

Parents' Facilitation of Friendships Between Their Children With a Disability and Friends Without a Disability

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This article is concerned with parental facilitation of friendships between children with a disability and peer without a disability. Previous research on typical children has pointed out that parent facilitation has enabled them to establish a more active social life. We use Schaffner and Buswell's facilitation framework (i.e., finding opportunities, making interpretations, and making accommodations) to organize the grounded strategies used by four Hispanic families, all of whom have a son of daughter with a disability who is experiencing a successful friendship with a peer without a disability. Data collection involved 13 semistructured group and individual interviews, with 31 respondents, including parents, children/youth with and without disabilities, teachers, and other family members. Evidence from these interviews shows that the selected families, particularly mothers, have actively facilitated friendships most frequently by finding opportunities (which always involved some level of interpretation and accommodation). They also generally facilitated friendships by exposing their children to a wide range of potential friends, rather than prioritizing a relationship with a specific person. Of the parents of children without a disability, two mothers, who were also service providers for the individuals with disabilities, specifically facilitated a friendship between the individual and their own son or daughter. The discussion highlights key issues for future research.

DESCRIPTORS: parental facilitation, friendships, Hispanic families

Friends are considered a vital component of lifestyle quality for children and youth with disabilities (Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, & Harry, 1998). Over the last several years, the literature has increasingly addressed three areas perceived as critical in increasing friendship

opportunities at school. These areas are (a) the nature of friendship interactions between children with and without disabilities (Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Grenot-Scheyer, 1994; Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994; Siperstein, Leffert, & Wenz-Gross, 1997; Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994); (b) the impact of placement on the nature of social relationships and friendships (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Guralnick, Connor, Hammond, Gottman, & Kinnish, 1995; Sale & Carey, 1995); and (c) strategies teachers can use to facilitate friendships (Cooper & McEvoy, 1996; Kishi & Meyer, 1994; Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995).

Literature is also emerging on parental perspectives on friendship. In one study, over two thirds of 17 families of children, youth, and adults with challenging behavior expressed disappointment and even resignation about their son or daughter's lack of friends (Turnbull & Ruef, 1997). In another study, parents of preschool children with disabilities or at risk for disabilities reported a strong priority related to their children learning to interact socially with peers and to develop friendships (Guralnick, Connor, & Hammond, 1995). Forty percent of the mothers in this study (that compared their perspectives toward inclusive and segregated settings) reported concern about rejection and the negative impact of rejection of their children. A recent study investigated the visions of Hispanic parents of adolescents/young adults with disabilities (Blue-Banning, 1997). Many of these parent participants emphasized the importance of their son or daughter having friends and opportunities to participate with them in community activities.

An emerging body of literature with typical children focuses on parents as (a) instigators of children's organized activities, (b) arrangers of social opportunities, and (c) monitors/supervisors of peer relationships. In terms of instigating children's organized activities, about 80% of the families of children between 5 and 14 years of age participate in community activities, with more active instigator roles by middle-class mothers as contrasted to working-class mothers (O'Donnell & Stueve, 1983). Children of parents who tend to be arrangers of social opportunities have a larger

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range of playmates and more frequent companions than parents who are less active in this role (Ladd & Goiter, 1988). Furthermore, children whose parents facilitate peer relationships have closer and more stable peer relationships and fewer problems (Krappmann, 1986). In terms of parental monitoring and supervision of peer relationships, preschool children whose parents are more active in this regard have increased social-interactive competence (Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989). These positive outcomes, some authors have reasoned, result from parents' sharing valuable interpretations about their children's friendships, information to which others do not necessarily have access (Doll, 1993; Younger, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1986).

There has been virtually no research related to friendship facilitation roles of parents of children with disabilities, in spite of the fact that many children with disabilities are likely to have a greater need for friendship facilitation. There is some application literature related to practical suggestions for parents in friendship facilitation (Lutfiyya, 1998; Schaffner & Buswell, 1992). These authors suggest that friendship facilitation involves finding opportunities, making interpretations, and making accommodations.

Many people can facilitate friendships, including current friends, general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, classmates, family members, and community citizens (Hamre-Nietupski, Hendrickson, Nietupski, Sasso, & Shokoohi-Yekta, 1993; Hamre-Nietupski, Hendrickson, Nietupski, & Shokoohi-Yekta, 1994). Hartup (1979) suggests, "Parents manage the social lives of their children directly. Mothers and fathers consciously determine the timing and circumstances under which their offspring will have contact with individuals outside the nuclear family" (p. 949).

Given the significant role that parents play in socialization, the purpose of this article is to examine the ways in which parents have successfully facilitated friendships for their sons or daughters with a disability with friends who do not have a disability. Data for this study come from a larger study that examined 11 successful friendships between children with and without a disability. In this article, we concentrate on the four families who most extensively and explicitly identified parent facilitation as a priority and were also the most actively involved in facilitating their child's friendships.

Method

We used the participatory action research (PAR) model that involves collaborative participation of potential research beneficiaries in defining the research focus and advising throughout all stages of the research process (Lather, 1986; Turnbull, Friesen, & Ramirez, 1998; Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes, 1991). Our PAR committee

consisted of an adult with a disability, four parents, two teachers, and two researchers.¹ This PAR committee encouraged us to choose one ethnic group rather than pursuing our original goal of including in the sample families of Hispanic, African-American, and Euro-American origins. Narrowing the racial/ethnic component of the study, the PAR committee members asserted, would allow us to attain more cultural depth through multiple interviews with respondents from the same cultural group.

We concurred with their recommendation for two reasons, in addition to the cultural depth rationale. First, we have long been concerned that the majority of literature on parents and families has been based primarily on Euro-American families (Turnbull & Turbiville, 1993). Thus, much of what we know about families in the disability field we know from a Euro-American perspective. Second, the Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States (Gutiérrez, 1995).

Participants

Working through a Hispanic community disability leader in diverse geographical locations (i.e., Texas, California, Kansas, and Connecticut), we sought nominations of Hispanic children/youth with disabilities from different age groups and disability classification, who had a successful friendship with a peer who did not have a disability. (The Hispanic community disability leaders have long-term and familiar relationships with a large group of parents of Hispanic children/youth with disabilities and were able to direct us to families who live in different neighborhoods and school districts.)

