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AN INVESTIGATION INTO CO-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP
COLLABORATION FACTORS: CO-TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2015

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Title: An Investigation Into Co-Teacher Relationship Collaboration Factors:
Co-Teachers' Perceptions

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This phenomenological study investigated co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship with their teaching partners and is limited to relationship collaboration factors. The researcher did not ask about other practical matters, such as preparation time, administrative support, resources, class size, or other related issues. Typically, school administrators assign co-teachers in co-teaching teams and the co-teachers are not paired for effective collaboration. When co-teaching teams work successfully in a collaborative relationship, this collaboration can impact student learning. Therefore, pairing co-teachers' collaboration factors is essential for maximizing teamwork for improving student performance in the inclusive classroom setting. The results of the research study may assist school administrators and co-teachers in identifying relationship collaboration factors. The study may be used for pre-service teacher collaboration coursework and professional development in co-teaching relationship collaboration.

The research study was conducted at two suburban school districts in the northeastern region of the United States. The first school district has a high proportion of students from low-income families and students with special needs. The second school district consists mostly of middle-income families with fewer students identified as having special needs. Co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the perceptions of

the co-teachers' collaborative co-teaching relationship were investigated through the use of ten qualitative open-ended interview questions. The audio digital recorded interview questions investigated the relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust in the co-teaching relationship and the co-teachers' perceptions of the collaborative co-teaching relationship.

Results of the study indicated that the co-teachers expressed concerns in the following relationship collaboration factors: respect, communication, parity, trust, and conflicting co-teacher personalities. Communication, parity, and conflicting co-teacher personalities were expressed as primary concerns and respect and trust issues were lesser concerns. The co-teachers named effective communication as the most important factor and trust was identified as the least important factor in the co-teaching relationship. For co-teaching collaboration, interdependence was addressed as essential for effective teamwork. Limited time for co-teachers to plan and prepare for instructional needs and conflicting co-teacher personalities were identified as major concerns throughout the co-teacher interviews. A fifth relationship collaboration factor that emerged from this research study was conflicting co-teacher personalities. Finally, the co-teachers perceived their collaborative relationship with their teaching partners by the five identified relationship factors.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving wife, Jennifer Leigh, and my in-laws, Allan (A.J.), and Annette Weiss. Without your selfless support, patience and understanding my dream would not be possible. Jennifer, you were a wonderful mother to our beautiful daughters, Ziarra Leigh and Zienna Leigh, while I spent countless hours alone on the computer. A.J. and Nettie, you were outstanding babysitters and helped us raise two smart, precious, little girls. I would often hear my four year-old (Ziarra) and two and a half year-old (Zienna) say, “Daddy is working on his dissertation.” I want my daughters to learn that dreams do come true with hard work, persistence, and determination.

To my mother and stepfather, Pamela and Jess Cignetti, I couldn’t have accomplished my dream without all of your advice and support. Mom, I remember the sound of the daisy-wheel typewriter and the commitment you made toward your dissertation. As you stated, “It is to David, Douglas, Jonathan, and Deidre that I dedicate this dissertation in hopes that they too will have the opportunity to capture a dream” (Petrick, 1989, p. v). Thank you, Mom, I captured my dream!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Co-teaching or collaborative teaching occurs when two professional educators collaborate to meet general and special education students' unique learning styles and needs in the inclusive classroom setting. In 1995, Cook and Friend defined co-teaching as two educators collaborating by planning and delivering instruction that is flexible for diverse student group learning needs to be met in the same classroom (Friend, 2008). There can be more than two professionals in the inclusive classroom. Cook and Friend described co-teaching as, "Two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 2). The co-teaching arrangement does not need to be exclusively the general and special education teacher; an educational specialist can collaborate with the general education teacher, as well. In 2012, Forbes and Billet stated that, "There is also at least one person in the room who is an expert with regard to special education laws, policies, and procedures, which are constantly evolving" (Forbes & Billet, 2012, p. 63).

The inclusive collaborative approach consists of the co-teaching team of two or more co-members collaborating to plan, to instruct, and to assess to meet student learning styles and needs. Collaboration is used when special education students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are placed in the regular education classroom. The IEP is a legal educational document that describes the modifications and adaptations of instruction that are needed for special education students to reach their learning goals.

The general education classroom setting is considered to be the first choice of a least restrictive environment for identified special education students. As indicated earlier, co-teaching teams may consist of more than two co-teachers. Stuart, Connor, Cady, and Zweifel's (2007) model is an example of three co-teachers collaborating in an inclusive multi-age classroom and created an environment to minimize student behaviors. "The luxury of having three teachers available allows us to focus immediately on individual needs to prevent and alleviate crisis" (Stuart et al., 2007, p. 17). The three co-teachers were interdependent and provided support with students with autism, behavior, and learning challenges. Another example of three co-teachers collaborating in an inclusion setting may consist of general, special, and gifted education teachers enriching gifted students' curriculum in an intermediate school classroom. Regardless of the students' exceptionality, co-teaching teams consist of two or more co-teachers adapting and modifying instruction in order to meet students' learning needs.

In addition to the general education teacher, the special education students depend on the professional expertise of a special education teacher to meet their learning needs. The special education teacher fosters academic and social success for students who have a wide range of learning exceptionalities. Special education teachers have received in-depth training in behavior modification techniques and various methods of meeting students' learning needs by modifying and adapting instruction. The inclusive classroom is the preferred learning environment for enhancing general education students' and meeting special education students' social and academic skills. As described by Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, and Hartman

(2009), “Co-teaching consists of a general educator paired with a special educator or other licensed professional in a diverse inclusive classroom” (p. 3). The collaborative co-teaching environment is a supportive instructional setting for students with exceptionalities and allows these students to have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive setting. Ideally, the two professionals work collaboratively to meet the students’ academic and social needs.

Brinkmann and Twiford (2012) discussed:

As a result of recent federal legislation and related policy changes, co-teaching has evolved rapidly as a strategy for ensuring that these students have access to the same curriculum as other students, while still receiving the specialized instruction to which they are entitled. (p. 3)

Cook and Friend (1995) describe the six types or models of co-teaching: one teaches, one observes; one teaches, one assists; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; and team teaching. The collaborative relationship of two professionals working together in the same classroom allows special education students to be successful in the inclusive setting. The following six co-teaching models support general and special education students’ academic and social needs. Each model is centered on maximizing student learning by utilizing the classroom space, co-teacher and student arrangements, and roles and responsibilities within the inclusive setting.

Six Types or Models of Co-Teaching

One teaches and one observes: In this type of co-teaching model, the co-teaching team consists of a leader role and an observer role. This model involves the

co-teachers in planning before, during, and after a co-teaching lesson. One co-teacher becomes the lead teacher and the other co-teacher is involved in a planned observation or monitoring the students as a co-partner. The co-teacher that observes is not passive since he collects data (Cook & Friend, 1995).

One teaches and one assists: In this type of co-teaching model, co-teachers' roles consist of a lead teacher and a support teacher. While the co-teachers are available in the same classroom, one co-teacher is the lead teacher and the other co-teacher supports and assists students throughout the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). Co-teaching teams may switch roles during the lesson.

Station teaching: Co-teachers in this model have active roles in the same classroom and they share planning and instructional responsibilities. The co-teachers separate instructional content into two or more sections and the lesson content is taught in different classroom areas. Students may be assigned to partner or individual stations and co-teachers are flexible and share the instructional delivery by rotating groups of students into an assigned learning station (Cook & Friend, 1995). Each station may consist of objectives that meet certain student learning outcomes, however the stations meet the classroom learning goal.

Parallel teaching: Co-teachers in this model plan the co-teaching lesson together and the lesson delivery is independent of the co-partner. Each co-teacher delivers the same instruction simultaneously and the class is divided into two different groups (Cook & Friend, 1995). This model allows for two different styles of teaching and can be used for reviewing for a test.

Alternative teaching: This co-teaching model focuses on a co-teacher specializing instruction for a small number of students, while the other co-teacher instructs the remainder of the class or targets the larger group. Special education students benefit from this co-teaching model and students may not all receive the same lesson (Cook & Friend, 1995). Students are able to have lesson remediation or enrichment (as needed) as more individualized attention is provided.

Team teaching: The co-teachers collaborate to share active instructional roles and lesson development. They instruct together for the same class (Cook & Friend, 1995). The co-teachers are perceived as equals and are involved in instructional roles and responsibilities to meet student needs.

Background of the Problem

Co-teaching fosters teacher collaboration for high-quality learning for special and general education students and it also meets legal mandates. Legislative policies are followed when special education students are educated in the least restrictive setting. Therefore, there is a need for co-teaching classrooms to meet the learning needs for students with exceptionalities. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 requires that students with exceptionalities be provided with special education, additional aids, and services in the least restrictive setting. Interventions are designed for all identified students who need extra support with their academics in the collaborative educational setting. The expertise of the co-teachers provides proactive support for all student ability levels by meeting legislative mandates.

Graziano and Navarrete (2012) state that legislative policies support inclusive practices:

Public Law 94-142 (1975) and the Individuals with Disability Education Act (1997) are legislative policies that led to a plethora of inclusive practices that are used today to educate students with diverse cognitive, processing, sensory, and/or physical disabilities in the same general education classroom. (p. 110)

The collaborative effort allows co-teachers to minimize student learning challenges. Special education students' learning and social success are the co-teachers' focus in the least restrictive setting. As a result, the co-teaching approach meets Federal Law requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) mandates.

The history of inclusion to the beginning of the twenty-first century has led to the success of students with exceptionalities. *Gaskin vs. the Pennsylvania Department of Education* (2005) highlighted the least restrictive setting and the inclusive classroom settings to allow students with exceptionalities to be educated in the inclusive classroom setting (Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, 2014). The *Gaskin* settlement was a major improvement for students with exceptionalities to be included in the general education classroom. Therefore, the collaboration of the co-teaching team helps to meet student learning needs in the inclusive classroom setting.

A successful co-teaching collaborative relationship is essential for establishing a foundation for student learning. Co-teachers need to be understood and valued by the school administrator and he or she needs to have the skills to identify and address the relationship collaboration factors to resolve co-teaching issues when designing

teams. Gardiner and Robinson (2010) stated the concern for successful collaboration and found that co-teachers need to be trained for success in the co-teaching arrangement. Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) reported on the lack of training for pre-service co-teachers in collaboration and the co-teaching relationship. Pre-service special education teachers described collaboration differently than co-teachers and indicated the need for the training of the co-teacher for successful collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. When pre-service teachers are trained to be successful in co-teaching relationships, then the proactive stance will allow co-teachers to overcome challenges.

