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**“A team working together to make a big, nice, sound”:
An action research pilot study in an inclusive college setting**

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Highlights

- College students with intellectual disabilities may benefit from group music therapy
- Community music therapy helps create authentic community for college students
- Music therapy programs support college students with ID as part of clinical training

Abstract

The purpose of this pilot study was to develop a community music therapy approach for students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in a university setting with a postsecondary education program specifically designed for students with IDD. Action research was used to create space for social critique and reflexivity throughout the research process. The aim of the group approach was to establish community and relationships within the residence hall where the students cohabitated with one another. Ten, weekly sessions were held in addition to attending two performances together. In the analysis of session notes, researcher journal, and interview transcripts specific themes were found. The participants identified ways that community developed and also highlighted some of the challenges of a program such as this. Community music therapy may be a viable approach to providing an authentic relationship building experience for college students. Limitations and recommendations for future research and clinical work are included.

Keywords: community music therapy, intellectual disability, inclusion, college, action research

Introduction

Throughout the past 20 years, post secondary education (PSE) programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have been established at 2 and 4-year institutions of higher education (IHE) throughout the United States. Previously, higher education was not accessible to young adults with IDD, however this trend has been changing. As of 2015, Think College (“Find a College,” 2015) reported that there were 246 programs, 53 of which were situated in a 4-year institution. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 has supported these programs through federal grant initiatives. While each program has been designed differently, if a program receives federal funding through the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) program, they are

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