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Relationships Among Middle School Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

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MA, Central Michigan University, 2009

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Special Education

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Abstract

Accommodating students with disabilities in a general education class often requires instructional modification and extra student support. Research has shown that making required changes can evoke different responses from teachers and can influence their willingness to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. However, research has not examined the relationships between middle school teachers' preparation for and experiences with inclusion instruction and their attitudes toward inclusion. The purpose of this correlational study was to explore possible relationships between middle school teachers' attitudes about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting and the teachers' education level, length of time teaching, and role as general or special education teachers. Social learning theory informed the study. Teachers from 3 middle schools in a large, primarily suburban school district in the southern United States were identified and sent the link for an online survey that included both demographic questions and the Attitude Toward Teaching All Students validated research instrument ($N = 220$). Despite several efforts to acquire enough responses to determine statistical significance, the sample obtained ($n = 55$) was too small for those calculations. However, Spearman correlations calculated with the smaller sample acquired indicated possible relationships between variables and indicated conducting the study in another location with a larger sample would provide valuable insights into teachers' behaviors and beliefs. This study contributes to positive social change by demonstrating a need to examine teachers' background and experiences and their attitudes toward and, as a result, behaviors in inclusion settings.

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my children, Kaidesh and Shane. They have been incredibly understanding and patient throughout my study. They have been my motivators, cheerleaders, and source of encouragement. Their frequent request for updates as to how my work was coming along and the occasional reminders that when I am finished we will have more family time have pushed me to work toward completion. Thank you, this is for you!

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I would like to acknowledge and give gratitude to my dissertation committee, family, and friends who have all assisted in this leg of my academic journey. Without these people, I would not have been able to complete my dissertation.

I am grateful for my dissertation chair, Dr. Barry Birnbaum. He has provided me with excellent guidance and timely feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. Christina Dawson who has helped me to navigate my way through analyzing quantitative data and analysis. Without the help of these two, I would not be able to actualize my dream of completing my dissertation, earning my PhD, and becoming an agent of social change. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who have stuck with me throughout my academic journey, and who have always believed in my academic success. They have been a strong shoulder to lean on, a listening ear, a great source of encouragement when I felt overwhelmed, and an energetic team of cheerleaders who kept pushing me toward success. Each member has showed support by lending a helping hand, offering words of encouragement, or by giving an approving look or smile. In the good and bad times, they were there for me; I give my deepest appreciation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Major changes that narrowed the gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers include services provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE), of which inclusion and collaborative teaching are major components (Timberlake, 2014; Yell, Conroy, Katsiyannis, & Conroy, 2013). The idea of LRE opened up the possibility that students with disabilities could be educated in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible. Inclusion and collaborative teaching signal what transpires in that setting. Inclusion indicates that students with disabilities are educated in the same educational setting as their nondisabled peers. Collaborative teaching is the method that employs the skills of two teachers in the general education classroom setting (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlin, & Shamberger, 2010; King-Sears, Brawand, Jenkins, & Preston-Smith, 2014). These changes are significant because they allow students with disabilities to receive equal access to the general education curriculum with the intent that these students will attain the educational goals set by local school districts (Humphrey, Wigelsworth, & Squires, 2013; McCann, 2008). With this, teachers performance expectations for students with disabilities are commensurate with those of their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Warner, 2009). This allows for more rigor in the teaching and learning situation. Throughout the years, enactment of legal mandates prompted local education agencies to provide comprehensive services for students with disabilities (Roden, Borgemenke, & Holt, 2013). Students with disabilities receive

supplemental services, which help them function at a level comparable to their nondisabled peers, and with these services, teachers can help disabled students meet educational expectations (Turki & Fur, 2012).

With the inclusion mandate from Congress as specified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990), school districts needed to implement policies for students with disabilities so those students could access the general education setting (Roden et al., 2013; Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). As a result, instructional models such as inclusion and collaborative teaching gained prominence and facilitated successful inclusion practices (Friend et al., 2010; King-Sears et al., 2014; Warner, 2009). To address the new mandates, local school districts promoted the need for successful collaborative strategies in inclusion classrooms (McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2012). Since the passage of the Disabilities Education Act, a greater push for inclusion through coteaching became common in schools (Friend et al., 2010; McLeskey et al., 2012; Warner, 2009).

Coteaching is the process in which two highly qualified teachers work together in the general education class to provide instruction to a combined class of special education and general education students (Friend et al., 2010; Murawski & Dieker, 2008). These highly qualified teachers typically include one special education and one general education teacher. In the inclusion setting, these teachers are required to engage in a number of collaborative teaching strategies to meet the needs of all the students in the class (Friend et al., 2010 King-Sears et al., 2014).

In spite of the pressures and challenges that come with inclusion, it is mandated in public schools and implementation is increasing (Ajuwon, Lechtenburger, Zhou, & Mullins, 2012; Friend et al., 2010; McLeskey et al., 2012). The federal government has set policies, outlined procedures, and allocated funding to ensure the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the LRE (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). To meet federal guidelines, educational agencies have streamlined their services to accommodate and support students with disabilities (McLeskey et al., 2012). Inclusion implementation is common in public schools; however, information about middle school teachers' perceptions of including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education classroom is lacking (Friend et al., 2010).

Background

Many students need specialized instruction to attain educational success (Almog, 2008; Ernest, Heckaman, Thompson, Hull, & Carter, 2011; Humphrey et al. 2013; Patterson, Conolly, & Ritter, 2009; Roe, 2010). Special education programs provide specialized instruction to students with disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012). However, to ensure these students are provided with equal opportunities for education, the federal government orchestrated the creation of specific laws and regulations outlining what constitutes appropriate education for students with disabilities. Beginning in the 1970s, Congress passed a series of public laws to grant students with disabilities free appropriate public education (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Initially, these laws were not comprehensive (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). However, with the passage of time and the

enactment of additional laws relating to the education of students with disabilities, a wider range of services and benefits became available.

Congress passed the first special education law in 1975. This law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), required local schools to provide an education to all disabled children. Some issues identified and addressed in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act included nondiscriminatory placement in special education, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address goals and objectives for students with disabilities, and the provision of special education services in the LRE. This law allowed students with disabilities to receive special education services without prejudice or bias. Students did not just receive services; they were required to work toward specific educational goals and objectives (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013).

Congress updated the Education for All Handicapped Children Act with a number of amendments. Each amendment offered students with disabilities additional services to improve social and educational outcomes. Some of these amendments included (a) The Education of the Handicapped Act amendments of 1986, (b) The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 1990), and (c) The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 and 2004. With each new amendment, a series of rights and services became accessible to students with disabilities. Each new amendment created opportunities to bridge the gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012). These

changes leveled the learning environment, so that students with disabilities could perform competitively with their nondisabled peers (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013).

IDEA also provided students with disabilities the opportunity to interact with their nondisabled peers while educated alongside them in general education inclusion settings (King-Sears et al., 2014; Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). Research indicates that with appropriate modifications and accommodations, the inclusion class is a realistic learning environment for students with disabilities (Alnahdi 2015; Ashworth, Bloxham, & Pearce, 2010; Friend et al. 2010; Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Marshak, 2012). In an inclusion class, students with disabilities are given the opportunity to benefit from the general curriculum and enjoy social integration (Aldabas 2015; Casale-Giannola, 2012; Hamilton-Jones & Vail. 2014; Hibel, Farkas, & Morgan, 2010; Lakhan, 2013; Obiakor et al., 2012). The intent of the inclusive environment was not to minimize expectations for students' academic and social outcomes, but to create opportunities by providing equal access to a group of students who were previously marginalized (Ashworth et al., 2010; Carter et al. 2015). As such, academic progress for students with disabilities became comparable with that of their nondisabled peers (Casale-Giannola, 2012).

Despite available measures to narrow the gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers, challenges still surround inclusion practices (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda, 2009; Alnahdi 2015; Aron & Loprest, 2012; King-Sears et al., 2014; Shorgen et al. 2015). Even with accommodations and modifications,

academic competence poses a challenge for many students with disabilities (Baird, Scott, Dearing, & Hamill, 2009; Lundie, 2009; Reed et al. 2009; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Research shows that educators express concerns about the cognitive and academic abilities of students with disabilities in the general education setting (Obiakor et al., 2012). Because of academic, social, and behavioral deficits in students with disabilities, teachers are required to put forth extra effort to help these students meet their educational and social goals (Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). Research indicates some teachers find it difficult to meet all of the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting (Albrecht et al., 2009; Baird et al., 2009; Lundie, 2009; Tremblay, 2013; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Teachers' expectations, experiences, and observations about the interactions of students with disabilities in the inclusion environment may influence teachers' dispositions toward providing instruction to students with some disabilities types (McCray & McHatton, 2011). According Bandura's social learning theory (1977a, 1977b, 1986), perception drives actions. The way teachers feel about including students with mild to moderate disabilities may influence their dedication to students' success (Yildiz, 2015). As such, a teacher's perceptions may be the first indicator of how successful the inclusion environment will be for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Research is clear regarding the benefits associated with inclusion (Ashworth et al., 2010; Friend et al. 2010; Scruggs et al., 2012). However, a gap in the literature exists regarding how inclusion could benefit students with mild to moderate disabilities. A

comprehensive search for current research about the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities yielded few results. Considering the legal implications of IDEA and federal mandates to include students with disabilities in the LRE as possible (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013), it would seem that including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting would take little additional consideration. Despite the academic and social deficits of students with mild to moderate disabilities, this population of students deserves the support necessary to work alongside their nondisabled peers (Baird et al., 2009; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; Hudson, Drowder, & Wood, 2013; Lundie, 2009; Reed et al., 2009; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009).

The limited amount of research in the area of the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities requires attention (Hall, 2009; Iacono & Carling-Jenkins, 2012; McLeskey et al., 2012). The research conducted for this dissertation create a foundation for greater understanding of inclusion and students with disabilities by abstracting the views of key stakeholders as they relate to including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting. Teachers' feedback provides clues for creating a strategic approach to target and address the problem or to provide indications for further research and intervention. These research findings reveal teachers' sentiments toward including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education classes. Based on these findings, I discuss implications and make recommendations.

Considering the limited current research regarding inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting, this research was needed. Not

only does this study provide some insight about the current mindset of teachers regarding including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting, it provides recommendations for further researchers. The decision to begin by extracting teachers' perceptions on the topic was strategic. Based on the tenets of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977b), teachers' perceptions are an indicator of how much effort they will invest in helping students with mild to moderate disabilities become successful in the general education class. I wanted to explore relationships between middle school teachers' attitudes about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting and the teachers' education level, length of time teaching, and their roles as general or special education teachers. I wished to address additional demographic variables but was constrained by the limited number of responses.

Problem Statement

Congress implemented federal guidelines to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). Many studies detailed the benefits of including students with disabilities in the general education class (Ashworth et al., 2010; Friend et al., 2010; Obiakor et al., 2012). However, at the time of data collection, research was sparse regarding the successes or challenges of including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting. A review of current literature revealed research was lacking regarding the inclusion of middle school students with mild to moderate disabilities in the least restrictive setting. Researchers have indicated that including students with disabilities in

the general education setting not only had academic benefits, but also social benefits (Knesting, Hokanson, & Waldron, 2008; Milsom & Glanville, 2010; Roden et al., 2013; Tremblay, 2013). Students with mild to moderate disabilities may have many deficits that affect their academic and social progress (Baird et al., 2009; Lundie, 2009; McLeskey et al., 2012; Reed et al., 2009; Yildiz, 2015; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Teachers' commitment to the success of these students can make a difference.

Many students with mild to moderate disabilities receive instruction in the self-contained classroom setting where they work alongside their peers with disabilities (McLeskey et al., 2012). However, benefits are achievable from interaction with their nondisabled peers (Casale-Giannola, 2012). Milsom and Glanville (2010), Knesting et al. (2008), and Hughes et al. (2011) argued that, if nothing else, students with disabilities could derive social benefits when integrated with their nondisabled peers in the general education setting. Considering little to no evidence existed about the inclusion of middle school students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education classroom; this study probed key stakeholders-teachers regarding their attitudes toward including students with mild to moderate disabilities in general education settings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this correlational study was to explore possible relationships between middle school teachers' attitudes about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting and the teachers' education level, length of time teaching, and their role as general or special education teachers. Using the Teacher

Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale-MM (ATTAS-MM), both special and general education teachers shared their views regarding how they felt about including middle school students with mild to moderate disability in the general education setting.

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' educational level?

RQ2. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' length of time teaching?

RQ3. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' role as general or special education teachers?

RQ4. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions towards students with mild to moderate disabilities total score and the linear combination of the teachers' educational level, experience, and role (regular education or special education)?

$H_0 4$: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perception towards students with mild to moderate disabilities total score and the linear combination of the teachers' educational level, experience, and role (regular education or special education).

$H_a 4$: There is a significant relationship between teachers' perception towards students with mild to moderate disabilities total score and the linear combination of the teachers' educational level, experience, and role (regular education or special education).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory provided the foundation for this study. Bandura postulated that efficacy consists of an individual's belief and action that an outcome is probable. Bandura's social cognitive theory detailed how the environment, psychology, and behavior affect cognitive development. With this, whatever happens in the environment influences the child. In this instance, if teachers children cannot function in the inclusion environment, it is likely the children will have the same sentiments about themselves.

With the passing of IDEA, students with disabilities have been included in general education classes to receive academic instruction alongside their nondisabled peers (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). With this, general and special education teachers must share classes as they instruct students with disabilities alongside nondisabled peers (Tremblay, 2013). Many general and special education teachers feel they are unprepared for the role (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Baird et al. (2009), Lundie (2009), Reed et al. (2009), and Zisimopoulos and Galanaki (2009) expressed that some students in inclusion settings demonstrate low academic self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977a, 1977b), teachers' perceptions about students' academic competence directly relate to their expectations of students with disabilities in the inclusion class.

