 5

Maverick met Goose through Goose's sister. Maverick is very close to Goose's sister. They have been friends for about 15 years. They spend time a lot of time together doing things such as going to the movies, sporting events, camping, church events, and guy's night. Maverick stated that many of his friends had children and attended kid's soccer games, baseball games, and plays, but he was not into those things since he did not have children. He indicated that Goose has become his "wingman" since he enjoys the same things. He brought pictures of their dogs and said those were his babies. Goose is actually very involved with helping Maverick take care of and walk the dogs. This is an activity they enjoy doing together.

Goose works part time at McDonalds throughout the week keeping the condiment stand stocked and the dining area clean. Maverick noticed whenever they go to breakfast there are people that come up to Goose from everywhere to talk to him. Some have told

him that Goose is the only reason they come to that McDonalds. Goose's sister said he has a small fan club there. Goose is also active in a local group called Handicaps for Christ. He attends their local and state events. He has made several friends from this group and has monthly outings with them. Maverick is a volunteer with this group and is a mentor sponsor with two other individuals with an ID in this group. Maverick is not paired with Goose in this group because they like to keep their friendship separate.

Their interactions throughout the interview were very close to that of brothers. They spoke very freely about their relationship in front of each other. Maverick made comments about how Goose likes to interrupt him during phone calls, and Goose made comments about how Maverick is "mean on me". Although they were honest and forthright, they still laughed and talked about how much they cared for each other. The pair chose their pseudo name after the comment about a "wing man." When asked about choosing one, Maverick said "well I guess we are like Maverick and Goose." Goose said, "that is correct." Maverick laughed and stated he did not know where he had picked that up from but that seemed to be one of his favorite sayings at the time.

Sony and Cher-Pair 6

Sony and Cher have been friends for 10 years. They met through Sony's church. Cher was a schoolteacher by profession and is now retired. She started attending Sony's church about 10 years ago and was just drawn to him naturally. She previously did some work with special education services at the school and felt an innate desire to befriend Sony immediately when she saw him at church. Sony's mother indicated that Sony is very keen on judging people and does not usually talk to people unless he senses they are friendly and open minded. However, when it came to Cher, it was different. Sony was

immediately drawn to Cher and started asking if he could sit with her at church. After some time, they started hanging out in the community and doing more things together outside of church. Sony would also spend the weekends with her at times.

Cher is a single mother and has one daughter. Cher and her daughter are a bit estranged. She does not see or interact with her as much as she would like. She mentioned several times that Sony came into her life right when she needed a friend. Prior to the friendship, Cher had been going through some struggles with her daughter and felt alone in the world. She was just going through the motions of life, but her friendship with Sony gave her a new purpose. The relationship gave her an opportunity to mentor and be a role model for someone else.

Although Sony communicates verbally, he chooses to utilize touch and gestures to help clarify his communication. During the interview, Sony was a little reserved at the beginning, but toward the middle to last part of the paired interview he became more verbal. Sony has lived at home with his parents his whole life. He graduated from high school, but has never worked, volunteered, or attended a day program. Most of his contacts and associations are through his parents or his church. His mother indicated that she has probably been a little overprotective, but she worries about his safety outside of family and friends.

During the interviews, the researcher noticed that Cher was very open about her experience and was very helpful in making Sony feel comfortable during the interview. Cher would often answer first as to assist Sony with knowing how to respond. There were times when the interviewer would ask a question to Sony, and Cher would try to

give him hints to trigger his memory or a response. It gave a vibe of a teacher/mentor. This was not surprising as Cher's background was in education.

When asked about their pseudo names, it was Cher that came up with the idea of Sony and Cher. She said she was an old school music lover, and Cher was always one of her favorites. She indicated their friendship was a lot like Sony and Cher because they just go well together. Sony was agreeable. His mother thought it was a great idea.

Bonnie and Clyde-Pair 7

Bonnie and Clyde chose Jill's Corner Bistro for their interview location and arrived at the coffee shop together. They were both laughing and talking about what they might order for a snack during the interview. After everyone got coffee, the interview began. They chose an outside booth where there were no other café customers for more privacy. The setting appeared to be relaxing for them and a way for them to spend some time together socially. They talked openly about their friendship and how it had evolved over the years and complimented each other very well throughout the interview.

Bonnie and Clyde have been friends for 5 years. They met when Bonnie was in high school. Bonnie was a student and Clyde worked in the cafeteria part time. Bonnie would notice him working hard every day and being nice to all the students. She was on the cheerleading squad at the time and noticed that along with working at the cafeteria, Clyde was a loyal fan of Seminole County sports. She would see him at all the games. She said one day she just walked up to him and introduced herself to Clyde. After that, she just made an extra effort to talk to him every day at lunch and whenever she saw him at the games. They remained friends throughout high school, and after she graduated, she

made a special point to make sure they stayed in contact. Clyde thought Bonnie was beautiful inside and out. They always had each other's back and that Bonnie was the nicest person Clyde has ever met.

Bonnie is a single woman with no children. She talked a lot about her appreciation for Clyde's family in not judging her or being distant with her due to their racial differences. She discussed her view of racial divides in southern Georgia, and she expressed her worries that one day it would hinder her friendship with Clyde. However, the racial differences have not been an issue between her and Clyde. Her family and his family are close and when it comes to their friendship, race is not an issue. She felt privileged to have Clyde as a friend and for his family to trust her with being his friend.

Clyde is a single man. He has lived with his mother his whole life. Clyde is involved in the community. He has been working part time at the school for over 10 years. This keeps him busy and gives him something to look forward to. Bonnie is more like family to him than anyone else. Many of Clyde's family members do not understand what it meant to have an ID, so they often shun or ignore Clyde. He does not feel that way when he is with Bonnie. Clyde spoke very highly of Bonnie and it was apparent that the two had close comradery.

Bonnie was the primary instigator of the pseudo names. Bonnie indicated that they are like Bonnie and Clyde because they stir up trouble when they go out together. They were both laughing, and Clyde said "Bonnie you are beautiful. You are not trouble." They both laughed and Bonnie explained that it did not mean she was trouble or in trouble, it just meant that they have a lot of fun together. Clyde then quickly agreed.

Kojak and Crocker-Pair 8

Kojak and Crocker were a funny pair. They were making jokes and giving each other a hard time from the moment they walked through the door until they left. Throughout the interview, when the researcher would ask a question, Crocker would say “give me twenty bucks and I’ll answer.” Kojak would get onto him and tell him to behave and Crocker would say “make it forty.” Crocker had a cleft pallet and was a bit difficult to understand but was very insightful. There were a few times when the researcher had to ask him to repeat what he said. He was very accommodating to repeat he was saying for the researcher. Kojak laughed and continued to share that “he knows sometimes people don’t catch what he says and uses it to get jabs in.” Crocker responded with an eye roll and a “yeah, yeah, yeah.”

Kojak and Crocker have been friends for over 12 years. The friendship started first when Kojak was a staff member at the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation. Crocker was involved in Special Olympics, and Kojak was his coach. Kojak has always enjoyed interacting with Crocker and did not really start up what he would consider a friendship until after he had left his job there. Kojak knew Crocker’s sister/guardian and had reached out to her to ask if Crocker would be interested in going on some outings with him for church and special events. They connected and started hanging out about twice a month going to various church events, the movies, sporting events, and shopping.

Kojak is married with two children. He works full time as a vice president for a company that provides services to individuals with an ID. He travels a lot and indicated he does not have a tremendous amount of spare time between work and family, but he always makes a point to spend time with Crocker. Their friendship was special and if

anything, ever happens to Crocker's sister, he would be willing to have Crocker live with him and his family and to be his guardian. Wherever they go together you can guarantee someone would take notice of them and leave the place with a smile on their face.

Crocker is a single and lives at home with his sister/guardian. Crocker loves to get 20 one-dollar bills for his soda machine at his day program where he attends five days a week. He has contracted work there that he does to bring in a paycheck. When he gets paid, he always goes to the bank and gets 20 one-dollar bills and a one-hundred-dollar bill. His sister said that he will break the one-hundred-dollar bill for four twenty-dollar bills by the second day. He enjoys his weekly trips to the Dollar Store and is highly involved in church activities.

When discussing pseudo names, the researcher asked about their preference. Kojak asked Crocker to pick. Crocker indicated while laughing so hard, "you pick you bald headed Kojak." Kojak keeps his head shaved bald and said that Crocker always tells everyone he is bald headed like Kojak. Therefore, the pair chose the names of Kojak and Crocker, an unforgettable partnership.

Overview of Thematic Findings

This section presents the overall findings of this study as they relate to the three research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The findings are first presented in Table 7 as themes by research question. Through the dyadic analysis process, the researcher found a total of 9 themes shown below in Table 7. The three subsequent sections after Table 7 describe the themes for each research question and how they manifested in the participants' stories.

Table 7

Themes by Research Question

Research Question	Themes
How do friendships form	Being Available to New Possibilities Having Help Getting to Know Each Other
How are friendships maintained	Keeping Things Light and Fun Having Each Other's Back Balancing Independence, Protection, and Advocacy Regulating Personal Disclosure
How participants described satisfaction	I Want More Availability I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies We Love Big and Unconditionally

Research Question One: How are Friendships Formed

This section outlines the themes related to the processes that occurred in the formation phase of the friendships. It is important to consider the nature of the participants while reading the results of this study. The participants are those with and without an ID. There are descriptions of events given by those participants without an ID that may have more descriptive language than those with an ID. However, the stories as told by those with an ID may have had less words, but the non-verbal cues and reactions were heartfelt and included in this presentation of results when appropriate. The two themes identified for friendship formation were *Being Available to New Possibilities* and *Having Help Getting to Know Each Other*. The theme *Being Available to New Possibilities* linked the thoughts, feelings, and actions that took place to make the introductions happen between the two friends. The theme *Having Help Getting to Know Each Other* described the need to have a mutual contact to guide the friendships beyond introductions to conversations and connections.

Being Available to New Possibilities

There were two important concepts for the friendship formation between the participants that consisted of having the opportunity to cross paths and having the desire for a new type of friendship. Both were essential to connecting the friends. Although crossing paths with others at work may seem like a very natural occurrence for most people, this was a little more uncommon for the friendship pairs in this study. The participants with an ID mostly had full time jobs while the participants without an ID did not work or attended a day program. Many of the participants without an ID noted having a social life, but it did not include individuals with an ID. The participants with

an ID were involved in some social activities but mostly only with other people with an ID. Because of this, many of the participants without an ID did not have a previous opportunity to meet a friend with an ID prior to this encounter. Likewise, the participants with an ID were excited about the opportunity to meet someone without an ID because it was a new experience. The activities that seemed to provide the optimum opportunity for the two meeting was through volunteer activities, church attendance, or specific community events targeted to assist those with an ID to meet people in the community.

For example, Maverick and Goose met at Handicap for Christ. Maverick is 47 and is employed full time. He travels frequently throughout the week for work and spends most of his free time attending sporting events, camping, or tending to his family and pets. Maverick is a “laid back kind of guy. I do not see myself as outgoing, but I see myself as a social person. I did not think I needed more friends, but the idea of a friendship with someone with an ID intrigued me.” Goose, on the other hand, is 46 and works at McDonalds part time and spends his free time watching movies. According to Maverick, “Goose just goes with the flow. He never meets a stranger.” The Handicap for Christ organization provided them with an opportunity to meet. Maverick stated “once I was there, I felt like I had found something I had been missing out on my whole life. People were open and non-judgmental and did not care who you were.” While Maverick seemed enchanted by the opportunity to interact with individuals with an ID, Goose simply stated, “I am happy I was there when Maverick came... I have never had a friend like Maverick.” Although his words were not as elaborate as Maverick’s, he seemed happy to have his friend there and looked at Maverick throughout the interview

with admiration. Being at an event that was open to anyone and promoted camaraderie was key to them making their initial bond that has sustained over 15 years.

Although having the opportunity to meet was an important factor for friendship formation, it was equally essential that each person in the friendship dyad have an open mind about the possibility of starting a friendship. The participants expressed a desire to experience something new and rewarding. Bonnie, who is a 23-year-old Caucasian female, was in high school when she met Clyde who was working part time at the school cafeteria. She said, “When I met Clyde, I felt like I was meeting someone famous. He fascinated me. I know there are challenges to meeting someone with a disability, but he filled the room with so much joy. I couldn’t help but want to meet him.” For those with an ID, their motivation was more of a generalized need to feel socially accepted. Clyde, who is a 42-year-old African American male, wanted someone to make jokes with and feel loved. He loved Bonnie’s “sweet spirit” and loved that “she made me feel warm inside. Her jokes made me want to be her friend.” The pair was an unlikely connection due to differences in age, gender, and race, but their desire for something special outweighed the barriers.