We defined successful friendships according to the following criteria: (a) an ongoing relationship for a minimum of 6 months, (b) both children/youth initiate contact and activities with each other, (c) they share experiences in at least two settings (e.g., school playground and YMCA), and (d) they are not more than 1E months apart in age. These criteria emerged from an extensive review of the friendship and social network literature related to children without disabilities (Belle 1989). They are generally self-explanatory except for the rationale for not having more than 18 months difference in age. We included this criterion because we were primarily interested in peer friendships in inclusive settings, as contrasted to friendships (that may have been just as important or more important) with individuals at diverse stages of the lifespan.

We asked the Hispanic community disability leaders who had a broad knowledge of the Hispanic children, youth with disabilities throughout the entire community, to identify

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not more than four friendship sets (i.e., child/youth with a disability and friend without a disability) who they believed had friendships that were the most consistent with these success criteria. Thus, we used two methods of sampling. First, we used purposive sampling (i.e., the selection of a reduced number of respondents who represent diverse characteristics of the target group; Bogdan & Bikien, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1995). Diversity included geographical residence, age, and nature of disability. Additionally, we used extreme case sampling as a strategy for identifying participants. Patton (1990) describes extreme case sampling as attaining information from special or unusual situations that may be specially instructive. The special or unusual situation within this sample was the presence of these successful friendships. (We acknowledge that because we were depending on the social network of community disability leaders in our sample selection, there were likely families in this community unknown to the community disability leaders whose children may have had friendships that met these criteria.)

Community leaders identified a total of 11 children/youth with a disability from 10 different families (there were twins in one case), whose ages ranged from 5 to 19. These children/youth represented a variation in disability classification (i.e., autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and emotional disorders) and the presence of multiple disabilities. Data were coded into 5 categories and 29 subcategories. Parent facilitation was a subcategory. In analyzing the comments in the parent facilitation subcategory for the purpose of identifying themes, it was apparent to the researchers that four of the families had been highly active in friendship facilitation considering the number of comments that they made and the pervasiveness of their facilitation comments. Given the richness of the parent facilitation data from these families, we targeted this study on conducting an in-depth analysis of their comments. The remaining portion of this method section focuses on this data subset. We have reported on teacher facilitation of friendships from this data set in a separate paper (Turnbull, Pereira, & Blue-Banning, in press).

Data Collection

A semistructured interview guide was used to provide general direction for the individual and group interviews (Creswell, 1994; Krueger, 1994). Four researchers, one of them Hispanic, planned and implemented the interviews so that the encounters would be "a conversation between equals, rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 77). To give respondents a broad latitude, the interviews were guided by grand tour questions about the general nature of each child/youth's friendship (Crabtree, Yanoshik, Miller, & O'Connor, 1993). These four families all addressed parent facilitation spontaneously in an *interspersed* manner throughout their entire interview (for other families who

did not bring up parent facilitation, we did probe to find out their perspectives on this topic).

For the four families targeted in this study, there were a total of 13 interviews. In 9 of these interviews, there was more than one participant. These interviews collected information from 31 respondents. They included 5 children/youth with a disability, 6 friends, 10 parents, 5 teachers, and 5 other family members of either the child with a disability or friend. Table 1 provides a description of interview participants. Interview duration ranged between 20 minutes (especially for young children) to 2 hours. Two respondents opted to share information in Spanish. In both instances, the Hispanic researcher, whose native language is Spanish, served as the facilitator. The interviews were audiorecorded and professionally transcribed. (The two Spanish interviews were transcribed in Spanish and were then translated into English for data analysis.) As a token of appreciation, each child/youth received a \$5 McDonald's coupon. Adults received \$10, a subscription to a family and disability newsletter, and a copy of the study's results.

Data Analysis

We used the constant comparative method of analysis to interpret the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method involved three phases, which required (a) organizing and reducing the raw data, (b) generating categories and codes, and (c) interpreting patterns and themes. In terms of organizing and reducing raw data, three researchers read and reread transcripts. Once they became thoroughly familiar with the data, they marked relevant passages meeting the criteria of relevance and meaningfulness (Seidman, 1991).

Next, each member of the three-person research team generated categories by progressing through a number of steps: (a) developing a preliminary list of categories, (b) discussing and refining topics to designate a list of tentative codes, (c) discussing and resolving disagreements through consensus, and (d) coding the transcripts for categories. After agreements had been reached on all categories and corresponding codes assigned to the categories, one of the researchers entered the codes into a data management computer program, *The Ethnograph* (Seidel, Friese, & Leonard, 1995), to sort the data by category. A two-person research team then went back through this four-step process to establish subcategories. This study focuses on a single subcategory—parent facilitation.

As the third task, the team interpreted patterns and themes by following three steps. First, the researchers discussed the meaning of each category and subcategory by asking reflective questions to identify patterns—contradictions, and key quotes. Second, they sought plausible and alternative explanations. Finally, they

clarified interpretations through the process of writing the results.

Lincoln (1995) encourages the incorporation of the foundational criteria framework and the emerging relational framework as bases for establishing the rigor and quality of qualitative inquiry. To address the foundational criteria, the research team considered the three constructs of credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

1. **Credibility:** Researchers used triangulation and member/stakeholder checks to ensure credibility. The triangulation involved requesting the participation of children, parents, teachers, and other family members as "... different *sources* of the *same* information" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). We also used multiple investigators, that is, four researchers participating in data collection and three researchers in data analysis.

Interview participants and individuals on the PAR committee collaborated for the member and stakeholder checks. Each parent identified in Table 1 received a draft copy of this article and a feedback questionnaire. Additionally, two parent members of the PAR committee (one of whom is Hispanic) also were asked to provide a similar review to obtain a stakeholder perspective. The questionnaire included six topics, seeking feedback on each parent's reaction to the article (e.g., Do you believe important points have been left out? If yes, please identify them).

We received feedback from three of the four

parents (member check) and the two PAR committed members (stakeholder check). (The one parent who did not respond to the member check, indicated that she was in the midst of some especially stressful and time-consuming experiences; and simply did not have the time.) All respondents indicated having no disagreements with the content of the findings and discussion sections. One parent participant provided comments suggesting, how to improve clarity in the data presentation. A PAR committee member stated a caveat expressing the need to highlight the difficulty of parental facilitation of friendships. A quote from her comment is included later in the article. All respondents (interview respondents and stakeholders) received \$25 for reviewing the article.