The tenets of Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory suggest that teachers have a significant part to play in the creation of a successful teaching and learning experience. Teachers' attitudes toward the learning environment reflect in students' attitudes and

success in learning. Extrapolating from Bandura's social learning theory, teachers'
attitudes are highly likely to have some impact on students' learning in an inclusion
setting. To this end, this study explored teachers' attitudes toward including students with
mild to moderate disabilities as they relate to teachers' educational level, years of
teaching, and role as general or special education teachers.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was quantitative. The plan was to use numerical data
collected through an electronic survey to determine teachers' perception about including
students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting against a
number of predictors. However, as explained in chapters 3 and 4, the sample size needed
to determine a significant relationship was not acquired. Therefore, I examined the data
instead for potential correlation and the potential value of conducting this study in
another location with a significant sample obtained.

Definitions

Accommodation: A range of services that allow a student with disability to access
the general education setting and curriculum (IDEA, 2004).

Coteaching: A general education and special education teacher sharing the
instruction of a mixed group of students in one classroom (Murawski & Dieker, 2008).

General or regular education teacher: An individual who holds standard
certification to provide instruction to a diverse population primarily comprised of
students without a disability (Friend et al., 2010).

Inclusion: The integration of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers in the general education classroom where the teaching and learning experience occurs (Embury & Kroeger, 2012).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The educational environment that is best suited to provide services to students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012)

Mild disability: Below average IQ score resulting in a cognitive deficit that may affect academic and social functioning (Colarusso & O'Rourke, 2007).

Moderate disability: Low IQ score resulting in a cognitive deficit that may affect academic and social functioning (Colarusso & O'Rourke, 2007).

Modification: Changes made to course content and skills performance that allow students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum (IDEA, 2004).

Special education teacher: An individual who holds standard certification to provide specialized instruction to a diverse population of students while placing primary focus on the needs and goals of students with disabilities (Friend et al., 2010).

Supportive services: A continuum of modifications and accommodations that are provided to students with disabilities so that they can successfully function in the general education setting (Colarusso & O'Rourke, 2007).

Assumption

I held the assumption that each respondent would read the questions carefully, provide thought to each question, and supply honest responses. To help them feel confident in responding accurately, their responses were anonymous.

Scope

The scope of this study focused on middle school teachers in a selected school district in the United States. These teachers were invited based on their experience working with students with disabilities in an inclusion or cotaught setting. The study reports both experienced and inexperienced teachers' attitudes toward including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the inclusion setting. Research questions, variables of interest, and theoretical perspective were chosen to provide insight into middle school teachers' attitudes regarding the presence of students with mild to moderate disabilities in inclusion classes. The results of this quantitative study could be generalizable to educators who teach middle school children with mild to moderate disabilities in an inclusion setting in public schools in the southeastern region of the United States.

Limitations

This study randomly sampled middle school teachers who had experience teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities in an inclusion setting. Considering the random selection of respondents, the sample may not be a true representation of the views of all middle school special and general education teachers. Another limitation was the survey was conducted primarily in the summer when most teachers were on break,

and many may not have had access to their work e-mails, which meant they might not have had a chance to see and complete the survey, which resulted in limited participation. Due to the small number of respondents, statistical significance could not be addressed in the resulting calculations. The use of a survey to collect quantitative data restricted respondents from elaborating on their responses and sharing personalized insights or experiences that could change data interpretation. In addition, respondents' responses may show biases based on self-reporting answers. Considering the limitations, similar criteria must be considered when replicating this study.

Significance

The importance of the study lies in its potential contribution in three areas: (a) advance knowledge in the field of special education, (b) advance educational practices, and (c) positive opportunities for social change. Considering this study addressed an area in special education practices that was relatively unexplored, I intended to provide needed insight about teachers' attitudes as they related to including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting. School leaders could explain current practices and develop professional development sessions based on the findings of this study. School district personnel would have the option to use these findings to provide effective inclusion programs and in-services for both special education and general education teachers. Findings from this study could provide teachers with insight about the role their perceptions play in shaping the learning environment of students with disabilities who are in middle school cotaught classes.

Summary

Teachers' attitudes toward including students with disabilities in general education settings play an integral part in students' learning. Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008) found that when teachers possessed positive perceptions of inclusion, their attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in inclusion classes were favorable. Strategies and exposure are key in teacher preparation for tackling successful inclusion. The more knowledgeable teachers are about inclusion and students with disabilities, the more enthused they are about working with disabled students (Sharma et al., 2008). Teachers who are confident about their instructional practices and content area are more comfortable with teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting (Berry, 2010). Inclusion classes may pose many challenges for teachers; it is important for teachers to be thoroughly prepared with the necessary skills to address multiple learning styles and social issues.

Although many studies have documented the positive results of including students with varying disability types in the general education setting, at the time of data collection, little research was available on the successful inclusion of middle school students with mild to moderate disabilities. With the push to include students with disabilities in the general educational setting and the improved academic and social benefits that can result, teachers need to be mindful of their perceptions. According to Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986), perception drives attitude, and attitude drives actions. Teachers can make the difference. The way teachers feel about including students with

disabilities may have a direct impact on how much effort they place on ensuring

academic and social success (Yildiz, 2015). Teachers' perceptions and attitudes are

integral. Students with disabilities require more support and guidance in the inclusion

environment than do nondisabled students (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Knesting et al., 2008;

McLeskey et al., 2012). Teachers' perceptions can make the difference for these students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The U.S. government has implemented stringent guidelines regarding students with disabilities. One of the mandates outlined in Free Appropriate Public Education Act and IDEA required public schools to integrate students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers as much as possible (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). This led to inclusion practices becoming part of the LRE. The inclusion environment includes two teachers: one general education teacher and one special education teacher (King-Sears et al., 2014). Inclusion environments also consist of a diverse group of learners and a number of instructional models to meet students' differing learning styles and needs (McLeskey et al., 2012; Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Tremblay, 2013). To a large degree, the inclusion setting creates an environment that requires students to be self-motivated about their academic success. However, students with disabilities enter the inclusion setting with an assortment of academic and behavioral deficits (Humphrey et al., 2013; Yildiz, 2015; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Teachers are required to address these deficits as well as deliver standards-based instruction in accordance with county and state pacing guides (Humphrey et al. 2013). They must therefore teach grade level concepts and provide remedial instruction for students with academic deficits (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013).

For a teacher to plan and execute an effective lesson for a group of students with varying abilities and different learning styles is no easy task (Aron & Loprest, 2012).

Teachers must make a determined effort to meet the needs of all students in the inclusive class (Doyle, & Giangeco, 2013). The challenges teachers must overcome in the inclusive setting can become overwhelming. Albrecht et al. (2009) revealed that working conditions in inclusion classes might not be ideal. Reasons named for less than perfect working conditions included teacher burnout (Albrecht et al., 2009). Many teachers experience burnout because they feel overwhelmed by the day-to-day pressure of instructing students with disabilities in the inclusion setting (Albrecht et al., 2009). Teachers must put forth effort in planning and executing lessons and strategies to help students accomplish their academic goals (Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). The attitudes of students with disabilities can compound the academic and behavioral problems that teachers face.

Often, students with disabilities enter the inclusion setting with low confidence regarding their academic competence (Baird et al., 2009; Lundie, 2009; Reed et al. 2009; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Students with disabilities are aware of their learning challenges; they have developed low academic self-efficacy. Baird et al. (2009), Lundie (2009), Reed et al. (2009), and Zisimopoulos and Galanaki (2009) expressed that academic self-efficacy is a major challenge for students with disabilities. Hence, students with disabilities often demonstrate a deficit in academic motivation regarding their academic competence (Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). As a result, students with disabilities demonstrate lower cognitive self-regulatory behaviors when it comes to academics than do students without disabilities (Baird et al., 2009). This behavior is a

major challenge to students' academic progress and learning. Considering this, teachers must implement additional effort and strategies to help these students meet their learning goals. Because teachers must work harder, this may create some resistance toward inclusion.

Researchers have documented the challenges that students with disabilities face regarding learning; however, at the time of data collection, little research indicated how middle school teachers reacted to the pressures of including students with mild to moderate disabilities in an inclusion setting. Applying the concept of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977a; 1977b, 1986), it could be argued that teachers' perceptions of including students with mild to moderated disabilities in the inclusion setting may be an important indicator of students' academic and social success.

In this chapter, I discuss current literature on the nature of inclusion. A detailed description will include such topics as the nature of inclusion, what inclusion looks like, and the problems associated with inclusion. This chapter will provide a detailed discussion on teachers' and students' perceptions of inclusion. This research will establish the relevance of understanding middle school teachers' perceptions of including students with mild to moderate disabilities in general classroom settings.

Literature Search Strategy

For this study, I employed a number of methods to gather literature. I used the Walden University online library to gather peer-reviewed, full-text research articles. I used the Thoreau Multiple Search and ERIC education databases to generate search

results. Some criteria for selection of research articles included a maximum of a 7-year-old publication date, full text, and peer reviewed articles. A comprehensive search of these databases for current literature within a three to five-year span from the date of search revealed a scarcity of published literature on this topic. As a result, I expanded my search to include older work. Although these publications were over the normal 5-year criterion of currency, they provided an in-depth perspective on the topic. The Walden Library and Google search engine helped generate appropriate peer-reviewed, full text articles. Descriptors that aided in the search included *inclusion, students with disabilities, teachers' perception, middle school, coteaching, intellectual disabilities, mild disabilities, moderate disabilities,* and *collaborative instruction.* I used the Google search engine to provide leads, which helped with probes in the Walden University Library database. Internet searches helped to locate reasonably priced books on the topic. I bought books from Amazon.com, primarily on Albert Bandura's social learning theory and students with disabilities.

The literature review provides an in-depth look at the problem associated with students with mild to moderate disabilities and provides justification for why this problem should be exploration. First, the literature review addresses global concepts. The discussion then deals with the topics in more specific ways. Some of the subheadings in the paper include inclusion, advantages, and disadvantages of inclusion, and teachers' perception of inclusion.

Theoretical Foundation

This study was grounded in the theoretical framework of Bandura's (1977a, 1977b, 1986) social learning theory. Social learning theory identifies social interaction as an important base for learning. With social interactions, the individual learns important clues of acceptable social behavior. From observation and trial and error, the individual grasps concepts of what is socially acceptable and what is not. Bandura postulated that efficacy consists of an individual's belief and action that an outcome is probable. Bandura's social learning theory details how the environment, psychology, and behavior affect cognitive development. In this sense, if teachers think children cannot function in the inclusion environment, it is likely the children will have the same sentiments about themselves.

Bandura (1977b) argued that people could control their actions to form multifaceted behavioral patterns. Using personal and environmental factors, people are able to develop their psychological process in terms of when and how to act in given situations. For this process to be effective, people must learn from observation. Bandura explained that learning through observation allowed people to acquire large integrated examples of social interactions without having to discover them through personal experience. Observation is important for social functioning. People are able to learn by looking at the behavior and rewards of other people and base their action on the outcomes of those behaviors. A modeled behavior is a frame of reference for the observer (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b). Individuals do not have to participate in the behaviors, but

because they observed the reinforcements, they can determine whether the benefits outweigh the cost of repeating that same behaviors.

Social learning theory places tremendous emphasis on the social context of a learning situation. Leaning does not occur in isolation; it occurs within a given social context. People not only learn from their own actions, they learn by observing the actions and outcomes of others. Based on the consequence of reinforcement or punishment, a person will learn whether to repeat or abstain from certain behaviors. The classic Bobo doll experiment demonstrated this principle by showing that children could learn by just watching and imitating the behaviors of others (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961).

The process of imitation uses cognitive processing, which triggers learning. Learning does not necessarily require reinforcement, but can occur in any situation. Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986) argued that a person's drive to perform a certain behavior successfully affects that person's outcome. Individuals weigh benefits and costs and then determine whether an activity is worth the undertaking. Bandura argued that if individuals have strong notions that their actions will lead to success, those individuals would put forth the necessary effort to achieve the desired outcome. The opposite is also true about individuals who have little confidence in the outcome of an event or situation. If they have little or no confidence in the outcome of an event or situation, they will likely not invest much time or effort in attaining it.

Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986) argued that environmental factors play a vital role in learning. By observing how things work in the environment, people are able to make

judgments about thoughts and behaviors. Based on reinforcements, people are able to form concepts about their world. Interactions not only develop cognitive processing but personality as well. Through personal interactions, people develop moral reasoning and behavior. For Bandura, learning was not just an abstract process, but also a process that allowed the individual to interact with the world. Therefore, learning is not only a biological process that generates in the brain, but is also a process that filters ideas and concepts through observation and interaction with the world. The incentives that are available in the environment play a major role in determining whether people will perform a task. If the incentives seem productive, the individual is more likely to perform a task.

Learning is an intricate process that involves cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. According to Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986), people are not just passive receivers of information; they are integrally involved in the cognitive processes. People actively participate in the learning process and self-development. As such, they can use personal, proxy, and collective measures to process and shape their learning experiences. With personal agency, the individual purposely uses personal experiences to set values and expectations that will regulate behavior. Proxy agency allows the individual to harness the resources and time of others to achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 1986). With proxy agency, individuals must have a sound knowledge of the people and resources in their environment, so that they can harness the right people to complete a task. Because of the social nature of human being, all people need to work

together to achieve a common purpose. This is collective agency. Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986) explained that it is important for people to collaborate in order to deal with and solve life's challenges. Bandura purported that although personal, proxy, and collective agencies have unique features, they are all interdependent. People need to be able to use all three agencies successfully to adjust and survive in society.

People learn from their personal experiences and from the experiences of others. Often, people learn from observing the behaviors of others. Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986) called this observational behavior modeling. He argued that modeling served an important function. The function of modeling has three parts: (a) observational learning, (b) response facilitation, and (c) inhibition and disinhibition (Bandura, 1977b). Observational learning occurs when people learn from the experiences of others. Here, the individual does not need a personal experience to learn, but can do so by watching others. Bandura warned that a lack of an imminent response to observational learning does not mean the individual who is observing did not learn. Modeling also involves response facilitation. Response facilitation serves as the motivation for an individual to perform learned behaviors. Bandura (1977a, 1977b) explained that response facilitation serves as evidence that true learning has occurred. Modeling also involves inhibition or disinhibition of learned behaviors. An individual is likely to perform a task based on the feedback received.