Other participants without an ID were often motivated by the desire to be a mentor for someone else, to offer them a sense of purpose and altruism. Many of the participants without an ID either did not have children or their children were not in the home. They were curious about what it would be like to have a friend with an ID and had the time to dedicate toward fostering the relationship. The idea of being able to nurture someone was emotionally appealing. Participants with an ID described it more as an opportunity to experience some independence. Thelma and Louise were neighbors and

Thelma had watched Louise and her father interact and wanted an opportunity to meet Louise. Prior to moving in next to Louise's family, Thelma had not had an opportunity to get close to anyone with an ID. Thelma, 71 and retired, described the experience as:

I immediately fell in love with Louise. She was so sweet and had such a sweet disposition. I remember I would look out the window and watch her interacting with her dad, and I would think about what it would be like to have her as a friend, kind of like a daughter. I wanted to teach her to cook, sew, and do other things I had always thought I would do if I had a daughter. This is what made me want to connect with her and attempt to make friends. You know, to give her a chance too to have something outside of her mom and dad.

Louise, who is 24 and does not work, looked at the friendship to gain more independence and feel good about herself. For her the appeal was not the need to nurture, but the need to be loved without the overprotection of a parent. She stated, "Thelma is so beautiful and nice. She made me feel good about myself. She did not get on to me like my mom and dad". As Louise was talking about her friendship, she smiled frequently and mentioned several times throughout the interview how excited she was that someone other than family had taken interest in her life and allowed her to be herself.

One of the participants, Cher, who is 63 and retired from teaching, talked about her desire to have a friendship with Sony. She had taught Sony's sister in school, so she had previous exposure to him prior to the friendship forming. However, she stated, that the "right opportunity had just never popped up to talk to him prior to me attending church with him." Sony is 23 and has autism and had little exposure to anyone outside his family growing up except for school and church. After she retired, Cher had joined a new church and was so excited when she looked up and saw Sony and his family sitting close by. She said "there was just something about him that fascinated me. I would sit behind him and watch him through the service. I was so drawn to him." Sony talks and

communicates with others, but he does not express himself often. However, while she was talking, he kept patting her shoulder. Cher indicated that this was his non-verbal way of expressing love. When she said that, Sony immediately said “yes. I agree.”

Regardless, of the differences in motivation of the participants to want a friendship, it was crucial to have the combination of an available scenario and an open heart to new relationships for the individuals to connect.

Having Help Getting to Know Each Other

Another central element to friendship formation, that is somewhat unique to this type of friendship pair, was that they had help getting to know each other. To establish meaningful interaction, the participants had the assistance of a mutual third party that was often a family member of the person with an ID. The mutual contact served as a liaison to build common interests, to enhance confidence in the friendship between the pair, and to provide both individuals with help to understand the verbal and non-verbal communication between them. Having someone to mediate during the first few encounters was important in establishing reciprocal conversation and common interests. The assistance of a mutual contact also helped decrease the probability that the friendship parties would not get frustrated with perceived differences and decide the friendship was not feasible.

One example of the benefit of having a mutual person assist with friendship formation was in Aqua and Dorinda’s story. Aqua, 24, and Dorinda, 55, met through vocational activities. Aqua, who has an ID and volunteers where Dorinda works, was able to meet Dorinda while on duty as a volunteer. Aqua was known throughout the hospital where Dorinda worked as being outgoing and friendly. Dorinda said, “one day

she just walked through my door like a ray of sunshine.” Dorinda became intrigued and curious about Aqua and made the effort to approach her mother (who also worked at the hospital) about getting to know Aqua. Aqua’s mother began to share things about Aqua’s preferences and about ways to present ideas to avoid Aqua feeling angry or confused. She told Dorinda that she would learn Aqua’s “quirks” over time. In her individual interview, Dorinda was laughing and told the story of their first outing in her where thankfully Aqua’s mother was present:

One day we were eating Chinese food and I told her she was eating cat on a stick. Her mother gave me that “uh oh” look. Dorinda got so upset, she got up and walked away from the table. She came back about five minutes later and said, “First of all Aqua, it is not cat, it is meatloaf”. I realized that I had to be very careful about how I joked with her. Had it not been for Dorinda’s mother helping me get to know her, I would have felt helpless and sometimes thought it was going to be too hard to make it work.

Like Dorinda, having her mother available during her outings was helpful to Aqua in processing things that happen that she did not understand. After lunch, Dorinda had approached Aqua and asked her if she was okay. Aqua told Dorinda that she loved going to lunch with her, but sometimes she did not understand what was being said. She felt left out and told Dorinda that friends do not do that. She said when it happens, she just looks at her mama and then knows it is okay. Aqua’s mother was not only able to give some background information to Dorinda prior to the lunch about Aqua’s interest, but she was also able to model for Dorinda how to react when something did not go as planned for Aqua. This assisted with building the confidence level between the two that they could have meaningful conversation and survive any communication mishaps.

For others, the primary focus on assistance with communication was pertinent to established reciprocal conversation between the friends. Having someone around that

could interpret verbal expressions avoided public scenes that could have made both parties uncomfortable. Maverick was out with Goose and his sister for lunch early in the friendship and stated:

We were ordering nachos one day and when the waitress asked him about what he wanted on them, he said he wanted beef and hot penis! I was so shocked I told the waitress I was sorry. Goose looked at me funny and asked what the problem was because he wanted hot penis. His sister was mouthing to me “jalapeno”. It was then I realized he was saying jalapenos. I clarified for the waitress and we both just laughed so hard. Goose was still looking at us like we had lost our mind.

Sometimes Goose merged other words such as diarrhea and stomachache. They were all just “it hurts” and a point to the stomach. Goose’s sister had to help Maverick understand the questions to ask to pinpoint exactly what he needed. Goose’s sister has tried to help Goose become more socially comfortable by using easy social cues and verbal responses, such as saying “it’s a good one” when asked about the weather. This helps him not feel left out of a conversation. She encouraged Maverick to bring up the weather, news, or sports so that Goose can participate and feel included. Although Goose did not distinctly verbalize that he needed help getting to know Maverick, their combined story indicated that Goose’s sister was prominent in helping Goose learn to be a part of interactive conversation.

Other participants described similar issues with learning communication styles and that having a third party was necessary for them to want to continue pursuing the friendship. Kojak, who is 39 and has several young children, is athletic and has fast paced life. He branched off into Special Olympics by a recommendation of another friend. It was there that he had the pleasure of meeting Crocker, who is 41 and full of spunk. Kojak was immediately attracted to Crocker for his presence and high energy, but

he had trouble understanding him. Crocker has a cleft pallet and makes it difficult for others to understand him. Kojak said,

The hard part is that although Crocker knows he has a cleft pallet, he does not fully understand that others do not know what he is saying. So, when he has to repeat himself or others don't respond in the way that he thinks they should, he gets frustrated and will say unkind things. I did not want him to be upset with me, so I asked his support staff to interpret for me until I had spent enough time with him to understand him myself. I did not want him calling me a stooge head like I have heard him say to many others (laughing).

Kojak and Crocker were teasing and poking at each other for most of the pair interview, so they have obviously developed a great communication system. However, having the help on the front end to clarify what was said was beneficial so that neither party got frustrated and gave up before the friendship had time to flourish.

Similarly, Chanel (38) and Galleria (26) met through a shared church family and had the benefit of other church members to assist in the friendship formation. Chanel was new to the area for work, so she was looking forward to meeting new people and was pleasantly surprised at the opportunity to make friends with Galleria. Just the presence of Galleria's church friend gave Galleria the confidence she needed to branch out and introduce herself to Chanel. Chanel said

Galleria introduced herself to me. She trusted our mutual friend at church and the fact that she had told her it was okay for her to talk to me. That simple permission was enough to build her confidence. She started talking to me like we had been friends forever. I think if her friend was not present it would have taken us a long time to gain trust and get to know each other. We may not have been friends at all. Because of her confidence to make the first move, I bonded fairly quickly with her.

As Chanel was giving her account of the story, Galleria was nodding her head in agreement and chimed in with "I trust her, she trusts me, and that makes us friends." She was very matter of fact. During the conversation, Galleria's nodding gave the impression

that she concurred with Chanel about the benefit of having the friend there for support, but the important thing she took away was the resulting bond that happened between the two.

Between the friendship pairs of this study, both parties ultimately benefited from the presence of the mutual contact, however, the friend without an ID had more awareness of the assistance needed and expressed this more explicitly than the friend with an ID. The friend with an ID did not distinctly discuss the amount of underlying support the mutual contact was providing, instead they talked about the appreciation of the resulting bond created in the presence of the mutual contact. The mediation of the mutual third party created an atmosphere of safety that provided the friends the opportunity to move from just acquaintances to friends.

Research Question Two: How are Friendships Maintained

The first research question focused on the processes that brought the friends with and without an ID together and allowed for an environment of connection in the formation phase of the friendship. This section outlines the themes related to the thoughts, feelings, and actions occurring that built sustainability during the maintenance phase of the friendship. There are four themes related to the maintenance phase that included *Keeping Things Light*, *Having Each Other's Back*, *Balancing Expectations and Boundaries*, and *Regulating Personal Disclosure*. The themes revolved around the atmosphere that kept both friends interested in continued contact, the receipt of reciprocal support, and the opportunity for growth.

Keeping Things Light

The participants placed a high value on the fact that when they spend time together, it is fun and without burden. Keeping things fun allowed the friends to avoid conflict and negativity that can lead to termination of friendships. It gave opportunity for the friend with an ID to take the spotlight, and for the friend without an ID to relax and forget life's stressors. The friends had lunch dates, went to the movies, went shopping, and attended sporting events. Although these activities are similar to those any other friends would enjoy together, these friendship pairs made special effort to make sure it was a time of laughing, joking, feeling carefree, and capturing the joy of the moment. Two of the participants went as far as to describe their time as a holiday every time they see each other. Chanel said

I make an extra effort to keep things light and fun...When we get together, there are always hugs, lots of hugs. We avoid talking about anything too serious because I think it would confuse Galleria and would take away from our time together. She is so upbeat. I would hate for her to lose that. Galleria will surprisingly say something so funny at times. I don't know if it is on purpose or if it is by chance, but it makes me laugh. She laughs right along with me.

Galleria labelled their time together "friendsversary," which is a weekly celebration of their friendship. Galleria stated, "You always bless me, you are my friend, and no one takes that from us!" Their apparent enjoyment of each other's time was evident in the interviews as they came in laughing, fist bumping, and making jokes.

Aqua and Dorinda spent most of the time laughing and reminiscing about memorable moments. They appreciated and enjoyed the light-hearted atmosphere they created as they shared activities. Aqua said, "Sometimes when we are out, she gets so tickled, she snorts. I get a kick out of it." Dorinda laughed in response and quickly teased her friend back, "Watch it!" Although Aqua was affectionately teasing, Dorinda

did not take offense and quickly responded with a quirky remark. The atmosphere was charged with enjoyment and security so much that the interviewer could not help but laugh and feel that same positive energy.

In a manner to keep things light, Romy told Michelle they needed to go to the movies more often, and Michelle told her that she was all for going to the movies if Romy was going to pay for dinner and popcorn. Romy responded with “I’m not a fan of popcorn.” Michelle said “great, I will just eat your part too!” Romy said, “PLEASE do.” They were both laughing, and Romy gave Michelle a high five. The exchange of jokes and physical affection seemed to characterize many of the dyads’ and was evidence of their relationship being one characterized by a simple, uncomplicated sense of fun.

The environment of love, joy, and laughter did not come without a sacrifice of authenticity on the part of the participants without an ID. The participants without an ID noted in the individual interviews that they catered to their friend’s interests even though they had no interest in the topic. The individuals with an ID lacked insight into this lack of genuineness from their friend. For instance, Dorinda and Chanel, frequently had to go along with the “Cheetah Girls” theme to make a connection with their friend and keep their interest in the conversation. Dorinda stated, “before we go out on any lunch date, I have to wear a cheetah print shirt and this random bracelet Aqua gave me to signal the cheetah girl power.” Chanel indicated that “I have to smile and play like I am half-way interested in all the videos Galleria plays of the cheetah girls while we eat. But it is what needs to be done for things to go smooth.” Cher catered to Sony’s preferences in movies and restaurants. She stated, “If I don’t watch what he wants to watch or eat where he

wants to eat, it makes for a rough day.” Maverick stated that “you better be ready to talk about coffee or watch whatever movie Goose wants to watch.”