2. **Transferability:** Although transferability is not a crucial issue for qualitative studies (Maxwell, 1996), we sought to enhance transferability by including different geographic locations to expand the diversity of the sample, children/youth of different ages and disabilities, and parents from both single and dual-parent families. We acknowledge that a focus on four families is an extremely small sample size; however, in qualitative research, the purpose is to present data that are "... detailed and complete enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 95). We describe the facilitation strategies (in the next section) so that readers can assess the potential transferability to other families (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 1
Description of Interview Participants

Parents	Child/youth with disability	Disability	Age	Friend			Other participants	
				Race/ethnicity	without disability	Age		
Mr. and Ms. Saks	Angélica	MR	7	M-A	Cindy	7	E-A	Consuelo (Angélica's sister) Mr. and Ms. Squires (Cindy's parents) Ms. Aragón (Angélica's teacher)
Mr. and Ms. Ramírez	Danny	MR	12	M-A	Jason	11	A-A	Mr. MacKeben (Danny's special education teacher)
					Yolanda	11	M-A	Mr. Fields. (Danny's general education teacher) Ms. Robinson (Jason's mother) Leah (Jason's sister) Ms. Blanco (Yolanda's grandmother) Litsé (Danny's neighbor) Itze (Danny's sister) Claudia (Danny's sister) Ms. Russell (Carolyn's mother)
Ms. Quiros	Meili	MR/CP	11	P-A	Carolyn	11	B	
Ms. Cofresi	Roxy	MR/CP	19	M-A	Saúl	18	M-A	Mr. Arias (Roxy's teacher and Adrian's mother)
	Roxela	MR/CP	19	M-A	Adrian	18	M-A	Ms. Lorea (Roxela's teacher and Adrian's mother)

Note: M-A = Mexican-American; P-A = Puerto Rican-American; E-A = Euro-American; A-A = African-American; B = Black (Caribbean); MR = mental retardation.

3. **Dependability:** The construct of dependability examines the extent to which the process of the study was consistent across researchers. Using four researchers for data collection and three for the analysis helped to ensure that the data were not weighted to reflect any one researcher's perceptions (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992). During the data analysis phase, three researchers extensively discussed their agreements and disagreements in order to reach consensus on the categories and subcategories.

We also incorporated Lincoln's (1995) more current identification of emerging relational criteria for ensuring rigor and quality:

1. **Voice:** As a form of resistance to marginalization, this research focused on Hispanic children and families who have not been as well represented in the literature as Euro-Americans. The project also included the perspectives of children/youth with and without a disability about their friendships, as well as their parents' and teachers' perspectives. It provided an opportunity to hear "alternative voices" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 283).
2. **Reciprocity:** Consistent with the need to establish reciprocal relationships " ... marked by a deep sense of trust, caring, and mutuality" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 284), the research team benefited from the guidance of Ms. Ramírez as a member of the PAR committee, as well as a site coordinator and as an interview respondent. Rather than viewing her multiple roles as a "contaminating factor," we view the intensity and comprehensiveness of our reciprocal relationship with Ms. Ramírez to be a factor in her comfort in providing us with such full information on her family and encouraging the other families to be comfortable with us.
Another element of reciprocity was asking the families if they would prefer to have their real name or a pseudonym used in the article; if they preferred a pseudonym, we asked them to give a pseudonym preference, if they had one. All parents indicated they would prefer to have their real name used in the article. One even indicated that she would "feel violated" if a name other than her own was used in the article to describe her personal and family experiences.
3. **Sharing the perquisites of privilege:** As Lincoln (1995) advises, research participants shared privilege perquisites by being paid for their interview participation and for their member check. Additionally, two of the four parents have been co-presenters of these data at national conferences and have had their expenses paid to those conferences.
4. **Communitarian nature of research:** Our intent is

for the research to "serve the purposes of the community in which it was carried out" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 280). To accomplish this goal, we prepared a user-friendly manual of friendship stories from this research, *Amistad* (1997), in English and Spanish versions, for the benefit of families and practitioners. We distributed approximately 700 copies of *Amistad* to research participants and community organizations who provide educational services and advocacy for Hispanic families.

Findings

In this section, we describe a brief snapshot of the five selected friendships. We then focus in more detail on the facilitation strategies used by the parents of children/youth with a disability. We subsequently address the facilitative role of parents of children/ youth without a disability.

Snapshots of Friendship

The Salas family-Angélica and Cindy. Angélica Salas, a 7-year-old Mexican-American girl, enjoys sports, especially swimming. Her parents describe her as sociable and expressive. Angélica met Cindy Squires, also 7, in elementary school, and they later spent time together swimming at the YMCA. Describing this friendship, Mr. and Ms. Sales, and Ms. Aragón, Angélica's teacher, indicated that the girls' friendship is primarily based on playing with each other. Cindy rarely assumes the role of "helper" when spending time with Angélica.

The Ramírez family-Danny, Jason, and Yolanda. Danny Ramírez is a 12-year-old Mexican-American youth who likes to play sports and attend church. His family, friends, and teachers describe him as nice, well mannered, and sociable. Danny's two best friends, Jason and Yolanda, are both 11 years of age and members of his Circle of Friends. They all go to the same school. Yolanda comforts Danny when other students tease him and assists him when he needs extra help at school. Jason appointed himself Danny's "bodyguard," requested the same class schedule as Danny's, and often hangs out with Danny during lunch time. Danny reciprocates by paying attention to what Jason and Yolanda have to say, showing understanding when they are in a bad mood, and saying, "You are my best friends."

The Quirós family-Meili and Carolyn. Meili Quirós, a 12-year-old Puerto Rican youth, likes music, singing, and dancing. She met 11-year-old Carolyn through Carolyn's mother, Ms. Russell. Ms. Russell is a nurse's aide who helps provide care for Meili. (Meili has limited mobility and is unable to attend to any of her daily living needs.) Ms. Russell also is a confidant and close friend to Meili's mother, Ms. Quirós. At Meili's house, Carolyn and Meili enjoy themselves playing and singing together. At school, Carolyn always tries to sit next to Meili for school assemblies and shows her affection, despite some negative

reactions from peers who seem unable to understand how Carolyn could hang out with a person who is nonverbal and nonambulatory. Societal discrimination may explain the instant chemistry and strong bond that exists between the girls. According to Ms. Russell, both Carolyn and Meili confront challenges due to their cultures (Black and Hispanic, respectively) and Meili's disability (severe cerebral palsy and mental retardation). When asked how this relationship provided benefits for these girls, Ms. Russell replied: "By having somebody to love."

