CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHridge

IMPROVING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION

OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Science in Counseling,
Marriage and Family Therapy

By

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ABSTRACT

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Many children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are being included with typically developing peers in their schools. As a result of the social deficits that come with having ASD, interacting with peers can be a challenging experience for these children. Interventions have been developed to improve the social skills of children with ASD. Nevertheless, researchers show that children with ASD are often misunderstood, rejected, and bullied by their typical peers. Some interventions have been developed to incorporate typical peers in the inclusion process. However, these interventions are time and cost intensive. Also, most peer interventions are designed to target individually selected peers without addressing the whole class. The class wide interventions are designed to educate an entire class on autism. Conversely, some cultures may find labeling to be stigmatizing. With the need to target typical peers in the inclusion process and the lack of effective interventions, a product needed to be developed to fill in these gaps. Therefore, I have created a workbook for 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms to address the struggles of having ASD without labeling. The workbook will use strategies for promoting support and acceptance towards peers with ASD.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Helen Keller said, “The heaviest burden of a disability arises from personal interaction and not from the impairment itself”. As a disabled person herself, Ms. Keller recognized that it was harder for her to interact with others than deal with being blind and deaf.

Many children with disabilities are attending regular schools throughout the nation and facing the challenge of interacting with their peers. This is a result of the Individual Disabilities Act, which was passed in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997 and 2004 to include students with disabilities, including developmental delays, in the right to receive a free public education. Inclusion is a federal policy that promotes integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools and classrooms by providing these children with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and specialized services (IDEA 2004). Many of the included students are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Autism Spectrum Disorders, which include Autism, Asperger Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, are a group of pervasive developmental disorders, characterized by deficits in social interaction and communication (verbal and nonverbal), repetitive behaviors or interests, and sensory issues. Some of their social issues involve difficulty interpreting social cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, difficulty engaging with others in a give and take manner, and difficulty regulating emotions. They also face communication difficulties such as trouble communicating needs and difficulty understanding others. Many of them also exhibit repetitive behaviors or interests that can involve an obsession with learning
one particular thing and a desire for absolute consistency and routine to the point where any changes can cause gigantic emotional outbursts. The symptoms in autism spectrum disorders range from mild to severe and vary in expression from person to person (NIMH). With such a large range of social deficits, children with ASD face numerous challenges in the public school environment.

A current trend, that has yet to be explained, is the rapid increase of children being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). In 2006, researchers discovered an alarming average; 1 in 110 children in the United States had an autism spectrum disorder. The average amount of children with ASDs in the US had risen 57% from 2002. Whether there was an increased risk for having an ASD or more awareness and identification of ASD is still unknown (CDC, 2006). In 2008, the average jumped to 1 in 88 children being diagnosed with an ASD (CDC, 2008). As a result of The Individual Disabilities Acts, 90% of children with ASD are attending regular schools, with 36.1% spending at least 80% of their day in a general class, and 18.4% spending 40%-80% of their day in a general class (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Therefore, children with autism spectrum disorders are commonly found in regular classrooms throughout the nation.

An Individualized Educational plan in addition to specialized services helps to alleviate some of the dysfunction children with ASD often display. However, let it be known there is no cure for autism spectrum disorders, only ways to help these children cope with their disabilities and expand their abilities. As a result of the large number of children dealing with ASD and The U.S. Department of Education’s support to help these children overcome their disabilities, it is no surprise that many of these youth are being
pushed into entering regular classrooms. Researchers Ferraioli and Harris (2011) found children with ASD to acquire significant gains in language skills, IQ, adaptive skills, functional communication, social interaction, play skills, and a decrease in symptoms a year after being included. However, as beneficial as inclusion may seem for children with ASD, there are repercussions for being different in a typical world. Unfortunately, the principles of inclusive education are not being fully practiced when it comes to the typical peers (Humphrey & Symes, 2010). Typical peers are increasingly having classmates with ASD, yet they are not being fully educated on how to deal with this considerably different-minded population of children.