In-service teacher professional development can train co-teachers on how to become successful when collaborating with their co-partners. Successful co-teaching longevity in the relationship is dependent upon the supportive and appreciative stance of the school administrator (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008). However, the school administrator should have an understanding of the co-teachers' educational training needs and especially the co-teaching relationship needs. When co-teaching teams are matched effectively, then successful collaboration will foster instructional success for student learning. This research study may provide further insight into the co-teaching relationship. In addition, co-teaching professional development can be designed based on the findings of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Co-teacher collaboration is essential for team results, however the development of a positive collaborative relationship can become a major problem when co-teachers are not paired effectively during the initial planning stage. Co-

teachers may not be carefully paired for successful collaboration, because relationship collaboration was not considered during the initial planning stage. “These classroom partnerships illustrate the potential and complexity of collaboration as contemporary special education evolves to more deliberately and effectively integrate with general education” (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010, p. 11).

Some co-teaching relationships may demonstrate effective collaboration.

When co-teachers are interdependent and have similar goals for collaboration success, the co-teaching relationship is able to overcome some challenges that may interfere with the relationship. Therefore, some co-teaching arrangements are more successful than other co-teaching teams. “Of critical importance when understanding the implementation logistics and success of inclusive practices, including collaborative and consultative teaching models, is the profound impact that interpersonal factors may have in terms of the programs overall success” (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010, p. 46). The collaborative process is unique for co-teaching teams, since co-teachers have a range of knowledge, problem-solving skills, communication needs, and team goals. These areas require attention of the school administration and co-teachers to help design a plan to identify co-teacher relationship collaboration, since the areas contribute to co-teacher collaboration.

Research to pair co-teachers for successful collaboration is needed with a focus on co-teacher relationship collaboration factors such as trust, respect, communication, and parity. The current study may help educators and school administrators understand how to pair co-teachers and to design a plan for supporting the co-teaching relationship. School administrators and co-teachers may apply the

plan to understand how to support collaboration in the co-teaching collaborative relationship for instructional success. In addition, pre-service co-teachers will be prepared for challenging co-teaching relationships when there is a focus in their teacher preparation programs on the relationship. Pre-service teachers can learn about collaboration and co-teaching relationship needs while being trained as educators. When pre-service teachers learn about this area of co-teaching need, they will be prepared to adapt and to understand the challenges co-teachers encounter.

This research study investigated co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship through the lens of relationship collaboration factors. Previous co-teaching empirical studies focused on areas outside of the collaborative co-teaching relationship such as effective inclusive instructional strategies, planning time, co-teacher roles and responsibilities, and supporting collaboration. Co-teaching research studies and literature focused on issues such as: limited co-teacher planning time, unclear co-teacher roles and responsibilities, and the lack of school administration support throughout the co-teaching arrangement. Limited co-teaching literature and research studies exist to identify and describe specific factors of effective co-teaching relationship collaboration. Therefore, a gap in the literature exists to identify co-teaching relationship collaboration factors that are related to improving teamwork within the co-teaching arrangement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationships. When co-teachers are not able to choose their co-partners and do not volunteer to co-teach, co-teachers may not be

paired for effective collaboration. Co-teachers can be paired for effective collaboration for supporting student success in the inclusive setting. The phenomenological research study will further the understanding of co-teaching relationship collaboration by providing knowledge for stakeholders in higher education, school administrators, co-teachers, and pre-service co-teachers to understand and to help design successful co-teaching teams. When co-teachers work effectively in their collaborative relationships, collaboration helps to impact student learning. The pairing of co-teachers to maximize collaboration is essential and the results of the study can be used for professional development to train co-teachers and provide a foundation to train pre-service teachers.

The Social interdependence theory by Johnson and Johnson (2005), Bandura's (1986) Social cognitive theory, and the Social development theory by Vygotsky (1962) served as the theoretical foundation to help explain co-teaching relationship collaboration. The co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationships were interpreted by the relationship collaboration factors. The interdependence of co-teachers in the collaborative relationship functioning as team members to meet students' learning styles and needs in the inclusive classroom setting is critical for student success. Co-teachers are dependent on one another in the collaborative process for a shared goal of fostering a learning environment for students. Co-teachers may interpret their collaborative experience differently than other co-teachers, since not all co-teaching teams are similar. Therefore, this study allowed the researcher to deepen the understanding from the co-teachers' perspective by the

identification and exploration of the relationship factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust.

Research Questions

The co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship were investigated by ten open-ended co-teacher interview questions. Four research questions guided the development of the open-ended interview questions:

1. How do the co-teachers describe their collaboration in terms of the relationship factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust?
2. How are the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors impacting the relationship?
3. Which relationship collaboration factors are strengthening the co-teaching relationship?
4. What relationship collaboration factors are hindering the co-teaching relationship?

Significance of the Study

This research study investigated co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship. The researcher studied only relationship collaboration factors and did not ask about other practical matters such as preparation time, administration support, resources, class size, or similar related issues. For longevity success, co-teachers should volunteer to co-teach and be allowed to select a co-partner (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Usually, the co-teachers must rely on the school administrator for their co-partner selection. According to Nichols and Sheffield (2014), "Administrators must be proactive in the structuring of co-teaching

relationships and diligent in providing support and feedback to teachers who are willing to take on the challenge of co-teaching” (p. 34).

In addition, this research study may further pre-service teachers’ understanding of collaboration and the co-teaching relationship. These two areas can be incorporated into the pre-service co-teaching curriculum in teacher education programs. As a result, coursework in this area and practical experience may increase longevity in the future co-teaching relationship. The coursework may also provide further insight into teamwork and how it impacts the co-teaching arrangement.

The study allowed stakeholders in higher education and K-12 school administration to have a deeper understanding of co-teaching relationship collaboration. Therefore, the research study will provide stakeholders, administrators, co-teachers, and pre-service co-teachers with information regarding how to effectively plan co-teaching teams for a productive co-teaching collaboration. When stakeholders are able to expand the knowledge of the co-teachers’ collaborative relationship and teamwork, pre-service and in-service teachers may benefit and may improve their co-teaching practices in the inclusive classroom setting.

Research Design

The phenomenological research study investigated co-teachers’ perceptions of their collaborative relationship and furthered understanding of the co-teaching relationship by providing knowledge for school administrators and co-teachers to implement when selecting co-teaching teams. In addition, the research study results may provide knowledge for the training of pre-service co-teachers. This research study will provide co-teaching relationship collaboration knowledge for co-teaching

stakeholders to help limit challenges and provide further insight into the dynamic co-teaching arrangement to improve teamwork for a successful and rewarding co-teaching learning experience.

The research study is a qualitative design that is a phenomenological study. The researcher interviewed two general education and two special education teachers from the SDA School District as well as the SDB School District. Therefore, four co-teachers were interviewed from each school district, with a total of eight individual teacher interviews. The SDA School District consisted of 274 teachers and in 2010, the high school was identified as a Title I school since close to 60% of the students met the poverty level status. SDB School District consisted of 178 teachers and in 2010, the school district received a supplement of over one and a half million dollars specifically for special education services.

The ten open-ended interview questions were guided by four research questions. The open-ended interview questions captured the co-teachers' voices and provided qualitative research data to improve future co-teaching professional development. The interview questions explored the unique co-teaching relationship in the co-teaching arrangement.

The theoretical framework consisted of Johnson and Johnson's (2005) Social interdependence theory, Social cognitive theory by Bandura (1986), and Vygotsky's (1962) Social development theory. The framework contributed to the investigation of the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationships. Since not all co-teaching relationships are similar, the qualitative research study deepens the understanding of co-teaching collaboration.

The research study results of the perceptions of co-teachers provided a foundation for higher education pre-service co-teaching coursework and training. It also created the foundation for future co-teaching relationship collaboration research studies.

Assumptions

The assumptions for the study included the assumption that some co-teaching teams included at least one factor in conflict. In addition, it was assumed that the co-teachers answered the open-ended questions honestly, that there was a balance of special and general education teachers available for the research study, and that the majority of the co-teachers did not volunteer to become co-teachers and/or did not choose their co-partners.

Limitations

The limitations for the study included the results of a small sample size that cannot be used to generalize co-teacher results to other co-teachers that are not related to the study. Other limitations included the researcher's interpretation of the research study data, experience level of the co-teachers, and the school district curricula that may become an issue in co-teaching collaboration. Additionally, the researcher is employed within one of the school districts and this may have influenced participants' responses.

Definitions of Terms

Compatibility: Compatibility is essential for co-teaching relationship success. The shared values, ideas, beliefs, and the personal connection in the co-teaching relationship foster collaboration in the co-teaching partnership.

Co-teaching: The general and special education teachers working together to promote the growth of student learning needs and styles in the inclusive setting.

Inclusive setting: The inclusive setting is a classroom that includes all student learning abilities, needs, and exceptionalities. General education and special education students are learning together with adaptations and modifications made to meet their unique learning styles and needs.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): The IEP team and parents construct the legal educational document that details the programs and services needed for a free and appropriate public education for a student with exceptional learning needs.

Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA): Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) in 1997 mandated that students with exceptional needs have specifically designed instruction, aids, and services in the least restrictive setting.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Special education students are educated to the maximum extent possible with general education students who do not have exceptionalities.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Title I provide assistance to schools with disadvantaged students. Standards and goals are established to improve student outcomes.

Public Law 94-142: The law requires equal access to education. Special education students have their rights to an appropriate education protected as well as the right to receiving that education in the least restrictive setting.

Scaffold learning experience: The scaffold learning experience is for students to be independent and have a greater understanding in their learning. The teacher supports student understanding and instructional techniques are changed as the student becomes more independent in learning to help reach the learning goal.

Special Education: An educational program constructed to meet the unique learning styles and educational needs for a student with a disability. The special education teacher is the provider of the special education services and is responsible for implementing the IEP.

Expected Findings

The understanding of how co-teachers identified their collaboration in the co-teaching relationship was investigated through the use of ten open-ended co-teacher interview questions. The interview questions investigated relationship collaboration with a focus on the factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust. The researcher expected to find conflict in more than one of the four factors and when the co-teachers had a strong collaborative relationship, the majority of the four collaboration factors showed a positive relationship.

The researcher expected to find that trust is the most important relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. If the co-teaching team identified that they were having trust issues, then the other factors were likely to be in serious conflict. However, if a co-teaching team indicated that trust was not a problem, then the co-teaching relationship was successful.

The researcher expected to find that respect was the second important relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. If the co-teaching

team identified respect as important, then all of the other factors should be adequate. However, if a co-teaching team indicated that lack of respect was an issue, then the other factors may be in conflict. The respect factor was similar to trust because without respect in the co-teaching relationship, the co-teaching collaboration will display major issues.