The Cofresi family-Roxy, Saúl, Roxela, and Adrian. Roxy and Roxela Cofresi are 19-year-old Mexican-American twins. As a result of cerebral palsy, Roxy uses crutches and Roxela a wheelchair. They have spent most of their school career in a separate school for students with multiple disabilities and only recently have been included in a typical high school for a portion of the day. Roxy has been a leader in the school's chapter of the Vocational Industrial Club of America. Saúl, an 18-year-old classmate and club member, describes how everybody likes Roxy, and they are all eager to assist in minimizing her mobility challenges. Saúl particularly emphasizes Roxy's kindness and the help she provides to others in the club. Similarly, Roxela's teachers and friends comment on her likable and nonverbally communicative character. Ms. Lorea, one of her teachers, introduced Roxela to her son, Adrian, 18, who is in the same computer class and a football player. In turn, Adrian introduced Roxela to other team members, who became her friends and invited her for afterschool rides. Occasionally, Roxela has lunch with some of the team members and receives flowers from some of them on special occasions.

Facilitation Strategies of Parents of Children/Youth With Disabilities

The content analysis of the parent facilitation category (within the larger data set) resulted in the identification of eight grounded facilitation strategies. After we generated the eight strategies inductively from the content analysis, we organized the eight strategies into the friendship facilitation framework suggested by Lutfiyya (1998) and Schaffner & Buswell (1992)-finding opportunities, making interpretations, and making accommodations. Thus, this a priori framework was deductively used to organize the eight grounded strategies in terms of their primary function (Table 2).

A foundational facilitation theme appeared to under-gird the three dimensions of the facilitation framework. This foundational theme was accepting children unconditionally. All four parents described a rather immediate transformation that occurred shortly after their child's birth when they consciously decided to give priority to the humanness of their child rather than to the disability. For example, about 2 hours after Danny was born, the physician came into the hospital room and

Table 2
Parental Facilitation Framework

Foundational theme

Accepting the child/youth unconditionally (e.g., loving the "disabled portion" of the child/youth and perceiving her or him as "whole" rather than "broken")

Creating opportunities

Advocating for inclusion in the neighborhood school (e.g., working to have the child/youth attend the neighborhood school rather than to be bused to a school across town)

Supporting participation in community activities (e.g., enrolling the child/youth for the First Communion class and supporting the instructor to engage in comfortable interaction)

Initiating and facilitating a Circle of Friends (e.g., starting a Circle of Friends to encourage friendships within the school and community settings)

Setting sibling-consistent expectations (e.g., in light of how siblings call each other on the phone, encouraging the child/youth and his or her friends to call each other)

Making interpretations

Encouraging others to accept the child/youth (e.g., discussing their child's/youth's strengths and needs with others and supporting others to know how to communicate comfortably)

Ensuring an attractive appearance (e.g., ensuring that the child/youth is dressed and groomed in a way that is likely to draw positive and appropriate attention)

Making accommodations

Advocating for partial participation in community activities (e.g., encouraging an instructor community activities to know how to adapt expectations to enable partial participation in completing them)

told Mr. and Ms. Ramírez that they had a "Mongoloid son." They went out to the hospital nursery to look at Danny. The nurse thought she was being well intentioned and said, "Do you want your son at the window where everybody can see him or do you want him away from all the other babies where nobody can see him? Mr. and Ms. Ramírez described this as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown on them. Mr. Ramírez emphatically replied, "Of course we want him there [at the window]. Why shouldn't he be there? He's like all the other babies." Mr. and Ms. Ramírez promised themselves "right then and there that Danny was going to be part of everybody's life, and he was not going to be separated from anybody. 'Ms. Cofresi, the twins' mother, and Ms. Quirós especially emphasized that their own unconditional acceptance of their children was spiritually rooted. Ms. Cofresi described using God as her model: "I have to request God's grace and to seek what God would think about them for me to think about them. Because it was God who created them." Both mothers expressed their belief in God's unconditional love for their children and that they should follow God's lead.

Finding opportunities. The first category in the friendship facilitation framework is finding opportunities, which involves arranging

opportunities to bring individuals with and without disabilities together (Schaffner & Buswell, 1992). To increase the likelihood of finding opportunities, these parents reported using four facilitation strategies: (a) advocating for inclusion in the neighborhood school, (b) supporting participation in community activities, (c) initiating and facilitating a circle of friends, and (d) involving siblings.

Advocating for inclusion in the neighborhood school. The Salases, the Ramírezes, and Ms. Quirós were emphatic in their belief that an inclusive education would encourage more friendships for Angélica, Danny, and Meili. According to Mr. Salas, his daughter was "an outsider in her own neighborhood" when she was bused to a special school for pre-kindergarten. Angélica's sister, Consuelo, stressed her parents' strong advocacy role in convincing the school system that Angélica should attend her neighborhood school. Consuelo commented: "They tested her and they tested her again, and they wanted her to stay there [in the special school] ... but my parents said, 'No.'" Angélica's alienation decreased when she started attending her neighborhood school, which provided an inclusive education. In this setting, an option was provided for students to stay after the morning kindergarten program to have lunch at school, and parents were invited to join students for this optional lunch period. Ms. Salas joined Angélica at school for lunch and was able to facilitate the acquaintanceship and then friendship of Angélica and Cindy, a classmate who ended up being Angélica's closest friend. Ms. Salas was able to encourage them during this lunch period to sit together, talk about topics of mutual interests, and generally get to know each other.

The Salases also provide a good illustration of the relationship between parents encouraging inclusion both in the neighborhood school and in the community. Because Angélica got to know Cindy during the optional lunch period at school, their meeting again at the YMCA to participate on the swim team strengthened their relationship. A similar situation occurred with Angélica's involvement in a Girl Scout troop. Thus, Angélica met a friend at school and then was able to spend additional time with her in community activities.

After trying every angle they knew to prevent segregation, Mr. and Ms. Ramírez pursued a due process hearing when Danny was in the early years of elementary school. The decision was that the school was right in segregating him, so Mr. and Ms. Ramírez took the case to federal court and then to the U.S. District Court. The findings of this significant case (Daniel R. v. State Board of Education) resulted in Danny's having increasing inclusive opportunities. Being able to attend his neighborhood school, Danny became friends with Jason and Yolanda and shared a number of classes with them. Jason even came up with the idea of changing his schedule at the beginning of the school year to fit Danny's so that they could have all of their classes together.