With their oddities and lack of social skills necessary for proper human interaction, many children with ASD are significantly more disliked, unaccepted, avoided, and rejected than typical peers and students with other disabilities, such as dyslexia (Humphrey & Symes, 2010). Children with ASD are also common targets for frequent and chronic peer victimization and bullying (Cappadocia, Weiss, & Pepler, 2012). Victimization in children with and without ASD was found to be associated with an array of psychosocial problems, such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, avoidance, social anxiety, self-injurious behavior, and low self-esteem, self-perception, and self-worth (Cappadocia, et al., 2012). With the amount of peer victimization children with ASD experience, it is no surprise that these children frequently struggle with generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and depression. As a result of their keen intellect, subtle awareness, and humanity, these children sense that they are different and often feel shunned by their classmates. They have problems with bullying and feel completely out of place. Many want to have friends, fit in, and be accepted for who they are, but they
isolate because socializing is so hard and uncomfortable. This isolation feeds their disconnection from others, and can lead to problems later in life, such as sustaining a job.

One reason peers may be inclined to reject or victimize their autistic peers is they lack knowledge, understanding, and recognition of autism. A mother of a child with autism said: “I wish he were Down’s Syndrome…They would see the Down’s Syndrome and know there was a problem” (Campbell, 2006). The physical signs of a disability can provide the general public with an explanation for strange behavior. The behavior is often excused as driven by disability and therefore, uncontrollable. Autism Spectrum Disorders have no physical deformations, yet strange behavior exists. As a result, children with ASD can be held accountable for their problematic behaviors because the naked eye of society sees no disability to blame. Researchers discovered that the more control a peer appeared to have over abnormal behaviors the less sympathy and greater anger exhibited by typical peers (Campbell, 2006). Children with ASD are often perceived as having the ability to control their behaviors, so their inappropriate actions inevitably lack tolerance from their peers.

Researchers learned that the most significant buffer against bullying and distress is support from peers and classmates (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008) (Humphrey and Symes, 2010). However, many public schools are not being required to encourage and educate students to provide this kind of support. As a result, many children with ASD seem to be left to the lions without proper protection.

With the high rise in autism spectrum disorders and the push for the inclusion of children with disabilities, we are filling our classrooms with children who are “unique”, but often seen as a “freak”. As much as programs and therapies try to teach these kids
how to “fit in”, they can’t help that their mind works differently, so they continue to experience victimization and the psychological disturbances that follow. Providing services solely for the child with autism has shown to not be effective enough for successful social inclusion. The environment in which these children are required to practice their skills needs to be conducive to their progress. Therefore, there still remains a need to address how school faculty can create an environment where children with autism can grow and thrive socially and psychologically.

Statement of the Problem

In order to promote the successful inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorders in regular schools, general classrooms need to implement an intervention that effectively and longitudinally improves understanding, tolerance, and support towards children with ASD. Unfortunately, there is a current lack of sufficient interventions for enhancing the social experiences of children with ASDs in regular schools (Humphrey and Symes, 2010)

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a workbook that can effectively enhance the social inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders in general education settings. The proposed project will strive to lay the foundation for creating classroom communities that motivate support. Furthermore, the project will educate students on how to interact and support a child with ASD effectively without labeling a child with ASD.
Terminology

Autism Spectrum Disorder- a group of pervasive developmental disorders, including Autistic disorder (classic autism), Asperger's disorder (Asperger syndrome), Pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), Rett's disorder (Rett syndrome), and Childhood disintegrative disorder (CDD), which are characterized by deficits in social interaction and communication (verbal and nonverbal), repetitive behaviors or interests, and sensory issues (NIMH).

Inclusion- a federal policy that promotes integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools and classrooms by providing these children with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and specialized services (IDEA 2004).

Project Overview

Chapter 2 suggests that schools are failing to implement classroom interventions that involve typical peers as part of the inclusion process. Research shows typical peers tend to have negative reactions towards those with ASD and this creates a barrier for social inclusion. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of successful interventions for promoting social acceptance and support for children with autism spectrum disorders in schools. Other research conveys the benefits and drawbacks to educating others about autism. Chapter 2 also demonstrates how effective peer support towards children with ASD can be built by providing explanatory and descriptive information along with improving social skills in classrooms. Lastly, chapter 2 examines research on the benefits of peer support as part of the social inclusion of children with ASD in general educational settings. Chapter 3 discusses the details associated with the development of the social inclusion workbook, which includes a description of the target audience,
qualifications of those using the workbook, the environment it is to be used in, and a project outline. The final chapter summarizes, evaluates, and discusses the key points associated with the social inclusion workbook and also provides a consideration of future work that can be done in regards to the project.
Chapter Two

*Literature Review*

*Introduction*

Researchers have been exploring the effects of including children with autism with typical peers in general educational settings. Much of the literature can lead practitioners and educators to conclude that typical peers can present negative attitudes towards their peers with autism. Furthermore, the negative relationships between typical peers and those with ASD present a barrier to successful inclusion. In light of this discovery, researchers have been investigating effective interventions for improving the relationships between children with ASD and their peers at school.

