Partners in Diversity and Inclusion: A Diversity Fellowship with a Mixed-Methods Approach

Authors: Jennifer Chen, BA; Christine Schoenberger, MHS; Ken Capone; and Christopher Smith, PhD

Background

In an effort to eliminate barriers to serving the community of individuals with disabilities, the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) at Kennedy Krieger Institute has undertaken a number of activities to build and advance diversity, inclusion, and cultural and linguistic competency. One of the steps MCDD recently took was to develop and sustain a Diversity Fellowship in collaboration with the Wendy Klag Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH) and Maryland's statewide advocacy network for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), People On the Go (POG). This research demonstrates the outcome of a 10-month Diversity Fellowship through MCDD's partnership with POG.

Objectives

- Create a fellowship opportunity that builds a diverse workforce dedicated to serving the community of individuals with I/DD.
- Expand current MCDD work regarding cultural and linguistic competency.
- Support diversity work with self-advocates in Maryland (supporting their identified needs) to reach more diverse areas of the state.

Methods

- Applicants were recruited from JHSPH (whose students come from 80 nations) by advertising the position to a number of student groups; additional outreach was conducted by the Wendy Klag Center, which reached out to five student/faculty groups that specifically support minority students.
- MCDD and POG partners selected one fellow an Asian-American, JHSPH full-time master's-level graduate student—who received her bachelor of arts degree in public health, with a minor in disability studies, at the University of California, Berkeley.
- Partnering with POG, the fellow completed a capstone project assessing POG's current representation in the community of individuals with I/DD.

Fellowship Activities

- Co-developed a diversity mission statement with POG leadership and staff members.
- Gave a presentation on diversity, cultural and linguistic competency, and inclusion at POG's quarterly meeting in December.
- Participated in a diversity panel for MCDD's "Diversity Matters"
 2018 retreat.
- Developed materials for and attended POG's "Lunch and Learn" during Developmental Disabilities Day in Annapolis, Maryland.
- Attended diversity and leadership seminars, a Kennedy Krieger Ethics Program meeting, and a training given by the Maternal Child Health-Leadership Education, Advocacy, and Research Network (LEND).
- Participated in MCDD data collection, management and program evaluation activities.
- Completed a capstone project and presented it to MCDD and POG faculty members, staff members and trainees.
- Presented a poster at AUCD's annual conference in 2018.

Capstone Project

- The purpose of the capstone project was to: (1) develop several methods for POG to gather and analyze membership demographics, and (2) assess POG's network with respect to diversity and inclusion.
- Many of POG's members do not have an email address or a direct phone number. POG members reside across Maryland, and they often rely on other people to assist them with attending meetings.
- The diversity fellow worked with MCDD and POG staff members, including people with I/DD, acting as a mentor and consultant to modify POG materials and processes to increase the accuracy of POG's data on the diversity of its membership.
- Another key task of the project was the dissemination of a Diversity and Inclusion Survey.
 It was critical that survey materials were relevant, succinct and accessible.