The researcher expected to find that communication was an important relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. If the co-teaching team identified communication as a priority and was successful, then the other factors may not have any issues. The researcher expected to find that when co-teaching teams have strong verbal or non-verbal communication skills, the teams should also have the similar strengths in the other factors. The researcher expected to find that the factor of parity was not addressed by most of the co-teachers. If a co-teaching team indicated that parity was an issue in their relationship, then the other factors should also be indicated as creating conflict for the co-partners.

Hypotheses

Research Question 1: How do the co-teachers describe their collaboration in terms of the relationship factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust?

The researcher expected to find that when co-teaching teams express strong collaboration, then the four relationship collaboration factors should also have similar results.

Research Question 2: How are the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors impacting the relationship?

The researcher expected to find that the majority of the co-teaching teams identified respect and trust factors as repeating factor themes addressed as significant in the co-teaching relationship. When a team expressed that the communication factor was a problem, then respect, parity, and trust will have the similar results.

Research Question 3: Which relationship collaboration factors are strengthening the co-teaching relationship?

The researcher expected to find the collaboration factors of respect, parity, and trust had a strong impact on the co-teaching relationship.

Research Question 4: What relationship collaboration factors are hindering the co-teaching relationship?

The researcher expected to find the issues in at least one of the factors for a weak collaborative co-teaching relationship. When the trust and respect factors are indicated as a need, then the co-teaching relationship will be predicted to have collaboration issues.

Summary

This chapter has provided background on the need to meet legislative mandates. In addition, co-teacher collaboration relied on the collaborative relationship in the co-teaching team to reach students' unique learning styles and needs in the inclusive classroom setting. When the general and special education co-teachers collaborate, co-teacher issues may hinder the collaborative relationship and interfere with student learning. Co-teachers and school administrators continue to not pair co-teachers into co-teaching teams, because of the lack of knowledge in co-teacher relationship collaboration. Also, pre-service and in-service teachers are not

sufficiently trained in relationship collaboration and often are not prepared to manage co-teaching challenges. The research study can inform all stakeholders with the knowledge of relationship collaboration to improve teamwork in co-teaching teams, both in K-12 settings and higher education programs.

Chapter two will provide a review of the relevant literature on the significance of co-teaching relationship collaboration. The related literature will begin with the history of inclusion and collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. The themes of collaboration in the co-teaching relationship, personalities and styles, essential factors for co-teaching, and pre-service and in-service training in co-teaching skills emphasize the methodological research of the co-teaching empirical studies that are discussed in chapter two.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the related literature and current research contributing to the research study. First, the history of inclusion describes the long journey for justice of special education students in the least restrictive setting. Secondly, collaboration in the co-teaching relationship is described to illustrate the importance of co-teacher collaboration for student success. Thirdly, personalities and styles are discussed because they are vital to the co-teaching relationship. Fourthly, the chapter reviews the essential factors for co-teaching of respect, communication, parity, and trust that are expressed throughout co-teaching literature. Fifthly, pre-service and in-service training in co-teaching skills are discussed because of the importance of preparing and maintaining a successful co-teaching relationship. Finally, three theories to support the four factors and the themes are explained. The themes of collaboration in the co-teaching relationship, personalities and styles, essential factors for co-teaching, pre-service training in co-teaching skills, and in-service training in co-teaching skills, and the theoretical framework support the research study.

History of Inclusion

This overview provides a framework for the following section of the history of inclusion. This section consists of three areas: Classification of Individuals, The Beginning for Equal Rights, and Legislative Mandates. First, the Classification of

Individuals area reviews classifying individuals based on their ability and skill levels. Providing an appropriate education in the least restrictive educational setting for students with exceptionalities began slowly over one hundred years ago. Students with disabilities were initially ignored and eventually special education services supported the identified students. Secondly, The Beginning for Equal Rights area explains that equal rights and the Civil Rights Movement led to the formation of important associations for the equality of individuals. As a result, changes were created within institutions to provide all children with a meaningful education in the K-12 public school settings. Thirdly, the Legislative Mandates area reviews the continued support of students with disabilities.

The social and political improvements for over a century have led to changes for students with special learning needs. In the beginning, the history leading to the justice of providing students' education was bleak. As parents advocated for the students, stakeholders slowly began the process of providing these identified individuals with the services that they required.

The history of special education students consists of four phases. First, special education students were in self-contained classes with specially-trained teachers. Even though the focus was direct instruction, the students were excluded from the general education curriculum and students. However, this approach was not fair for these targeted students.

Secondly, mainstreaming became an alternative approach to allowing the identified students to be taught in the least restrictive learning environment. Special education students learned the similar content and socialized with their general

education peers. During mainstreaming, special education students were primarily the responsibility of the special education teacher with resource room support.

Regular content area teachers were asked to have the special education students in their classes (on an individual basis) with support from the special education teacher.

Thirdly, with inclusion, the regular education teacher has primary responsibilities. Special education teachers are ‘pushed-in’, students are ‘pulled-out’ for additional support, or co-teaching will occur. Therefore, the inclusive student has his academic and social needs met in this classroom setting with the general education students and the general education curriculum. Finally, inclusion became an appropriate service for special education students and these changes have provided a fair and appropriate education in the least restrictive setting focusing on social and academic learning needs in the 21st century.

The practice of including students with exceptionalities in the general education classroom setting developed over a long period of time. Educational parity for students with exceptionalities may be achieved when these students socialize and learn in the regular academic environment. The inclusion classroom does not necessarily require co-teaching, however the special and general education co-teachers create a learning environment to maximize learning success. The special education teacher and the general education teacher can co-teach to share roles and responsibilities to educate identified students with additional instructional support in the inclusive setting. Students with disabilities are educated in the classroom with the general education students who have not been identified as having disabilities.

Students with exceptionalities are provided educational opportunities in the least restrictive environment for academic success, while instructional professionals make modifications and adaptations for their learning needs. In addition, they are able to socialize with the general education students. There were several important events in the history of inclusion that have led to providing educational equality for students with exceptionalities. The following discussion will detail monumental legislative and social movements in the United States for students with exceptionalities.

Classification of Individuals

Almost a century ago, United States military leaders classified individuals based on their abilities during the end of the 1910s. These leaders screened new recruits based on intelligence for roles and responsibilities within the military. This was the beginning of classifying individuals based on their abilities (Sleeter, 2010). In the 1940s, intelligence tests were used outside the military to identify individuals' intelligence. Individuals who did not score within the average intelligence or academic functioning level were classified as being different from the normal population.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Alfred Strauss and Heinz Werner expressed their interest of evaluating children with brain injuries (Sleeter, 2010). In the 1940s, social movements began to seek justice for students with disabilities and parents began advocacy groups. In the 1950s, students with disabilities were separated from the normal population. The National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) supported these identified students and special education services slowly began

assisting students with learning disabilities in the learning environment (Sleeter, 2010).

The Beginning of Equal Rights

The Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s helped to change society's perception of fairness and justice for all individuals and helped to create impetus for inclusion in the twenty-first century classroom setting. This important movement has led to the creation of other associations for the educational equality of individuals. In the 1960s, President Kennedy's policymaking helped to develop the Mental Retardation Amendments of 1963 (Berkowitz, 1980). The Civil Rights Movement helped to end discrimination and segregation and established the understanding that everyone is equal. "On 17 May 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine of the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision" (Wraga, 2006, p. 425). In 1954, the results of the case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* provided the understanding of the unfairness of public school racial segregation of students (Wraga, 2006). As a result, changes were made within institutions to provide all children with a meaningful education in the K-12 public school settings. Prior to the landmark decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, disabled individuals also faced discrimination. In 1963, the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities was created and learning disabilities became a category in special education (Sleeter, 2010).

Legislative Mandates

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was an important law that addressed educational funding for students with disabilities. “In November, 1966, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, PL 89-10, was amended to include a new grant program in special education” (Irwin, 1968, p. 565). “The centerpiece of the ESEA, Title I, was designed to improve achievement among the nation’s poor and disadvantaged students” (Cortiella, 2006, p. 6). In the same year, the Committee on Mental Retardation was established. Until the mid 1970s, there continued to be injustice for students with exceptionalities. Many students with disabilities were not identified or educated in the public schools. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson led the federal government and Congress passed legislation to assist disadvantaged children. “The interest in mental retardation by President Kennedy and the “War on Poverty” under President Johnson led to Federal funding for research focused on young “at-risk” children, particularly children in poverty” (Keogh, 2007, p. 66).

In 1975, Education for All Handicapped Children Act PL 94-142 mandated that all students in the public school setting, especially special education students, should have their learning needs met (Keogh, 2007). PL 94-142 mandated that special education students should learn in the same classroom as general education students to the greatest extent possible and created the beginning for federal support for special education. PL 94-142 required public schools to have Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities and the Least Restrictive Environment was also mandated in the law (U.S Department of Education, 1996). Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is when students with special needs are

educated to the maximum extent possible with students who do not have exceptionalities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides special education opportunities for infants to secondary education students. “IDEA focuses on the individual child and seeks to ensure specialized services for children with disabilities so that they may benefit from education” (Cortiella, 2006, p. 5). The students with disabilities have an IEP and this legal document is a plan for the programs and services that are needed for a free and appropriate education. IDEA provides protection for students with disabilities so that their social and academic learning needs are met. “Congress first passed IDEA in 1975, recognizing the need to provide a federal law to help ensure that local schools would serve the educational needs of students with disabilities” (Cortiella, 2006, p. 8). IDEA helps to ensure that general and special education teachers are able to provide a high quality education for all students in the inclusive setting.

The twenty-first century has continued essential mandates for the continued support of students with disabilities. No Child Left Behind Act (2002) mandated that students with disabilities be included in the general education setting and given the opportunity for learning success. The legislation also required formal assessments for every child (Colker, 2013). NCLB also mandated that all students with exceptionalities be assessed so that their learning can be maximized. In the twenty-first century, equal learning opportunities for students with exceptionalities in the inclusive setting were created.

The following research literature established a methodological foundation for

research in co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the co-teacher perceptions. The themes of collaboration in the co-teaching relationship, personalities and styles, essential factors for co-teaching, pre-service and in-service training in co-teaching skills were investigated in the research and methodological literature. Qualitative and quantitative research studies illustrated a gap in the research findings. Co-teaching research studies and literature focused on issues such as: limited co-teacher planning time, unclear co-teacher roles and responsibilities, and the lack of school administration support throughout the co-teaching arrangement. This research study is needed to investigate the four relationship collaboration factors and co-teachers' perceptions of their co-teaching relationship.