Supporting participation in community activities. All four families looked for the existing activities in their neighborhoods and communities to further friendship opportunities. In three of them, church was an important place for connecting with others. Ms. Cofresi, Roxy, and Roxela participated in many church activities. Ms. Cofresi said that her church friends were disappointed if she came alone to church functions without the twins. Meili participated in preparation classes for the First Communion every Saturday for a year. She was the only child with a disability in a class of 35 children. Ms. Quirós offered suggestions to the instructor for handling some behavior concerns and drooling.

There were several activities that applied to specific families. For instance, Angélica participated in the local YMCA swimming team, for which Mr. Salas "felt like their personal coach." Ms. Ramírez actively sought special opportunities in which Danny and his friends could participate such as going to the movies and an amusement park, eating at Peter Pan Pizza, organizing birthday parties for Danny's friends, and skating. Because a number of these activities were quite expensive, Ms. Ramírez helped Danny and his friends organize car washes so they could raise money.

An opportunity occurred for Meili when Ms. Quirós heard on the Hartford radio that there was a Miss Puerto Rico Beauty Pageant for youngsters. Because Meili met the two criteria (age and Puerto Rican heritage), Ms. Quirós immediately proceeded to enter her as a contestant. When she called and enrolled Meili, Ms. Quirós provided all of the information relevant to the beauty pageant and only disclosed Meili's "condition" at the end of the conversation. To the silent reply of the pageant organizers, she quickly and assertively added, "Well, you cannot reject her, because she is part of the community. She is Puerto Rican, and she's very pretty ... she is going to participate whether you like it or not." The pageant director decided to consult with the other mothers on whether or not Meili should be allowed to participate, and Ms. Quirós described that these mothers had "doubt in their faces." These doubts disappeared when Ms. Quirós spoke to them about her desire to give Meili "a normal life like everybody else." Her participation in the beauty pageant was one means to achieve this goal.

On the night of the pageant, the master of ceremony called Ms. Quirós to the front, describing her as "a very brave woman." Ms. Quirós described what she said to the pageant audience:

I told them that I wanted them to see Meili as a person, not with cerebral palsy . . . I just wanted her participation in the pageant. And also once the pageant was over and they see Meili on the street, I want them to know Meili and to talk to her, accept her the way she is.

This vision started to come true when Ms. Quirós casually met the master of ceremonies at the store after the pageant. According to Ms. Quirós, "I never thought she would come to me. She came to me and asked me, 'How is Meili?' That was something really nice for me..."

Initiating and facilitating a Circle of Friends. Ms. Ramírez attended a workshop about the Circle of Friends approach when Danny was in the third grade. Although Ms. Ramírez was eager to put what she learned into practice for Danny's benefit, she immediately ran into resistance from the principal.

I was concerned that the principal, you know she was fighting us all the way.- She didn't want to start anything new, anything to rock the boat, and I tried to respect that. I did what I could with what little bit she allowed me. Because my fear was always that they're going to take it out on Danny, because they have done that before.

In the fourth grade, Ms. Ramírez convened a Circle of Friends that met every other Friday in the school once classes had ended for the day. She facilitated the Circle to focus on Danny and how to solve his problems and increase his social activities. For instance, Jason explained that the Circle "helped him [Danny] on doing his work and helped him pay more attention in class... ." Yolanda described the Circle's advice for Danny on how to handle kids at school who were calling Danny names: "We just [told] Danny to ignore them, not to listen to them, and just to walk away when they are telling him something."

Involving siblings. In three families, siblings contributed to the process of creating friendship opportunities. Ms. Cofresi insisted that her older son and daughter take their twin sisters for a walk in the stroller when the twins were infants. She would dress the twins in their prettiest clothes. She commented, "The first task was to make them feel no shame because of their sisters"; and the feeling of no shame evolved as people in the neighborhood complimented the twins and expressed eagerness to see them. Ms. Cofresi reported that the older siblings and the neighbors became more eager to include the twins in their activities as a result of these walks.

Siblings' experiences represented a source of frustration and a catalyst for Ms. Ramírez. She expressed frustration for feeling that the burden of creating opportunities for Danny and his friends to connect fell on her shoulders and Danny's. She encouraged Jason, Yolanda, and other friends to take the initiative in calling Danny, because she had noticed how many friends called Itse and Claudia, Danny's sisters. Her prompts began to pay off, because on the day of the interview, Yolanda called to invite Danny to attend a school dance.

Making interpretations. The second category in the friendship facilitation framework is making interpretations or highlighting a person's strengths and commonalities to others (Schaffner & Buswell, 1992). Two facilitation strategies generated from the data fit into this category. One was encouraging others to accept their child. The other was ensuring an attractive appearance.

Encouraging others to accept their child. All four families encouraged others to accept their child. These families conveyed to others that the disability was just one more characteristic of the person rather than the only one. By openly discussing their children's strengths and needs, the parents contributed to reducing the disability stigma. For instance, the Salases, who maintained frequent contact with their extended family, commented that at first Angélica did not always mingle with "her little circle of cousins." They were curious about why Angélica would behave in a certain way. Once Mr. and Ms. Salas provided meaningful information in answering their questions, the children felt comfortable in approaching and including her in their games.

Ms. Cofresi used similar facilitation. When facing inquiring situations, she always presents Roxy and Roxela in a positive light. She described a typical interaction as follows:

Others: Are your daughters bad (in the sense of sick, with a disability)?

Ms. Cofresi: No, they are the best they can be.

Others: What? One of them walks with crutches and the other, well, is in a wheelchair.

Ms. Cofresi: But I don't call that an illness. They are healthy, well, and ... greet them, touch them, look at them ... Ask them whatever you want, address [your questions] to them.

Ms. Cofresi also offered a twist of the facilitation strategy of encouraging others to accept her daughters by encouraging the twins to practice the "golden rule" with friends. From her perspective, the golden rule advises accepting the "dirty looks" and questions from the others. For this philosophy, acceptance seems to be a boomerang; if one offers it, it will come back. She taught her daughters "as you want to be treated, in that way you have to treat others." And it has worked. She emphasizes to Roxy and Roxela that they have to accept things about other people that they may not like, if they want to have an "honest friendship."