The friend without an ID catered to the person with an ID’s interest to keep things light, but this was only disclosed in individual interviews suggesting this is an area where the friends have dissonance and lack of true disclosure of feelings. For those with an ID, they were not necessarily aware of the lack of genuineness from their friend, but they found acceptance and freedom in the atmosphere of love and laughter. Bonnie said, “we have too much stress in this world, our time together is special and does not need to be bogged down with negativity. That is what keeps us connected and makes me look forward to our time.” For those participants without an ID, there may be a lack of authenticity at times, but found the sacrifice worth the effort. The ambiance of being carefree and happy kept both friends engaged and willing to continue the outings.

Having Each Other’s Back

Keeping the atmosphere light provided a non-judgmental and joyful environment where the friendship could flourish was important, but there was also another theme that related to friendship maintenance between individuals with and without an ID. The idea of *Having Each Other’s Back* revolved around how the participants gave and received support (i.e., emotional, physical, and mental) in the friendship. One of the distinctive characteristics of these friendship pairs was the differential between the two friends of expected support. Most of the participants with an ID were open about their expectation of support from their friends without an ID. Conversely, the participants without an ID did not have expectation of receiving any support in the friendships from their peer with an ID. They expected to give the support to their friend with an ID, but they did not

anticipate the need of support from their friends with an ID. Interestingly, throughout the course of the interviews, most of the participants without an ID surprisingly found they did in fact benefit from various types of support from their friends with an ID.

Thelma and Louise were able to support each in difficult times. Louise, who is significantly younger than Thelma and has an ID, was tearful in sharing how Thelma was present during a seizure she had when they attended a concert together. About the event, she said

We had to call an ambulance when I had my seizure. Thelma was right there and prayed for me. I feel safe when I am with her even though I don't have seizures anymore. She held my hand and I knew she was there for me.

Thelma began to cry while Louise was telling the story and was patting her back. Louise laid her head on Thelma's shoulder for a few moments in appreciation of the obvious emotional support. Later in the individual interview, Thelma told the interviewer,

I do not expect Louise to support me. I think it is important for her to think that she has my support. But I do not think she really can support me emotionally. The things that I need emotional support for would probably be uncomfortable for her.

However, Thelma talked about losing her mother to cancer, and how Louise was there as a companion for her and to lift her up most days. Louise quickly stood up and gave Thelma a big hug. Thelma quickly teared up and said, "Thank you honey, that was really nice." So, although there was not an expectation of emotional support, Thelma found Louise could offer companionship if given the opportunity.

Maverick and Goose expressed how they have each other's back, but it was not focused on a feeling of comfort or security as it was for Thelma and Louise, but rather like having a "wingman" as Maverick described it. It is a functional show of teamwork. Maverick is a businessman that travels frequently with a high demand position, and he

did not really think there was much that Goose could offer in terms of support. However, he indicated that Goose proved to be a great partner by simply just being there and helping “keep me in line.” Maverick will just call Goose and say “let’s go for a ride” when he simply wanted company. Most of his friends are married and have children and would not have the ability to just drop everything and run errands with him. Laughing, Goose said, “I have to keep Maverick on time.” Maverick laughed and stated “yeah he is punctual... He wants to be on time for things.” Goose seemed very content on listening to Maverick and kept saying “that is correct” when Maverick would discuss the teamwork effort of conquering required task. Goose did say that “Maverick helps me with my chores at home, so I don’t get into trouble.” Maverick explained that he knows their outings sometimes takes away from Goose’s responsibilities and he wants to keep a good relationship with Goose’s sister, so he helps out. This was a similar experience for Kojak and Crocker.

Kojak and Crocker were similar in that their perception of having each other’s back was more of a physical type support. Kojak will look out for Crocker in terms of helping him tend to his hygiene or giving him social clues when out in public. Crocker tended to leave the house without ironing his clothes, or walk around with ketchup on his face, or not fix his hair. Kojak will remind Crocker to tidy up so that he presents in a good manner. Kojak stated, “I have to look out for him because he just doesn’t understand how his appearance reflects on him and how others perceive it.” Kojak also makes sure Crocker gets his checks cashed and always makes sure he has a scooter when they go into stores because of his bad knee. Crocker also looks out for Kojak. When Kojack is driving and someone cuts him off, Crocker will call the driver a “stooge head”

for him (both laughing while telling the story). Crocker will also purposely order things on the menu that Kojak likes so he can share. Kojak said, “Crocker can always tell when I am stressed and will make a funny joke or gesture. He just has this way to make everyone laugh.” The gestures showed one to another was a way that they let each other know the friendship was important and that they were there for each other.

Bonnie and Clyde’s presentation of reciprocal support presented itself when Bonnie faced a tragedy during her high school years. Bonnie received an injury from cheering and was required to wear a back brace. Kids from school made fun of her and accused her of using the injury to gain attention. During her emotional pain, Clyde empathized with her. She described it as:

I never expected Clyde to be able to show me any mental support, but I found that he could be my rock. When I was in the hallway that day, I looked up and saw Clyde and he was crying. I asked him why he was crying, and he said it hurt his heart that someone hurt me. He told me he didn’t know what to do. I told him that that just the fact that he was there, and present was enough.

Clyde was nodding while she was telling the story and said “if she needs help with something, I will help. If I know she is upset, I try to make her feel better. If someone hurts her, I am there for her.” Bonnie was able to return that support for him one day when she heard some kids making fun of Clyde. She reported she pulled the kids to the side and told them that if she heard them again, she would report them to the principal. She indicated “I promised I would always have his back because he had mine.” Clyde responded with “that’s right. She is there for me and I am there for her.” The idea of providing support to one another was comforting and rewarding for not only Bonnie and Clyde, but for most of the other participants. The concept of having each other’s back in the maintenance phase of the friendships for those with and without an ID varied from

emotional, physical, and mental reciprocal support. Regardless of the type of support, both participants found that when difficult situations arose, they could count on their friend to have their back.

Balancing Independence, Protection, and Advocacy

The friendship pairs kept things fun when they were together and provided each other support to build camaraderie. One of the more complex processes that played a role in the maintenance phase of the friendship was *Balancing Independence, Protection, and Advocacy*. This was a theme where most of the content came from the participant without an ID in their individual interviews. The participants with an ID confirmed some of the content in their descriptions, but the depth was not the same. The participants without an ID had more life experiences (i.e. work, relationships, education) and different levels of capability than their peer with an ID. The friends with an ID looked at the world with unadulterated trust and confidence; their exposure to life and its dangers was limited resulting in fewer boundary setting skills. They felt comfortable telling their peers without an ID about their dreams. They expected their friend without an ID to support them in achieving those dreams. The friends without an ID struggled between encouraging their peers with an ID to pursue dreams versus protecting them from potential harm or negativity. What kept the friends sustained was their ability to balance and compromise.

One of the common areas of desired autonomy that the participants with an ID discussed was the desire to have a boyfriend/girlfriend. When the friends with an ID discussed wanting more relationship autonomy, the friends without an ID often validated the feelings of their peer and offered an alternative when necessary. While the friends

with an ID expressed some frustration or lack of understanding about the need for compromise, they seemed to accept without malice because there was validation and effort from their friends without an ID. The participants without an ID found solace in the fact they could remain an advocate without compromising safety.

Aqua and Dorinda's story was one example. Aqua made it clear that she wanted a boyfriend in her statement, "I want a boyfriend and I have never had my first kiss with a boy. I don't understand what the problem is. Will you help me, I only have Down Syndrome?" Aqua's mother is very protective of her and does not allow her to talk to boys or discuss things of a more intimate nature. Dorinda reminded Aqua of this, "I know you do, but you know your parents and I just want you to be safe." Aqua frowned, crossed her arms, and said "I am a grown woman and I can make my own choices." In response Dorinda stated, "If your mother is okay with it, maybe she will let you take a male friend to the Tim Tebow prom next year." Aqua's face lit up and said "perfect." Although, it may not have been the exact thing that Aqua was looking for, Dorinda attempted to support Aqua's desire for growth while considering her safety.

Some of Galleria's family was a bit more open to her having relationships and doing things more independently until she mentioned going on dates alone with her boyfriend and moving in together. Her sister offered support, but the rest of the family did not support her need for independence. Galleria's disappointment and anger about the refusal of her request often came up in conversations between Chanel and Galleria. Galleria has asked Chanel in the past to convince her family that she deserves the right to be independent. Individually, Chanel said, "I did not feel comfortable at all interfering in this, but I wanted to support Galleria as much as I could. I suggested some possible dates

at her family's house where there was supervision." Chanel was careful not to mention this in front of Galleria before she had discussed it with her mother. She offered to be a chaperon for Galleria and her boyfriend. Ultimately, Galleria's family was open to a supervised date and Chanel said, "I was impressed that Galleria's family took her request seriously. I think all she wanted was for someone to acknowledge her desire for some normalcy." Although Galleria accepted the offer for the supervised date it was something that was still weighing on her mind as she randomly mentioned in the paired interview "I think we should all be happy, have boyfriends, live together, and get married."

Cher found herself in a difficult situation while she and Sony were out one day at a restaurant (a few days prior to the interviews). Out of nowhere, Sony told her very loudly that he had never had sex before. This was the second time he made that type of statement, but this was the first time in public. Cher stated, "I thought I wanted to crawl under the table and hide." She knew that this had been something on Sony's mind, but she felt she had done a good job at avoiding the conversation. Cher told Sony that they could talk about that later and was able to redirect him for the moment. She felt bad for feeling embarrassed, but she also felt sadness that Sony could not freely express himself. She stated, "I know we should encourage each other to be ourselves, but there are limits." Sony did not mention anything about relationships or sex during the interviews, but Cher was concerned that this would come up again because it was the second time he had mentioned it. Cher said, "I just keep telling him that one day he will meet someone special and when he does, we will cross that bridge when we get there. I know it's not the best answer, but it's all I had for that moment."

Relationship autonomy was only one area where there was a balance between expectation and boundaries. The individuals with an ID also discussed their desire to do other things independently. Clyde, who has an ID, wanted to be able to attend ball games alone and to drive. His family was also skeptical about letting him have this freedom because of risks and ability limitations. Bonnie understood his desires and wanted to support him, but she also was aware that it may not be possible for him to achieve his dream to drive. She said “When Clyde asks to do something that I know he is capable of, I always let him do it independently. When it is something that I know he can’t do alone, I try to present it to him like I need the practice. He lets me help then.” Utilizing this strategy avoided Clyde feeling belittled.

Similarly, Maverick allowed Goose to cook simple meals by himself per his request, but he watched him from the security cameras at his home. Thelma helped Louise read through the driving book because Louise wanted to drive. Thelma said “I struggle between building false hope and supporting he dreams. Who knows, maybe one day she can drive.” Michelle summed it up well

Deep down inside I know Romy knows she is different. She knows she does not get to experience everything that everyone else does. But she wants to be a part. Being different does not mean that you are not human. I think it is important to try and balance everything. We need to advocate for people with disabilities to be independent while still trying to respect the rules and boundaries their family have put into place to protect them. My job is to be her friend and support her in as many ways possible to be more independent within reason (laughing)

Although, there was a struggle between wanting the individuals with an ID to have more self-determination, the participants were torn with wanting to guard them from negative outcomes. The friends without an ID attempted to be an advocate and find a balanced

compromise that felt comfortable and safe and preserved the dignity and respect of their friend with an ID.

Regulating Personal Disclosure

This theme of *Regulating Personal Disclosure* was the process by which the friendship pairs found common ground in sharing personal secrets. In almost every interview with the participants with an ID, they expressed the importance of being able to swap secrets. Most of the participants, in particular the females, with an ID talked about their peers using the word “best friend” suggesting that there should be a high level of trust and sharing. They had full trust in their friends without an ID and would reveal any secret to them. However, this was not necessarily reciprocated by the participants without an ID. None of the participants without an ID used the word “best friend”. So, there was some degree of dissonance in how the friends viewed the friendship. In fact, the individuals without an ID purposefully held back full disclosure from their friend with an ID. The participants without a regulated level of sharing to protect the person with an ID and to protect their own comfort level.

The individuals with an ID were open in sharing secrets and vocal about it in the paired interviews. Michelle stated

I share my secrets all with Romy. I trust her and that is what best friends do. We share secrets. We do not keep secrets...That is against the rules. I wish she would share more secrets with me. I don't understand why she don't.