Collaboration in the Co-Teaching Relationship

This overview provides a framework for the following section of Collaboration in the Co-Teaching Relationship. The research study focused on co-teaching collaboration and the co-teachers' relationship within the co-teaching arrangement. Highlighted empirical studies are discussed that center on the following areas: collaborative co-teaching, addressing issues in the relationship, and co-teacher interdependence for instructional results. First, Collaborative Co-Teaching is discussed. The co-teaching arrangement is an interdependent co-teaching environment that is a supportive instructional setting for students with exceptionalities. This environment allows students to have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive setting. Secondly, issues in the co-teaching relationship are discussed and the area of Addressing Issues in the Relationship indicates that co-teachers need to address particular issues in their

relationship for collaborative success. Thirdly, Co-Teacher Interdependence for Instructional Results is the last area that illustrates co-teacher interdependence to share their strengths to meet student learning needs.

The services of the general and special education teachers help to create a learning environment for students with disabilities. Collaboration in the least restrictive setting provides professional expertise of both the general and special education teachers. Currently, co-teaching evolved into the teamwork of two or more professionals educating disabled and non-disabled students together in the inclusive classroom setting. The collaborative effort allows co-teachers to help meet student learning and social needs.

Jones, Michael, Mandala, and Colachico (2008) define collaboration in the inclusive setting:

Collaboration is a method of teaching and learning in partnership with another faculty member to address students' learning difficulties. Collaboration requires sharing thinking between the general education teacher and the special education teacher. It also requires an interaction between those who have knowledge of ways to meet the needs of a diverse, academically talented, or special needs population. (p. 203)

Collaborative Co-Teaching

Relationship collaboration factors are central in the unique co-teaching effort to help meet the academic and social goals of students. Therefore, collaboration is essential in the co-teaching relationship and the four previously discussed collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust strengthen the co-

teachers' collaborative relationship. The collaborative co-teaching environment is a supportive instructional setting for students with exceptionalities that allows students to have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive setting. Students with and without disabilities can be successful when academic and social needs are met in the unique inclusive classroom setting. When team members collaborate, they work together for shared goals. The interdependence allows the co-teachers to build new ideas, skills, and abilities for team effectiveness in the inclusive classroom setting.

Gürür and Uzuner's (2010) empirical study focused on collaboration and illustrated the need for co-teacher training to expand the understanding of collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. The researchers' cyclical and reflective component of action research analyzed special and general education co-teachers' opinions in an inclusionary class over twelve weeks, centered on the co-teaching approach. A phenomenological perspective via inductive analysis assisted in interpreting the daily data sources. Transcription of the preparation meetings and interviews were audio recorded and the results included how different views, attitudes, and beliefs impact the longevity of a co-teaching program. The study was conducted in Ankara, a lower socio-economic area of Turkey, in an inclusive second-grade classroom. The overall findings of the research study indicated the need for cooperative skills, training, and respect for successful communication. The inclusive setting provided co-teacher understanding of views, attitudes, and beliefs that impacted co-teaching program success. Co-teachers worked together or collaborated to foster best practices to meet students' unique learning styles and needs in the

inclusive co-teaching classroom setting. Gürür and Uzuner's (2010) results also showed that for co-teaching success, professional development programs should focus on inclusion and collaboration. The co-teaching relationship requires co-teacher collaboration or the interdependence of providing effective teamwork in the inclusive setting. Finally, the study showed the importance of collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. For co-teachers to remain a productive team, interdependence and relationship factors help to unify relationship collaboration. However, there are co-teaching issues that co-teachers need to address that interfere with the co-teaching relationship.

Addressing Issues in the Relationship

The following empirical studies illustrate the concern to address issues in the co-teaching relationship. In 2011, Fenty and McDuffie-Landrum explored teacher collaboration and co-teaching collaboration advantages and obstacles of six co-teachers. The study was conducted in Kentucky with three co-teaching classrooms, one mathematics classroom and two reading and English/language arts classrooms. Elementary, middle, and high schools in rural and urban settings were part of the research where observations and interviews were conducted. Recurring themes were created from the data evaluation and the observation data were analyzed. Findings indicated that the special education teacher was not treated as an equal partner in the co-teaching relationship and general education teachers conducted the leadership duties. As a result, the special education teachers experienced disparity issues but the general education teachers did not perceive any type of co-teaching barriers. The research suggested that co-teachers need to address issues in their relationship for

collaborative success and co-planning time and parity were found to be essential in co-teaching.

Lester and Evans (2008) analyzed collaboration in the co-teaching experience in a team-taught undergraduate educational psychology course at the University of Tennessee during a five-month period. A phenomenological analysis of the team teachers' unstructured open-ended interview provided a deeper perspective on the definition of team teaching. A ground theme was expressed, "We are willing to engage in reflective practice with those around us, listen to the thoughts and perspectives of others, even when there is inherent risk of conflict and disagreement, the opportunity to build greater understanding emerges" (Lester & Evans, 2008, p. 380). When co-teaching issues are identified, co-teachers are able to minimize barriers to support relationship collaboration. In summary, co-teachers working together to strengthen teamwork and problem solving through co-teacher differences is necessary to meet student learning challenges in the inclusive classroom setting.

Co-Teacher Interdependence for Instructional Results

The following research studies reviewed the importance of co-teacher collaboration and the results of team interdependence. Miltenienė and Venclovaitė's (2012) quantitative research study differed from the studies of Gürür and Uzuner (2010), Fenty and McDuffie-Landrum (2011), and Lester and Evans (2008) since it consisted of a sample size of one hundred sixty-eight teachers who were surveyed. The research results indicated that successful co-teacher collaboration is dependent on team member relationships. Overall, the co-teachers expressed a rewarding collaboration of sharing ideas to help shape student learning. "It is impossible

without collaboration among the participants of the educational process, the most important thing in collaboration being positive attitudes, voluntary participation, relationships between team members, actual resources, common goals and motivated teachers” (Miltenienė & Venclovaitė, 2012, pp. 120-121). Interdependence allows co-teachers to share skills, talents, and abilities for strengthening instruction. The research and methodological literature provided a foundation for research in co-teaching relationship collaboration. The co-teaching environment allows students to learn academic content and social skills when co-teaching occurs. Austin (2001) said, “Inclusive education was socially beneficial for students with and without disabilities because it promoted a tolerance for differences and a general sense of acceptance, and it provided general education peer models for students with disabilities” (p. 251).

Pappamihel (2012) noted that special education teachers are the experts in designing and implementing instruction for students with exceptionalities in the inclusive setting. Instruction is differentiated and the student-centered approach is successful in the co-teaching collaborative environment. “There are many benefits of co-teaching including opportunities to vary content presentation, individualize instruction, scaffold learning experiences, and monitor students' understanding” (Graziano & Navarrete, 2012, p. 109).

The co-teachers are able to meet the academic and social needs of all students in different co-teaching classroom arrangements. When the four relationship collaboration factors and collaboration are present in the co-teacher arrangement, the collaborative efforts of the general and special education teachers foster an environment for potential student success. Finally, co-teachers maximize the

collaborative environment when their relationship collaboration and interdependence overcome issues to center on teamwork to assist student learning needs.

In summary, collaboration in the co-teaching relationship is essential for team success to create an environment for student learning. The relationship factors contribute to the understanding of how co-teachers interact with one another when co-teachers collaborate. Co-teacher training is needed to address collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. The empirical studies have highlighted co-teaching relationship issues and the importance for collaborative results when collaborating in the inclusive setting.

Personalities and Styles

This overview provides a framework for the following section titled, Personalities and Styles. Empirical studies illustrate the following areas: Issues in the Co-Teaching Relationship, Co-Teacher Professional and Personal Compatibility, and Communication Styles. The first area of Issues in the Co-Teaching Relationship examined co-teacher personalities and styles that influenced the co-teaching relationship. In addition, issues and conflicts within the co-teaching relationship were highlighted. Secondly, the area of Co-Teacher Professional and Personal Compatibility showed why compatibility is important in the co-teaching arrangement. Thirdly, the Communication Styles area illustrated the varied social interaction skills.

Co-teacher compatibility may be impacted by co-teacher personalities and styles that can interfere with team collaboration. Co-teachers need to be supportive and receptive to their member's communication style to maximize collaboration during instruction. "The best way to build a great team is not to select individuals for

their ‘smarts’ or accomplishments but to learn how they communicate and to shape and guide the team so that it follows successful communication patterns” (Pentland, 2012, p. 65). Co-teacher personalities shape communication styles which influence collaboration. When co-teachers are personally compatible, they are successful in designing and implementing instruction. Co-teaching teams are not the same, and some teams are inherently more compatible than others. Unfortunately, there are issues in some co-teaching relationships that affect co-teaching productivity.

Issues in the Co-Teaching Relationship

This section highlights significant research studies that focused on co-teaching relationship issues. Co-teaching teams may have weak interdependence because of some type of conflict in their relationships. The following research studies provide evidence of personalities and styles that influenced the co-teaching relationship. Keefe and Moore’s (2004) qualitative research study of general and special education co-teachers at a southwestern United States suburban high school investigated the co-teaching challenges from the co-teachers’ perspective. Three general education and five special education teachers were included in the study and themes were constructed from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The research study indicated that co-teachers should recognize if they are compatible when building a co-teaching team. They also discussed the importance of addressing issues in the beginning of the co-teaching arrangement rather than allowing problems to evolve during the instructional process.

Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2008) investigated factors of twenty secondary school educators that influence the adoption of inclusive co-teaching

models in a western Pennsylvania middle school consisting of six-hundred-fifty students. The study focused on co-teaching conflicts in co-teaching relationships. Their findings concluded that the school administrator arranged the co-teaching teams and the co-teachers were not paired effectively. In addition, “Teacher personalities and styles are not often considered during the matching and implementation process” (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008, p. 125).

A naturalistic inquiry method and case study design helped to clarify the research question. The research question was, “What factors in a suburban middle school in western Pennsylvania affect the successful adoption of co-teaching relationships between regular education and special education teachers?” (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008, p. 123). Themes were categorized from interviews, notes, and documents. Inductive patterns assisted in the understanding of co-teaching relationships and models.

The content analysis results indicated that co-teaching positively influenced the co-teachers and the learning environment for the students. At times, co-teachers were mismatched and conflicting personalities impacted the co-teaching relationship. Isherwood and Barger-Anderson’s research (2008) provided a stronger understanding of how co-teaching can influence co-teachers and impact student learning.

Isherwood and Barger-Anderson’s (2008) qualitative study is similar to the present study of co-teacher relationship collaboration factors. Isherwood and Barger-Anderson’s qualitative study focused on issues impacting co-teaching models of general and special education teachers and conflict in co-teaching relationships. The co-teacher relationship collaboration factor study is similar, since these two studies

centered on co-teachers' relationships. However, the research studies are different since Isherwood and Barger-Anderson's study focused on conflict in co-teaching relationships. Whereas, this co-teacher relationship collaboration factor study investigated co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship to deepen the understanding of the co-teachers' perspective. This co-teacher relationship collaboration factor study investigated the co-teachers' experience and Isherwood and Barger-Anderson's study focused on identifying areas of co-teacher conflict. The previous studies examined the concern for issues obstructing the co-teaching relationship. Co-teachers are distracted by issues rather than focusing on the team effort to meet student learning needs. When co-teachers are compatible, their relationship collaboration fosters an effortless team approach for the inclusive setting.