Observational learning allows people to determine projected outcomes. These outcomes are usually determined by experiences and lessons learned from observing

other people. By observing the world and people around them, individuals can form conclusions about what actions will produce a desired outcome. Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986) explained that keen individuals would set goals and expectations based on concepts that come from observational learning. With this, people will have a fair understanding of likely consequences and can pattern their actions accordingly. When a person feels that his or her efforts will yield successful results, that person will persevere amid hardships and difficulty.

Although learning can occur through observation, people's actions are generally restrained. As Bandura (1977b) explained, an individual's ability to self-regulate is essential in social learning. Bandura explained that environmental factors censor a person's behavior. These environmental factors may include environmental stimuli and possible consequences for one's actions. Based on the anticipated response, the individual determines whether to abstain or embark on an action (Bandura, 1977b). External factors influence this pattern. With this, the individual chooses actions that will yield positive results.

An individual will use social cues to exhibit behavior. With this, an individual will demonstrate certain behavior during certain social interactions, while at the same time inhibit others. This action of self-regulation helps the individual to produce behaviors that are not only self-serving, but also behaviors that will produce a predictable outcome. The project outcome determines the amount of effort an individual will place on a task; the greater the reward, the more intense the self-drive.

One of the pillars of social learning theory is the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 1986). Simply, self-efficacy is a person's self-drive. This may include a person's ability to push him or herself to complete a particular task to meet a specific goal. In an educational setting, self-efficacy is the teacher's and student's beliefs about the student's ability to successfully engage academic content or instructional situations (Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). Self-efficacy gives people the motivation to do the things they do. Bandura (1977a) explained that self-efficacy plays an important role in people's choice and effort when working on a task. A person's self-efficacy directly affects the task difficulty and the environment in which the individual will choose to complete. This will determine how much effort an individual will invest in completing a given task. Considering this, Bandura (1977a) argued that personal accomplishments do not involve change or luck, but are rooted in a person's determination to succeed.

Social learning theory gives a great view of how an individual learns, processes information, and puts that information into practice. Based on the canon of social learning theory, a person's self-drive to achieve a goal determines an individual's actions (Bandura, 1977a, 1077b, 1986). If a person has a high self-drive, the likelihood of completing a task is great. However, a low self-drive diminishes the likelihood of task completion. Bandura argued people are not helpless entities controlled by a series of circumstances. He posed that people were involved in their destiny through behavioral, environmental, and cognitive reciprocal interaction. With this, people observe, shape, and

model behavior to self-regulate, so they can achieve a desired outcome. The interaction

between teachers and students are not incidental; they are purposeful. According to

Bandura's philosophy on observational learning, people take their cues from others.

Teachers' perceptions about inclusion are generated from their experiences, observations,

and interactions with others (McCray & McHatton, 2011). Perception is the foundation of

actions (Bandura, 1977b). People chart their behaviors based on how they view certain

situations. Applying Bandura's (1977a, 1977b, 1986) social learning theory to the

teaching and learning situation, the way teachers feel about including students with

disabilities will drive how much effort teachers will invest in its success. Not only will

teachers' perceptions drive their actions, but they will also influence students' thinking

about the teaching and learning situation.

Assumption and Purpose of Inclusion

The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting requires

significant planning for success (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; Khatib

& Khatib, 2008; King-Sears et al., 2014; McLeskey et al., 2012). Not only should

physical placement generate reflection of inclusion practices, but also careful

consideration regarding students' academic and social outcome should receive

consideration (Knesting et al., 2008; Milsom & Glanville, 2010). Kilanowski-Press,

Foote, and Rinaldo (2010) explained that a steady increase of students with disabilities

has been placed in the general education classes. Kilanowski-Press et al. attributed this

increase to legal mandates, which require students with disabilities to receive services in

the LRE. The notion of LRE is to place students with disabilities in the same learning environment as their nondisabled peers (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). When placed in the general education setting, students with disabilities should not disrupt the educational setting. When determining whether the LRE is appropriate for students with disabilities, the IEP committee must determine whether the child can receive educational and supportive services in the general education setting with support and accommodations without disrupting the educational environment (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). If the committee agrees that the general education setting is an appropriate placement option, the students with disabilities receive services in this educational setting (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013).

The federal requirement to include students with disabilities in the LRE has yielded a pre-formatted structure for inclusive education (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend et al., 2010; Murwaski & Swanson, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). As such, coteaching through inclusion has prevailed in general education classes throughout public school. Coteaching is an instructional format that requires "two or more professional delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 1). Coteaching allows two teachers to share the same classroom as they instruct both general and special education students (Tremblay, 2013). Considering this, both teachers must be active participants in the instructional experience (King-Sears et al., 2014).

Two teachers instructing a diverse group of students in the same space requires strategic planning and effort (King-Sears et al., 2014). Teachers must employ instructional strategies and approaches to meet the need of all learners (Hudson et al., 2013; Roden et al, 2013). Instruction must meet educational goals while considering each student's particular learning style. Although this may seem a daunting task, Friend et al. (2010) described a number of coteaching strategies that teachers execute in the inclusion setting. Friend et al. provided six main approaches teachers employ during the coteaching experience, which are grouped into two categories: small group and large group. The small group approaches to coteaching are station teaching, alternative teaching, and parallel teaching. The large group approaches to coteaching are team teaching, one teaches one observes, and one teaches one assist.

Although there is no fixed approach for a successful coteaching environment, some approaches are more desirable than are others (King-Sears et al., 2014). A number of factors may affect selection in any approach. These factors can determine the selection of a specific approach. Factors that can influence a desired approach may include classroom space, comfort of teacher with content and activities, content to be covered, room setting, students' needs, students' IEP, and learning activities (Kramer, Olsen Mermelstein, Balcells, & Liljenquist, 2012). Despite a preference in an approach for coteaching models, teachers must make certain the diverse needs of students receive focus. A closer look at each approach will provide more insight about how each coteaching model works.

One Teach/One Observe

As the name of this coteaching model suggests, one teacher instructs the class and the other teacher looks on. Friend et al. (2010) explained the one teach/one observe coteaching model only uses the teaching expertise of the general education teacher who presents and explains the instructional material to the students. While the general education teacher is presenting the instructional information, the special education teacher is observing and monitoring behaviors (Friend et al., 2010; King-Sears et al., 2014). The disadvantage of this model is it involves only the teaching expertise of the general education teacher who leads in instruction and manages discipline. One concern that can come from this arrangement is the special education teacher generates the perception that he or she is a paraprofessional or assistant if he or she observes on a consistent basis (Friend et al., 2010). Considering the drawbacks to this coteaching model, it is not the ideal model because this arrangement does not use the expertise of both teachers to instruct a class of diverse learners.

One Teach/One Assist

It can be argued that the one teaches/one assists coteaching model should not be considered a preferred model for reaching the needs of students with various learning styles. Although this model requires little planning and is easy to implement, it does not harness the skills of both teachers during the teaching and learning experience (King-Sears et al., 2014). With this model, "One teacher (usually, the general education teacher) assumes teaching responsibilities, and the special education teacher provides individual

support as needed" (Scruggs et al., 2007, p. 392). The one teach/one assist model involves one teacher conducting classroom instruction, disciplining, and managing students. The other teacher circulates, offers redirection, and helps individual students (King-Sears et al., 2014).

Team Teaching

Team teaching presents students with the idea that their teachers work unitedly in the teaching and learning experience. Team teaching communicates to the students that both teachers are equipped with equal resources and necessary skills to help all students (Friend et al., 2010; King-Sears et al., 2014). Team teaching uses the strengths of both the general and special education teacher. With this model, both teachers have joint responsibilities for teaching and assessing the entire class using their individual style (King-Sears et al., 2014). This model demonstrates that, "Both teachers agree to work with each other when they have something to contribute to the conversation" (Zionts, 1997, p .86). With both teachers engaging in shared responsibilities, more curriculum materials may be covered. This coteaching model addresses the needs of students with multiple learning styles. Both teachers take equal responsibility in the academic success of their students (King-Sears et al., 2014).

Station Teaching

Station teaching is another favored model for coteaching because it gives students an opportunity to learn by using multiple modalities. Station teaching presents different parts of the lesson "where various learning stations are created" (Scruggs et al., 2007, p.

392). With station teaching, teachers create multiple centers with a variety of activities that target specific skills or content areas (King-Sears et al., 2014). Teachers divide students into small groups and allow students to work together as they investigate, discover, or explore the concept at hand (King-Sears et al., 2014). With this coteaching model, each teacher has a clear responsibility to work with their predetermined groups as they move from station to station. Station teaching is ideal because not only does it provide students with peer interaction, but also because it allows students to participate in the instructional activities where they can use a variety of learning styles.

Parallel Teaching

Parallel teaching creates a classroom environment that reduces student-teacher ratio. Although both teachers are taking ownership of the class, they share the responsibility (King-Sears et al., 2014). This strategy requires teachers to divide the class into two mixed abilities groups. This method allows both teachers to teach the same content matter to each group (Friend et al., 2010; King-Sears et al., 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007). The general education teacher teaches one group, and the special education teacher teaches the other group. Both teachers teach the same or similar content at the same time (King-Sears et al., 2014). It is arguable that this coteaching model may present some distractions during the teaching and learning experiences. One drawback to this method is the classroom environment may be noisy. Another distraction may include interruptions caused by the events of the other group. In spite of this, both teachers are sharing equal responsibility for their students' success.

Alternative Teaching

Alternative teaching is another preferred coteaching model because it employs the knowledge, skills, and expertise of both teachers. This coteaching model allows teachers to identify and target specific learning gaps or to provide reinforcement for academic content (King-Sears et al., 2014). With this model, the teachers divide the class into two groups: large and small. One teacher may take the smaller group of students to a different location for a set period for specialized instruction (Friend et al., 2010; King-Sears et al., 2014). The teacher who is providing instruction to the smaller group may provide enrichment activities, re-teach a concept, or review needed information. The teacher with the larger group will simultaneously provide instruction. This coteaching model offers teachers a unique arrangement to target the needs of struggling students without holding back students who have mastered the concept.

The Inclusion Debate: Pros and Cons

The term inclusion refers to the process of including students with disabilities in the general education setting (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). Some may argue that the term itself is subjective because it implies marginalization from the main group and that incorporation of someone or something is necessary (Booth & Potts, 1983). Despite this notion, inclusion is a positive change for people with disabilities (Ashworth et al., 2010; Damore & Murray, 2009; Friend et al. 2010; Obiakor et al., 2012; Scruggs et al., 2012). Inclusion is a basic human right (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010; McKee, 2011). Inclusion's main purpose is to provide a continuum of services, which

serves as a bridge to connect students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers

(Friend et al., 2010; Spasovski, 2010). With this, students with disabilities receive a boost

to help them work and socialize alongside their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest,

2012). Including students with disabilities in the general education setting not only helps

students build stronger social skills, but also boosts their academic competence.

Inclusion: Pros

Including students with disabilities in the general education setting has the

potential to affect their academic and social potential tremendously (Dessemontet, Bess,

& Morin, 2012; Hudson et al., 2013; McKee, 2011; Roden et al., 2013). McKee argued

that inclusion provides students with disabilities with a positive school climate, which

seeks to promote service in oneness. Inclusion in a positive school climate creates the

prospective that students with disabilities are a part of the general stream of things as it

relates to the general school environment (McKee, 2011). Although students with

disabilities receive specialized support, they are often viewed as a separate entity to the

whole. Inclusion forces school districts to see students with disabilities as part of the

whole (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013).

Students with disabilities not only benefit from oneness when they are included in

the general education setting; they receive exposure to a larger network of nondisabled

population (Dessemontet et al., 2012; McKee, 2011). This kind of exposure provides

students with disabilities with a larger social support system. Ryndak (2014) reported that

students with disabilities who received instruction in an inclusion setting showed

academic growth. Ryndak explained that when included in a general education setting, students with disabilities academic performance showed competitive results as compared to their nondisabled peers.

Inclusion is not only a great idea because students with disabilities have the potential to gain better academic and social outcomes, it allows students to generalize what they have learned (McKee, 2011). Educating students goes beyond the teaching and learning experiences in the classroom. Students must be able to take what they have learned and apply it in their world (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Karmer, 2011). When application matches learning, true learning has taken place (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b). Considering the world is not isolated to one specific group of people with unique characteristics, students with disabilities have an opportunity to explore their learning in many different environments (Doyle & Connor, 2012). The inclusion environment provides students with disabilities the opportunity to generalize their learning (McKee, 2011). Feedback from their interaction in the inclusion setting allows students with disabilities to use personal, proxy, and collective measures to mold and shape their learning experiences, so they are relevant to social conventions and norms (Bandura, 1997a 1977b). The benefits of inclusion go beyond academic and social competence. Inclusion provides students with disabilities the opportunity to generalize their learning in a society that is diverse.

Even with the best of things, there is always room for concern, improvements, or recommendations. The main concern from inclusion critics is the way students with

disabilities receive services (Doody & Connor, 2012; McKee, 2011). Considering that general education teachers follow a preset curriculum designed for nondisabled students, conflicts may arise for students with disabilities who have IEPs (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Careful consideration is necessary to meet the needs of both groups without infringing on their rights to a free and appropriate education (Dessemontet & Bless, 2013). With this, a breech in services occurs when an IEP does not address the general education setting (McKee, 2011). Moreover, many general education teachers may not be properly prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities (McCray & McHatton, 2011; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014; Yildiz, 2015). These teachers need training to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Sposovski, 2010).

Another argument against inclusion is that the general education classroom is not always the best setting for students with disabilities. The needs of students with disabilities go beyond the scope of the general education classroom (McKee, 2011). The need for specialized instruction, unique techniques, methods, and technology are necessary to instruct students with disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; McLeskey et al., 2012). The general education classroom in not generally equipped with the resources to aid in the instruction of students with disabilities (McKee, 2011). As a result, they must leave the general education classes and receive instruction, therapy, or community-based instruction.