Similarly, Louise commented, “Friends share everything. They always share secrets. If you cannot share secrets, you are not best friends.” Clyde said, “I trust Bonnie. I share all my secrets with her.” Aqua made a point to discuss that sharing secrets was expected and not sharing them was taboo, “Best friends should share and keep each other's secrets.

She has her business and I have mine. We need to share though. I won't tell your secrets if you share one with me Dorinda." There was an evident trust from the friend with an ID and a desire for the same in return.

On the other hand, the participants without an ID were reserved and did not talk much about their own disclosure of secrets until the individual interviews. The participants that did not have an ID were guarded about the type of information they shared with their friend. Romy indicated that "I have learned to hold my tongue on certain things because Michelle is very impressionable...I often find myself protecting her from a variety of secrets because I feel it would not benefit our friendship." Louise stated that "If I share secrets, it is really immature secrets that don't go into any depth... I do not want to put more confusion or burden in her mind that she cannot handle." Maverick found that sharing secrets could be embarrassing. He told Goose about losing his job once and how his father had said hurtful things to him. Goose in return started telling a stranger about it one day on the elevator. Maverick said, "I learned that you better not share something you don't want the whole world to know. You have to regulate what you say." Cher mentioned that "Sony will likely twist my words around if I shared an intimate secret. I would be afraid it would not only confuse him, but it would end up embarrassing me too. So, I just don't share anything too detailed." Whether it was for protection of innocence of those with an ID, or protection of self-dignity of those without an ID, the friends without an ID did not find it beneficial to share intimate secrets.

In attempts to continue to build reciprocal trust and to foster feelings of positive self-worth for those with an ID, the participants without an ID made sure that they

disclosed some secrets. Although the secrets that the individuals without an ID chose to share were superficial and limited, the request for open sharing was not completely denied. Bonnie came up with a compromise, “maybe I will share a little secret with Clyde. Just so he knows I trust him.” Dorinda promised that she would share a secret “maybe about my dog or my mother who passed from cancer.” Chanel thought it would be good to share her feelings about moving and not having any friends so that Galleria could feel important in helping her transition. Thelma said, “I will share a silly secret like when I hid my husband’s shoes and he looked for them for an hour” and hoped it would help Louise feel special. Ultimately, the participants without an ID found ways to share but with limitations.

In summary, keeping things light provided the friends with a special time that met each of their needs in an individualized way. It gave the participants with an ID the chance to feel celebrated, and it provided the participants without an ID the chance to relax and be carefree. The friends meet their need for reciprocal support in various ways, but ultimately found that each pair had uniquely developed a system of encouragement and companionship. Through balancing autonomy and safety, the pairs were able to learn about compromise and still feel validated and purposeful. Although the friends may not have viewed the friendship in the same way, resulting in a different level of disclosure, they still worked through the differences to find some degree of mutual sharing. These were the key elements that fostered the maintenance of the friendships.

Research Question Three: How Participants Describe Satisfaction

The preceding sections have detailed how friendships are formed and maintained between individuals with and without an ID. The final section of the chapter outlines

how the participants described the overall feeling of satisfaction with the friendship. The themes of *I Want More Availability*, *I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies*, and *What We Have is Amazing* revolved around how the participants met each other's expectations in the friendship.

I Want More Availability

Most of the participants with an ID were reluctant to or avoided discussion any negative feelings or frustrations with their peers that did not have an ID. When asked about anything she would change or that upsets her about the friendship, Galleria said, "I would never say anything bad about Chanel, she is my friend. Friends do not do that." She looked astonished that the interviewer had the audacity to ask the question. Louise had a similar response to the question and just said, "no way", and Goose just said, "everything is okay." The other participants had similar responses to the direct question. However, throughout the interviews, both pairs and individual, there was mention or allusion to some disappointment in the level of availability from their friends without an ID.

The imbalance of life demands between the friends created some differences of opinion about how much time should be allocated to the friendship. Although some of the participants with an ID held part time jobs, attended day programs, or participated in volunteer activities, for most of them, their schedules and lifestyles were open and flexible as compared to their friend without an ID. The friends with an ID had a hard time understanding why everyone else did not have the same freedom to be as leisure with their time. Many of the participants without an ID had full time jobs and often those jobs were demanding and inflexible with work hours. These participants viewed the

demands of the job as priority. The differences in lifestyles and priorities created a gap in what the friends expected in terms of time distribution.

Kojak recognized how important it was for Crocker to have some time with him on the weekends. However, Kojak worked a job that demands being on call seven days a week, but he still tried to juggle seeing Crocker and doing work at the same time. This frustrated Crocker. Kojak stated

When Crocker is at the house hanging out with me, he knows not to interrupt when I am on the phone...So sometimes, I have to lock the door while I am on the phone or Crocker will continuously try to talk to me while I am having an important conversation. He thinks I should be devoting the time to him...I had to explain to him that I needed some privacy...He got very upset with me and huffed out of the room. We are just very dissonant when it comes to how we view time priorities.

When Crocker's version is that "sometimes Kojak is mean. It is okay, but I don't like it.

I just wanted to tell him about the movie I wanted to see. I told him not to do that anymore, but it is okay". He did not seem to understand why Kojak found his work conversation more important than him. Maverick had the same issue with balancing work and availability for Goose. He said, "Goose wants to call me several times throughout the day. I am often flying from east coast to west coast and that is just not always feasible for me. So, I give him a fixed time to call everyday". Maverick had to revisit this every day because Goose still repeatedly requested more phone time.

Other participants with an ID did not find that work was an obstacle to their friend, but they found their parents limited additional potential for time with their peers without an ID. Aqua and Dorinda have weekly lunch dates, but Aqua still wanted more availability to Dorinda in between dates. Aqua said, "I miss her a lot. She doesn't live that far away. I don't know why she doesn't see me more often, because she knows I

miss her”. Dorinda said, “I know she wants more availability from me, so she has my phone number. But I don’t think her parents let her call.” Aqua just agreed and said that she wished things could be different. Galleria made mention that she missed Chanel, “I know she will come visit. I don’t want to cry about it.” Chanel reminded her that she had her phone number. However, Galleria said, “I’m scared if I call you, I am going to get my TV taken away by mama”. Chanel did expound upon this, she simply moved on to the next question. Sony went as far as to request a vacation with Cher. He said, “we should go on vacation. That is what friends do. I don’t understand why we don’t do that”. Cher laughed it off and said, “we don’t want to get into trouble with your parents.” The parents of the individuals with an ID posed a barrier to increased communication, but the participants without an ID did not encourage the increased time either.

Whether the barrier was from direct instructions from the friend without an ID or from direction of a parent, the participants with an ID did not feel they had adequate access to their friends without an ID. Most of the participants without an ID were aware of how their friends felt, and they expressed thankfulness that their friends with an ID were accepting of their limited availability. Michelle realized that she did not give Romy the time that Romy desired from her. Michelle said, “but you forgive me for that don’t you?” Romy laughed and said, “Of course Michelle, that is what friends do.” Thelma said “I think Louise knows that if she really needs me, I am here. She also knows that I can’t be there every time she wants to talk. She understands.” Likewise, Bonnie knew that her education, work schedule, and other family obligations took away from potential time with Clyde, “I do regret a lot of times I have taken to rest that I could have spent with Clyde, which is not fair.” Although there is some acknowledgement on the part of

the friends with an ID regarding their limited availability, it did not appear as something they necessarily wanted to change. The participants with an ID would still like more access, but it did not seem to divert them from the friendship all together.

I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies

The individuals without an ID were careful not to discuss the elements of this theme, *I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies*, in front of their peer. However, many of them made it a point to discuss the challenge of adapting to the uniqueness of their friend's behavior at times. The predominant two behaviors included repetitive conversation and having "temper tantrums" in public. As mentioned throughout this chapter, there was a different maturity level between the friendship pairs. The friendship pair managed this disparity through education and acceptance. When the individual with an ID did something that was socially awkward, the individual without an ID tried to buffer and provided some positive feedback to try and prevent further occurrences.

Many of the participants with an ID had awkward topics that they would focus on and would not change the subject. For instance, Aqua mentioned her loved ones that had passed at almost every lunch date and would talk to random strangers about it also. This was embarrassing for Dorinda. Similarly, Goose fixated on anyone talking about death or passed loves ones and Maverick had to "steer him away from the conversation, or otherwise it will be like a rolling snowball that no one can stop." Louise could not make it through any conversation without discussion of her friend Terry Turner. Thelma tolerated the repetitive stories but said "sometimes you just need a break." Chanel complained that "every safety rule Galleria has ever learned, you hear about it at least a hundred times, such as wearing seat belts, wearing earmuffs when vacuuming, wearing

an apron in the kitchen, you know things like that.” Although it was not something that the participants with an ID dwelt on a tremendous amount of time, the repetitive and hyper-focused conversations by the participants with an ID were a bit of an irritation to them.

Other participants without an ID became frustrated when their friend with an ID took something out of context and then repeatedly brought it up in spite of numerous attempts to redirect the conversation. Kojak and Crocker ate some chili at Wendy’s one time and both ended up sick the next day. Crocker heard Kojak tell his wife that he hoped it was not food poisoning. It turned out that Kojak’s whole family was sick and that there was a virus going around. However, every time Kojak and Crocker go out to eat, Crocker “gets upset and makes me tell him over and over again that I am sorry for giving him food poisoning. It does not matter how many times I explain it, he gets upset. So, I just keep apologizing.” Michelle felt the same type of frustration with Romy. Romy told the story of Kathy Miller and how she did not look both ways before crossing the street. She got hit by a drunk driver and went into a comma. Romy told the story as if she were there. “It was something she had seen on TV, but everyone she met had to hear the story.” It seemed that no matter how much explaining or re-directing the individuals without an ID gave, the conversations continued to arise. Bonnie came to an acceptance, “Clyde thinks that every time he hears a dog bark, he has to tell about his dog dying. I used to get so irritated. Now, I just sing in my head. I know it is weird, but it is how I keep from being upset with him.”

Lastly, the participants without an ID found that their friends with an ID had trouble managing their emotions in public when they did not get their way. It was

typically when the attention in the room was not centered in their (individuals with an ID) direction. Louise would run Thelma's husband in circles waiting on her, and when Thelma would encourage Louise to stop, she would "get a little puffed off and stomp out of the room regardless of who was with us." Sony is used to waving his hand and someone come running, but Cher refused to do that at times. Sony would, "get mopey, and throw a little temper tantrum, you know kind of like a child. I think it's because he is jealous that everyone is not looking at him." Chanel had Galleria with her one day and was eating with some other friends. They were discussing weight loss. Galleria jumped up from the table, crossed her arms, and stomped to the bathroom. Chanel said

I knew she was upset, so I went after her. I found her in the bathroom talking to herself. She was huffing and puffing. She told me that she was upset because we should not be talking about our weight. She does not like to talk about those things. I told her that we were all there together and she needed to be a little more friendly and let others have their say in the matter. She kept her arms crossed, but she returned to the table. She pouted for the rest of the night.

Maverick had similar situations with Goose, and said, "you just learn to cope with his idiosyncrasies. It is pretty miniscule in comparison to the big picture." Although the socially awkward moments apparently irked the participants without an ID, it did not deter them from continued outings and communication with their friends with an ID.

We Love Big and Unconditionally

Based on interviews with the eight friendship dyads between those with and without an ID, there was a unanimous feeling of generalized contentment and enthusiasm about the experience of friendships between those with and without an ID. The immediate response from all the participants was positive. After discussing the ups and downs of the formation, maintenance, and the frustrations of the friendship, the friends lit

up and emotionally described how special the friendship was and the desire to keep the friendship going forever. It did not matter that there were obstacles and differences between the two, the fact that they were able to overcome and form such a strong bond was beyond words for some. Although the words were few, the energy in the room was so full of love it became difficult for the interviewer not to cry along with some of the friends. The feelings about the friendship were so intense the participants without an ID made it a point to recommend this type of friendship to everyone.

The generalized sense of joy was evident in the room as the interviewer allowed them to discuss their feelings about the friendship. Chanel tearfully shared, “She loves, and she loves big, unconditionally!... There are really are not enough words to describe how I feel about the friendship.” As Chanel said this, Galleria patted her on the back and responded, “You are my best friend and I love you.” Dorinda felt her words were not sufficient, so she chose to use a poem Aqua wrote for her:

Dorinda, how much I always love you. I will always be your friend. You are my best friend I ever had because I could never replace you, my friend. You are the greatest friend ever, and you are always there for me. Let’s stay friends forever. Roses are red, violets are blue, and when I first met you long time ago you became my greatest friend ever!