Co-Teacher Professional and Personal Compatibility

The following research study showed that co-teachers expressed a need for professional and personal compatibility for a successful relationship. Rice and Zigmond's (2000) qualitative study included a large sample size of co-teachers and was conducted in the United States and Australia. They interviewed and observed co-teachers in inclusive secondary classrooms to investigate co-teaching approaches that assisted students with special needs. Their international research involved two public secondary schools in urban southwestern Pennsylvania school districts and eight urban public secondary schools in Queensland, Australia. They compared seventeen secondary co-teachers' responsibilities and roles. A semi-structured protocol was adopted when interviewing the co-teachers and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Themes were analyzed and co-teachers expressed the importance of

professional and personal compatibility in their relationships. They found that co-teacher professional and personal compatibility are essential for co-teaching partner success and established the foundation for the importance of compatibility for co-teachers. Their international research consisted of gathering qualitative data from co-teacher classroom observations and interviews. The research findings indicated that, “The continuing, close cooperation that co-teaching involves was given as the reason by several respondents for identifying both professional and personal compatibility as critical” (Rice & Zigmond, 2000, p. 194). The lack of administration support created obstacles when creating a co-teaching design in the inclusive setting. This study is an example of professional and personal compatibility influencing co-teacher interdependence for relationship needs. The following study showed the importance of social interaction skills to address relationship issues and maintaining compatibility to support the co-teaching relationship.

Communication Styles

Jeon’s (2010) research results proved that social interaction skills are essential for a successful co-teaching relationship. Jeon conducted research that consisted of interviews and observations in Korean elementary and secondary school classrooms over a five-month period. The researcher investigated native and non-native English co-teachers’ co-teaching experiences, the collaboration of the two groups, co-teacher interactions, professional development needs, and co-teaching styles and roles. Jeon investigated three pairs of co-teachers in an inclusive English classroom. For further understanding of the teaching practice of the co-teachers, a comparative data analysis was conducted. The stages of analysis were within-case analysis, cross-case analysis,

and later themes and categories were constructed. “Both observation and interview data were analyzed based on three different perspectives including teachers’ collaborative practice, interactions, and professional development” (Jeon, 2010, p. 50). The research findings indicated that co-teacher communication was focused on the professional experience. “For the communicative channels, they rarely used body language or facial expressions, which are naturally accompanied by the communicative process to establish the emotional connections between the two” (Jeon, 2010, p. 56). The co-teachers’ attitudes and beliefs were positive and reflected in their co-teaching relationship. “Any teachers who want to implement the co-teaching practice successfully are required to foster the social interaction skills such as conflict management, creative problem solving and positive interdependence” (Jeon, 2010, p. 47). The co-teaching relationship can be interpreted as emotional, since attitudes and beliefs are exchanged from different co-teacher perspectives. However, successful communication styles can help bridge the emotional exchanges between co-teachers to problem solve in the collaborative relationship.

In summary, personalities and styles of co-teachers are components that impact the collaboration of co-teachers. The empirical studies reviewed issues in the co-teaching relationship and conflict in co-teaching relationships alters the interdependence of co-teachers. Co-teacher professional and personal compatibility contributed to successful relationships. Communication styles were also indicated, since social interaction skills contribute to a meaningful co-teaching relationship.

Essential Factors for Co-Teaching

This overview illustrates a framework for the following section titled, Essential Factors for Co-Teaching. The following relationship collaboration factors were indicated in many empirical studies that centered on the co-teaching relationship. First, respect contributed to successful collaboration and respect allowed co-teachers to understand their differences. Also, co-teacher responsibilities needed to be respected and shared for co-teaching goals. Secondly, communication was another factor shown to influence the co-teaching relationship. Communication skills were essential and contributed to impacting co-partner's roles and responsibilities. Thirdly, parity was another factor that constructed the co-teaching relationship. This factor created a positive learning environment for students and co-teachers. Fourthly, trust was the last factor that fostered success in the co-teaching relationship. Trust impacted co-teacher collaboration and co-teacher trust was influenced by school administrator trust. Trust was created from co-teacher interdependence and the interdependence created a shared and positive inclusive learning environment. The following research studies explained the four factors and how they construct relationship collaboration in the co-teaching arrangement.

According to many researchers, the four components that influence the co-teaching relationship are: respect, communication, parity, and trust. These factors will be considered individually in the following sections of the literature review. Co-teaching success can be defined as occurring when co-teachers are interdependent in their collaborative effort with shared goals to meet student learning styles and needs in the inclusive classroom setting.

Respect

Respect is the first factor to create the co-teaching relationship. Respect is understanding and accepting both the positive and negative aspects of an individual. “In healthy co-teaching situations, the relationship between the general and special education teachers appeared to be built upon a mutual trust and respect for one another’s expertise in each respective field” (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie, 2005, p. 268). Earning trust creates the foundation for respect and establishes communication for the co-teaching member. “Understanding and respecting each other’s preferred mode and method of communication fosters mutual respect, reduces the likelihood of being misunderstood, and maximizes collaboration” (Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009, p. 5). Respect enhances communication for the collaborative effort (Casale-Giannola, 2012; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebaner, 2005). Respect is a co-teacher relationship factor that fosters positive communication for team members. When co-teachers have mutual respect, a successful collaborative relationship allows the team to achieve their goals.

The following empirical studies provided further information regarding the relationship collaboration factor of respect. For example, Casale-Giannola’s (2012) qualitative study consisted of surveys and observations to further the understanding of high school inclusion in general education classrooms. The inclusionary settings were career and technical education classrooms and the researcher was the inclusionary expert and participated in the study. The urban and suburban settings consisted of two vocational and technical secondary education schools. The

participants consisted of eleven special education teachers, fifteen general education teachers, twenty vocational education teachers, two learning consultants, and five school district supervisors. The data collection consisted of data from teacher surveys, meetings, and observation notes. Codes were created from the analysis of data of patterns and themes.

The research study results indicated issues for secondary education inclusion. Three co-teaching teams reported that communication and respect did not support their relationship (Casale-Giannola, 2012). Respect among co-teachers creates a meaningful work relationship and improves collaboration. Greater inclusionary success has been reported at the elementary level because inclusion at the secondary level poses challenges (Casale-Giannola, 2012, p. 28). Casale-Giannola (2012) expressed that collaboration suffered and the challenges consisted of negative teacher beliefs, lack of fundamental background of special education, collaboration skills, school administration support, and time. When co-teachers have successful collaboration, respect is usually present. “Open communication and respect for teachers and students were examples of good collaboration. Classroom instruction was better when teachers had good collaboration and worked to collectively support students” (Casale-Giannola, 2012, p. 32).

Magiera, Lawrence-Brown, Bloomquist, Foster, Figueroa, Glatz, Heppeler and Rodriguez (2006) expressed that successful collaboration can result in understanding differences in the co-partner while respecting the co-partner. The researchers conducted an action research study at an elementary school and interviewed twenty educators. The participants consisted of administrators, service

personnel, general education teachers, and special education teachers. The semi-structured interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for an in-depth analysis. To help classify patterns and themes, data from the interviews were analyzed. “About a third of the educators mentioned the importance of the relationship between the two teachers in co-taught classes, describing co-teaching as initially challenging” (Magiera et al., 2006, p. 6). The co-teachers believed that their confidence and collaboration skills improved as they continued to collaborate, however challenges occur. “It is important to respect each other as teachers and understand that everyone is different. Co-teachers are working as a team, so they need to feel free to bounce ideas off one another and to share responsibilities” (Magiera et al., 2006, p. 7).

Magiera et al. (2006) showed in the findings that the co-teaching relationship evolved because the teachers accommodated one another, respect was apparent, and effective communication allowed the teachers to become successful for instructional purposes.

Magiera, Smith, Zigmond and Gebaner’s (2005) research study indicated that co-teacher responsibilities needed to be respected and shared for mutual collaborative goals. Their research study consisted of narrative notes in mathematics inclusion classrooms of eight high schools. Forty-nine observations were made of ten co-teaching teams to further understand co-teacher classroom roles. Three observations were conducted in the beginning of the study and three additional observations were made three months later. The results showed that co-teacher responsibilities were respected and shared to meet common team goals. “Interview questions also reflected the supportive roles assumed by the special education teachers in secondary co-taught mathematics classrooms” (Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebaner, 2005, p.

21). The importance of the special education co-teacher as an equal member of the collaborative relationship was indicated by the research results. Finally, the empirical studies highlighted respect as the research study's relationship collaboration factor. The results from the studies showed that respect created collaboration success. When co-teachers respect one another, they can embrace differences and foster successful collaboration. The results also stated that co-teacher responsibilities should be respected for shared goals.

Communication

Communication is the second important factor to support the co-teaching relationship. Sileo (2011) believes that professional relationships rely on meaningful communication. Team members are successful when respect and communication skills are present in the co-teaching relationship. As a result, co-teachers will recognize their partner's personal and professional needs and the co-teaching relationship will blossom. Communication helps to express the co-teachers' shared thinking and the co-teachers need to be equal in the collaborative relationship. "Clearly, co-teachers need to know what their partner is thinking, feeling, doing, and bringing into the school environment in order to provide effective instruction for all students" (Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009, p. 3). The co-teacher relationship also relies on shared emotions, both verbal and nonverbal communication. Effective communication is essential for co-teachers to foster a collaborative environment (McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, & Lupart, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Jones & Harris, 2012). Co-teacher communication and supportive inclusionary beliefs are areas of importance for a successful

inclusionary classroom. Adjusting to the co-teachers' communication style is paramount for exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages. Communicating in an effective manner and meeting the co-partner's needs help to support a collaborative environment according to Sileo (2011).

In 2013, McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, and Lupart found that elementary teachers' communication skills were important in the collaborative relationship. The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study in central Alberta, Canada, to further understand the teachers' perspective regarding inclusion. They surveyed a total of 123 elementary and secondary teachers by using the Diversity, Individual Development, Differentiation survey and also interviewed 14 of the identified teachers. Communication and teacher attitude regarding inclusion were areas of interest and the research study helped to investigate these concerns. The Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion in Rural Canada scale provided further insight into teacher attitudes concerning the inclusion experience. The study's results showed that teachers' beliefs of inclusion are positive. However, large differences existed between elementary and secondary education teachers' inclusion beliefs. "Secondary-level teachers hold more negative views of inclusion than elementary-level teachers" (McGhie-Richmond et al., 2013, p. 228). In this study, good communication was identified as an essential component in the co-teaching relationship, especially at the elementary education level.