Ensuring an attractive appearance. For Ms. Quirós and Ms. Cofresi, ensuring their daughters' physical attractiveness was a means they perceived to increase the likelihood of friendships. Ms. Quirós emphasized how "pretty" Meili is and the strong priorities she places on brushing her hair, making sure she has bows and ribbons in her hair, and ensuring that her clothes are feminine and fancy. She believes that Meili's beauty and pretty

clothing are catalysts that draw other people to her and enable them to immediately give her compliments.

For me she is pretty naturally, and once I dress her the way she is, the people come to her and say, "Oh how pretty this child." And they don't see her condition, and they talk to her, say "Hi," and she starts throwing kisses.

Ms. Cofresi agreed on the significance of personal appearance. She indicated that when the twins were younger, she always tried to dress them in clothes similar to what other children wore. She believed that the twins would "draw" their friends to them in a very positive way, and her early prediction turned out to be true.

Making accommodations. The final category of the friendship facilitation framework is making accommodations, which Schaffner and Buswell (1992) describe as the actual changes or adaptations in the physical environment that help to involve an individual in some way. Of the five students, two used a wheelchair and one used crutches. Only one parental strategy generated from the content analysis addressed physical accommodations: advocating for partial participation in community activities. This partial participation not only involved accommodations related to mobility but also for tasks involving communication and cognitive skills.

Advocating for partial participation in community activities. Ms. Quirós was the primary spokesperson regarding the need for partial participation in community activities. For example, she advocated with her church to involve Meili in confirmation activities by having other children push her in the wheelchair and having the church alter the verbal requirements for being included in the final confirmation ceremony. Furthermore, she encouraged the Miss Puerto Rico Beauty Pageant organizers to enable Meili to participate in her wheelchair in the required group dance with support from the other contestants. She also advocated for Meili to answer a yes/no question rather than an open-ended one and to sing one line of a song rather than an entire song for the talent event. For the bathing suit event, Meili worked extremely hard in using a walker (with assistance) rather than her wheelchair.

Facilitation Strategies of Parents of Children/Youth Without a Disability

Of the five friendship sets (Angélica/Cindy; Danny/Jason/Yolanda; Meili/Carolyn; Roxy/Saúl; Roxela/Adrian), two were particularly enhanced by the parent of the friend without a disability. In both situations, the facilitation strategy related to increasing opportunities to bring the young people together.

For example, Meili and Carolyn's friendship was definitely facilitated by Carolyn's mother, Ms. Russell, who provides care and assistance to Meili as a nurse's aide. Ms. Russell and Ms. Quirós are close friends. Ms.

Russell and Meili are closely connected to each other, and, consequently, Meili and Carolyn have a very responsive context within which to develop their friendship. Ms. Russell described the first day Carolyn and Meili met:

So I took her over to Meili's house the following week, and it was Saturday afternoon. I took her over and no problems. Meili greeted her, hugged and kissed her. Carolyn sat and played with her. She read to her. You know so many things just clicked.

We also interviewed Ms. Lorea, the mother of Adrian, one of Roxela's friends. Ms. Lorea is a teacher aide at the school Roxela attends. Ms. Lorea got to know Roxela and then encouraged Adrian and his friends to get to know Roxela, spend time with her, and do special things like getting her a corsage for homecoming.

Discussion

In this section, we address (a) the limitations of the study, (b) the friendship facilitation framework, (c) the role of parents of children with a disability, and (d) the role of parents of children without a disability. We synthesize findings across the four families' facilitation strategies and point out important areas for future research.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was not to make generalizations about parental facilitation strategies or to understand all of the nuances of facilitation strategy for children and families with diverse characteristics. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the fact that so little previous research has been done in this area, the primary purpose was to provide an initial conceptual foundation for the study of parental facilitation of friendships.

Although we included 31 respondents (i.e., parents, children/youth with and without disabilities, other family members, and teachers), our sample is extremely small, and we did not have repeated interviews with the same participants. Conducting interviews in two locations (i.e., Texas and Connecticut) and including a wide range of respondents related to each friendship pair were done at the expense of having one closer location where we could have repeated interviews with a smaller number of respondents over a period of time.

We experienced difficulty in defining friendship and in being confident about exactly what constitutes a friendship. Future research is needed to operationalize definitions and

validate quality indicators within diverse cultural contexts that enable one to be confident about the presence of friendships. One of the criteria that we set—the child with and without a disability not being more than 18 months apart in age—is especially problematic. As we stated earlier, our intention was to try to ensure a focus on peer friendships in inclusive settings. The four friendships we describe in this article met that age criterion. We did find in our larger study that some of the children described having a best friend whose age was outside of the 18-month age differential limit. Rather than assuming that a similar-aged peer may represent an "age-appropriate" friendship, we believe that much more inquiry is needed on how children and youth with disabilities gravitate in their friendships toward people at various age ranges.

As indicated in this study, the children/youth and families for this article were drawn from a larger sample. We did not include demographic information on the severity of each child/youth's disability, although it was clear to us that all children/youth included in this study were receiving extensive and pervasive support to enable their participation in general and special education settings at school and within their home environments (Luckasson et al., 1992). We regret that we cannot more definitively describe the severity of each child/youth's disability, although we noted quite similar strategies when we compared the child/youth with the least severe disability with the child/youth with the most severe disability. Future research is needed to more definitively clarify the tailoring of friendship facilitation strategies in light of the extent of the child/youth's disability.

In terms of methodology, we did not retranslate the Spanish to English translation of interview transcripts to assure reliability. We did, however, involve a translator who has extensively translated materials for families and professionals related to disability issues and has consistently received highly favorable feedback on the quality of the translations. Another methodological limitation is that we did not have a professional peer conduct a confirmatory analysis of our analytic procedures, although multiple researchers coded the data and we had both member and stakeholder checks.

Friendship Facilitation Framework

Our friendship facilitation framework has a permeating theme of providing foundation acceptance; it also has the three facilitation strategies of (a) creating opportunities, (b) making interpretations, and (c) making accommodations.