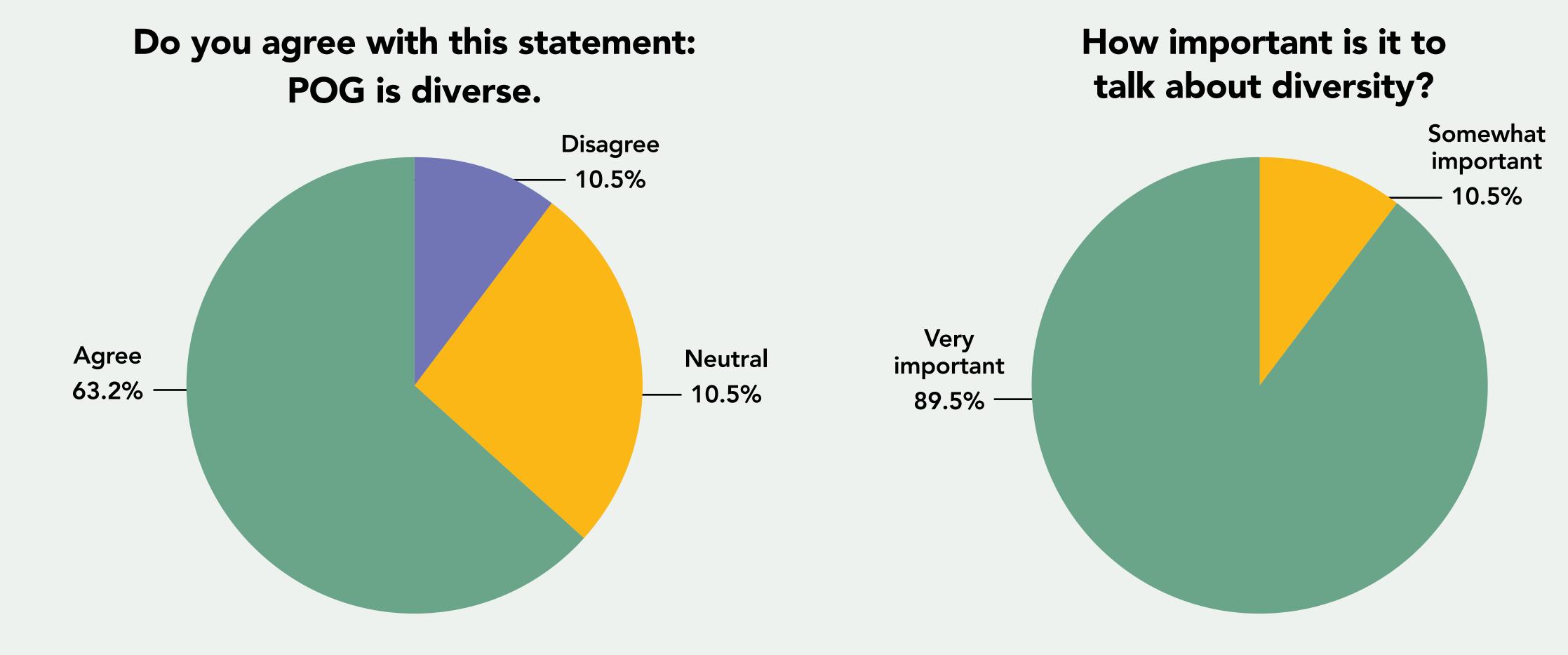
Membership Data Collection Method	Total Number of Responses	
Original Paper Form		
In-person at 2 POG quarterly meetings	23	
USPS mail delivery or in-person events (e.g., Developmental Disabilities Day, selfadvocacy trainings led by Project S.T.I.R.: Steps Towards Independence and Responsibility)	38	
Online SurveyMonkey Form		
Email	8	
Phone	16	

Diversity and Inclusion Survey Collection Method	Total # of Responses	
Paper Form		
In-person at POG quarterly meeting	14	
10-Minute Phone Interview	5	
Total	19	

Findings

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of POG Members

Age	n=79	
under 25	5	6%
25–34	23	29%
35–44	17	22%
45–54	18	23%
55–64	8	10%
65 and over	8	10%
Gender	n=102	
Female	53	52%
Male	49	49%
Other	0	0%
Race	n=83	
White/Caucasian	49	59%
African-American/Black	32	39%
Other (Persian/multiple)	2	2%
Ethnicity	n=85	
Non-Hispanic	83	98%
Hispanic	2	2%



Among the survey's key findings: Nearly 90 percent of POG members surveyed feel it is very important to talk about diversity. However, only 63 percent of POG members surveyed feel the POG network is diverse, while 36 percent are neutral on the subject or feel it is not diverse.

Interviews identified the following as avenues for more diverse recruitment: other selfadvocacy groups, schools, Kennedy Krieger, marches, and people without disabilities.

What would you like to see POG do about diversity?

- 1. "Get people from different groups, self-advocacy groups."
- 2. "I think maybe sometimes when [POG] visit[s] schools, the community activities they do, they should let them know we are looking for Sammy or Sally who might not have had the opportunity to be a part of that community ... And at... Kennedy Krieger... all those little people someday are gonna be adults."
- 3. "Well what I would like to see is open the board up to people without disabilities because I think that certainly if we move ahead we're going to need people without disabilities to help us continue to move forward."
- 4. "Well, [POG has] been to marches, they have been to outcry certain federal and state issues."

Impact

The diversity fellow reported:

- Increased knowledge about self-advocacy, disability rights, and the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD).
- Increased comfort in working with people with disabilities.
- Developing personal and professional networks in the community of individuals with I/DD.
- Increased leadership, data collection, management and analytical skills.

POG reported:

- Refined methods to collect and analyze data through Apricot database software.
- New dialogue among its members, leadership and staff members about intentionally integrating diversity and cultural and linguistic competency into recruitment, training and advocacy efforts.

MCDD reported:

- A new way to support emerging diverse leaders in the disability field.
- Strengthened partnerships with local and state self-advocacy networks.

Future Plans

- Support future diversity fellows.
- Continue collecting membership and diversity data.
- Pursue new avenues for including perspectives of people with different identities and views, as part of efforts to serve the community of individuals with I/DD (for example, work within the Hispanic community through the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.).
- Organize a diversity, cultural and linguistic competency, and inclusion workshop series.

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Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at Kennedy Krieger Institute

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