*Typical peers reaction to autism*

Neil Humphrey and Sarah Lewis (2008) explored the experiences of twenty children ages 11-17 with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism who were attending mainstream schools. Interviews with these children as well as their diaries were analyzed for results. The researchers discovered that the relationships between those with ASD and their peers had an influence on how successfully they felt included at school. The researchers stated that nearly all of the participants dealt with bullying and teasing, which sometimes happened severely and/or regularly, and social isolation. However, support from peers was found to counteract the bullying and social isolation experienced.
Liza Little (2002) researched the prevalence of peer victimization in children with Asperger Syndrome (AS) and Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD)\(^1\). Little obtained surveys filled out by parents regarding their perceptions of peer victimization in their children with either Asperger Syndrome or Nonverbal Learning Disorder. Little was able to gather results based on 411 children, ages 4-17 years old, with 73.4% having Asperger Syndrome, 15.3% having Nonverbal Learning Disorder, and 15.3% having Asperger Syndrome and Nonverbal Learning Disorder. Little found 94% of surveyed mothers reported their child experienced peer victimization, such as group attacks, assault, and bullying, by peers or siblings. Typical peers and siblings were also found to regularly shun those with AS and NLD by not inviting them to birthday parties, leaving them alone at lunch, and picking them last for teams.

In a study sampling 30 typically developing children ages 7-12, Harnum, Duffy, and Ferguson (2006) read their participants a scenario involving a boy with stereotypical, autistic behaviors, such as having trouble making friends, speaking repetitively, and rocking back and forth. The participating children were asked to respond to statements based on the boy. The research team discovered that these children were significantly more likely to express avoidance and dislike towards the seemingly autistic boy and perceived the boy as unlike them.

**Barriers to inclusion**

Storch and Ledley (2005) reviewed research regarding the relationship between peer victimization and psychological distress. The results of their examination led Storch

\(^1\) Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD) is a neurocognitive disorder presenting difficulties in nonverbal communication, social competency, academics, visual-spatial abilities, and motor coordination (Little 2002).
and Ledley to infer that peer victimization is associated with an array of psychological problems including depressed mood, low self worth, social anxiety, loneliness, and academic issues.

A team of researchers used psycho-educational testing to evaluate the social, behavioral and academic experiences of 40 children with an autism spectrum disorder ages 3-15 years old (Church, Alisankso, & Amanullah 2000). The test scores indicated that the greatest challenge for these children involved socializing. Even the children who received social skills training continued to experience frustration, anxiety, and confusion in their relationships with peers. The difficult emotions these children experienced in social encounters often led them to display inappropriate behaviors towards their peers. The researchers suggest that peers often misinterpret the inappropriate behaviors exhibited by children with Asperger Syndrome because they have a normal appearance.

Strategies for improving inclusion with typical peers

In a review of empirical research on strategies for including children with autism in mainstream schools, Joshua Harrower and Glen Dunlap (2001) conclude that peer-mediated interventions have proven to be successful in improving inclusion for students with autism. These interventions involve promoting social initiations by typical peers towards those with autism and training typical peers how to interact with children with ASD. However, these interventions tend to involve selecting the typical peers who will be trained for these interventions as opposed to working with the entire class.

One study that proved to be successful in engaging typical peers with those with ASD used the interests of the ASD child to develop clubs that involved both sets of peers (Koegel, Vernon, Koegel, Koegel, & Paullin, 2012). The participants in this study were
three children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders who exhibited severe social difficulties. These children were observed in their natural environment prior to any intervention. Then an assessment was conducted to identify the interests of the participants. These interests were used to design social clubs that would involve the child with autism and any other peers who wanted to be involved. Data was obtained through observing the interactions between the child with ASD and their peers while the clubs were going on. During the club sessions, there was an increase in social engagement and verbal initiation. However, the study did not provide results on whether or not the engagement and initiation improved outside of these structured clubs. The researchers were able to show how incorporating a child with ASD’s interests can be an avenue towards social interaction. Nevertheless, the researchers required a facilitator and structured clubs for this to happen, so it is hard to say how these peers would interact without a structured club and an adult present. Also, schools have tight budgets and may not be able to provide such extracurricular activities and adult facilitation.