Providing foundational acceptance. All parents strongly emphasized that their own unconditional acceptance of their child formed a foundation for their strong parental roles in friendship facilitation and in encouraging others to accept their child. An important area for future research is not only parents' unconditional acceptance of their child but the

unconditional acceptance shown by others who facilitate friendship. Likely, a person who will be most successful as a friendship facilitator is a person who affirms the gifts and strengths of individuals with disabilities and views their potential friendship as a positive experience for others. A highly important unaddressed area in intervention literature is the balance between unconditional acceptance and intervention to ameliorate the effects of disability. Rousso (1984), a social worker who has a physical disability, characterizes a potential conflict as follows:

For all children, disabled or not, the "gleam in the mother's eye" in response to all aspects of the child's body and self is essential for the development of healthy self-esteem. This includes the parent's ability to show pride and pleasure in the disabled part of the body, as one valid aspect of the child, and to communicate appreciation and respect for the child's unique, often different-looking ways of doing things It makes children think: "Mother thinks I am great, so I must be." Parents too often communicate to their child, directly and indirectly, that the disability should be hidden or altered, if not purged—the child should strive toward appearing as "normal" and nondisabled as possible. This attitude can put the child into an identity crisis, causing him or her to push that feeling of intactness way underground (Rousso, 1984, pp. 12-13).

Adults with disabilities offer a valuable participatory lens within which professionals and families in the severe disability field can consider the very important area of friendship facilitation. Likely, there is not nearly as much emphasis as there might be for either families or professionals on unconditional acceptance as a prerequisite for self-esteem, friendships, and intimate relationships. Certainly, all the parents in this study had a "gleam in their eye" as they interacted with their child and described their friendship facilitation experiences. We believe unconditional acceptance as a prerequisite for successful friendship facilitation is an important area for future research.

Finding opportunities. Finding opportunities was the most frequent type of facilitation activity. Four specific facilitation strategies were used within this category. All four parents used the strategy of supporting participation in community activities. Additionally, three parents advocated for inclusion in the neighborhood school, one parent took an additional step of initiating and facilitating a Circle of Friends for her son, and three parents involved siblings.

Although we have categorized finding opportunities as separate from making interpretations and making accommodations, it was obvious that almost every time

a new opportunity was found, interpretation and accommodation were part of the necessary facilitation in order to actualize the child/youth's participation in the opportunity. A good example is Meili's participation in the Miss Puerto Rico Beauty Pageant. Ms. Quirós' facilitation primarily was on the front-end of this process. Once pageant officials concurred with Ms. Quirós that it was appropriate for Meili to participate, they then took over some of the facilitation roles, particularly in making accommodations.

The major point here is that new opportunities typically introduce the child/youth with a disability to a new group of potential friends. Interpretations are necessary in order to form the linkages and connections to others, and accommodations are often necessary in order to enhance participation. Once friendships evolve and children/youth with and without disabilities and the participating adults are comfortable with each other and know how to provide reciprocal support, it appears that the need for interpretations and accommodations begins to diminish. Future research might address the role of parents as initial facilitators and then the evolution of facilitation that, to some extent, might be taken over by the friends themselves, the adults who are part of the setting, and by the children/youth with a disability. Thus, there are major questions to be explored about the timing and nature of parental facilitation and ways to "pass the baton" of that facilitation to others, as appropriate and preferred.

The issue of socializing with the extended family raises an interesting opportunity and opportunity cost. Some families have strong and extensive ties between the nuclear and extended family (Lynch & Hanson, 1998). Mr. and Mrs. Salas pointed out the benefit of Angélica having her "little circle of cousins" to play with on weekends when she was at her grandmother's house; however, they also highlighted the opportunity cost that this imposed in not having the same amount of time available for experiencing friendships with school and neighborhood peers. Ms. Ramírez also emphasized the conflicting pull between time with extended family and with friends. Typically, friends are considered to be nonfamily members. An important area of future inquiry is the exploration of family as friends (Harry, 1998).

Involving siblings led Ms. Ramírez to encourage Danny's friends to initiate contact with him by issuing invitations or calling him on the telephone. Ms. Ramírez had not felt the need to do this for her three other children who do not have disabilities, but she did feel the need to prompt Jason and Yolanda to initiate contact because this was not naturally occurring. Although on the surface this might be interpreted as being coercive, Yolanda gave no indication that she felt coerced in any way to invite Danny. We were conducting interviews on the day that Yolanda made her first call to Danny to invite him to a dance. We also attended the dance and had an opportunity to

see them there and talk with them afterwards, and there was no sign of coercion. This type of situation, however, raises the likelihood that facilitation can move from encouragement to coercion. An extremely important area for future research is establishing indicators to determine when facilitation crosses the line into coercion and how this potential problem can be avoided.

Making interpretations. In terms of making interpretations, undoubtedly the parents' unconditional acceptance of their children made it easier for them to highlight their children's strengths and commonalities to others. An area that has not been addressed in the literature, but is frequently reported anecdotally by parents, is their hesitation to "impose" what they might perceive as "burdens" associated with disability on other people who are not in a paid role. We believe that research would be illuminating to address ways that families, as well as organizational, can develop their own value system that will enable them to comfortably and spontaneously encourage the acceptance of children and youth with severe disabilities. Ms. Quirós is an excellent example of a parent who has absolutely no hesitation in encouraging, even demanding, that others accept Meili. Although many parents report that they don't participate in a religious organization in their community because their child is not accepted, Ms. Quirós reported that she goes to religious services, even when Meili screams and other people glare at her to take Meili out of the service. Predictably, she refuses to leave. A critically important dimension of friendship facilitation, as well as inclusion facilitation, is having a permeating sense that one deserves to belong (Kunc, 1992). Once that value is established, making interpretations likely becomes almost second nature.

Making accommodations. Just as partial participation is an important accommodation strategy in educational settings, it likewise is important in settings in which children and youth with severe disabilities have a chance to experience friendships. In the example that we discussed of Meili participating in the Miss Puerto Rico Beauty Pageant, it is important to consider how community volunteers learn the principles and skills related to partial participation. Educators might encourage parents to invite others with whom they are interacting in the community around friendship facilitation to participate in individualized education plan (IEP) meetings and other team meetings where creative problem-solving can address making accommodations so that friendships will have the greatest likelihood of success.

As we indicated in the Methods section, we purposively used a wide range of variation in the targeted children and youth. Although our sample size is extremely small and it is impossible to generalize conclusions, we generally detected themes of similarity across age ranges, gender, and the nature of the disability. The only facilitation strategy

that we would immediately detect as possibly being gender specific is the strategy of ensuring attractiveness. Although we only had one male in the sample, the two parents who strongly emphasized attractiveness were speaking of their daughters. Future research should address the similarities and differences of parental facilitation strategies in light of child/youth factors such as age, gender, and the nature of the disability.