Magiera and Zigmond (2005) found that co-teachers were challenged when adjusting to their co-partner's instructional role. They conducted a qualitative study in eleven inclusive classrooms of four western New York middle schools. Eighty-

four observations were conducted and the results indicated that general education teachers did not provide similar instructional support as special education teachers for students with disabilities. The special education educators adapted and modified instructional needs and managed student behavior. The co-teachers reported that they had difficulty adapting to their co-partner's style. There were issues in roles, responsibilities, and adapting to their co-partner's style (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005). When co-teachers are prepared to adjust to their co-partner's style, communication can strengthen the team effort.

Jones and Harris (2012) found that teacher experience and instructional style were beneficial for collaboration. However, in this study, both educators and students expressed concerns in issues of compatibility, communication, and teaching independence. Researchers investigated the positive and negative aspects of having more than one educator present in class in nine science courses in a higher education institution. The survey consisted of three questions and a sample size of 17 educators and 924 students. The results showed that the experience level and style of teaching was a positive advantage for collaboration, therefore there were positive aspects for collaboration. However, the researchers stated that, "Corresponding difficulties include incompatibility within the team, poor communication, or reduced freedom to teach as one pleases" (Jones & Harris, 2012, pp. 137-138). The educators needed to understand effective communication and adjust to the students' needs. Students expressed the advantage of the educators' knowledge and how it influenced their learning. The collaborative team approach allowed student learning needs to be met when the communication needs were addressed for the educators.

Finally, several empirical studies highlighted communication as the research study's relationship collaboration factor (Sileo, 2011; McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, & Lupart, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Jones & Harris, 2012). The results from the studies showed that communication created collaboration success. Communication skills were especially important for elementary education co-teachers for the collaborative relationship. Co-teachers reported having the following issues: adapting to their co-partner's style, compatibility challenges, communication issues, and teaching independence.

Parity

Parity is the third factor to help foster the co-teaching relationship. Parity occurs when co-teachers have equal responsibilities and understand that they are equal partners in the teaching-learning process. When one co-teacher controls the co-teaching relationship, in instructional responsibilities, parity is not present. "Parity is a prerequisite for effective co-teaching and learning" (Embury & Kroeger, 2012, p. 109). The relationship needs to have the mutual understanding of the team and the responsibilities should not be placed on only one co-teacher. When co-teachers can work as a successful team, co-partners share roles and duties in the classroom to be effective in making a difference for student learning. Co-teachers need to share the roles and responsibilities and to maintain a team approach for parity in the shared co-teaching relationship. Parity allows co-teachers to share and to create goals for their co-teaching relationship (Trent, 1998; Scheeler, Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010; Beebe & Corrigan, 2013). When co-teachers are equals, teamwork is strengthened to help overcome students' learning challenges. Parity enhances compatibility and allows for

developing newer skills and techniques in the inclusive classroom. Therefore, parity contributes to the sharing of ideas, effort, and resources to improve the collaborative relationship.

Trent (1998) found that co-teacher relationship collaboration influenced the students in the classroom setting due to successful co-teacher interaction and goals. The researcher conducted a case study which consisted of 18 observations and four interviews of two general education teachers and two special education teachers in a suburban high school. The researcher investigated how an inclusive secondary education classroom assisted the students and co-teachers. The research study consisted of five eleventh grade history class observations, five team interviews, and three team interviews for half of a school year. The case study's main topics were the obstacles or problems of the co-teachers' relationship. Trent (1998) stated that, "I categorized these problems as (a) teacher incompatibilities, (b) teacher comparisons, (c) structural constraints, and (d) limited administrative support" (p. 508). The results showed that co-teacher interaction and goals were shared because of parity. The co-teachers believed that the general and special education students profited from co-teaching. The researcher stated that, "Still, Christine's and Katherine's focus on instructional modifications and organizational skills resulted in improved performance by students with learning disabilities and other students served in their class" (Trent, 1998, p. 511). As a result, student learning was positively influenced by the team relationship in the inclusive classroom setting.

In 2010, Scheeler, Congdon, and Stansbery found that the co-teachers' relationship consisted of parity and as a result contributed to a positive learning

environment for everyone in the learning setting. They investigated the instructional process of six co-teachers in teams in two southeastern Pennsylvania school districts for three months. The teaching lessons were video recorded and organized into three groups. The participants were divided into three groups, a seventh grade general education mathematics class, a third grade inclusionary mathematics class, and a second grade inclusionary language arts class. The study's results showed that, "Co-teachers were also compatible and willing to learn a new teaching technique" (Scheeler, Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010, p. 94). The teachers were able to learn and to grow with one another since they were compatible and equality created a positive learning environment for the students. The "bug-in-ear" technology allowed the co-teachers to learn from one another and to apply skills to newer settings with immediate corrective co-partner feedback.

Embury and Kroeger's (2012) research study interviewed seven students to investigate their perceptions of their co-teachers and found that parity was shared among co-teachers and the students in the inclusive environment. The setting was in two inclusionary classrooms in an urban middle school of grades seven and eight. The research study consisted of a multi-level data analysis and was comprised of open coding and inductive analysis. The findings showed that students expressed positive feedback about their co-teachers in the inclusive setting and co-teacher assistance varied among classrooms. Students understood the difference in the co-teachers' roles and responsibilities and parity was essential for influencing the students and co-teachers. The findings showed that inclusionary practices should relate to students as well as the co-teachers. Embury and Kroeger (2012) expressed

the co-teachers' lack of parity, "Where co-teaching was less complex and roles were not shared, [students] repeatedly referred to their general educator as the real or regular teacher" (p. 107). Students are aware of co-teacher roles and responsibilities in the learning environment. "In order for students to be and feel fully included in the classroom, general and special teachers must demonstrate inclusion as equal and contributing members of the classroom community as well" (Embury & Kroeger, 2012, p. 110).

In summary, the previous empirical studies highlighted parity as the research study's relationship collaboration factor. The results from the studies clarified that parity establishes collaboration success. Parity in relationship collaboration created success in co-teacher interactions and goals. This factor fostered a supportive learning environment and the equal process contributed to the sharing of ideas and effort for successful interdependence.

Trust

Trust is the fourth factor to support the co-teaching relationship. According to Bishop and Stevenson (2000), trust is a critical factor in the co-teaching relationship as the co-teacher has to trust his partner for collaboration to be successful. "One of the biggest challenges for the content teacher is building trust in the classroom. The content teacher has to trust that the special education teacher knows the information he or she is providing to students" (Forbes & Billet, 2012, p. 64). Without co-teacher trust, the co-teaching relationship will not develop and flourish. Trust will take time for the co-teacher to earn and the co-teacher's respect, communication, and parity factors help to strengthen trust. Co-teacher trust strengthens the collaborative

relationship for a positive inclusive classroom learning environment (Christophersen, Elstad, & Turmo, 2011; Pasha, 2012; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Trust in the collaborative relationship is influenced by the school administrator and the school culture of trust. Trust allows a co-teaching team to learn from one another and to reach student learning goals. Therefore, co-teacher trust helps to promote a successful inclusive classroom setting for student learning and maintaining an effective co-teaching team.

Christophersen, Elstad, and Turmo (2011) found that co-teacher collaboration was reinforced by trust among co-teachers. They expressed that administrator trust impacts teacher trust. The quantitative study investigated the interpretations of teachers regarding the relationship of trust among other teachers and trust was also evaluated among teachers and school administrators. In addition, collaboration and the impact of teachers' views of school were measured. A cross-sectional survey of a seven-point Likert scale was conducted in 11 Norwegian schools and consisted of 234 teachers. The school grades ranged from eighth to the beginning year of an adult education school. The results showed that school administrator's trust influences the school climate of teacher trust. In addition, teacher trust has a strong influence on teacher collaboration.

Nichols and Sheffield's (2014) research study was to inform administrator preparation and professional development research related to special education. The researchers found that learning to work together and understanding the co-teaching environment contributed to establishing trust. The qualitative study provided themes addressed by study participants. The themes included: need for cultural sensitivity

training, time and techniques for building co-teaching relationships, and administrative support. Participants consisted of 37 general education teachers and 12 special education teachers. The reflective analysis was conducted in a Tennessee school district consisting of two middle schools and six elementary schools. The participants attended professional development workshops that centered on inclusive practices. Participants also used journals to describe their co-teaching experiences. Data were constructed into ten categories and inter-rater reliability was conducted. The coding process centered on the general and special education teachers thinking about their environment.

Nichols and Sheffield's (2014) findings showed that school leaders informed teachers on how to problem solve interpersonal conflicts and to meet students' instructional needs. "Many participants (special and general education teachers) were open to learning to work together and believed that understanding their co-teachers' culture(s) and reasons for behaviors would help them build mutual trust and respect" (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014, p. 40). However, some special education teachers indicated that they were not treated fairly by the general education teachers. The general education teachers expressed that they did not trust giving someone else instructional authority when that teacher was not responsible for students' high stakes test scores.

Van Maele and Van Houtte (2011) studied 2,104 teachers in 84 Flanders (Belgium) secondary schools focusing on factors that impact trust among educators. They found that believing in a successful inclusive setting, fosters trust and trust created a positive learning environment for students. "When teachers in a school

share assumptions about students' teachability, or when a homogeneous staff culture is indicated, a teacher's trust in colleagues is fostered" (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011, p. 454). The researchers emphasized that professional development for strengthening inclusive practices relies on teacher trust. As a result, trust fosters a positive environment for student learning success in the inclusive setting. In summary, the previous empirical studies highlighted trust as an important relationship collaboration factor. The results from the studies showed that trust builds collaboration success. Co-teacher trust impacted collaboration and school administration trust influenced co-teacher trust and established a learning environment.

In conclusion, the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust are relationship collaboration factors that strengthen co-teaching team success. The factors are interdependent because of the connectivity of the factors. In addition, teamwork consists of an individual's personal relationship with the co-partner and also for collaboration to establish team effort to achieve team goals. If one relationship collaboration factor is weak, then the remaining factors will be influenced. When co-teacher relationships have a successful balance of the four factors, the relationship collaboration needs are effectively maximized for student success in the inclusionary classroom.

Pre-Service Training in Co-Teaching Skills

The following research studies addressed the concern for pre-service teachers to have effective training in co-teaching skills for future collaboration in their future in-service teaching. Pre-service teachers often first become co-teachers in the K-12

inclusive setting during their field experiences and may lack the necessary skills and competences to be successful. Therefore, a need exists in the higher education settings to train the pre-service general and special education teachers to be prepared for challenges in the co-teaching arrangement. When pre-service teachers are provided with the fundamental coursework and training on the collaborative relationship, then these future teachers will be prepared to overcome challenges in the co-teaching arrangement.