Despite the possibilities and the odds, the inclusion experience offers some positive outcomes; however, it has room for development (Friend et al. 2010; King-Sears

et al., 2014; Obiakor et al., 2012; Scruggs et al., 2012; Thompson, 2012). Inclusion

presents avenues where students with disabilities can partake in similar learning

experiences as their nondisabled peers (Nowicki & Brwon, 2013). This move is not only

beneficial to academic and social outcomes, but also provides students with disabilities

the opportunity to generalize their learning in practical social settings (Friend et al.,

2010). Despites the benefits of inclusion, there is room for improvement (Aron &

Loprest, 2012; McLeskey et al., 2012). More measures need to be in place to allow

students to receive the services they need in an appropriate learning environment (Aron

& Loprest, 2012). These measures will not only reduce the potential for compromised

learning situations, but will provide a wholesome learning experience for all students

with disabilities in the general education setting.

Inclusion and Educational Practices

Federal guidelines mandate that student with disabilities be instructed in the LRE,

which is often the general education classes (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). This

has resulted in a new paradigm shift in the way students with disabilities receive services.

More efforts are in place to ensure that students with disabilities are educated alongside

their nondisabled peers (Ashworth et al., 2010; Damore & Murray, 2009; Friend et al.,

2010). As a result, many schools have moved from providing separate instructional

settings for general and special education students to including both groups in an

inclusive setting (McLeskey, 2012). This move to inclusive education has given rise to

coteaching. Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) and Nowicki and Brown (2013) argued that

coteaching is a valued approach not only because of its unified attempts to meet the needs of a variety of learners, but also because of its emphasis of shared instructional support. Shared instructional support is highly regarded by teachers because the pressure of instructing a diverse population is distributed (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Nowicki & Brown, 2013; Teixeria, Mosquera, & Stobäus, 2015). Coteaching is one viable option to meet the need of a diverse population who receive academic instruction under the same roof.

Inclusion through coteaching is a feasible way of meeting the needs of a group of diverse learning in the same classroom. Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) reported that classes with larger groups of students with disabilities are more likely to employ coteaching models. Employing coteaching models in an inclusion class where teachers provide services to students with disabilities is the only logical model to use (Friend et al., 2010; Marks, Kurth, & Bartz, 2014). Not only will teachers be able to have a stronger grip on classroom management, they can meet the academic and behavioral needs of diverse population (Friend et al. 2010; Thompson, 2012). This is especially true considering that students with disabilities have different needs, which translates to needing individualized assistance. Here the idea of one-size-fits-all is not relevant. Teachers are being strategic in employing the coteaching models to meet the needs of all students.

Children are keen observers of adult behaviors. Often, the words and actions of adults affect children (Bandura, 1977b). Children are able to formulate opinions based on

their observations (Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012; Nowicki & Brown, 2013; Yildiz, 2015). The same is true for the teaching and learning situation. Students often generate opinions about the teaching and learning experience in the inclusion setting based on the words and actions of their teachers (Nowicki & Brown, 2013; Yildiz, 2015). Based on their experiences in the inclusion setting, students have their own thoughts and opinions about coteaching and inclusion (Embury & Kroeger, 2012; Katz et al., 2012; Yildiz, 2015). Children are able to analyze the classroom situation and make judgments about the teaching and learning experience. Damore and Murray (2009) and Embury and Kroeger (2012) showed students typically view the inclusion positively.

Although students with disabilities may view inclusion as a positive experience (Embury & Kroeger, 2012), they have mixed views about coteaching. Embury and Kroeger (2012) and Katz et al. (2012) purported that students tend to view coteaching through inclusion as a positive experience when both teachers share the responsibility of the class regarding instruction, disciple, and classroom management. In a cotaught class, where there is no distinction between special or general education teachers, and where both teachers take leadership of the class, students see coteaching as successful (Friend et al., 2010). Students feel they are accountable to both the general and special education teachers. Students are not afraid to seek the assistance of either teacher. Embury and Kroeger (2012) explained in inclusion classes that use effective coteaching models, students made no differentiation between special and general education teachers. They viewed both teachers as equally important to the teaching and learning experiences.

When coteaching through inclusion is not effective, students are aware (Lundie, 2009; Yildiz, 2015). Students developed perceptions about coteaching through inclusion based on teachers' attitudes and dispositions to the learning environment. Embury and Kroeger (2012) demonstrated students viewed the general education teacher as the *real* teacher because that teacher took over the leadership of the class. In this instance, the general education teacher was responsible for teaching, allocating assignments, and grading. Embury and Kroeger also explained the students saw the general education teacher as the main teacher when the special education teacher and students with disabilities shared the general education classroom. Students need to get a balanced view of teachers' interaction in the inclusion class (Cameron, Cook, & Tankersley, 2012; Yildiz, 2015). Students must see that each teacher plays a valuable role in the teaching and learning situation, and both teachers are equally responsible for the entire class. When all educational personnel are actively involved in delivering services to students with disabilities, students achieve success (Cameron et al., 2012).

Positive Outcomes of Inclusion

Including students with disabilities in the general education class has its benefits. This approach to teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting can benefit teachers and students alike (Thompson, 2012). Students with disabilities in an inclusion class not only benefit in the school setting but also in the world. Some of the advantages students with disabilities receive as a result of inclusion include teaching and learning are shaped, so students will achieve their highest potential, lessons are student-centered,

social acceptance of students with disabilities can be achieved, a low teacher student ratio, and students have the opportunity to work side-by-side with their none-disabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012).

The most important benefits of inclusion surround the rights of all students (Friend et al., 2010; Kleinert et al., 2015). The school is the preparatory institution for teaching students their civic responsibilities (Dewey, 1938). Hence, the school should expose and prepare all students for community participation (Teixeria, Mosquera, & Stobäus, 2015). Excluding students with disabilities from interacting with their same aged peers will exclude them from the real world setting where discrimination based on disability is illegal (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013). By law, all students have the right to be a part of public education (Education of the Handicapped Act, 1986). Although all students have the right to participate in public education, sections 3000.522 d and e of IDEA list one reason that may prevent a student with disability from this right. Thompson (2012) explained federal compliance requires all students must receive access to public education with their nondisabled peers unless it interferes with the instruction environment. All students with a disability should be educated with their none-disabled peers as long as it does not interfere with the education of others (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; Friend et al., 2010). As much as possible, students with disabilities need the opportunity to interact in the same learning environment as their nondisabled peers (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013).

Inclusion has tremendous benefits for students' successful development (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014; Friend et al. 2010; Obiakor et al., 2012; Scruggs et al., 2012; Thompson, 2012). Friend et al. (2010) expressed an argument in favor of inclusion through coteaching is students with disabilities learn and grow within communities, which are similar to the world they will live in as adults, and they need exposure for similar interaction. Exposure in the general education classes is only the beginning to expected social interaction, which will eventually lead to full interaction in communities (Friend et al., 2010). In the real world, students with disabilities are not segregated. They must participate in social, political, and business endeavors just as their nondisabled counterpart do. As such, the school is the best starting point to foster such an interaction (Friend et al., 2010). The best place to prepare students with disabilities for the real world is with their none-disabled peers.

Inclusion requires two highly qualified teachers to provide instruction in a class with students with disabilities as well as their nondisabled peers using coteaching strategies (Friend et al., 2010). Both teachers share equal responsibility for the entire class (Friend et al., 2010; King-Sears et al., 2014; McCann, 2008). Not only does this method reduce the teacher-student-ratio, but allows students to benefit from the expertise of two individuals (King-Sears et al., 2014; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). Inclusion allows students to benefit from two highly qualified teachers in both content and strategies. Although teachers may approach the lesson differently, they are likely to target multiple learning styles because of their differing strategies (Friend et al., 2010). This

situation offers students with and without disabilities another opportunity to perform at higher levels because of different learning strategies and modifications (Doyle & Giangeco, 2013). Lakhan (2013) indicated students with disabilities achieve academic, behavior, and communication success because of inclusion.

Teachers need to be prepared to embark on the inclusion experience. Inclusion requires collaboration, planning, and knowledge about students with disabilities for it to be successful (Friend et al., 2010). Multiple factors, which include severity of disability, education, and age, determine teachers' success in the inclusion class (Lakhan, 2013). These factors have a direct impact on teachers' perceptions of the inclusion experience (Lakhan, 2013). Teacher preparedness courses and teachers' knowledge of inclusion are factors that influence teachers' perceptions and attitudes of inclusion (Hunter-Johnson, & Cambridge-Jonson, 2014; Loreman, Sharma, & Forlin, 2013; Ozer et al., 2013; Sharma et al. 2008). Fallon, Zhang, and Kim (2011) reported pre-service teachers noted great deals of readiness for addressing the challenges of an inclusive class after they had taken coursework in providing services to students with disabilities. The more knowledge teachers have about inclusion and students with disabilities, the more enthused they are about working with disabled students (Ozer et al., 2013; Sharma et al. 2008). Teachers who are confident about their instructional practices and content area are more comfortable with teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting (Berry, 2010; Combs, Elliott, & Whipple, 2010). Teachers' preparedness and mindsets have a direct impact on their perception of inclusion.

Barriers Relating to Inclusion

Self-efficacy is a person's self-drive (Bandura, 1977b). This may include a person's ability to push him or herself to complete a particular task to meet a specific goal. In an educational setting, self-efficacy is a student's beliefs about his or her ability to tackle and handle academic content (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012). Self-efficacy is important because it provides the student with the driving power to succeed. According to Lundie (2009), students with learning disabilities generally lack self-efficacy. This lack of self-efficacy originates in poor academic and personal outcomes (Anderson, Lai, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2012). Students with disabilities attribute academic or learning factors that negatively affect them to situations outside of themselves (Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). With this, students with disabilities lack self-efficacy in the learning process.

Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986) purported that a person's self-efficacy can provide motivation for the repetition of certain behaviors. For Bandura, motivation and self-drive energize a person to repeat a behavior based on the consequences. A positive or negative reinforcement from an action determines the likelihood of a reoccurring behavior (Bandura, 1977a; 1977b, 1986). Motivation is therefore essential during the learning process (Bandura, 1977b). Students can be self-motivated where they have a personal drive for knowledge (Bandura, 1977a; 1977b). Motivation can also come from extrinsic sources, which can include the teachers. The teacher can motivate students by providing praise, incentives, or treats.

For Bandura (1977a, 1977b, 1986), motivation was an essential ingredient in the learning process. Students need to have a desire to learn, and teachers must foster that need with encouragement and incentive. Because many students with disabilities experience a deficit in cognitive functioning and may not learn at the same rate as their nondisabled peers, they are less motivated (McLeskey et al., 2012; Yildiz, 2015; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). The lack of academic motivation relates to academic competence (Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Students with disabilities often feel less competent regarding academics because they believe that they are not born with the mental capacity to perform as compared to their nondisabled peers who are more academically inclined (Anderson et al., 2011).

Although students with disabilities often have academic deficits, one factor that may hinder or slow down the learning process is motivation (Anderson et al., 2011; McLeskey et al., 2012; Yildiz, 2015; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). This factor may prevent these students from reaching their academic goals. Accommodations and modifications are two services provided to students with disabilities to place them on a comparative academic level to their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLeskey et al., 2012; Turki & Fur, 2012). Elliott, McKevitt, Krotochwill, and Malecki (2009) and Elliott et al. (2010) argued modification and accommodation help to bridge the academic gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers.

Modifications and accommodations bridge the gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Turki & Fur, 2012). With

accommodations, students with disabilities have services in the same or comparable

learning environment as their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLeskey et al.,

2012). Even with adjustments, students share the same environment. Results from studies

conducted by Elliott et al. (2009), Doyle & Giangeco, (2013), and Roden et al. (2013)

provided evidence that students with disabilities can perform at a comparable academic

level as their nondisabled peers. The results of the research indicated that with

accommodation, students' test scores improved. These findings revealed that when

accommodations were given, students with disabilities' academic competency improved.

Test scores are one indicator to show that learning is taking place.

Modification is another support service that improves the learning experience for

students with disabilities (Hunter-Johnson & Cambridge-Jonson, 2014; Turki & Fur,

2012). Elliott et al. (2010) contended that modification is a great tool to help students

with disabilities. With modifications, students with disabilities can access the general

education curriculum (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014; McLeskey

et al., 2012; Turki & Fur, 2012). With modifications, students' work or assessment varies

to suit their level of performance (Turki & Fur, 2012). Modifications not only help

students with disabilities access the general education classroom, they also help students

meet academic success.

Accommodations and modifications are ideal for helping students access the

general education curriculum and provide opportunities to work alongside their

nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLeskey et al., 2012; Turki & Fur, 2012).

However, these supportive services do not address students' lack of academic self-efficacy (Solberg et al., 2012). Accommodations and modifications address the classroom setting and the delivery of academic content (Turki & Fur, 2012). Students with disabilities need interventions to address their deficits in academic self-efficacy.

Providing support through intervention is another way to improve academic self-efficacy in students with disabilities. Research (Hudson et al., 2013; Jacob and Dangling, 2014; Kleinert et al., 2015; Reed, 2009; Roden et al., 2013; Taylor, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Flowers, 2010; Tremblay, 2013) shows that students with disabilities were able to improve test scores and academic performance after they received intervention. Because of the academic and or cognitive deficits that students with disabilities face, they may not be at the same cognitive level as their nondisabled peers (Turki & Fur, 2012). With intervention and support, students with disabilities can achieve their learning goals.

The focus for students with disabilities should be different from that of their nondisabled peers. The focus should include strategies that foster confidence for students with disabilities who often experience some intellectual or academic deficits. The learning experience is a dynamic one. It should involve the input of both the teacher and the student. The teacher may exert much energy in preparing engaging lessons and use appropriate strategies, but he or she will not achieve optimum results alone. The teacher needs some initiative from the student. Without some effort from the student, the process is futile, and this action may affect a teacher's perception of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Student input is an essential part of the

teaching and learning process. Students desire to learn has to be aroused enough to motivate them into an active learning experience. Motivation, intervention, instructional methods, and self-regulation each play an integral part in students with disability learning experiences.