Dorinda hugged Aqua and said, “you just cannot replace that kind of innocent and pure love. It is unconditional. Most people just cannot give that kind of love. You have to hang on to that when you find it.” Cher lost her husband not long before she met Sony and felt that God sent Sony directly to her so that “I did not have to go through things alone. He loves me unconditionally and I just don’t get that from anyone else anymore.” Bonnie even went so far as to say, “I can’t imagine my life without Clyde.” Clyde hoped no one ever took Bonnie away from him. Thelma laughed, “I plan to stay friends with

her until Jesus comes!” Louise responded, “yes forever. I don’t ever want to lose you.” Maverick summed it up well when he said, “I have re-arranged flights, left meetings, and dropped things that were very important just to make it back for something I had scheduled with Goose. That says a lot. You just do not make friends like Goose and not love them!”

In addition to expressing the beauty of their friendships, the participants without an ID hoped that everyone could have the opportunity to experience the same reward. Although those with an ID did not explicitly say that they wished others could have the same type of friendship, their appreciation for the friendship was apparent in conversation. Simply put, Bonnie said, “I believe everyone should have this. I get to be carefree and without judgement. He brings so much joy and thankfulness to my life.” The participants without an ID made it seem like the rest of the world was missing out a secret treasure, Michelle expressed, “Who could resist a friendship with someone like Romy. She is genuine, sincere, and provides unconditional love.” Kojak compelled others to pursue a similar friendship:

I wish more people had the opportunity to be with people like Crocker. Society today writes people like Crocker off. He is such a good friend to so many people. Some might not want to become friends with someone like him because of the communication barrier. But those that have taken the time to become friends with him or others like him have enjoyed it. He is happy and excited every time he sees you. We get a lot from that. Nothing is better than that look on his face when he sees me walk in.

Crocker followed with “That is what being friends is about... so, give me twenty bucks”. Everyone in the room burst with laughter, and Crocker just held out his hand still wanting that twenty dollars. As mentioned in this chapter, the participants with an ID wanted more availability from their friends, and the participants without an ID coped

with some of the idiosyncrasies, but those things were minute compared to the benefit of big and unconditional love they gave and received in these friendships.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants' description of their satisfaction within that friendship. The researcher chose eight pairs of friends between those with and without an ID to answer the three research questions. Those eight pairs of friends came from Georgia, Alabama, and Kentucky. There were four female pairs, two male pairs, and two female and male pairs recruited for the study. They were all of white ethnicity except for one, and the ages ranged from early twenties to the seventies. Most of the participants without an ID worked full time or are retired while those without an ID either worked part time, volunteered, or did not work at all. Many of the participants without an ID were single, but a few were married, divorced, or widowed. All the participants with an ID were single, had legal guardians, and lived at home with family. The number of years the pairs were friends ranged from 16 months to 15 years.

The participants went through a pre-screening and discussion of informed consent prior to their interviews. All participants signed the consent or assent forms and were eager to contribute to the study. The participants chose a neutral location at local business for the interviews. A couple chose to have their legal guardian present for the interviews, but many did not. The participants had the opportunity to choose a pseudo name for the purpose of confidentiality, and the pairs chose famous couples that represented something important to them in their friendship. Those pseudo names

included: Aqua and Dorinda, Thelma and Louise, Chanel and Galleria, Romy and Michelle, Maverick and Goose, Sony and Cher, Bonnie and Clyde, and Kojak and Crocker.

The themes associated with the formation of the friendships included *being available to new possibilities*, and *having help getting to know each other*. The themes for research question two about how the friendships are maintained included *keeping things light and fun*, *having each other's back*, *balancing independence, protection, and advocacy*, and *regulating personal disclosure*. The themes for research question three regarding friendship satisfaction included *I want more availability*, *I cope with the idiosyncrasies*, and *we love big and unconditionally*. The researcher explained these themes throughout the chapter and gave examples of how those themes came about in the participants' stories.

It was evident to the researcher throughout the process of listening to the participants' interviews and reading through the transcripts that the friendship pairs valued the connection that they had and wanted others to hear how wonderful it was to have such a bond. Although many of the friendship pairs experienced similar situations, how they described and experienced each theme was unique. The researcher tried to give examples to the reader to relay those variations and allow the participants' story to shine. The final chapter will include further discussion of the findings, the implications and limitations of the study, and direction for future research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

“It is through these one-to-one friendships that we see the long-term changes in behavior that promote the acceptance of differences and move us closer to an inclusive society (McDonnell, Hardman, & McDonnell, 2003, p.61).

As discussed in chapter one, practitioners and researchers are concerned about the social inclusion and social networks of individuals with an ID. More specifically, researchers are interested in the development of friendships between those with and without an ID as these friendships provide an opportunity for a more inclusive community and a decreased social divide (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017, Bigby & Wiesel, 2015; Wilson et al., 2017). The purpose of this study was to explore the formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID and the participants’ description of their satisfaction within that friendship. This chapter provides a discussion of the results of this study in four sections that include: overlaps, contrasts, and new developments compared with previous literature, practice implications, limitations of the study, and direction for future research.

Overlaps, Contrasts, and New Developments

This study confirmed some results of previous studies, challenged others, and added some new themes with regards to social inclusion and friendships between those with and without an ID. The researcher found that friendships formed between those

with and without an ID in this study through *Being Open to New Possibilities* and *Having Help Getting to Know Each Other*. The friendships were maintained through *Keeping Things Light*, *Having Each Other's Back*, *Balancing Independence, Protection, and Advocacy*, and *Regulating Personal Disclosure*. The participants also reported high levels of fulfillment and satisfaction demonstrated in the theme *We Love Big and Unconditionally*, in spite of some challenges noted in *I Want More Availability* and *I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies*.

The researcher presented Blieszner and Adam's (1992) integrative conceptual framework of friendships in chapter two. The framework postulated that each person brought an individualized set of characteristics that affected the friendship. The social context and these individual characteristics influenced friendship patterns. The friendship patterns included behavioral, cognitive, and affective processes throughout the formation and maintenance of any friendship as well as the consideration of power and status throughout all of those processes. The researcher drew upon the principles of this framework in understanding what is known about patterns of friendships between those with and without an ID in analyzing the results of this study.

Individual Characteristics

As noted in chapter two, there were only two previous studies that focused on understanding the entire friendship patterns between those with and without an ID (Lutifiyaa, 1991; Bigby & Craig, 2017). Other studies focused on role of support staff, network size, and barriers to social inclusion (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Asselt-Goverts et al., 2015; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Kennedy et al., 1990; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Wilson et al., 2017). The discussion of individual characteristics was minimal in

these studies, but these authors all indicated that many people with an ID typically had limited education, work experience, maturity levels, and autonomy compared to their friends without an ID (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Bigby & Craig, 2017; McConkey & Collins, 2010, Wilson et al., 2017). So, to no surprise, this too was the case for most of the participants in this study with an ID. The participants (with and without ID) of this study recognized these differences, and it was frequently mentioned in the interviews and emerged in the themes of this study (further discussed in later sections).

A finding of interest is that the participants in this study without an ID do not have children, have an empty nest, or have children that are estranged. In previous studies that focused specifically on friendships with and without an ID (Bigby & Craig (2017; Lutifiyya, 1991), the researchers did not specifically identify participants without an ID not having children in the home. However, in the authors' description of their participants, there was reference to some of them having no children. Lutifiyya (1991) conducted 19 individual interviews and four friendship pair participant observations. The researcher noted that three of the four participants without an ID did not have children at the time the friendship was formed. Bigby & Craig (2017) conducted a single case study on a friendship between two women with and without an ID. The participant without an ID in this study was also single and did not have any children. Bigby & Craig (2017) concluded that the friendship provided an opportunity for the participant without an ID to nurture and allowed her to "experience something that was missing in her own life" (p.182). It is also possible that individuals without an ID who do not have children simply have more time to dedicate to establishing the friendship and are looking for opportunities to give and receive unconditional love which may be a motivating factor in

their decision to develop a friendship with persons with an ID. Future studies should examine what role having children in the home plays in the decision to form and maintain friendships with persons with ID.

Another finding of interest was the significant age difference in some of the friendship pairs. In this study, Louise made a brief comment about the age difference when she indicated that Thelma was “one of my younger friends. She keeps me young.” However, age differences were not generally mentioned throughout the interviews by the study participants as affecting the formation, maintenance, or satisfaction of the friendship. This is consistent with most of the previous literature which either only briefly mentioned participants’ ages, did not discuss age at all, or noted that age did not seem to affect friendship outcomes (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Asselt-Goverts et al., 2015; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Kennedy et al., 1990; Lutifiyya, 1991; McConkey & Collins, 2010, Wilson et al., 2017). Lutifiyya (1991) did not discuss age differences except to mention that the individual with an ID was 19 and the friend without an ID was 49. Bigby & Craig (2017) also did not discuss age differences but did mention that the participant without an ID was retired. In the interviews conducted for this study, no themes emerged to suggest that age differences between the friendship pairs either enhanced or impeded the formation or maintenance of the friendship. However, participants without an ID in this study described their enjoyment of being a mentor or role model. Although the participants with an ID discussed their dislike for being treated as a child, but they expressed the comfort of having support and security in the friendship to feel safe. The fact that the friends without an ID were older may have been a factor in their willingness to nurture the sense of security for those with an ID. It

is worthwhile to further investigate the role of age differences in the formation and maintenance of friendships.

Social Stigma

Previous research noted that stigmatization and negative thinking regarding individuals with an ID were barriers to the development of friendships between those with and without an ID (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Amado, 2014; Bigby & Wiesel, 2015, Duvdevany & Arar, 2004; Lutifiyya, 1991; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993). Amado (2014) discussed that the lack of understanding and knowledge regarding ID on a societal level has hindered the formation of friendships between those with and without an ID. Similarly, the participants in this study discussed their desire for others to be more open to having these friendships in the theme *We Love Big and Unconditionally*. They confirmed what others have noted ---that society tends to devalue relationships if there is no perceived benefit (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Amado, 2014; Bigby & Wiesel, 2015, Duvdevany & Arar, 2004; Lutifiyya, 1991; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993). However, in their discussion of the satisfaction gained from being in these friendships, the participants described the reward as far outweighing the costs, debunking the false perception that this type of friendship is not worth pursuing and challenging long held stigmatization and negative thinking.

Interactive Processes in Friendship Formation

Researchers agreed that for generalized friendships to form there must be a common ground and shared interest (Bowker, 2004; Bigby et. al, 2007; Mokhtari, 2008; Petrina et. al, 2014). The theme of *Being Open to New Possibilities* found in this study

reiterates previous literature that suggested friendship formation between those with and without an ID typically happened in a shared community setting (Bigby & Craig, 2017; Lutifiyaa, 1991). Asselts-Goverts et al. (2015) wrote that volunteering proved to be a successful avenue for encounters to occur between those with and without an ID.

For many of the participants of this study the opportunity for connection occurred at church, a place of employment, or volunteering. Many had mentioned that without there being a common place to meet, the friendships would have likely never occurred.

There are other processes likely to influence friendship formation in addition to coming together for activities in a shared community setting. Robbins et. al (2012) have theorized friendships as social exchanges with the need for perceived benefit for people to enter into a friendship. There is an intrinsic need to nurture from the participants without an ID, and a desire to fit in for those with an ID. This seemed to be just as important as being present in a diverse environment. Opportunities for activities in a shared community setting may be a necessary element but perhaps not sufficient for friendship formations.

Previous studies discussed the need for a friend, family member, or support staff to assist the person with an ID in engaging with others socially to make friends. The family member or coach assisted with communication barriers and challenging behavior (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2010; Duvdevany & Arar, 2004; Wilson et al., 2017). The findings of this study also support the idea that friendship formation between those with and without an ID requires practical support from someone in a coaching or family role. The theme, *Having Help Getting to Know Each Other*, speaks to the importance of assistance of a mutual contact

in bringing about friendship formation and success. Participants without an ID in this study felt that without the assistance of a mutual contact, the friendship would have likely not been successful. Participants with an ID described that the presence of third party allowed them to feel confident in pursuing conversation with their friends without an ID.