Researchers have identified effective strategies for improving the perceptions of typical children towards their autistic peers. In one study, researchers discovered that combining descriptive information with explanatory information was an effective method for improving the attitudes and behavioral intentions of typical peers towards a child with autism (Campbell, Ferguson, Herzinger, Jackson, & Marino 2004). A sample of 576 typical children with a mean age of 10.6 years were randomly assigned to either an intervention that only provided descriptive information on autism or an intervention that provided both descriptive and explanatory information. The participants viewed a video of a boy with autism and then filled out questionnaires based on what they had just seen.
A combination of descriptive and explanatory information was found to be significantly more effective in improving behavioral attitudes towards those with autism. However, part of this intervention involved labeling the child with autism and some cultures, religions, and families may find this label stigmatizing. Therefore, this type of intervention may be unusable for people who find the label of autism stigmatizing or against their cultural ideals.

**Synthesis of Literature Review**

A review of literature suggests that many typical children do not understand their peers with autism spectrum disorders. As a result, it is common for typically developing students to hold negative perceptions towards those with ASD. These negative perceptions often lead to maltreatment, which can have a negative impact on children with ASD. However, research suggests that there are effective strategies for improving typical students’ attitudes towards peers with ASD. These strategies involve using typical peers to mediate interactions, and educating peers about the characteristics of autism. Nonetheless, these strategies can be difficult to implement in all inclusive school settings. This may be due to the amount of training, outside influence, and time required for providing socially inclusive interventions. In addition, some of these interventions may go against cultural values for people who do not want to openly label their child with ASD. Therefore, the idea of a workbook was designed to allow teachers to implement strategies for social inclusion without the process of bringing in outside influences or going against cultural values. The workbook would target the whole class as opposed to solely intervening with selected peers.
Chapter 3

Introduction

Many children with autism spectrum disorders are being included with typically developing peers in their schools. As a result of the social difficulties that come with having ASD, interacting with peers can be a challenging experience for children with ASD. Numerous interventions have been developed to target the social skills of children with ASD. However, after a review of current literature, researchers showed that children with ASD are often misunderstood, rejected, and/or even bullied by their typical peers. Some interventions have been developed to incorporate typical peers in the inclusion process. Nevertheless, these interventions are time and/or even cost intensive. Also, current literature shows most interventions designed to target individually selected peers without addressing the whole class. Some interventions are designed to educate an entire class on Autism. However, some cultures may find labeling inappropriate or stigmatizing and would therefore be opposed to this type of intervention. With the need to target typical peers in the school inclusion process and the lack of effective interventions, a product needed to be developed to fill in these gaps. Therefore, the product I have created is a workbook intended to address the struggles of having ASD without labeling. The workbook will use strategies for promoting support and acceptance towards peers with ASD.

In this chapter, I will discuss the process involved in developing this workbook. I will also address the intended audience this workbook is designed for and the personal qualification of those who will use it. In addition, I will address the environment the
workbook can be used in and any equipment that may be needed. Lastly, I will provide an outline of the workbook, including its content, activities, and procedures.

Development of Project

In 2007, I began working as a behavioral therapist for children with autism spectrum disorders. Part of my job involved helping these children achieve social and behavioral goals at their schools. Many of my clients were in regular classrooms surrounded by typical peers. While working in the schools, I noticed a lot of effort was being made towards fixing the child with ASD. There was me, shadowing and implementing behavioral and social interventions, there was the resource teacher, providing individualized educational attention, there was the speech therapist, increasing communication skills, the occupational therapist, developing gross and fine motor skills and facilitating sensory needs, and there was also the adaptive P.E teachers, improving physical, sport, and game playing skills. In addition, many of my clients would have behavioral therapy in their homes after school, which further addressed social and behavioral challenges. With all of these therapies, I noticed my clients had acquired many social and communicative skills.