Students Barriers in the Inclusion Setting

Barriers students with disabilities possess may influence a coteacher's perception of successful inclusion. When barriers exist in the learning environment, it is reason for concern. Barriers in the learning environment mean that effective learning is not taking place, or students are not understanding and processing academic concepts (Humphrey et al., 2013; Lundie, 2009; Roden et al., 2013). Considering students with disabilities are already receiving services for cognitive, behavioral, or physical deficits; any obstacle standing as a barrier to the learning experience needs serious consideration.

Even with cognitive, behavioral, or physical deficits, students with disabilities may have other hindrances that hamper learning (Humphrey et al., 2013). One common barrier that students with disabilities face is that of academic self-efficacy (Lundie 2009). Self-efficacy affects students' academics because it prevents them from building positive concepts as it relates to learning (Solberg et al., 2012). With this, students lack motivation, and they foster the feeling that academic competency is bestowed on their nondisabled peers and not on them (Lundie, 2009). Therefore, self-efficacy is an essential element of the learning experience.

Self-efficacy is important. Self-efficacy habits inculcated to students with disabilities go a long way in the learning process (Lundie, 2009). Self-efficacy not only motivates students, but also empowers them to strive to their highest potential. Lundie (2009) suggested motivation not only nourished the learning experiences but also considered learners' experiences. Therefore, motivation is an important ingredient in a student's success. Motivation is a driving force, which causes an individual to work toward a desired goal (Humphrey et al., 2013; Solberg et al., 2012; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Students with disabilities should possess some willingness to work toward an academic outcome to demonstrate success. Self-efficacy is an important factor in achieving academic goals.

Students' attitudes in the learning process are important in determining success. This attitude can come from an internal drive to succeed; however, students do not always have this drive (McLeskey et al., 2012; Yildiz, 2015). They experience barriers. Being academically motivated is not always an easy task for students with disabilities (Lundie, 2009). Students with disabilities often demonstrate little self-confidence in their academic competence. For these students, negative perception about their academic outcome stifles their motivation (Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). This negative perception about their academic capability affects positive learning outcomes.

Helplessness is one barrier to a positive learning outcome for students with disabilities (Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Familiarity with academic failures and difficulties may result in helplessness for students with disabilities. With learned

helplessness, students demonstrate a lack of motivation in the academic areas in which they feel less competent (Sparks & Cote, 2012). Academic helplessness may reveal itself in a number of maladaptive behaviors, which include diminished persistence, lower academic expectations, and negative affect (Baird et al., 2009; McLeskey et al., 2012; Sparks & Cote, 2012; Yildiz, 2015). With this, students show little interest in academic content but demonstrate higher competences in skills or success in nonacademic areas (Lundie, 2009). Students prefer to focus on their areas of strength that do not involve academics (Lundie, 2009; Sparks & Cote, 2012)

Perception about learning has a direct influence on learning (Baird et al., 2009; Ford, Stuart, & Vakil, 2014; Lundie, 2009). A student's view about his or her academic competence directly correlates to that student's attitude toward learning (Bandura, 1977b). If a student feels that he or she is smart, he or she shows increased motivation toward learning. The opposite in true if the student feels cognitively inferior; he or she shows little motivation toward learning.

Baird et al. (2009) indicated that students with learning disabilities were more likely to have low academic self-efficacy than were other students. These students believed that intelligence was genetically endowed to smart students. As a result, less intelligent students could do nothing to improve low academic outcomes (Lundie, 2009). As such, academically challenged students with disabilities were more likely to focus on skills that were nonacademic (Lundie, 2009). As a result, students with disabilities showed more motivation in areas that required nonacademic skills. Students with

disabilities are more prone to choose outcomes that will demonstrate nonacademic success.

Perception about academic competence is vital in the learning process. Researchers (Ford et al., 2014; Lundie, 2009; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009) argued that students who were confident in their academic ability typically enjoyed a task and displayed more determination to complete a task successfully. When a student feels less competent academically, he or she is least likely to put forth effort in this area (Lundie, 2009; Sparks & Cote, 2012). Zisimopoulos and Galanaki (2009) suggested that because intrinsic motivation and self-concept are integrally involved in the learning process, these factors require consideration when planning for the educational success and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Self-efficacy in students with disabilities is integral to the learning process. Considering the challenges these students face, self-efficacy does not come naturally. Because of low self-concept and difficulty in academic content, students with disabilities experience some complexities. These students feel they lacked the genetic disposition of scholastic competence and show helplessness by avoiding academic driven goals. The lack of motivation and self-efficacy hinders the learning process.

Teachers' Barriers to Inclusion

An environment that addresses students with disabilities learning deficit is important. Lundie (2009) purported it is essential to anticipate students' needs and create an environment that encourages positive self-worth. Finding factors that motivate

students with disability is not only proactive but addresses specific areas of concerns (Doyle & Giangeco, 2013). This process takes more than the student; it requires the realignment of social factors to facilitate the general perception of students with disabilities (Ford et al., 2014; Thurston, 2014). As such, disability is not an inability. Parents and teachers can foster students' motivation by helping them to improve their self-concept.

Teachers are an invaluable resource in the teaching and learning situation. Their importance lies beyond delivering instruction and conducting assessment (Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; Ford et al., 2014). The teacher sets the tone for learning, motivating students, establishing academic expectations, and helping students to foster and develop high academic standards (David & Kuyini, 2012; Ouellette-Kuntz, Burge, Brown, & Arsenault, 2010). Williams (1983) explained the effect teachers have in the classroom. In an experiment where student selection was random, and teachers had no direct indication about students' academic performance, teachers learned that some of their students were functioning below grade level but had the potential to improve their academic performance. By the end of the study, students' academic performances soared. The factor that contributed to improved academic performance was teacher expectation and attitude.

Teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities often play a vital part in students' academic self-efficacy (David & Kuyini, 2012; Ford et al., 2014; King-Sears, 2008; Scior, Addai-Davis, Kenyon, & Sheridan, 2013). Teachers' perceptions determine

students' attitudes toward the instructional environment (David & Kuyini, 2012). When teachers foster the attitude of helplessness, students demonstrate limited confidence in their abilities (Yildiz, 2015). The opposite is true regarding when teacher possess the attitude that all students can learn (Lundie, 2009). Taylor et al. (2010) illustrated this best. In their study, they detailed the results that students with significant developmental disabilities enjoyed when teachers used a structured literacy curriculum to teach reading. Despite students' limitations, they demonstrated self-efficacy in the learning environment. Taylor et al. attributed students' successes to the structured curriculum, teacher effectiveness, and self-efficacy.

Teachers' expectations about students' academic competence also play a part in the learning environment (Ford et al., 2014). When teachers have high expectations for students, students tend to perform better (Aron & Loprest, 2012; David & Kuyini, 2012; Dessemontet et al., 2012). Bandura (1977a, 1977b) explained that people strive toward achievable goals. The rewards for achieving a goal are not always tangible but can include a number of intangible rewards. One reward Bandura addressed was the sense of self-fulfillment. In the teaching and learning environment, this means students may want to work harder toward successful academic outcome not only for their own fulfillment, but to receive the teacher's praise and approval. Students are influenced by their environment and by individuals. When individuals have high self-efficacy, their belief about their competence escalates, and they are likely to perform a task successfully

(Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 1986). When students know their teachers are confident in their abilities, students are more likely to work harder toward their academic goals.

The severity of students' disabilities also plays a part of how teachers approach inclusion (Dusseljee, Rijken, Cardol, Curfs, & Groenewegen, 2011). Dukmak (2013) and Katz et al. (2012) explained teachers embraced students with milder disabilities. However, teachers were less accepting of students with intellectual disabilities and behavior disorders. Other factors affect teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities placement in the general education setting. Some of these factors include gender, experience in teaching, and disability types (Dukmak, 2013; Dusseljee et al., 2011). Dapudong (2014) expressed that when teachers have a negative or neutral attitude toward including students with disabilities in the general education setting, these teachers would often try to relegate their duties to someone else.

Self-efficacy is wanting in students with disabilities. They cannot achieve it on their own. They need the help of teaches (Aron & Loprest, 2012; David & Kuyini, 2012; Dessemontet et al., 2012). Teachers can foster self-efficacy among students with disabilities by substituting the pressure to perform with goal completion at one's own pace. Students will see their learning goals as reachable and be willing to work toward them (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b). By so doing, students will feel more relaxed. The desire lessens to compare themselves with peers that are more competent. Students will be proud of their accomplishments although they did not complete them to the same degree as their nondisabled peers.

Attitude, trust, expectation, and self-efficacy go a long way. Although these attributes are not tangible or directly measurable, they are important ingredients in the learning process. They are important because they set the foundation for a positive learning environment. With a positive learning environment, students with disabilities should be able to take on the challenges associated with their specific academic deficits.

Current Practices in Inclusion

Despite the benefits of inclusion, research has mixed views about its practice. Although some researcher (Berry, 2010; Fallon et al., 2011) credited teachers' preparedness courses and knowledge about inclusion as factors that may affect their perceptions about including students with disabilities in the general education classes, this view is not unanimous. Forlin and Chambers (2011) argued that even with knowledge of inclusion, teachers still expressed concerns about inclusion. With this, teachers were still concerned about environmental implications about inclusion. They expressed concerns about academic and behavioral challenges that may be associated with inclusion (Aron & Loprest, 2012; David & Kuyini, 2012; Dessemontet et al., 2012; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). Another study indicated preservice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities went unchanged after awareness of inclusion was raised (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). Forlin and Chambers argued teachers' attitudes heighted after receiving awareness about inclusion. Unlike previous studies (Berry, 2010; Fallon et al., 2011), lack of knowledge about inclusion may not be the only factor that influences

teachers' attitude toward students with disabilities. Their perception of this teaching model may also be a contributing factor.

Open mindedness is important when embarking on the inclusion experience (Thurston, 2014). Teachers' attitudes about students learning are important when talking about the teaching and learning experience in an inclusion setting (Berry, 2010; David & Kuyini, 2012; Fallon et al., 2011; Ford et al., 2014; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Whitley, 2010). Teachers are not only required to approach the inclusion experience with knowledge, but they must have the right attitude toward its practice (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Friend et al., 2010). Here, attitude goes a long way. Whitley (2010) argued a teacher's attitude has a great influence on students' learning experiences. Teachers' attitudes directly affect students' academic and social success. When teachers have high academic expectancy for their students, these students tend to work harder at becoming successful (Lundie, 2009). The opposite is also true. When teachers have a negative attitude about student learning and a low expectancy for their students, they tend to put forth little effort in academic endeavors (Whitley, 2010). Teachers' perceptions of students' academic competence in the inclusion setting will greatly determine a student's success or failure.

Teachers are ultimately one of the major contributing factors in the learning outcomes of students with disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Friend et al., 2010; Lundie, 2009). Teachers influence goes beyond delivering academic content, but also encompasses their perception of educational practices (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLeskey

et al., 2012). A teacher's contribution does not only rest on the fact that he or she is providing interventions to target academic areas of deficits, but also in attitude (Thurston, 2014). Teachers who are confident in their capability to instruct students with disabilities have high expectations for students' academic success, which results in better academic growth (Whitley, 2010). With this, students with disabilities are more receptive to academic intervention and display better academic self-efficacy when teachers demonstrate passion for the teaching and learning experience.

Attitude goes a long way (Whitley, 2010). Despite the benefits derived from an inclusion setting, many teachers have negatives views about inclusion and resist the notion of including students with disabilities in general education classes (Aron & Loprest, 2012; David & Kuyini, 2012; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; Katz et al., 2012; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). Because inclusion is a legal requirement under the mandates of IDEA (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013), teacher resistance is more ingrained in their attitude toward inclusion. Hwang and Evans (2011) reported that although many teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion, many are hesitant to teach students with disabilities in their general education classes. Some teachers think inclusion is a good idea, but they do not want to engage in its practice. Although many general education teachers believe including students with disabilities will yield social and academic benefits, they feel that students with disabilities require extra time and support (David & Kuyini, 2012; Hwang & Evans, 2011; Yildiz, 2015). Some general education teachers expressed that when they devote extra time and support to students

with disabilities, the rest of the class lacks teacher interaction and attention (Hwang & Evans, 2011). A number of teachers feel that including students with disabilities is extra work. With this, some teachers feel that students with disabilities should be educated in an environment where they can receive specialized services.

Hwang and Evans (2011) argued that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion might be significant regarding what occurs in inclusion classes. Teachers, who do not support the practice of inclusion, may not be willing to embrace students with disabilities in their classes (David & Kuyini, 2012; Yildiz, 2015). After examining teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities, Hwang and Evans (2011) found gaps between theories and practices as they related to inclusion. Hwang and Evans found that although teachers may embrace the idea of inclusion, they are hesitant to teach students with disabilities in their general education classes. Although teachers think the idea of inclusion is a good one, they are not willing to take on the task of implementing it. The position that teachers take may hinder the successful implementation of inclusion. Here, teachers' attitudes stand as barriers to successful inclusion.

Theoretically speaking, many agree including students with disabilities in the general education classes is a good idea development (Friend et al. 2010; Obiakor et al., 2012; Scruggs et al., 2012; Thompson, 2012). However, often, theory does not match practice (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLeskey et al., 2012; Thurston, 2014). Although many teachers feel that including students with disabilities in the general education classes is a good idea, many do not provide these students with the necessary services they need

(Almog, 2008). Almog revealed that although teachers feel that students with disabilities benefit from adaptive instruction, many teachers fail to implement the recommended support. Although many teachers agree students with disabilities can benefit from receiving instruction in an inclusive setting, teachers fail to implement strategies to make the transition effective. Despite this inconsistency, inclusion through coteaching has gained grounds in public schools (McLeskey et al., 2012).

Many general education teachers are hesitant to implement inclusive education. These teachers cited limited skills, lack of knowledge regarding inclusion, and lack of support (Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014). Hwang and Evans (2011) argued teachers are fearful of change and are hesitant to accept the new educational paradigm. Fuchs (2011) purported that teachers' views about inclusion are a direct result of their ability to educate students with disabilities in the general education setting. If teachers do not feel positively about inclusion, their effectiveness in teaching students with disability in the general education setting is of no consequence. Gotshall and Stefanou (2011) supported this same view. They reasoned the higher the level of a teacher's anxiety about inclusion, the lower his or her belief in the success of inclusion was. The opposite also holds true. When a teacher embraces a positive view of inclusion, he or she possesses a strong belief that students with disabilities can experience a positive change in the inclusion setting (Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). Teachers' attitudes have a lot to do with their perception of students with disabilities in general education classes. When teachers possess a positive

attitude toward inclusion, they are more willing to implement the necessary strategies, modifications, and accommodations to make the merger successful.