Role of Parents of Children With a Disability

Across all three facilitation categories—finding opportunities, making interpretations, and making accommodations—all the parents focus their efforts on what we might describe as general rather than specific friendship facilitation. By general facilitation, we mean that they increased opportunities for their son or daughter and prepared them to be a friend to a wide variety of people. On the other hand, for facilitation of a specific friendship, the parents might have targeted their efforts toward supporting their son or daughter to form a friendship with a particular person. Ms. Ramirez is the exception in the sense that she stresses general facilitation as well as specific facilitation with Jason and Yolanda through Circle of Friends, parties, recreational outings, and phone calls. An important area for future inquiry is the relative benefits and drawbacks of general versus specific facilitation. Additionally, we hope this will begin a line of research that will describe for parents (and others) options that they might consider for facilitation.

The parents in these four families reported enjoying various aspects of friendship facilitation. They appeared to be energized by friendship facilitation as opportunities for shared socialization and recreation for their son or daughter. Only one of the mothers spoke of the fatigue and energy drain, exacerbated by her intense advocacy across many issues, in ensuring an appropriate education and quality of life for her child.

In the stakeholder review, a parent of a middle school student with mental retardation commented as follows:

I have found this area (parent facilitation) to be very frustrating ... It is a very difficult area ... how do parents overcome or balance being a provider of services/activities and the tendency for a group of kids to take advantage of the parent of the child with a disability. My experience is that we drive to the movies, go to the pool, we are being taken advantage of by kids sometimes. You kiss a lot of frogs before you find the prince.

Future research should inquire into the parental benefits and drawbacks of friendship facilitation and the reciprocity for parents for their time investment. As we discussed earlier, the role of cultural values and tradition in making friendship

facilitation easier or more challenging is a worthy area of inquiry (Meyer et al., 1998).

The families we interviewed emphasized far more strongly the role of the mother as a friendship facilitator as contrasted to the father. As more information is developed and parents are provided with support related to friendship facilitation, the contribution that fathers can make should be considered. Although mothers typically spend more time with children with disabilities in child care (Traustadottir, 1991; Young & Roopnarine, 1994), mothers and fathers typically spend approximately equal amounts of time in play. Euro-American fathers' play tends to be more robust, and many typical children report preferring to play with their fathers as contrasted to their mothers (Clarke-Stewart, 1978). Furthermore, Euro-American fathers of children with and without disabilities, report spending similar amounts of time in play (Turbiville, 1994). It is not clear how activities are qualitatively similar and different for fathers with different cultural values. One of the promising areas for future development might be the role of fathers, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds, as friendship facilitators.

Role of Parents of Children Without a Disability

As we discussed, in two of the five friendship pairs, mothers of students without a disability had a major role in friendship facilitation. Interestingly, in both of these situations, the parent of the friend without a disability was in a paid role that had some relationship to the child/youth with a disability or to the parents. In this paid role (i.e., nurse aide, teacher aide), the parent of the child without a disability had an opportunity to spend extended time with the child/youth with a disability (and in one situation, with the child/youth's mother). Consequently, a close relationship developed that then led to the mother encouraging the opportunity for her son or daughter without a disability to also be a friend. This is not unlike data on the friendships of adolescents and adults with disabilities indicating that friendships frequently start from paid relationships and evolve into a more natural arrangement (Turnbull & Ruef, 1997; Uditsky, 1993).

Ms. Russell and Ms. Lorea both provided specific facilitation to their children to form a friendship with Meili and Roxela, respectively. This approach contrasts with the general facilitation by Ms. Quirós and Ms. Cofresi, who did not target their facilitation specifically at Carolyn or Adrian. An interesting area for future inquiry relates to the balance of specificity and generality in the facilitation strategies of parents of children with and without disabilities. Another important area for future research is focusing on the characteristics of parents of children without disabilities who are most likely to initiate facilitation—either general or specific regarding the friendships of their children without a disability with friends who have a disability. We can

speculate from these data that an area for inquiry is to investigate the extent to which some structure of getting to know a specific child or a number of individuals with disabilities is important as a prerequisite for facilitation initiation. The fact that the two mothers in this study both have paid roles may be important in understanding possible preparation for parents in enabling them to feel competent and confident in facilitation roles.

Summary

This study focused on the strategies used by four families to facilitate friendships between children/youth with and without a disability. The parents of these students were actively involved as facilitators for their son or daughter. A foundational theme across all parents was their unconditional acceptance of their son or daughter with a disability. This unconditional acceptance appeared to be a catalytic factor in propelling them to carry out facilitation by finding opportunities for their daughters or son to be with others who do not have a disability, making interpretations to others of their strengths and commonalities, and making accommodations to enhance their successful participation in shared activities. Of these three facilitation categories, strategies were most often in the category of finding opportunities and especially focused on inclusion in community activities and neighborhood schools. While parents of children/youth with a disability tended to focus on general facilitation strategies, two parents of the students without disabilities very specifically encouraged their children to form a reciprocal friendship with the targeted child/youth with a disability. Both of these parents were in paid roles related to providing support.

There are a broad array of important research questions to pursue regarding successful and manageable friendship facilitation strategies for parents, as well as for other key people in the lives of children and youth with disabilities. Our vision for the role of parents as facilitators of their children's friendship is that parents could choose to participate or not according to their own preferences, strengths, and needs in supporting their son or daughter with a disability. For the parents who choose to facilitate friendships, they would have access to information from other families and from researchers on "what works" so that their facilitation efforts can reap the strongest possible dividends for their children, themselves, and their families. For parents who would prefer to not assume this role, our vision is that they would have access to other family members, friends, educators, and community citizens who are interested in friendship facilitation and have access to this same information.

Whether it is families or others who facilitate friendships, it is clear that research, in and of itself, is not sufficient in enhancing the quantity and quality of friendships. There is a tremendous need in the field to develop user-friendly products that enable families and other possible facilitators to develop visions of successful friendships for children and youth with and without disabilities and to then have the knowledge and skill to carry out the facilitation. In congruence with this belief, we have developed a manual of friendship stories, *Amistad* (1997), based on the four friendships described in this study and the additional seven friendships in the larger study from which this study was drawn. *Amistad* is targeted for parents, teachers, and organizations that provide support to families and is available in English and Spanish. Although we recognize that this does not even scratch the surface of what needs to be done in friendship facilitation, we believe that the outcomes of friendship research efforts need to be measured in the enhancement of the quantity and quality of friendships of children and youth with a disability. Such facilitation is a means to an end, with the end being that individuals with disabilities have rich and rewarding friendships, consistent with their own preferences.

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