During recess I would encourage and support my clients to use their skills with their peers. Whether it was imaginary play, playing handball, basketball, jump rope, or tag, I ended up working a lot with my clients’ peers. I would encourage peers to help and teach my client, and gave high reinforcement and attention to any support given to my client. Children would sometimes ask me why I was there with my client and I would explain that my client was very smart and great at a lot of things, but he or she sometimes needed helping playing or talking with friends. Sometimes, I would simply say, “I’m
here to help” and they wouldn’t know I was there for a specific child. The more I encouraged and supported peers in helping and interacting with my client, the more I started to see a community of support develop around my clients. I would see children cheering for my client and my client cheering for others. I would see my clients perform better at sports, games and play. Sometimes I would even see children let my client be the team captain. This support ensued in the classroom as well, and promoted patience and understanding. Ultimately, I would see my clients being seen as valuable by their peers and friendships developing.

It is wonderful that there is a service where therapists can be in the school supporting children with ASD, but unfortunately with budget cuts, these services are being cut more and more. The families that usually end up getting these services often have to hire advocates to fight to obtain these services for their child. Many cultures and families with lower incomes may be unaware of such a service and/or unable to afford the fight. Therefore, I imagined the usefulness and cost effectiveness of using a workbook as a strategy for assisting inclusion in the classroom.

With the continuing increase of children with ASD entering our society, I acknowledged the necessity of other peers being able to tolerate, accept, and commune with these unique individuals. I decided to research the existing literature on targeting typical peers as part of the intervention process. What I noticed was a lack of interventions and research on working with typical peers. The interventions that did exist appeared insensitive to the needs of schools and different cultures. As a result, I decided to create a workbook that would incorporate researched, effective strategies for social
inclusion, be sensitive to cultural and school needs, and provide a pathway for creating a supportive community that starts in the classroom.

As a child, I had always loved Dr. Seuss books. I was inspired to use rhyming as part of the development of the workbook. Also, working in classrooms exposed me to the types of worksheets, art, and group projects teachers’ use. As a result, I used these examples as guidelines for incorporating these projects into the workbook. I used a website called Bookemon.com, which provided a template to put the workbook together using text and pictures. I designed the workbook to be child and teacher friendly, while still using researched ideas, ideas from books on teaching children, and ideas from my own experiences.

**Intended Audience**

The target population for the social inclusion workbook would be typical peers who have children with autism spectrum disorders included in their school. The workbook is intended for children in 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms (ages 6-9 years old) and for children of all genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities or races. This workbook would be most appropriate for 2nd and 3rd graders in the United States because its design was based off of the U.S public school system, but other countries may find it applicable in their schools. The workbook is initially written in English, but may be translated into another language by an outside vendor in the future. This workbook may be inappropriate for children 10 years or older due to its design being formulated around the interests, experiences, and educational level of younger children.
*Personal Qualifications*

The qualifications of the professionals who will be using the workbook are credentialed elementary school teachers. An understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and the Federal inclusion policy may be helpful, but is not required to use this product.

*Environment and Equipment*

The workbook is to be used in a 2nd or 3rd grade classroom in a public or private elementary school. The lessons and activities should be presented during class time. However, some activities may be given as homework assignments to be discussed later on in the classroom. Equipment needed for the execution of the workbook is pencils, butcher paper or large pieces of paper, and crayons, colored pencils, or markers for the students. Also, in the event that a workbook can’t be afforded to each student, a copy machine may be needed to make copies of lessons and activities. If a school does not have a copy machine or sufficient ink and paper needed for copying, students can use blank paper to conduct workbook activities.

*Project Outline*

The content of the social inclusion workbook for students in 2nd or 3rd grade classrooms includes: lessons and activities on how children are special, similar and different; small group activities incorporating children with similar interests; lessons and activities on helping others; a lesson and activity on bullying; and lessons and activities on the qualities of being a good friend.

The workbook will start off with an introduction for teachers on ways to utilize and execute the lessons and activities provided in the workbook. Teachers will also be
provided with optional strategies for promoting support between peers, such as handing out tickets when a child is caught helping another and using these tickets in a raffle for prizes. Another strategy that will be recommended is facilitating small groups and pairing for academic lessons.