On the other hand, this study also found that there were instances of friendship initiation without the help of an intermediary directly between persons with ID and without ID. Several past studies have noted that most introductions that occur between those with and without an ID are initiated by the person without an ID (Bigby & Wiesel, 2015; Lutifiyya, 1991; McConkey & Collins, 2010). Amado (2014) wrote that individuals with an ID are likely not to approach someone without an ID due to fear of rejection or being stigmatized. However, in this study, there were several instances where the person without an ID initiated the friendship such as Aqua and Dorinda and Michelle and Romy. The fact that the individuals with an ID felt comfortable approaching the individual without an ID suggested for these participants there may be an increased sense of self confidence on the part of the individual with an ID, an increased acceptance of diversity from those without an ID, or a combination of the two creating more opportunities for connection between those with and without an ID.

Interactive Processes in Friendship Maintenance

Oswald, Clark, and Kelley (2004) discussed that every friendship will either continue or dissolve based upon how they maintain positivity, provide support, have meaningful interactions, and experience reciprocated openness. Bowker (2004) reiterated that without cohesion, the friendship will fail. Petrina et. al (2014) added that there must be a sense of personal development and an overall balance of power for friendship

maintenance. Three of the four themes identified specific to friendship maintenance in this study have been described in previous studies. For instance, *Having Each Other's Back* is similar to reciprocal affection (Bigby & Craig, 2016; Kennedy et al., 1990; Lutifiyya, 1991), *Keeping Things Light* is comparable to having fun (Bigby & Craig, 2017; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Lutifiyya, 1991, Kennedy et al., 1990), and *Balancing Independence, Protection, and Advocacy* is analogous to increased autonomy for the individual without an ID (Bigby & Craig, 2017; Lutifiyya, 1991). The fourth theme, *Regulating Personal Disclosure* is a new contribution to the body of this research literature.

In the theme, *Keeping Things Light*, the participants described what most friends would do in terms of going out to eat and going shopping. The two parts that were specific to friendships with and without an ID was the concept of being carefree and the sacrifice of genuineness. Lutifiyya (1991) briefly mentioned that the participants without an ID expressed gratitude to have the friendship with someone with an ID and reported being inspired by the resiliency of their friend with an ID. The concept of being able to feel carefree as a result of the friendship was a unique benefit for the individual without an ID that has not been previously documented. The participants without an ID found themselves catering to their friend with an ID to avoid any negative feelings or conflict. Bower (2004) spoke about how there needs to be an absence of continued conflict for friendship survival. It seemed that for this study the way that the friendship pair avoided conflict was through sacrifice of authenticity on the part of those without an ID.

Homan, Blau, and Emerson discussed the development of empathy through increased social interactions in the Social Exchange Theory (Robbins et. al, 2012). In

previous literature specific to the participants of this study, Lutifiyya (1991) discussed the development of empathy as one of the primary results of diverse friendships. In her study, she noted that through increased opportunity for participants with an ID to interact safely with others that do not have an ID, both parties develop a sense of empathy for the other. Bigby & Craig (2017) also discussed that the friendship gave the individual without an ID a chance to nurture the participant without an ID and teach empathy. However, both studies presented the idea of physical and emotional support as being the primary responsibility on the person without an ID. However, in this study, this presented itself in a different manner. The participants of this study described the experience of having each other's back as a reciprocal process. They experienced it in different ways, but participants with and without an ID felt the comfort of knowing their friends had their back. It was not one-sided on the part of the individual without an ID. The individuals with an ID provided just as much emotional support to the people without an ID as they did them.

The researcher discussed the idea of *Balancing, Independence, Protection, and Advocacy* presented by the participants without an ID in the friendship. Mokhtari (2008) reported that the level of independence experienced as a child will reflect in the level of secured and healthy attachment as an adult. Many of the participants with an ID had not been exposed to difficult or complex life situations. Therefore, the participants without an ID spoke about how they feared allowing the person with an ID to do things independently. This was in spite references made by the participants with an ID that they wanted more independence. The participants without an ID were hesitant that their friend with an ID would not be able to safely navigate difficult situations without assistance.

Bigby et. al (2007) talked about the need to foster self-determination and personal growth in friendships or one party will become uninterested. Previous research regarding friendships between those with and without an ID discussed the desire for autonomy of those with an ID (Amado, 2014, Asselts-Goverts, 2015; Duvdevnay & Arar, 2004; Wilson et. al, 2017) and the desire for those without an ID to advocate (Bigby & Craig, 2017; Lutifiyya, 1991). What was different in this study was the discussion of how the participants balanced these two conflicting values. Bowker (2004) noted that if you are cohesive in your values, the friendship will likely last. These pairs found cohesion through incremental advancements of independence. Throughout time, the individuals without an ID learned to trust their friends with specific independent tasks while still maintaining a sense of safety.

The degree of power and status differentials, solidarity, and homogeneity will likely vary throughout the formation and maintenance of the friendship (Adams & Blieszner, 1994). John (2011) suggested that people tend to interact more openly with people that they view as equal in terms of ability and power status. Petrina et.al (2014) indicated that “best friends” expected higher levels of disclosure from one another versus just “good friends”. The differences in power, solidarity, and homogeneity effected how the friendship pair shared personal information as relayed in *Regulating Personal Disclosure*. The friends with and ID viewed their peers as “best friends” and expected high disclosure, while the participants without an ID did not label the friendship and limited self-disclosure. They chose to navigate the imbalance by compromise.

The processes that occurred in the formation and maintenance phase of the friendships between those with and without an ID were similar to other friendships, but

they had certain areas where it was unique. Lutifiyya (1991) noted that “while the specifics of each friendship were unique, the informants shared similar expectations and characteristics of friendship in general (p.243). Bigby & Craig (2017) made a point to notate that the friendship that developed between their participants had its complications, but the friendship had “all the hallmarks of genuine friendship” (p.7).

Satisfaction

The researcher did not find any prior research specifically on the satisfaction experienced in adult friendships between those with and without an ID making it difficult to discuss overlaps or contrasts. However, in Robbins et.al (2012), the discussion of Social Exchange Theory noted that every relationship will have a perceived cost versus benefit ration. If the benefits outweigh the costs, the relationship will likely continue. For the participants of this study, there were some costs/challenges noted in *I Want More Availability* and *I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies*, but the overall benefit of the relationship outweighed the challenges depicted in *We Love Big and Unconditionally*.

There was an interesting dynamic in that the participants with an ID wanted to avoid any negative thinking. The participants with an ID view their friends like the world; they do not see any negative aspects in their peers. For instance, when the interviewer asked Goose if there was anything that upset him or was hard about the friendship, Goose said, “everything is fine.” Upon review of the transcripts, the researcher however found that the participants with an ID did not like the limited availability from their peers with an ID noted in the theme, *I Want More Availability*. This was new in terms of literature because the satisfaction aspect had not been investigated specifically to this population in the past.

Although studies were not present regarding the satisfaction of individuals without an ID in friendships with those with an ID, there were studies documented that managing socially inappropriate behavior as being a barrier to friendship formation (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Lutifiyya, 1991; McConkey & Collins, 2010, Wilson et al., 2017). These studies predominantly painted the picture that all of the toleration was on the part of the individual with an ID. So, it was not surprising that the participants without an ID noted their frustrations with lack of social skills from their peers in *I Cope with the Idiosyncrasies*. What was different and interesting, is that the results of this study indicated that the toleration is not one-sided. The individuals with an ID had to adapt and tolerate the demanding schedule and limited access of the person without an ID, making coping and tolerating a concept that is two-sided.

There were a couple of articles published on the satisfaction in adolescent friendships between those with and without an ID that indicated a high level of satisfaction in the friendship. Hardman and Clark (2006) did a study on friendship satisfaction between adolescents with and without an ID and reported that the ten pairs of friends they interviewed, with and without an ID, enjoyed the experiences and would engage in another similar type of friendship. Pottie and Sumarah (2004) also conducted a study of adolescent friendships between those with and without an ID and reported similar results on the desire for longevity of the friendship. They specifically wrote that their friendship pairs endured due to faithfulness and commitment to the friendship. Although there was no research on the adult satisfaction in friendships between those with and without an ID, the studies on the adolescent version of these friendships support

the theme found in this study of *We Love Big and Unconditionally*. What made this theme stand out from previous studies was the intensity of emotion and remarks regarding “unconditional love.”

Social Inclusion Implications

These results of this study provide some guidance for communities, service providers, families, and individuals to enhance current practices that encourage social inclusion. It is important to note that friendships between the participants of this study provided a sense of satisfaction for all and inclusion for those with an ID (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Castles, 1996; Hall, 2010; Hardman & Clark, 2006; Knox & Hickson, 2001; McConkey & Collins, 2010; Tipton, 2011; Wilson et al., 2017). This section outlines the practice implications of this study on a community, organizational, family, and individual basis.

The participants of this study discussed how they met and were able to make contact to form friendships in the community within a variety of scenarios including special olympics, church, places of employment, and places of volunteering. Researchers and practitioners have repeatedly noted that involvement in community programs and activities increase the opportunities for social inclusion for those with an ID (Amado, 2014; Asselts-Goverts, et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Goodley, 1997; Hardman & Clark, 2006; Lutifiyya, 1991; McConkey & Collins, 2010; O’Brien & O’Brien, 1993; Simplican et al., 2015). Communities can assist the social inclusion incentive for those with an ID by gearing outreach activities toward the intentional goal of building connections between those with and without an ID through things such as social groups, diversity awareness festivals, and church events. Outreach

activities can include accommodations for those with an ID such as visual prompts, use of common language, and repetition of thoughts. These activities can also be arranged so that there is an intentional pairing between those with and without an ID in facilitating these activities to promote meaningful interactions and provide interactions with the assistance of a peer.

The researcher discussed the repeated theme that participants without an ID wanted other members of their community to be aware of the value in having a friendship with someone without an ID. They discussed the lack of community awareness and education regarding the abilities and values that those with an ID bring to the table in any friendship. Practitioners noted that efforts to build more inclusive communities focused on strategies that highlight similarities and abilities (Amado, 2011). Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Godfried, and Larson (2013) suggested to utilize newspapers, televisions, social media accounts, newsletters, and other sources of community education to include the voice of those that may be disenfranchised. This increased exposure provides an opportunity for the faces, stories, and opinions of those with an ID to be included in the community and presented in a manner that promotes their valued input (Jonas, 2009; Wilson, 2004).

One of the major themes of this study is that friendships between those with and without an ID, like most friendships, thrive on getting to have fun. By creating an atmosphere of acceptance and making sure facilities are accessible, businesses and community service providers can create enhanced opportunities for friendship pairs between those with and without an ID to meet, feel welcome, and be comfortable (Wiess, 2012; Wilson, Bigby, Jonson, & Botherton, 2017). Emerson & McVilly (2004) noted

that transportation was a significant barrier for those with an ID in having access to businesses and community events. A few of the participants of this study noted that transportation hindered their ability to hang out and have fun with their peers. Therefore, social inclusion practitioners provide a valued service by educating local businesses, family members, church members, friends, and teammates about the potential need that their peer with an ID might need assistance with transportation.

Education and awareness do not have to happen only at a community level, it can also be included in educational systems. This can start at the elementary school level and progress all the way up to higher education. When individuals with an ID are given equal opportunities to participate in classroom activities with other peers without an ID, teachers are given the opportunity to use it as an awareness of similarities in abilities (Moran, 2000; Meyer, 2001). Teachers can serve as a coach or role model to assist with communication between students with and without an ID to increase the likelihood that the interactions are positive (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Wiesel, 2015; McConkey & Collins, 2010, Wiltz, 2005). The participants of this study found it helpful to have a family member or friend assist with communication in the beginning to overcome any barriers that might lead to misconceptions or misunderstandings.

Practitioners have focused on providing opportunities for volunteering for those with an ID and have found this to be successful in building community networks (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017). Asselts-Goverts et al. (2015) suggested that volunteer activities for those with an ID be coordinated where they can participate in meaningful roles and activities. They suggested volunteering at places such as senior citizen centers, coffee shops, cafes, community centers, or other places of gathering for

locals. Several participants of this study met through volunteering at a senior center or at a local hospital. This provided them with access to community members and to the staff at those places of employment. Hall (2010) encouraged business owners to not only provide volunteer activities for those with an ID, but to also make an effort to make the common places such as hallways and break rooms accommodating for people to connect and make friends.

As a community member without an ID, making an effort to make contact with an individual with an ID, can be crucial to the enhancement of social inclusion for those with an ID. Personal contact is a critical factor in reducing negative attitudes and prejudice toward a socially excluded or ostracized group of individuals (Amado, 2014). Through witnessing at least one positive contact between someone with and without an ID, others in that social network can see the benefit which can naturally decrease labeling and stigmatizing stereotypes (O'Day & Kileen, 2002). For instance, Chanel was able to see how Galleria interacted with her peers at church and in the social group she was part of, which included a mixture of people with and without an ID. Chanel discussed letting her guard down because she felt comfortable. Had there not been other members of the church or the community modeling the friendship value between those with and without an ID, Chanel may have never felt comfortable accepting the extension of friendship from Galleria.