In 2011, Zhou, Jinyoung and Kerekes investigated the collaboration experience of instructors and pre-service teachers in collaborative teams in a New York urban public university. The data source consisted of journals, field notes, and meeting minutes over a three-semester period. Student reflective journals were written in the beginning, middle, and end of the study and the information provided knowledge of teaching skills, where they acquired the skills, interest level, confidence level, and understanding of co-teaching and the curriculum. The journals were analyzed through content analysis and later open coding interpreted the journals. Themes were recognized by data coding to explain the overall findings that collaboration was beneficial for both the instructors and pre-service teachers. The instructors were able to expand their thinking and become part of a shared process of learning to produce best practices in the post-secondary classroom setting. The pre-service teachers experienced how collaboration can promote their teaching and can be used for professional development.

In 2010, Samimi-Duncan, Duncan and Lancaster's research study results showed that pre-service teachers demonstrated collaboration knowledge for

coursework. The researchers focused on the teaching experience of the pre-service teachers and conducted a case study that explored the collaborative relationship of pre-service teachers in a paired practicum. They grounded the study in a post-positivist paradigm. Individual interviews of nine undergraduate students were conducted at the conclusion of their paired practicum. A thematic analysis helped to further explain the student interviews and themes were classified by NVivo qualitative software. The researchers' findings included the group's knowledge of ideas and resources of students' feelings of comfort to take challenges when collaborating in pairs. Based on the study, pre-service teachers can become successful future educators when they learn fundamental co-teaching collaboration skills in their coursework.

Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2013) explored pre-service teachers' collaboration perceptions when preparing for special education teacher success. This study was singular when compared to the previous research studies, since it investigated the views of pre-service teachers. Pre-service special educators learned about collaboration coursework and expressed collaboration challenges. The study also helped to further the understanding of co-teaching preparation for successful collaboration in the co-teaching relationship experience. The research participants were a group of nontraditional undergraduates that consisted of eleven females and one male. The data collection methods consisted of reflective journals from the selected participants, two assignments constructed from meeting observations, and interviews. Data were analyzed and later identified into pre-service teacher collaboration themes. Findings detailed the dissimilarities of how the pre-service

special education teachers described collaboration and co-teaching challenges that may hinder their understanding of collaboration prior to the practical setting. The pre-service teachers indicated that teacher collaboration helped students to succeed and co-teachers are successful in their collaborative effort when they volunteered to co-teach.

Brinkmann and Twiford's (2012) qualitative study is similar to Hamilton-Jones and Vail's (2013) study since the findings showed a problem in understanding collaboration and the skills needed for success. Brinkmann and Twiford's (2012) research study in three central Virginian suburban school divisions helped to further the understanding of collaboration skills for co-teaching success and addressed the need for pre-service teacher collaboration coursework. The research study consisted of a naturalistic inquiry design of three focus group interviews and field notes of identifying skill sets for effective elementary general and special education teacher collaboration. Group conversations were directed by open-ended questions. "Audio recording devices, computer systems, a reflective journal, field notes, and a peer debriefer were used to efficiently and accurately document the focus group interview process" (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012, p. 7). Member check process was conducted for clarification and accuracy of statements from the participants. The results suggested that there are issues for pre-service and in-service teachers for an understanding of co-teaching skills. Pre-service co-teaching coursework and teacher preparation programs lack a teacher collaboration focus. Also, in-service teachers lack the required skills and are not properly trained for co-teaching.

Cramer and Nevin (2006) conducted a survey using two co-teacher scales in twenty-two schools and investigated the need for pre-service teachers to have co-teacher collaboration and inclusionary practice training. The surveys provided both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of forty-six in-service co-teachers in an urban school system in the southeastern section of the United States. The researchers studied the co-teaching relationship of general and special education teachers by using a mixed methodology approach. The approach clarified two co-teacher assessment instruments and the grouping of grounded theory, qualitative methodology, and quantitative data analysis were implemented. Interviews of the co-teachers assessed different viewpoints by a comparative process to help gather interview, survey, and observation data. “The major implication for teacher educators is the lack of preparation reported by these teachers with respect to inclusive education practices, collaboration, and co-teaching. Independent of role, both general and special educators reported being under-prepared” (Cramer & Nevin, 2006, p. 270). The results indicated that the co-teacher assessment instrument data were similar for both comparative populations. The in-service co-teachers were excited about their relationship and how it positively influenced students.

In summary, the previous research studies illustrated that pre-service professional development in co-teaching skills is necessary for collaboration success in future co-teaching relationships. The training and coursework allow pre-service teachers to have practical inclusionary practice training for collaboration success. Co-teacher roles, responsibilities, and skills can be the coursework focus so that

general and special education co-teachers will further their understanding of pre-service collaboration.

In-Service Training in Co-Teaching Skills

In-service teachers are prepared with the co-teaching skills and knowledge when professional development programs provide best practices for co-teaching success (Bryant Davis, Dieker, Pearl, & Kirkpatrick, 2012; Noonan, McCormick, & Heck, 2003; Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta, & Menendez, 2003; Buell, Hallam, & Gamel-McCormick, 1999). Current research and knowledge will create the foundation for professional development programs for in-service teachers to continue life-long learning of deepening knowledge and skills. The following empirical studies demonstrate the importance of in-service teachers learning co-teaching skills for successful productivity and longevity in the co-teaching relationship. In-service professional development programs provide learning opportunities for teachers to apply in the classroom setting. Teachers have the opportunity to utilize current skills and knowledge that will impact successful classroom practice.

Davis et al. (2012) of the University of Central Florida collaborated with the Arkansas Department of Education to develop a co-teaching professional development program. The researchers examined co-teaching practices across school districts within Arkansas. Co-planning was the area of focus for the research study and co-teaching program needs for a whole school year. Three cohorts consisted of middle school co-teaching teams and 155 lesson plans were examined. The co-teachers utilized a planning book throughout the school year and the planning book became a reference for best practices. “In addition to the professional development

and evaluation activities described, co-teaching partnerships were encouraged to assist the professional developers with Webinar agendas by submitting copies of their lessons plans monthly” (Davis et al., 2012, p. 212). Data from the lesson plans were coded and the program factors linked to successful co-teaching models were identified for teacher training for grades 6-8. Co-teacher trainings were supported by the planning book. Also, evaluating, planning, and training co-teachers fostered success. Davis et al. (2012) revealed that the teachers had concerns on implementing technology and also the behavioral needs of the special education students. The teachers used many co-taught models. However, the one lead and one support co-taught model involved significant planning time.

Noonan, McCormick, and Heck’s (2003) research study is similar to Davis’s et al. (2012) study. The researchers expressed that co-teachers lack an understanding of successful co-teaching and are underprepared in the co-teaching models. They investigated the association of ten co-teacher relationships and co-teaching programs for the application of professional development needs. “Co-teacher relationship was defined as extent of perceived similarities in beliefs, personal characteristics and traits, and professional style” (Noonan et al., 2003, p. 113). The study was conducted in one school district with twenty co-teachers and the results showed that co-teachers should be trained on how to communicate effectively for collaboration success. Noonan et al. (2003) stated, “A problem in application of the co-teaching model has been the assumption that the teachers came to the co-teaching setting with well-developed teaming and communication skills” (p. 118). Co-teachers’ behavior and relationship variables were a focus in the researchers’ study. These factors were

evaluated and utilized for the co-teacher rating scale. In-service training in the co-teaching professional relationship was the area of need from the research study.

Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, and Scheer (1999) conducted a needs assessment for a mid-Atlantic state managed by the Department of Education and 289 surveys were completed among general and special education teachers across the state. The survey was a Likert-type 25 item scale consisting of open-ended and yes/no questions. “Three major sections of the survey addressed (a) teachers’ confidence regarding student success in inclusive settings, (b) teachers’ in-service needs regarding inclusive education, and (c) teachers’ perceptions of necessary programmatic supports for successful inclusionary practices” (Buell et al., 1999, p. 147).

The researchers began by conducting a needs assessment and analyzed factors relating to teachers meeting the learning needs of special education students in the inclusive setting. “A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to test for differences in response between special and general educators on questions measuring beliefs about inclusion” (Buell et al., 1999, p. 148). The in-service training needs of teachers, inclusive education, and student success were researched to help achieve the results of the study. According to Buell et al. (1999), “In every area assessed, special education teachers rated their efficacy, ability, understanding, and resources higher than general education teachers. Special education teachers have the instructional skills to meet students’ unique learning styles and needs. These results are discussed in terms of meeting professional development needs for both groups of teachers” (p. 143). Inclusion education resources, teachers’ perceptions of inclusion support, and

teacher understanding of inclusion and student success were additional areas that were considered for the research study. In-service training can provide support in the understanding of roles and responsibilities for general and special education teachers.

Professional development co-teaching opportunities provide in-service teachers with best practices in the inclusive classroom setting and for student success. Supporting co-teachers by providing in-service trainings will foster inclusion success for in-service teachers (Bryant Davis, Dieker, Pearl, & Kirkpatrick, 2012). In-service inclusion training can provide knowledge of the co-teacher relationship, teaming, and communication skills for in-service teacher skills (Noonan, McCormick, & Heck, 2003). Professional development programs can also offer support for in-service teachers regarding the connection between teacher style and practice (Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta, & Menendez, 2003). In-service teacher trainings provide learning experiences to enhance co-teaching skills for collaboration success in the inclusive classroom. Inclusionary training for in-service teachers foster teacher success and the foundation for students' inclusive education success (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999).

In summary, the previous research studies clarified that in-service training in co-teaching skills is essential for co-teacher relationship collaboration success. The studies also examined co-teaching professional development needs in the following areas: student behavioral needs, communication, time, support, and insufficient materials in the classroom. Another area of concern was centered on pairing co-teacher styles for relationship collaboration success.

Theoretical Framework

There are three theories that support the theoretical orientation for this co-teacher relationship collaboration research study. The three theories helped to interpret the co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration. First, the Social interdependence theory developed by Johnson and Johnson (2005) provided a collaboration perspective to explain the co-teaching relationship. Secondly, Bandura's (1986) Social cognitive theory established a learning perspective for interpreting co-teacher actions. Thirdly, the Social development theory created by Vygotsky (1962) created a social interaction perspective for the co-teaching relationship. Therefore, the three theories provided the researcher with a lens to interpret the co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration.

Social Interdependence Theory

The co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration were interpreted by the Social interdependence theory, first described by Johnson and Johnson. This theory provided a collaboration perspective to explain the co-teaching relationship. "Social interdependence theory provides a foundation on which cooperative learning is built" (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p. 365). The theory allowed further insight in understanding the investigation of the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust of co-teacher relationship collaboration as well as the co-teachers' perception of the collaborative relationship.