For inclusion to work, theory must exemplify practice (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLeskey et al., 2012; Thurston, 2014). Teachers must not only agree that inclusion is a good idea but must be willing to implement strategies that will make it effective. Although Golmic and Hansen (2012) reported an increase in positive attitude and decreased concern for inclusion among pre-service teachers; however, teachers still had concerns about this teaching model. Teachers view inclusion as a beneficial venture for both teachers and students. Their concerns come because of the equity of teaching responsibility in the class. Hwang and Evans (2011) explained that although teachers are in favor of the theory of inclusion, teachers have concerns about its practical implications. Disability types and availability of resources influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Teachers' concerns increased depending on the severity of the disability involved (Hwang & Evans, 2011). The more severe the disability, the more teachers resisted the idea of inclusion.

Thoughts exemplify actions. An individual's perception of something has tremendous implications toward his or her behavior (Bandura, 1977b; David & Kuyini, 2012). When someone feels positively about something, he or she puts forth the work to achieve the desired result. However, when an individual feels negatively about something, he or she feels that effort is not necessary because failure is eminent. Gotshall and Stefanou (2011) maintained that a teacher's confidence about the success of students

with disabilities in an inclusion setting results in higher expectations, which in turn, results in students meeting grade level expectations. When teachers maintain a positive attitude about inclusion by exhibiting high expectation for students, student performance will soar. The success or failure of inclusion has a lot to do with teachers' attitudes toward its practice (Ford et al., 2014; Hunter-Johnson, & Cambridge-Jonson, 2014). When teachers buy into the concept of inclusion, they will likely work toward the integration of students with disabilities to ensure their success.

Negative views about inclusion can set the tone for how teachers see students with disabilities in general education classes (Gokdere, 2012; Gotshall &Stefanou, 2011). In examining in-service and pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, Gokdere (2012) found teachers resisted the notion of inclusion because they equated inclusion with extra work and intra-class problems. With this thought process, it was only natural teachers would cultivate negative views about inclusion. With inclusion, teachers see themselves as having to preserve the teaching and learning environment amid academic, motivational, and behavioral challenges.

Lundie (2009), Baird et al. (2009), and Zisimopoulos and Galanaki (2009) explained academic self-efficacy is a major challenge for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities foster feelings that academic competency is bestowed on their nondisabled peers and not on them (Lundie, 2009). Amid increased responsibilities and other challenges, teachers must show growth in students' learning (Jacobs & Fu, 2014). Gokdere (2012) explained teachers see themselves as more responsible for students'

outcomes, which causes feelings of anxiety. Whitley (2010) suggested teachers' attitudes play a role in students' learning. In Whitney's study, teachers with higher efficacy made a more positive impact on students' with disabilities academic outcome. Teachers' impact was higher despite behavioral characteristics. Conversely, students of teachers with lower efficacy did not make significant academic progress.

Hassan, Parveen, and Nisa (2010) conveyed that although teachers were willing to embrace inclusion, they were not willing to accept students with any disability type. These teachers were only willing to accept students with mild disabilities in their classes. Teachers were reluctant to accommodate students with severe disabilities in inclusion classes (Dukmak, 2013). Teachers gave rational explanations for their position with factors such as time management, lack of resources, a lack of support, large class sizes, and a lack of awareness of inclusion. Hassan et al. (2010) argued teachers' views were only a reflection of their perception of inclusion. Although teachers based their views of inclusion on the situation in their schools, they were willing to teach some students with disabilities in the general education setting. In spite of teachers' willingness to try inclusion, they still expressed doubt about their effectiveness. Teachers expressed that students with disabilities would not gain maximum of academic support, which would compromise their educational achievement.

Conclusion

With the evolution of the IDEA (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013), Congress mandated that students with disabilities should be educated in the LRE. This means that

as far as possible, students with disabilities must have equal access to the general education curriculum. Whenever possible, these students should be educated in the same setting as their nondisabled peers. These requirements have caused school systems to streamline students with disabilities into general education classes. As such, students with disabilities receive lessons in the same setting, as do their nondisabled peers where two teachers instruct the class. The inclusion setting is unique because it embraces the skills and expertise from the general and special education teachers (King-Sears et al., 2014). In theory, this is a great way to expose students with disabilities to the general education curriculum and increase social interaction with their nondisabled counterparts. However, practice is sometimes lacking. Although policies are in place to ensure that students with disabilities get a fair and appropriate education, different factors may sometimes stand in the way (Aron & Loprest, 2012).

Often, students with disabilities do not perform to their fullest abilities (Baird et al., 2009; Lundie, 2009; Reed et al., 2009; Zisimopoulos & Galanaki, 2009). Although cognitive deficits may be responsible for low academic performance, other factors affect learning. Teachers' attitudes and students' low academic self-efficacy are two main factors that account for low educational performance (Dukmak, 2013; Lundie, 2009; Whitley, 2010). Although these factors do not directly relate to learning, they inadvertently affect the way students approach the learning environment. Students with low academic self-efficacy foster feelings that they cannot perform because they were not born with the ability to achieve academic success. Students with low or no motivation

lack the drive to perform. Both groups of students encounter barriers in their learning experience because they lack the intrinsic motivation that provides them with a greater willingness to accomplish their academic goals. For these students, strategies and interventions are necessary to improve their academic goals.

Strategies are available to increase students with disabilities academic self-efficacy and motivation. These strategies may be ineffective if teachers do not possess the right attitude in the class. Therefore, teachers need to have the right attitude when dealing with this group of students. Whitley (2010) suggested teachers' attitudes play a role in student learning. Teachers with higher efficacy had a more positive outlook of the academic success of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting. These teachers would have a more favorable impact on students with disabilities academic outcome. This is generally true because teachers are likely to invest more time and effort in students' progress. Teachers' impact was higher despite of behavioral characteristics. Conversely, students of teachers with lower efficacy did not make significant academic progress.

Teachers are ultimately a major contributing factor in the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. Teachers' influence goes beyond delivering academic content. A teacher's contribution does not only rest on the fact that he or she is providing interventions to target academic areas of deficits, but also in attitude. Teachers who are confident in their capability to instruct students with disabilities have high expectation for students' academic success, which results in better academic success. With this, students

with disabilities would be more receptive to academic intervention and display better academic self-efficacy when teachers demonstrate passion for the teaching and learning experience. When teachers feel positive about the academic success of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting, expectations of academic success increase.

This study investigated whether there was a relationship between teachers' attitude and disabilities types. It looked at how teachers felt about including students with certain disability types in the classroom to determine if there was a link between teachers' perceptions of disability types and teachers' willingness to participate in inclusive instruction. In Chapter 3, I explain methodology and design, sample, population, and ethical concerns.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

For this study, I employed quantitative methodology to address the research

questions. The selection of quantitative design was appropriate for this study because it

allowed me to use numerical data to analyze teachers' perceptions. However only 55

teachers responded to the invitation, and as a result, I cannot demonstrate that these

respondents were representative of the larger population. I cannot determine statistical

significance of any of the procedures used. More information about these issues is

included in this chapter. I address the research design and its rationale, methodology,

population, sampling, sampling procedures, respondents, procedures for recruitment, and

data collection. This chapter also includes a discussion of instrumentation and

operationalization of constructs, threats to validity, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

My goal was to examine relationships between middle school teachers' attitudes

regarding including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general middle

school classroom and the specific demographic factors of years of teaching experience,

role as special education or general education teacher, and level of education completed. I

collected data from special and general education middle school teachers from three

middle schools. The teachers completed an online survey designed to measure attitudes. I

ran Spearman correlations to address the first three research questions. Spearman

correlation coefficient is a nonparametric statistical measure used to analyze data that fall

outside the normal distribution range (Field, 2009). With nonparametric statistical procedures, data are ranked (Field, 2009). I correlated teachers' perceptions and teachers' education levels (Research Question 1), their length of experiences (Research Question 2), and their roles (Research Question 3). For the fourth research question, I ran a multiple regression where the criterion variable was the total teacher perception score and the three predictors were the teachers' education levels, years of experience, and roles. Due to the small set of respondents, the regression model has little meaning.

Methodology

A plethora of literature and research exists about inclusion and its impact on students with disabilities. However, at the time of data collection, specific research about teachers' perceptions related to the impact of including middle school students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting was limited. More research would reveal information about what teachers believed about inclusion classes regarding students with mild to moderate disabilities. It is important to seek stakeholders' views, and middle school teachers had not been included directly in research I reviewed. Exploration was needed to determine the relationships among middle school teachers' perceptions about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting. My statistical plan included correlation and multiple regression. However, the number of respondents was too small to do more than look for potential correlations. I can use the results to suggest that further exploration could be useful.

To analyze the collected data, I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This software package is the statistical data analysis tool commonly used in educational research. I uploaded data collected from SurveyMonkey into SPSS for analysis and interpretation. Using Spearman's Rho, I measured whether the research variables were related to each other. I planned to include multiple regression where the dependent variable was the teacher's perception total score and the three independent variables were educational level, experience, and role (regular education or special education), but my sample size was too small to make any judgment. If the sample size had been large enough, I could have determined whether there were significant positive correlations, negative correlations, or no correlations. A positive correlation would have indicated, for example, that with increased experience levels, teachers' scores for positive attitudes would have increased. A negative correlation would have indicated that as experience level increased, attitude scores were less positive. No correlation would indicate that no linear relationship existed between variables.

Population

The population included teachers in the largest suburban-urban school district in a southern state in the United States. All middle school personnel in this school district are engaged in some way in providing instructional and academic support to students with disabilities in an inclusion environment. At the time of data collection, there were 18 middle schools in the district. Attempts to gather specifics about total numbers of middle school teachers and their demographics were hindered by the lack of access to state,

district, and site-specific data. The respondents for this study included teachers from three schools within the targeted school district. Teachers invited to respond to the survey (220) were randomly selected middle school teachers who provided instruction in grades six through eight. These teachers instructed students with specific learning disabilities in the mild to moderate range.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

For this study, I used cluster sampling. Criteria for using this sampling and procedure included the following: (a) the sample size had to be fair and manageable, (b) I had to be able contact the teachers relatively easily, and (c) the teachers who taught students with disabilities had to be representative of the population. This sampling method should have allowed me to divide the population into a manageable size, which was representative of the total population (Creswell, 2009). However only 55 teachers responded to the invitation, and I cannot demonstrate that these respondents were representative, nor could I use this small sample size to determine statistical significance.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I gained written permission to collect data from Walden University IRB (approval number 07-02-15-0181915; see Appendix A) and the administration of the targeted schools. I retrieved teachers' e-mails from the various school websites and sent invitations to participate in the survey. Invitations included a brief summary of the study, a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey website, and instructions for accessing the survey. Respondents who accessed SurveyMonkey were provided with the informed consent

guidelines. By completing and submitting the electronic survey, respondents indicated they consented to participate in the study. I sent invitations to the teachers nine times.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The survey instrument used in this research study was the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) Instrument, created by Gregory and Noto (2012). This survey instrument was appropriate for this study because it specifically measured teachers' attitudes and beliefs about including students with disabilities in general education classes. ATTAS-mm measures teachers' attitudes related to including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The developer gave permission to use the instrument (see Appendix B).

The ATTAS- mm and other scales are useful because they make it easy for researchers to analyze abstract concepts and ideas (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The ATTAS-mm uses a Likert-type scale to measure teachers' attitudes and feelings about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education classes. The instrument measures both preservice and established teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities. In a 20-item, Likert-type scale survey, a principle components analysis was used to construct the validity of the ATTAS-mm (see Appendix C). Communalities for the scale ranged from 0.40 to 0.80. These scores indicated the ATTAS-mm measured overall attitude and three components of attitude: (a) the belief that all students can learn in general education classes, (b) personal and professional relationships development are important in teachers perception about

students academic and social outcome, and (c) fostering a supportive environment for all learners is integral in the teaching and learning situation (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The Cronbach's' alpha correlation was used to confirm the reliability of the ATTAS-mm (Gregory & Noto, 2012). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients ranged in size from $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .92$. All four scales had acceptable levels of internal reliability: full scale $\alpha = .833$, cognitive scale $\alpha = .720$, affective scale $\alpha = .928$, and behavioral scale $\alpha = .837$ (Gregory & Noto, 2012). This coefficient confirmed that the ATTAS-MM was a reliable measurement of teachers' attitudes toward including students with disabilities in general education classes. These findings indicate good content validity.

Threats to Validity

In research, it is important to know and to attend to threats that may affect the authenticity and credibility of the research. Validity determines whether the researcher is measuring what he or she proposes to measure. To minimize researcher biases, I took a neutral stand regarding the variables. With this, I made no suggestion or prediction between a negative or positive relationship between variables. I used SPSS statistical software to determine whether there was a correlation between variables. An important threat to validity is drawing conclusions based on insufficient data, and I did encounter this threat due to the very low number of respondents. I have tried not to overstate my findings and their meanings.

Ethical Procedures

The Walden University IRB granted permission prior to data collection and recruitment of respondents. Walden IRB (approval number 07-02-15-0181915) reviewed the study to ensure no ethical or other violations affected respondents. This study did not cause respondents physical or psychological harm. Respondents had the choice to participate in the study voluntarily. Respondents received advice of their rights. They had the option to leave the study at any time without consequences. Respondents were not required to share personal information. All data collected remained anonymous. During the survey, respondents had the opportunity to create a numeric code known only to them. Should respondents have wished to withdraw from the study; this code could identify a particular participant's responses for deletion. Data were stored on a password-protected external drive and kept in a keyed fireproof box in my personal residence, which has deadbolt locks and a security system. I possess primary control of these data. Upon conclusion of the study, the creators of the research instrument received the deidentified raw data.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology of the study. It provided a detailed explanation of the format and procedures for procuring research respondents and rationale for sample selection. The methodology of this study probed whether a correlation existed between variables and to what extent. Chapter 4 of this

study examines the raw data of the study. It also provides a detailed explanation of

statistical processes used to examine the data.