All of the participants in this study with an ID indicated they wanted more independence and allowance for higher levels of intimacy. Wiltz (2005) wrote that when individuals with an ID are allowed to practice autonomy, they are more likely to achieve social inclusion by having input with their peers without an ID, voicing their own

opinions and concerns, providing input in relationships, and having opportunities to influence change in the communities. Participants of this study without an ID voiced that they wanted to give their friend opportunities to grow but wanted to make sure it was done safely. Hall (2010) noted that through education and informed decisions, families and parents can provide safe opportunities for those with an ID to exercise dignity without significant risk. Through continued education and awareness activities, practitioners can educate families and parents about the important of self-advocacy and autonomy to their loved ones with an ID (Amado, 2014; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2005; Lutifiyya, 1991; Wiltz, 2005)

Lastly, researchers can continue to recognize and conduct future research with the goal of enhancing social inclusion of those with an ID. Throughout the study, participants mentioned how grateful they were to have the opportunity to share their stories and were elated that others would have the chance to read about it. This was not just from the participants without an ID, it was also from participants with an ID. After one of the interviews, Dorinda stopped the interview and asked, “so when I am to get a copy of this”. She was proud of the work that she had done and wanted to share it with her family. Researchers giving due diligence to research that includes the voice of those with an ID sets a precedent for valuing the voices of people with an ID.

Limitations of the Study

This basic interpretive qualitative study provided an avenue to understand how friendships are formed and maintained between those with and without an ID and the description of satisfaction in those friendships. However, like any study, there are limitations. One limitation of the study is one that is common to most qualitative studies.

It is the fact that the findings cannot be generalized to the wide population with the same degree of confidence as a quantitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall and Rossman 2015). The sample size for this study was small and selective; it was not a wide random sample. For instance, it only included adult pairs of friends between those with and without an ID and could verbally articulate their experiences. It also narrowed down criteria based upon length of friendship and type of intellectual disability. The small and selective sample provided an avenue that suited the purpose of this study, but the sample limited the results to those participants and not the overall population in general.

Researchers should incorporate ways to establish rigor in a qualitative study. One method to increase trustworthiness is through inter-rater reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher utilized a second coder to establish at least 80% agreement 95% of the time. Although researchers wrote it was sufficient to have two coders, it is more robust to have more than two coders (Campbell et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Conducting research with individuals with an ID can be challenging as they are considered a vulnerable population and may need research design accommodations including specialized interview protocols and consent processes. The researcher submitted the study to the University of Louisville's IRB and received approval. The interview questions and interview length of time was adapted to accommodate possible comprehension, attention span, and language barriers. As noted in previous discussion, the individual interviews with the individuals with an ID were shorter and contained less in-depth answers. The individuals with an ID were present and given the same

opportunity, but due to the short length in the comments or limited expansion of ideas, their responses may not be represented as fully as the individuals without an ID.

Future Research

Research on the friendships between those with and without an ID is still in an exploratory phase (Asselt-Goverts et al., 2015; Bigby & Craig, 2017; Hall, 2010; Wilson et al., 2017). Although this study provided more information on understanding how these friendships are formed and maintained along with the level of satisfaction experienced, there is still a need for continued research. This study found some themes that can be contrasted with those of other studies, and some which themes and several new themes not documented in previous research. Additional studies can either confirm or challenge these findings. In addition, future research should further probe into how age differences and the absence of children on the side of the participant without an ID could affect the formation or maintenance of the friendship. Furman et al. (2009) encouraged any researcher continuing to investigate friendships to utilize a theoretical or conceptual framework to guide literature review, research methodology, and documentation of results to enhance the validity of the study. By simply continuing the research, researchers are giving voice and power to those with an ID.

The researcher chose specific sampling criterion to meet the needs of this study that included limiting the level of intellectual disability to mild and requiring that individual with a mild intellectual disability to be able to verbalize the experience. Future research can expound upon the criterion of “level of intellectual functioning” by including individuals with moderate, severe, or profound intellectual disabilities. Future research could also be inclusive of those individuals that do not communicate verbally.

The methodology would need to accommodate these criteria, but other researchers have demonstrated that altered methodologies can be effective (Asselts-Goverts et al., 2014; Bogdan & Taylor, 1989; Clement & Bigby, 2008; Johnson et al., 2011; Kennedy et al., 1990).

The participants of this study that had an ID all lived at home with family. The researcher chose to limit the sampling for the individuals with an ID to those that lived at home only due to feasibility of the study completion. Emerson and McVilly (2004) along with McConkey and Collins (2010) both stressed that the living accommodations of the individual with an ID can impact the social network size and status. Therefore, to continue to fully understand the dynamics of all friendships that occur between those with and without an ID, it is important that individuals living in other housing arrangements such as group homes, supported living, or residential facilities have a voice as well.

There are currently no standardized instruments to gauge friendship satisfaction validated for those with an ID. Friendship satisfaction plays an important role in the friendship maintenance phase of any relationship and can shape whether someone chooses to remain friends ((Burndt, 2002; Gleckel, 2015; Thein et al., 2012). The level of satisfaction experienced in a friendship also affects feelings of belonging, which in turn affects social inclusion (Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2016; Rodrigez et al., 2003). So, researchers should place efforts into developing a standardized instrument to gauge friendship satisfaction that is for those with an ID. The standardized instrument can be helpful in providing a quantitative comparison of not only satisfaction across various

friendship, but also to investigate correlations with satisfaction, social inclusion, and quality of life.

There were several practice implications mentioned earlier in this chapter that encouraged increased access to jobs, education, and communities for those with an ID. The researcher also discussed options for raising community awareness to combat negative attitudes. Other suggestions included promoting activities that enhance autonomy and independence for those with an ID. Future research should look at the effectiveness of any intervention geared toward addressing these areas of concerns. However, it would be important to link it back to the overall experience of friendship and social inclusion.

Another area for consideration in future research is a comparison of how friendships are formed and maintained along with satisfaction across friendship types included between those without an ID, between those with an ID, and between those with and without an ID. Previous research indicated that there are several similarities in how friendships are formed and maintained across all types of friendships (Hall, 2010; Tipton, 2011, Wiltz, 2005). There remains little research on the satisfaction in friendships that include those with an ID (Chappell, 1994; Emerson & McVilly, 2004; Wiltz, 2005). Therefore, looking at a comparison would fill an additional gap in literature.

Lastly, the participants without an ID noted that having the opportunity to be a mentor was one of the factors that intrigued them about the friendship with someone with an ID. Mentoring and volunteer programs are successful avenues to assist people with an ID to make community connections and friendships between those with and without an ID (Amado, 2014). Mentors are often individuals who do not have children or have

grown children no longer in the home similar to those in this study (Adams, 2017). However, some have questioned as to whether mentoring type of relationships can be considered a pure form of friendship (Cheung, 2017; Sanchez, Bauer, & Paronto, 2006). The participants did not indicate directly that the desire to mentor or volunteer was the motivator for pursuing a connection with someone with an ID. However, throughout the processes of friendship maintenance, many participants without an ID found themselves in mentor roles. It would be of future interest to compare friendship processes and satisfaction between those friends that started as a mentor role versus those that did not appear to have any indicators of a mentor type of relationship. The literature available on peer mentoring and volunteering may also provide some light into the social inclusion initiatives and future research as these types of activities seem to have similarities to the friendships between those with and without an ID in this study.

Chapter Summary

Through a qualitative approach and participant interviews, the researcher was able to collect data that captured the experience of formation and maintenance of friendships between those with and without an ID along with the level of satisfaction experienced in those friendships. This study offered confirmation on findings from previous research that friendships between those with and without an ID form naturally in community settings and require some third-party support at initiation. The participants of this study with an ID demonstrated that they take initiative are forerunners in formation of the friendship.

This study also verified that hanging out and having fun, reciprocal exchanges of affection, and adapting to idiosyncrasies were themes that characterized the maintenance

of the friendship. This study produced new knowledge that people without an ID benefit from the friendship in a unique way by getting to be carefree. The study also challenged the concept that friendships are not one-sided on providing support; individuals with an ID can provide just as much emotional support in the friendship as their counterparts. The results also indicated that individuals with an ID accept and adapt to challenging behaviors and schedules of those without an ID. Lastly, the study resulted in knowledge that the friendships between those with and without an ID are valued and desired to continue forever.

These results have implications for communities, organizations, community members, and families in terms of enhancing social inclusion for those with an ID. There are interventions and considerations at macro, mezzo, and micro levels of change that can provide opportunities for an increased number of friendships to develop between those with and without an ID. It is imperative that research continues to support and include those with an ID especially with regards to further knowledge about progress toward social inclusion. Future researchers should continue to seek knowledge and provide guidance to anyone hoping to decrease stigmatization and prejudice and increase attitudes of acceptance and diversity in communities.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

The Experience of Friendships Between Individuals with and without an Intellectual Disability

Introduction and Background Information

This study is about how people make friends and what people do to keep those friendships going well. You or the individual for whom you are the legally authorized representative are invited to take part in this research study because you have a friend whom you spend quality time with and want to share your friendship story. The study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Bibhuti Sar, PhD. at the University of Louisville.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to give you an opportunity to talk about how you met your friend and the important things you do with your friend that makes your friendship special.

Procedures

In this study, you and your friend will talk with a researcher together for about one hour, and then separately for about thirty minutes about your friendship. The interviews will be audiotaped. If at any time you become uncomfortable you can choose not to answer the questions. Your data will not be stored and shared for future research under any circumstances.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible feelings of discomfort in answering personal questions. While you are talking with the researcher, you may start to feel sad or uncomfortable. If you do start to feel this way, you can ask to stop the conversation at any time. There may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

This study gives you the opportunity to celebrate and share your experiences with your friend. Sharing your story can be exciting and fulfilling. You may not benefit personally by participating in this study. The information collected may not benefit you directly; however, the information may be helpful to others.

Alternatives

Instead of taking part in this study, you could choose to not participate in the study.

Payment

You will not be paid for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Cost

This study will not cost anything to participate.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your information may be shared with the following:

The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office and others involved in research administration at the University

The local research team

People who are responsible for research and HIPAA oversight at the institutions where the research is conducted

Applicable government agencies, such as:
Office for Human Research Protections

Security

The data collected about you will be kept private and secure on a password protected flash drive in a locked safe box.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide not to be in this study, you won't be punished or lose any benefits for which you qualify. If you decide to be in this study, you may change your mind and stop taking part at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, you won't be punished or lose any benefits for which you qualify. You will be told about any new information learned during the study that could affect your decision to continue in the study.

Research Subject's Rights

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the researcher, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has approved the participation of human subjects in this research study.

Questions, Concerns and Complaints

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Bibhuti Sar at 502-852-3932 or Rebecca Clark at 270-535-2545. If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll-free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24- hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgment and Signatures

This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Subject Name (Please Print)	Signature of Subject	Date Signed
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Printed Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Legal Representative Date Signed

Relationship of Legal Representative to Subject

Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent (if not Investigator)

Printed Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date Signed
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Phone number for subjects to call for questions: 270-535-2545
Investigator(s) name, degree, phone number, University Department, & address:
Rebecca Clark, LCSW
270-535-2545

Bibhuti Sar, PhD
502-852-3932
Kent School of Social Work
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY 40292

Site(s) where study is to be conducted:

Donalsonville Hospital
102 Hospital Circle
Donalsonville GA 39845

SARCOA
1075 South Brannon Stand Road
Dothan, AL 36305

LifeSkills
380 Suwannee Trail St
Bowling Green, KY 42103

APPENDIX B

Subject Assent

The Experience of Friendships Between Individuals with and without an Intellectual Disability

I am invited to be in a research study being done by Professor Bibhuti Sar and Rebecca Clark. When a person is in a research study, they are called a “subject.” The goal of the research is to understand how people make friends and the things they do that make those friendships last. I am invited because the research team feels that I have valuable information to give about how my friend and I met and the important things we do that makes our friendship special. This means that I and my friend will talk with a researcher together for about one hour, and then separately for about thirty minutes about our friendship. The conversation will be audiotaped. There may be some risks with this study. The researchers do not think there are likely risks, but one possibility is that I may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions. If at any time I become uncomfortable I can choose not to answer the questions. This study will last a total of about one hour and thirty minutes. The benefit to me for participating in this study is that I can share the story of my friendship. It gives me and others a chance to celebrate and understand the value of my friendship. Although it is not necessarily a personal benefit to me, my story may help others who are looking to have a good friend like mine. My family, my friend, Professor Sar, and Rebecca Clark will know that I’m in the study. If anyone else is given information about me, they will not know my name. A number or initials will be used instead of my name. I have been told about this study and know why it is being done and what I have to do. My parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/legally authorized representative(s) have agreed to let me be in the study. If I have any questions, I can ask Professor Sar or Rebecca Clark. He or she will answer my questions. If I do not want to be in this study or I want to quit after I am already in this study, I can tell the researcher Rebecca Clark she will discuss this with my parents/legal guardian/legally authorized representative(s).