The workbook will begin with a section explaining how children are special. Students will be asked to fill in a questionnaire followed by a drawing activity about them. Then students will learn about how they are similar, and an activity will be given addressing things students have in common with one another.

The next section of the workbook will address how children may act different or unusual. A lesson will be provided on how children think and act differently. An activity is included that involves looking at an abstract picture and having children write what it looks like to them, in order to show how children think differently.

The following section will address ways to help others when they are having trouble. There will be a role-play activity where small groups will be given scenarios of a child having a problem during recess. Within the small groups, students will need to figure out a way to help the child with the problem and act the scenario out. In addition, children will be asked to write about a time they helped someone, which they will then share with the class.

The interest inventory will ask students to fill out a form asking about what they like to play, do, learn about, and/or talk about. Based off of the inventory, children will also be assigned into small groups where children share similar interests where they will develop a poster ad for their shared interest.
Another section of the workbook will provide lessons on bullying. Students will have the opportunity to discuss experiences where they or someone else they know have been bullied. Students will draw a picture depicting how to treat others and write a caption. There will also be an activity where the teacher will write down rules on treating others that will be developed by the class.

The final section of the workbook will ask students to discuss the qualities of someone who is a good friend. There will be an activity asking students to write about a time when someone was a good friend to them. Students will be asked to practice some of the qualities that make a good friend at recess and write about it afterwards.

The workbook will be set up with one lesson and activity a day. Some activities may take more than 1 day to complete. The lessons and activities need to be conducted in order, but do not need to be done daily. Some activities have the option to be done as homework.
Chapter 4

Conclusions and Future Work

This chapter summarizes the proceeding chapters and offers suggestions for future work that builds upon the social inclusion workbook.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to develop a workbook that could effectively enhance the social inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders in general education settings. The goal of the project was to lay the foundation for creating classroom communities that motivate support and acceptance. Furthermore, the project intended to educate students on how to interact and support a child with ASD effectively without labeling a child with ASD.

In order to promote the successful inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorders in regular schools, general classrooms need to implement an intervention that effectively and longitudinally improves understanding, tolerance, and support towards children with ASD. Unfortunately, there is a current lack of sufficient interventions for enhancing the social experiences of children with ASDs in regular schools (Humphrey and Symes, 2010).

With the high rise in autism spectrum disorders and the push for the inclusion of children with disabilities, there is a need for interventions supporting social inclusion. Many programs and therapies attempt to teach social skills to children with ASD. However these services are limited, expensive, and do not necessarily target typical peers as part of the inclusion process. Researchers have recognized that children with ASD experience rejection, avoidance, misunderstanding, and victimization from their typical
peers (Cappadocia, Weiss, & Pepler, 2012) (Symes & Humphrey, 2010). Therefore, it is important that typical peers be incorporated into the inclusion process to help provide a positive socially inclusive environment for children with ASD.

Currently, there is a lack of interventions and research on working with typical peers. The interventions that do exist appear insensitive to the needs of schools and different cultures. As a result, the social inclusion workbook was developed to target typical peers as part of the inclusion process, while being cost effective and sensitive to cultural ideals on psychological labels.

Discussion and Conclusions

Upon conclusion of my project, I recognize that this workbook is, in fact, specific to the 6 to 9 year old range, and thus would only provide benefits to that age group. The reality exists that the same fundamental problems occur in other age groups, but the specific problems and remedies may vary depending on the different ages. Consequently, the implementation of other strategies that target the specific issues in other age groups would be recommended.

Future Work/Research

I would like the social inclusion workbook to be adopted by elementary schools and incorporated or encouraged as part of the curriculum. In order to promote usage of the social inclusion workbook in schools, workshops can be designed for parents of students with autism spectrum disorders, which empower them to push the social inclusion workbook into the schools of their children. Furthermore, training workshops can be developed to support teachers using the product on ways to optimize the success of the workbook. In addition, an evaluation can be designed for teachers to provide...
feedback on the workbook, so that it can be fine-tuned and improved for future success. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention, an outcome study should be conducted that measures the effectiveness of the workbook on the social inclusion of children with ASD. Studies that are conducted can measure the longitudinal success of support and acceptance of children with ASD and the improvement of interactions between typical and ASD peers. Studies can also compare results of students who received the workbook intervention to students who did not.
References