Chapter 4 Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore possible relationships

between middle school teachers' attitudes about including students with mild to moderate

disabilities in the general education setting and the teachers' education level, length of

time teaching, and their role as general or special education teachers. In all, 55 middle

school teachers responded to the survey. For this study, I examined the attitudes of

general and special education teachers toward including students with mild to moderate

disabilities in general education classes against a number of predictors. I constructed each

research question and any related hypotheses to address the research problem. I wanted to

determine relationships between teachers' attitudes toward including students with mild

to moderate disabilities in general education classes and teachers' roles as special or

general education teachers, length of time teaching, education levels, and all variables

combined. Due to the small number of respondents, the multiple regression model run to

address all variables combined is displayed, yet cannot be discussed in a meaningful way.

In this chapter, I provide an analysis of the research findings. First, I discuss data

collection processes and chronicle the timeframe for data collection, provide a description

of recruitment and response rate, and explain the demographic characteristics of the

respondents. Second, I present a discussion of results, which includes reports on

descriptive statistics that characterize the sample, an evaluation of statistical assumptions,

and analysis of findings. Finally, I summarize data results.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, permissions were obtained from the appropriate agencies: (a) Walden University's Institutional Review Board granted consent to conduct this study (#07-02-15-0181915), (b) the creators of the ATTAS-mm research instrument authorized its use (see Appendix A), and (c) the school administrators granted permission to conduct research in schools in the district (see Appendix D). After I secured those permissions, the data collection period began. I collected data from special and general education teachers from one of the largest suburban-urban school districts in the southern United States. I chose three schools randomly from the list of 18 middle schools.

On the first day of data collection, I sent electronic invitations via SurveyMonkey to all 220 teachers from the three middle schools (see Appendix E). By the end of that week, only two respondents had completed the survey. Because of this low return rate, I sent another invitation (see Appendix F). This follow-up invitation offered teachers who did not participate an opportunity to do so. With this, three more teachers participated. After the initial 2 weeks of data collection, I sent reminders to teachers on a weekly base (see Appendix G). These invitations offered teachers who did not participate an opportunity to do so. Weekly reminders continued for a total of 9 weeks. Each new reminder generated additional responses from teachers. After these recruitment efforts, the survey remained active for an additional 3 weeks with no additional respondents.

Of the 55 middle school teachers who responded to the survey 37 were certified general education teachers and 18 were special education teachers; 33 of the 55 were

females; 37 had at least a master's degree. The median level of teaching experience was

12 years. Four of the respondents had taken no special education classes; 24 had taken

four or more. As shown in Table 1, 37 of the teachers indicated they spent a considerable

or extensive amount of time working with individuals with disabilities.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Respondents

Variable	Category	*n*	%
Current Role			
	Certified General Education Teacher	37	67.3
	Certified Special Education Teacher	18	32.7
Gender			
	Male	22	40.0
	Female	33	60.0
Highest Degree			
	Bachelors	18	32.7
	Masters	21	38.2
	Masters +30 (6th year)	13	23.6
	Doctorate	3	5.5
Years' Experience (*Mdn* = 12 years)			
	0-4 years	9	16.4
	5-9 years	13	23.6
	10-14 years	20	36.4
	15-19 years	12	21.8
	20 years or more	1	1.8
Special Education college courses completed			
	None	4	7.3
	1 to 3	27	9.1
	4 or more classes	24	43.6
Experience working with individuals with disabilities			
	Minimal (1 hour or less per month)	4	7.3
	Some (2-10 hours per month)	14	25.5
	Considerable (11-80 hour per month)	14	25.5
	Extensive (more than 80 hours per month)	23	41.8
School grade level			
	Middle (4-6, 5-6, 4-8, 6-8, 7-8)	55	100.0

Forty-three of the respondents taught in a suburban area at the time of data collection. Ten respondents taught in an urban area, and two respondents taught in a rural area (see Table 2).

Table 2

Respondents' Working Conditions

Variable	Category	n	$\%$
Community of work			
	Rural	2	3.6
	Suburban	43	78.2
	Urban	10	18.2
Socioeconomic status of work community			
	Poor (income/education in the lowest 20%)	19	34.5
	Moderate (income/education in the middle 60%)	35	63.6
	Affluent (income/education in the highest 20%)	1	1.8
Socioeconomic status of work community			
	Poor (income/education in the lowest 20%)	19	34.5
	Moderate (income/education in the middle 60%)	35	63.6
	Affluent (income/education in the highest 20%)	1	1.8

All but one teacher participant planned to teach for at least 5 more years, and 25 planned to teach more than 20 more years (*Mdn* = 15.50 years). Twenty-six of the teachers wanted eventually to become a school administrator (see Table 3).

Table 3

Respondents' Future Plans

Variable	Category	*n*	%
Plan to teach (*Mdn* = 15.50 years)			
	Fewer than 5 years	1	1.8
	5-10 years	16	29.1
	11-20 years	13	3.6
	Greater than 20 years	25	45.5
I want to become an administrator			
	No	29	52.7
	Yes	26	47.3

Table 4 displays the ratings for the statements about attitude of teaching all students sorted by ascending mean ratings. These ratings were given using a 7-point metric: 1 = *Agree Very Strongly* to 7 = *Disagree Very Strongly*. The highest level of agreement was for Item 7, "I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with mild to moderate disabilities" (*M* = 2.25). The lowest level of agreement was for Item 1, "Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated" (*M* = 5.29).

Table 4

Ratings of Statements about Attitudes of Teaching All Students Sorted by Ascending

Means (N = 55)

Question	M	SD
7. I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with mild to moderate disabilities.	2.25	1.08
8. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom.	2.71	1.20
6. I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in the regular education classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success.	2.76	1.35
5. I want to emulate teachers who know how to design appropriate academic interventions.	2.89	1.36
4. I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction.	3.07	1.35
9. All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible.	3.53	1.82
3. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.	4.47	1.30
2. Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classes with non- disabled students because they will not require too much of the teacher's time.	5.15	1.43
1. Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated.	5.29	1.38

Note. Ratings based on a 7-point metric: 1 = *Agree very strongly* to 7 = *Disagree very strongly*.

Table 5 displays the psychometric characteristics for the four aggregated scale scores. These ratings were based on a 7-point metric: 1 = *Agree Very Strongly* to 7 = *Disagree Very Strongly*. The most agreement was for the items in the affective scale (M = 2.91) and the behavioral scale (M = 2.83). The least agreement was for the items in the cognitive scale (M = 4.97). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients ranged in size from α = .50 to α = .70 with a median alpha being α = .57. All scales except the total scale (α = .70) had unacceptable levels of internal reliability (Field, 2009). Given the low levels of internal reliability for the scale scores, hypothesis testing was done using the four scale scores.

Table 5

Psychometric Characteristics for the Aggregated Scale Scores (N = 55)

Score	Number of Items	M	SD	Low	High	α
Cognitive	3	4.97	0.97	2.00	7.00	.50
Affective	3	2.91	1.00	1.00	5.67	.60
Behavioral	3	2.83	1.01	1.00	5.33	.54
Total Score	9	3.57	0.75	1.33	5.33	.70

Note. Ratings based on a 7-point metric: 1 = *Agree very strongly* to 7 = *Disagree very strongly*.

Addressing the Research Questions

Recognizing that statistical significance could not be determined based on the small number of respondents, I discuss the research questions and the related correlations in this section. Tables are included to illustrate the results of SPSS manipulation of the data.

Research Question One

Research question one was, "What is the relationship between teachers'

perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' educational

level?" Table 6 displays the Spearman correlations for the four scales with the teacher's

highest degree. There was no indication of a relationship between the variables.

Therefore, my answer to the first research question is that educational level and attitude

scores were not related.

Table 6

Spearman Correlations for Attitude Variables

Variable	Highest Degree	Years of Experience	Current Role [a]
Cognitive Scale	-.01	-.11	.12
Affective Scale	.27	.27	-.20
Behavioral Scale	.12	.14	-.14
Total Score	.22	.19	-.16

[a] Current Role: 1 = Regular Education 2 = Special Education.
Note. Ratings based on a 7-point metric: 1 = *Agree very strongly* to 7 = *Disagree very strongly*.

Research Question Two

Research question two was, "What is the relationship between teachers'

perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' length of

time teaching?" Table 6 displays the Spearman correlations for the four attitude scores

with the teacher's years of experience. A comparison of teachers' length of time teaching

against the four scales revealed no relationship between the variables. My response to the

research question is that attitude scores were not related to the length of time teaching

(see Table 6).

Research Question Three

Research question three asked, "What is the relationship between teachers'

perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and role as general or

special education teachers?" Table 6 displays the Spearman correlations for the four

attitude scores with the teacher's current role (regular education or special education). A

comparison of teachers' current role as special or general education teachers against the

four scales revealed that none demonstrated a relationship. My response to the research

question is that attitude scores were not related to teachers' roles as special or general

educators.

Research Question Four

Table 7 displays the results of the multiple regression model designed to predict

the total attitude score based on three variables. However, this model has little meaning

and cannot be discussed in detail due to the limited number of respondents.

Table 7

Prediction of Total Score Based on Selected Variables (N = 55)

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*P*
Intercept	3.74	0.75		.001
Highest Degree	0.16	0.15	.20	28
Years of Experience	0.05	0.12	.08	.66
Current Role [a]	-0.24	0.22	-.15	.27

Final Model: F (3, 51) = 1.39, p = .26. $R2$ = .076.
[a] Current Role: 1 = Regular Education 2 = Special Education.

Summary

In summary, I used data from 55 teachers to explore possible relationships between middle school teachers' attitudes about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting as they related to education level, length of time teaching, and their role as general or special education teachers. No relationships were revealed for any of the first three research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions towards students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' educational level?

2. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' length of time teaching?

3. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' role as general or special education teacher?

Research question four—"What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions towards students with mild to moderate disabilities total score and the linear combination of the teachers' educational level, experience, and role (regular education or special education)?"—could not be examined fully based on the number of respondents and results from the previous three questions. In the final chapter, I compare these findings to the literature, discuss conclusions and implications, and make recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Federal government mandates require the inclusion of students with disabilities in classrooms and other environments within schools. Inclusion is a common practice in public schools in the United States (Timberlake, 2014; Yell et al., 2013). Research indicates that academic and social outcomes can be improved for students with mild to moderate disabilities by including them in the general education setting (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Hudson et al., 2013; McKee, 2011; Roden et al., 2013). Despite the benefits of including students with mild to moderated disabilities in the general education setting, these students are not generally placed in the inclusion environment and when included, they might not receive appropriate or effective instruction (McLeskey et al., 2012).

Despite the benefits that exist for all students related to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms, few researchers have examined whether general and special education teachers' attitudes toward such inclusion relate to the quality of instruction the students receive (Knesting et al., 2008; Milsom & Glanville, 2010; Roden et al., 2013; Tremblay, 2012). My study explored general and special education middle school teachers' attitudes toward including these students in the general education setting with three possible predictor variables (level of education, time in teaching, and role as special or general education teacher).

In this chapter, I summarize findings related to the research questions. I address the limited results in the context of the theoretical framework and relevant peer-reviewed

literature. I discuss the limitations of the study. I make recommendations for future research and present implications for social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore possible relationships between middle school teachers' attitudes about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting and the teachers' education level, length of time teaching, and their roles as general or special education teachers. I invited 220 middle school teachers to respond to an online survey, and 55 responded (N=220; n = 55). Of the 55 respondents, 35 were certified general education teachers and 18 were certified special education teachers; 33 of the 55 were female; 37 had at least a master's degree. Twelve years was the teachers' median level of teaching experience.

A SPSS analysis of collected data revealed unacceptable levels of internal reliability (Creswell, 2009). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients ranged in size from α = .50 to α = .70 with a median alpha being α = .57. All scales except the total scale (α = .70) had unacceptable levels of internal reliability. Given these low levels and my small sample, relationships were considered rather than significance.

For the first research question, I examined relationships between teachers' attitudes toward students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' educational levels. Although not statistically significant, results revealed that teachers in my sample who had more education were likely to believe that they could create a welcoming classroom for students with mild to moderate disabilities. I could determine no

relationship between attitude scores of the teachers and their level of education. For the second research question, I examined relationships between teachers' perceptions toward the general education classroom inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities and teachers' length of time teaching. No relationship was indicated by the Spearman correlations I ran.

Earlier studies revealed that seasoned teachers with masters and doctorate degrees disagreed believed that students with mild to moderate disabilities could be integrated in the general education classes (McCray & McHatton, 2011; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014; Yildiz, 2015). McKee (2011) argued that the general education setting is not always the best option for students with disabilities. The general rationale against inclusion for this population of students included the argument that teachers are not prepared to address students' needs in the general education setting (Hunter-Johnson, & Cambridge-Jonson, 2014). Some scholars argued that the needs of students with disabilities go beyond that of the general education classroom, and teachers are not always equipped with the necessary resources and techniques to address those needs (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Doyle & Giangeco, 2013; McLeskey et al., 2012).

Although the general education setting may not be the ideal instructional model for meeting all the needs of students with disabilities, teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward including these students may help or hinder students' academic success (Friend et al., 2010; Obiakor et al., 2012; Scruggs et al., 2012; Thompson, 2012). Teachers' views on including students with mild to moderate disabilities do influence how well students

will perform in their classes (Bandura, 1977b); there is a relationship between expectations held and performance.

I examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderated disabilities and teachers' role as special or general education teachers in an effort to address the third research question. No relationships were revealed. More research is needed to examine how roles might be important. Because of the limited number of respondents, the regression model suggested to address Research Question 4 (teachers' perceptions toward students with mild to moderate disabilities total score and the linear combination of the teachers' educational level, experience, and role) cannot be interpreted with any statistical meaning.