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date Signed

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

Printed Name of Investigator

Signature of Investigator

Date Signed

APPENDIX C

Interview General Guidelines (Pair)

Interviewer Initial Statement:

The purpose of this study is to understand how you all formed your friendship and how you have maintained that friendship over the years. I want to give you both an opportunity to tell your story and share with others things you have experienced together and what makes your friendship so special. It is important to me to hear all the details about your story and be able to accurately tell the true experience you have had in your friendship. If you have questions at any time about what I am asking, please stop me and ask me to repeat or clarify my question. If you don't feel comfortable answering any questions, it is okay to say, I don't want to answer that right now. You will have an opportunity to talk with me in private later and can share at that time if you so choose. If you don't want to answer the questions at all, it is okay to say that.

R1: How do friendships develop between those with and without an ID?

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me the story about how you met (utilize interview techniques to gather how old were you, where were you, who were you with, what type of things were you doing, who assisted you, etc ...)

Interviewer statement:

Now that you have told me about how you met, I want to further explore what you have done to keep your friendship going.

R2: How are friendships maintained between those with and without an ID?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the things you normally do together and how often you do those things.
2. What sorts of things do you all talk about?
3. Do you tell each other secrets?
4. Tell me about how you celebrate special occasions
5. Does your family ever get involved with your friendship?
(Parents/children/siblings)
6. What are your favorite things to get or give each other?
7. Tell me about your favorite memories with each other.
8. Tell me about how your friendship has changed over the years

APPENDIX D

Interview General Guidelines (Individual)

Interviewer Statement: I have enjoyed hearing about your friendship with _____. Now I want to hear about some more things regarding how happy you are with your friendship. I want to give you an opportunity to share privately with me. The specifics of this interview will not be shared with your friend. This is for me to get a better understanding of your friendship including those times where your friendship has gone well and times when it has not gone as well as you had wished.

R1: How do friendships develop between those with and without an ID?

Interview Questions

2. How did you become friends?
3. When you were trying to make friends, what was helpful to assist you in getting to know _____?
4. What things were difficult or hard in trying to get to know him/her?

R2: How are friendships maintained between those with and without an ID?

Interview Questions

9. Tell me about how it feels when you spend time together.
10. When you are together do you find get to laugh and have fun?
11. Tell me about the compliments that _____ gives you.
12. Describe how much do you care about _____.
13. How long do you want your friendship to last?
14. Tell me about a time you needed help and your friend was able to assist you.
15. Does _____ know when you are upset or something bothering you?
16. When you get upset, how does _____ help you?

R3: How do Participants Describe their Satisfaction?

17. Tell me about a time when _____ made you feel really important or good about yourself.
18. Tell me about a time when you weren't happy with _____? How did you work through it?
19. If you had one wish for things to be different with _____ what would it be?
20. Tell me about a time when you were really happy with _____?

Appendix E

Participant Demographic Sheet

Assigned Pseudonym: _____ Partner/Friend Pseudonym: _____

Age: _____ How long have you been friends? _____

Who initiated the friendship? _____

Legal Status:

- a. Own Responsible Party
- b. Has a Legal Guardian

Residence Status:

- a. Lives at Home Alone
- b. Lives at Home with Family
- c. Lives in Supported Housing/Group Home
- d. Other: _____

Gender:

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Other: _____

Ethnicity:

- a. White
- b. Black
- c. Hispanic/Latino
- d. Asian
- e. Other: _____

Employment:

- a. Full Time
- b. Part Time
- c. As Needed
- d. Day Program

Marital Status

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Separated
- e. Other: _____

Education:

- a. High School Diploma/GED
- b. Some College/Technical School
- c. Associate Degree
- d. Bachelor's Degree
- e. Master's Degree
- f. Doctoral Degree
- g. Other _____

CURRICULUM VITAE

Rebecca Clark, MSSW, LCSW
39 Trillium Cir
Dothan AL 36301
Phone: 270-535-2545
Email: clarkrc1980@gmail.com/rebecca.clark@horizonhealth.com

Education

PhD in Social Work Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, Kentucky	2010-2020
Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling School of Counseling, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green KY	2008-2010
Master's of Social Work in Science (MSSW), Advanced Standing Department of Health and Human Service Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green KY	2007-2008
Bachelor's of Social Work in Science (BSSW) Department of Health and Human Services Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green KY	1998-2004
High School Diploma Franklin Simpson High School, Franklin KY	1998

Clinical Profile

Counseling

- Provided individual (adolescent, adult, and geriatric), group, substance abuse, marriage, and family counseling in the behavioral health field in an inpatient, intensive outpatient, and outpatient setting. I addressed issues such as PTSD, sexual offenses, general psychology needs, intellectual disabilities, and severe mental illness.
- LCSW licensure (AL and GA)

Substance Abuse

- Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling

Recognitions

- Member of the Phi Alpha Honor Society-Social Work Delta Mu Chapter

Computer Skills

- Microsoft Applications, Database Design, Access Database, SPSS, EPIC, CPSI, Meditech

In-Patient Behavior Health Work History

Program Director
Donalsonville Hospital

March 2017-current

(I provide oversight to a 12 bed Geriatric and 8 bed adolescent inpatient psychiatric unit. I am responsible for the development, education, and supervision of the treatment programs, staffing, and community relationships. I provide quality improvement oversight, manage the inpatient psychiatric facility quality data, oversee the unit's budget, and am responsible for policy development and implementation).

Highlights:

- Hosted a successful open house with over 200 visitors
- Successfully opened a 12-bed geriatric/8 bed adolescent inpatient behavior health unit
- Oversaw the process of getting the hospital certified to be an emergency receiving, evaluating, and treating facility
- During the first year of opening the program was nominated for the Customer Satisfaction Award
- During the first year the program was a finalist as Program of the Year
- Hosted a presentation for the Commissioner of Community Health, Commissioner of DBHDD, and Senator Dean Burke to promote the unit and educate about the needs of the community
- Implemented a Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Social Services
- Oversaw the development of the Standard Operating procedures Manual for Nursing
- Hosted a clinical teleconference of "Adolescent Behavior and the Clinical Interview"
- Assisted in the CON process to expand the adolescent unit to 12 beds
- Developed and Implemented a Best Practice Georgia 1013 Competency
- Composed a 30-day adolescent and geriatric group curriculum

Director of Social Services
Mobile Infirmary

November 2014-March 2017

(I provide direct care for patients to include case management, discharge planning, and individual/group counseling. I also manage the day to day activities for the social work department to include case assignment, facilitation of treatment team, chart audits, quality improvement, policy development, and direct supervision of the social work staff)

Highlights:

- Implemented a Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Social Services
- Implemented a 30-day Adult and Geriatric Group curriculum
- Trained SW and Facilitated the initiation of treatment team
- Developed and Implemented a Group Schedule for Adults and Geriatric
- Trained staff on group documentation

IP/IOP/OP Psychotherapist
Medical Center of Bowling Green

August 31, 2012-November 2014

(I provide adult and adolescent individual, family, group, marriage and play therapy for an inpatient, outpatient, and intensive outpatient behavioral health service, assist in discharge coordination, and assist in utilization review. I also provide services occasionally on the inpatient behavioral health unit for adults and geriatrics to include psychosocial assessments, treatment planning, group and individual therapy, and crisis intervention)

Highlights:

- Implemented a system that brought the outpatient handwritten medical records to electronic
- Organized a weekly curriculum and schedule for the adult intensive outpatient
- Assisted in creating new services to increase productivity

General Behavior Health Work History

Behavior Specialist
Community Living in Kentucky (CLiK)

January 2010-August 2012

(I provided contract behavior supports to adolescents and adults with Intellectual Disabilities. This included developing, providing training, and monitoring functional analysis and behavior support plans. I also provided instruction on crisis intervention and modeling of behavioral intervention strategies to care givers and families, support coordinators, direct care staff, teachers/school staff, and employers)

Impact Plus Psychotherapist
Gateway Counseling Services

October 2009-August 2012

(I provided contract therapeutic supports to adolescents meeting criteria for the Impact Plus program in Kentucky. This was an intensive outpatient program for children with acute psychiatric or behavioral symptoms. I assisted the case manager with the development of care plans and discharge plans. I also provided collateral services to families and school staff for comprehensive care.)

Substance Abuse Therapist
Agape Counseling Services

October 2009-January 2011

(I provided contract work through the agency for DUI services. I completed DUI assessments and provided treatment through individual and group services under the supervision of the DUI program for Kentucky. I completed psychosocial assessments with substance abuse components, developed treatment plans, and utilized counseling skills to facilitate treatment.)

Various Positions (outlined below)
LifeSkills Incorporated

June 2011- October 2009

1. Behavior Specialist

January 2009-October 2009

(I provided full-time behavior supports to thirty adults with Intellectual Disabilities. This included developing, providing training, and monitoring functional analysis and behavior support plans. I also provided instruction on crisis intervention and modeling of behavioral intervention strategies to care givers and families, support coordinators, direct care staff, teachers/school staff, and employers)

2. Regional and SCL Case Manager

January 2005-January 2009

(I provided case coordination for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities receiving state general funds to include respite services, crisis supports, and case management. I developed annual individualized support plan that outlined social history, current and past services, and current needs. It the support plans also provided goals and objectives to assist individuals in meeting goals and increased daily living skills.)

3. Community Living Associate/House Manager

June 2001-January 2005

(I provided direct supports to individuals with Intellectual Disabilities living in a staffed residence through the Supports for Community Living Waiver. I assisted individuals with daily living activities and personal care. I also had house manager responsibilities to include monitoring daily activity, medications, scheduling, and paperwork from other staff.)

Teaching Experience

Adjunct Professor, Western Kentucky University August 2012-May 2015
(I provide instruction on clinical assessment including application and techniques in the DSM-IV, ethical issues in social work practice, and grief and loss issues. I also provided supervision of students during their field experience as a faculty liaison).

04/2011- Guest Lecturer, IRB: Doctoral students' glimpse into the mystery.
Presented to Graduate Student Ethics Roundtable of the Research Integrity Program, University of Louisville.

05/2011- Guest Lecturer, Kent School of Social Work, Doc Prep course. Topic: IRB navigation and concepts

08/2011-Guest Lecturer, Western Kentucky University, Topic: DUI Assessments for Dr. Neresa Minatrea, PhD.

02/2012- Guest Lecturer, IRB: Doctoral students' glimpse into the mystery.
Presented to Graduate Student Ethics Roundtable of the Research Integrity Program, University of Louisville.

08/12-5/13(Fall and Spring Semester) Adjunct Professor, Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis, Western Kentucky University

08/12-12/12 (Fall Semester) Adjunct Professor, Field Liaison, Western Kentucky University

08/11-12/13-Adjunct Professor, Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis, Western Kentucky University

01/14-05/14-Adjunct Professor, Ethics in Social Work, Western Kentucky University

08/14-12/14--Adjunct Professor, Field Liaison and Generalist Social Work Practice, Western Kentucky University

01/15-05/15- Adjunct Professor, Field Liaison, Western Kentucky University

03/2018-current- Core Competency Educator, Horizon Health, Adolescent and Geriatric Behavior Health

Research Experience

January 2012-April 2012, Research Assistant, Hazelwood Center in Louisville KY and U of L. Performed survey development, data collection, data base maintenance, statistical analyses, literature reviews, focus groups, and presentation of results.

May 2011-December 2011, Research Assistant, KIPDA and U. of L. Performed literature review and data collection and analysis through the method of Concept Mapping and assisted in the manuscript writing.

November 2012- March 2013, Research Assistant, JETS and University of Louisville. Performed quantitative data analysis by providing descriptive statistics and t-tests on a database of 34 variables and gave a detailed report for the JETS grant.