Earlier studies detailed that students with mild to moderate disabilities can benefit socially from a larger network of peers (Dessemontet et al., 2012; McKee, 2011). By integrating students with mild to moderate disabilities with their nondisabled peers, both academic and social outcomes can be realized (Dessemontet et al., 2012; Hudson et al., 2013; McKee, 2011; Roden et al., 2013). Teachers feel that the general education setting can provide students with mild to moderate disabilities some benefit.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation was the low return rate of surveys. For this study, 55 special and general education teachers completed the survey; therefore, the desired sample size was not met and significance could not be determined. Timing could have accounted for the low rate of surveys. I conducted my study primarily during the summer

months when teachers are typically on summer break; this timing may have resulted in limited use of work e-mails. If the study had achieved an adequate number of respondents, an analysis of the data would have provided clearer conclusions about the research questions.

Another limitation was the sampling method I used. The use of cluster sampling would have affected the generalizability of the research findings even if the sample size had been significant. For this study, I collected data from personnel within one school district. Moreover, only three schools were randomly chosen for data collection in the school district.

Recommendations

Including students with disabilities in the general education setting is a heavily researched topic. Much information exists on how students with specific learning disabilities, emotional behavior disorders, or autism thrive in the general education setting. Comparatively speaking, at the time of data collection, information was sparse regarding teachers' attitudes regarding students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting. I recommend more inquiry into influences upon teacher attitudes and about how those attitudes might be related to the academic functioning of students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting.

My first recommendation is to replicate this study with a larger sample. This move will not only add to the body of existing literature, but also garner teachers' views about including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education

setting. Researchers can take several steps to gather a larger sample. One method could include extending the data collection period or sampling the entire school district. Another method could be to include both online surveys and collect surveys in person.

My second recommendation is to conduct a mixed methods study including special and general education teachers who work with students with mild to moderate disabilities. Different measures could be used, and teachers could be interviewed to give practical feedback of the specific functioning of students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting.

Other studies could be designed using qualitative methods only. One approach would be to have focus groups that include special and general education teachers, students with mild to moderate disabilities, and the parents of these students. The purpose of the focus groups would be to give ongoing feedback about including students with mild to moderate disabilities. Students with mild to moderate disabilities could give feedback about their experiences of learning alongside their nondisabled peers. Parents could share their experiences about raising their child with mild to moderate disabilities. In the focus groups, teachers could share their successes and difficulties in guided group discussions. All parties involved should be given an opportunity to contribute in ongoing guided feedback.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study have implications for social change. As inclusion becomes more prevalent in education, researchers are finding new ways to mold and

improve its practice (Friend et al., 2010). The need for improvement continues, and research shows a need to match theory with practice **(**Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Marks et al., 2014). Although policies are in place to provide students with disabilities with the necessary educational arrangements, implementation is influenced by teachers' biases and abilities and by the availability of resources. In an effort to improve conditions for students with mild to moderate disabilities, social change policies and practices must match. By determining teachers' mindsets toward including students with mild to moderate disabilities in the general education setting, successes can be highlighted and reproduced, current practices can be improved, misconceptions can be addressed, and professional development can be implemented to fill gaps between theory and practices.

Conclusion

Academic and social deficits are typical characteristics of students with mild to moderated disabilities. These deficits widen the social and educational gap between students with mild to moderate disabilities and their nondisabled peers. Necessary modifications and accommodations are critical when placing these students in an inclusion setting. The teacher stands at a pivotal place in helping students cope in the inclusion setting. Teachers need to provide strategies and interventions that bridge the gap between students with mild to moderate disabilities and their nondisabled peers. The way teachers view students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, their placements, and functioning in the inclusion setting are factors influencing students' success. Teachers' attitudes will indicate not only their thoughts about including these

students but will also reveal how much commitment they might invest in students' success.

Including students with disabilities in the LRE to the fullest extent possible is the law. As such, teachers are required to provide quality services to all students, which include students with and without disabilities. Teachers have an obligation to provide all students with a fair education regardless of disability. Considering perceptions and attitudes become practices, teachers must first mentally embrace the notion of including students with mild to moderate disabilities. This psychological process can then be transformed into actions. More study is needed.

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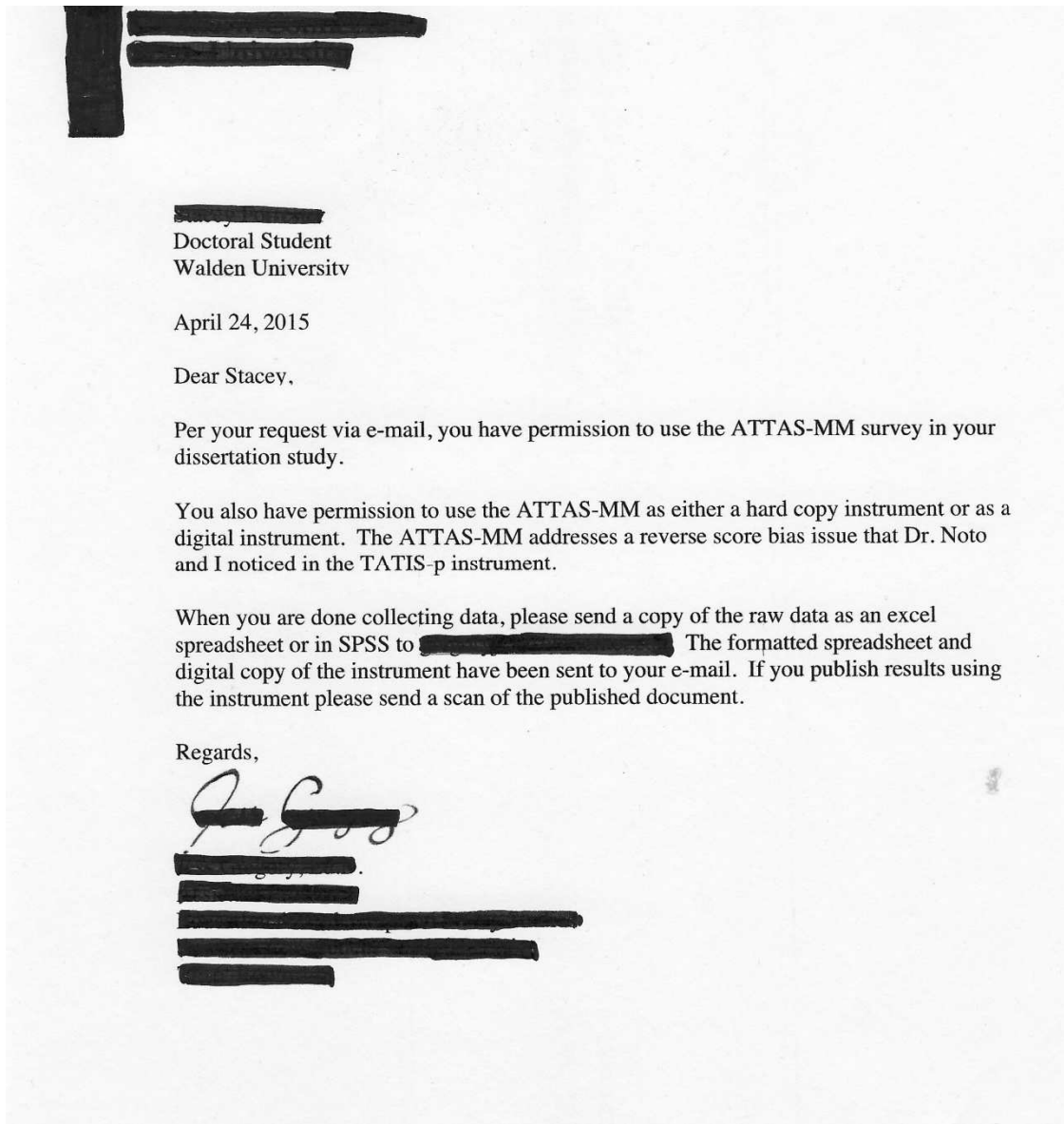
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Appendix A: Permission to use Survey

████

████

Doctoral Student
Walden University

April 24, 2015

Dear Stacey,

Per your request via e-mail, you have permission to use the ATTAS-MM survey in your dissertation study.

You also have permission to use the ATTAS-MM as either a hard copy instrument or as a digital instrument. The ATTAS-MM addresses a reverse score bias issue that Dr. Noto and I noticed in the TATIS-p instrument.

When you are done collecting data, please send a copy of the raw data as an excel spreadsheet or in SPSS to ████ The formatted spreadsheet and digital copy of the instrument have been sent to your e-mail. If you publish results using the instrument please send a scan of the published document.

Regards,

Gmail
by Google

Stacey Forrester <   @waldenu.edu>

Permission to use TATIS

Stacey Forrester <   @waldenu.edu>   Fri, Jun 19, 2015 at 7:32 AM
To: "Gregory, Jess L." <   @southernct.edu>

Good morning Dr. Gregory,

You granted me approval to use the ATTASmm previously. I am requesting your permission to make small modifications to the demographic section of the instrument. May I have your permission to:

1. Add certified special and general education teacher to question 1.
2. Have research participants enter their years as an educator instead of using the scale. (Question 4)

These changes are only being requested to specifically identify my target population (special and general education teachers) and determine their exact years of teaching experience. A positive response will greatly help me to move my research forward and will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in anticipation for considering my request.

Respectfully,

Stacey Forrester
[Quoted text hidden]

Gmail
by Google

Stacey Forrester <   .   @waldenu.edu>

Permission to use TATIS

Gregory, Jess L. <   Fri, Jun 19, 2015 at 8:23 AM
To: Stacey Forrester

Yes you have permission. When you send the data back to me on the excel sheet, would you code the certified special and general education teacher as certified teacher and use the categories for the years? This way you get the level of detail you require an I can still sue the data to improve the reliability of the instrument.

:)

Jess Gregory, Ed.D.

Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Southern Connecticut State University
TE-6, Room 123
501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06515

gregoryj2@southernct.edu
203 392 5324

"The classroom with all its limitations remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom." Bell Hooks, Teach to Transgress, 1994
[Quoted text hidden]

Appendix B: Validity of Instrument

Component	Title	Cronbach
Full scale	Attitudes towards teaching all students	0.833
Subscale 1: Cognitive	Believing all students can succeed in general education classrooms	0.720
Subscale 2:	Developing personal and professional	0.928
Subscale 3:	Creating an accepting environment for all	0.837

Appendix C: School District Approval Letter

County
School District

Director

Superintendent

Research, Assessments, and Grants

January 22, 2015
Ms. S. Forrester

Reference: Teachers make the Difference: Middle School Teachers' Perception about Including Students with Mild to Moderate Disabilities in the General Education Setting (File # 2014-035)

Dear Ms. Forrester:

This letter is to inform you that your research proposal has been approved by the Department of Research, Assessments, and Grants for implementation in the ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉.

When you begin your research, you must secure the approval of the principal/chief site administrator(s) for all schools named in the proposal. You should provide the application with all required attachments and this district approval letter to the principal(s) in order to inform their decision. **Please remember the principal/chief site administrator has the final right of approval or denial of the research proposal at that site. In addition, note that teachers and others may elect not to participate in your research study, even though the district has granted permission.**

Please remember, the last day to conduct your research in ▉▉▉▉ for the school year is Tuesday, March 31, 2015. This approval is valid for one year from the date on this approval letter. Should there be any changes, addenda, design changes, or adverse events to the approved protocol, a request for these changes must also be submitted in writing to the ▉▉▉▉ Department of Research, Assessments, and Grants during this one year approval period. Changes should not be initiated until written approval is received. Further, should there be a need to extend the time requested for the project; the researcher must submit a written request for approval at least one month prior to the anniversary date of the most recent approval. If the time for which approval is given expires, it will be necessary to resubmit the proposal for another review by the ▉▉▉▉ Institutional Review Board.

Completed results are required to be submitted to the Department of Research, Assessments, and Grants.

Best wishes for a successful research project. Feel free to call me at ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Coordinator II

safety box in the researchers residence that has 24/7 security system. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 404-513-5082. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210 or send an email to irb@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for this study is 07-02-15-0181915 and it expires July 1, 2016.

Please save/print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make an informed decision about my involvement. By submitting a completed survey, I agree to participate in this research.

2015.07.0
2 16:42:34
-05'00'

Appendix D: Invitations to Complete the Survey

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a study titled : "Relationships among Middle School Teachers' Perceptions about Inclusion and Students with Disabilities". I am inviting middle school general and special education teachers who have at some point worked with students with disabilities in grades 6 through 8 to participate in this study. Please follow the link to review the informed consent to make an informed decision about whether you would like to take part in this study. Should you agree to participate in this study, please access the survey that follows the informed consent. This study is completely voluntary and would only require no more than 10 minutes of your time. Your feedback is very important. Survey link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRSFKNL

Sincerely,

Stacey Forrester

Appendix E: Reminder Invitation to Complete Survey (week 2)

Dear Colleague,

About a week ago you received an email inviting you to complete an online survey titled

"Relationships among Middle School Teachers" If you have completed the survey, thank

you! ". I am inviting middle school general and special education teachers who have at

some point worked with students with disabilities in grades 6 through 8 to participate in

this study. I would greatly appreciate you accessing the link

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRSFKNL to review the letter of consent and

complete the survey should you choose to do so. Your feedback is very important.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research.

Sincerely,

Stacey Forrester

Appendix F: Reminder Invitation to Complete Survey

Dear Colleague,

This is an invitation to complete the online survey titled "Relationships among Middle School Teachers". Because of the anonymous nature of the survey, I am not able to tell whether or not you have completed this survey. If you have already completed the survey, thank you! Please disregard this reminder. If you have not had an opportunity to complete this survey and is a middle school teacher who have experience with working with middle school students with disabilities in grades 6 through 8, please take a few minutes to access this link https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRSFKNL to access the informed consent. Should you decide to participate, please access the survey that follows the informed consent. The survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete and will be available until August 31, 2015. I would greatly appreciate you accessing the link in this email to review the informed consent and complete the survey should you decide to do so. Your feedback is very important. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research.

Sincerely,

Stacey Forrester