Johnson and Johnson (2005) expressed how the social interdependence theory originated from Koffka and Lewin in 1935: Since Morton Deutsch (1949a) introduced the basic theory of social interdependence (building on the work of

Kurt Koffka [1935] and Kurt Lewin [1935]), the theory has provided a conceptual structure to organize and summarize the existing research, generated numerous new research studies, and guided practice in such fields as education and business. (p. 286)

Johnson and Johnson (2009) stated that reaching common goals and interdependence is essential in maintaining team success. “Group members are made interdependent through common goals” (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 366). The co-teaching relationship requires the interaction of two co-teachers to depend on one another for common or shared goals to provide best practices for students in the inclusive setting.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), “The research has focused on numerous outcomes, which may be loosely structured into three categories: effort to achieve, quality of interpersonal relationships, and psychological health” (p. 375). The first area is the collaborative effort to achieve the common or shared goals and is essential for improving student learning in the inclusive setting. The co-teachers are dependent upon one another to achieve success in the unique relationship. The second area is the quality of the interpersonal relationship. When the four factors are present, then the quality of the co-teaching relationship will have a successful effort to achieve common or shared goals. The third area is psychological health and how it impacts the four collaboration relationship factors and the factors influence the co-teacher’s mental stability. The team’s psychological health influences the collaborative effort and the four relationship collaboration factors. The Social interdependence theory explained the four relationship collaboration factors and collaboration in the co-teaching relationship and deepen the understanding of

interdependence of the co-teaching team to help reach shared goals. The Social interdependence theory provided a deeper understanding of the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the co-teachers' perception of the collaborative relationship.

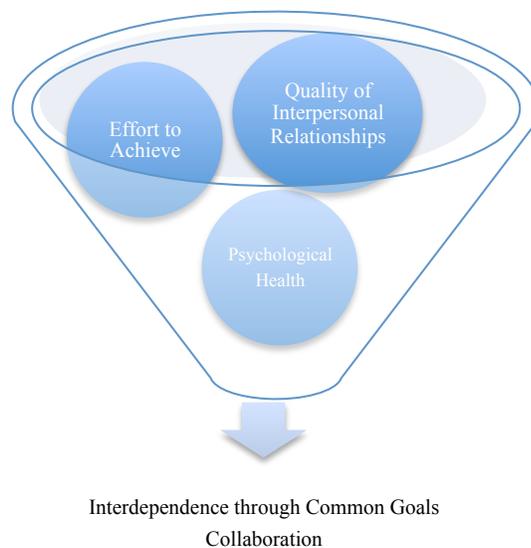


Figure 1. Social interdependence theory: Collaboration model.

In summary, co-teachers' collaborative results are grounded on team interdependence, a shared vision, and common goals. The psychological condition or health of the co-teaching team was determined by the strength of the team's factors. The team's psychological condition assists in steering the collaborative effort for maintaining team success in the inclusive classroom setting. Co-teachers foster positive interdependence when they have similar perceptions of goal attainment. Co-teachers create an opposition in their relationship collaboration factors when they have different and negative perceptions of goal attainment. The co-teacher's social

interaction and support within the team shape team outcomes. Support, equal effort, and achievement of shared goals are mutually shared to foster co-teaching team success.

Social Cognitive Theory

The second theory to be considered in this study is Bandura's (1986) Social cognitive theory. The co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration were interpreted by this theory. Social cognitive theory established a learning perspective for interpreting co-teacher actions. The theory assisted in the interpretation of co-teacher behaviors that impact co-teaching collaboration and the relationship collaboration factors. The actions of the co-teachers shape the team shared goals and result in success for the collaborative relationship. Albert Bandura's Social cognitive theory states, "Learning is largely an information processing activity in which information about the structure of behavior and about environmental events is transformed into symbolic representations that serve as guides for action" (Bandura, 1986, p. 51). The effort is influenced by the process of an identified behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). These three areas work together to create the unique collaborative effort. The collaborative effort is impacted by three areas of how co-teacher behavior is affected by environmental and personal factors.

The triadic reciprocal determinism or triadic reciprocity consists of three areas that support one another for creating an individual's behavior: observed behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). The three areas interact with one another and will help to define the

collaborative learning process. The three areas of the triadic reciprocity principle are distinctive, since typically co-teacher relationships are unique. The observed behavior can be demonstrated as the actions of an individual. The cognition of other personal factors is the area of skills and thinking processes for the co-teaching. The area of environmental factors determines the behavior of an individual, how he or she interacts with the environment.

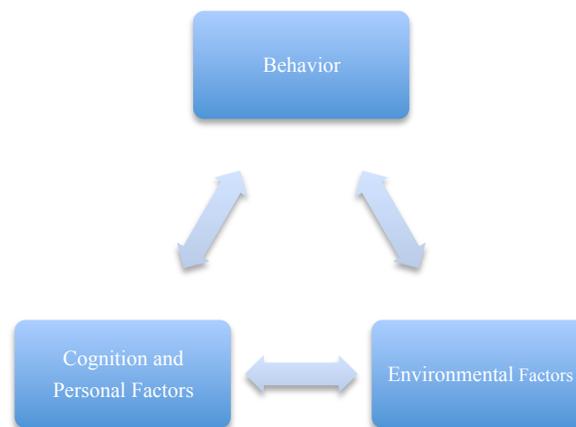


Figure 2. Social cognitive theory: Triadic reciprocal determinism model.

Finally, the Social cognitive theory helped to create further knowledge of co-teacher relationship collaboration and the co-teachers' perception of their collaborative relationship. The theory interpreted how co-teacher behaviors are created in the co-teaching relationship. Co-teachers' behaviors are dependent on the environment of the co-teaching relationship. Co-teachers can improve relationship collaboration skills by becoming aware of weaknesses within the relationship. Individuals can change or improve the co-teaching relationship so that the four factors contribute to successful collaboration. Co-teachers create the co-teaching

environment and have the ability for collaborative success. Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Determinism was explained in the research study and consisted of four interactions. First, personal to behavior: A co-teacher's knowledge and belief of collaborating with another co-teacher will determine how he will collaborate with the co-partner. Second, behavior to environment: The co-teacher's behavior or action in the collaborative relationship made behavior changes. The co-teachers' relationship consisting of social interactions can influence the co-teacher's behavior. Third, environment to personal: Co-teachers have the ability to improve performance by changing their behavior by understanding co-partner feedback. Fourth, behavior to personal: Personal characteristics of co-teachers can create a reaction in the co-partner.

Social Development Theory

The Social development theory interpreted co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration. This theory created a social interaction perspective for the co-teaching relationship. Vygotsky's Social development theory indicates that an individual's social behavior and socialization with others creates development and cognition skills (Vygotsky, 1981). "Culture is the product of social life and human social activity. That is why just by raising the question of the cultural development of behavior we are directly introducing the social plane of development" (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 164). The social interaction and shared experiences of the interaction become the area of learning development for an individual.

Vygotsky stated that the functions of the cultural development of a child occurs twice, "first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child

(intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). An individual's social interaction is essential in cognitive development and social interaction contributes to development (Vygotsky, 1978). "Human mental functioning, even when carried out by an individual acting in isolation, is inherently social, or sociocultural, in that it incorporates socially evolved and socially organized cultural tools" (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992, p. 551).

Vygotsky also described where learning is created and developed. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is where learning is constructed and is the distance between an individual's task ability with collaboration or support and the independent problem solving ability (Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is described as the "distance between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The ZPD can be applied to adults. Vygotsky also created the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). MKO is an individual who has a higher ability level or understanding of a task. The individual provides support to another individual by understanding more of a task (Vygotsky, 1978).



Figure 3. Social development theory: Social interaction model.

The Social development theory helped to create further understanding of co-teacher relationship collaboration and the co-teachers' perception of the collaborative relationship. The theory interpreted how co-teachers' social interactions are created in the co-teaching relationship. Co-teachers' social experiences of the collaborative relationship factors shaped what and how they learned. The co-teaching social interaction allowed co-teachers to learn from one another and apply positive experiences to future settings. Co-teaching social interactions created an environment for co-teacher growth. Some co-teaching relationships consisted of a leader or a dominant co-teacher willing to coach or support the co-partner. A co-teaching relationship will typically consist of a More Knowledgeable Other or the MKO. This co-teacher has the higher skill ability for a designated skill and provides support for the co-partner to further the understanding of a given task. The co-teacher needs to have a co-teaching relationship of equal effort considering the relationship collaboration factors to help expand learning abilities. The Zone of Proximal Development applies to co-teachers since the co-teacher's social interactions and collaboration provided newer learned abilities and skills. Co-teacher teams can establish goals based on their ability and skill levels.

In summary, the researcher utilized the theoretical framework consisting of the three theories to help interpret the co-teaching relationships. The three theories supported the foundation of the relationship collaboration factors to interpret the co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationships. The three theories provided the researcher with a lens to interpret the co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration. The Social interdependence theory by Johnson and Johnson indicates that group members' shared goals allow the team to be interdependent. Co-teachers work together in the shared co-teaching process to meet student learning needs and the interdependence relies on the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust for relationship collaboration.

The Social cognitive theory by Bandura stated that, "Learning is largely an information processing activity in which information about the structure of behavior and about environmental events is transformed into symbolic representations that serve as guides for action" (Bandura, 1986, p. 51). Co-teachers learn from information regarding the behavior structure and environment that help to direct co-teacher action in the collaborative relationship. The four factors assist the understanding of the collaborative relationship.

The Social development theory by Vygotsky indicates that social interaction is important for cognitive development and the interaction contributes to development. The four factors construct the co-teaching relationship and co-teachers learn by interacting in the co-teaching relationship. As a result, the co-teaching environment is critical for co-teacher relationship collaboration development. Therefore, the theories provided an interpretation of co-teaching relationships with the

understanding of collaboration for shared goals, a learning perspective for co-teacher actions, and an environmental perspective for co-teacher social interactions.

Summary

This chapter has provided the review of the methodological literature related to co-teaching relationship collaboration. Co-teachers can benefit from a designed co-teaching collaborative relationship that will focus on the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust to support successful collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. There are concerns that may impact the co-teaching relationship. The first concern is that most co-teachers depend on school administrators for the co-teaching selection process. The second concern is that the co-teacher selection process is usually not planned for successful collaboration. Third, pre-service co-teachers are not prepared in coursework and lastly, in-service teachers are not trained in practical experiences in the collaborative relationship. These four concerns may impact teamwork for K-12 co-teaching teams. The research and methodological literature centered on the evidence that supports this research study to investigate the co-teachers' perception of their collaborative relationship.

Chapter three will provide the procedures for the phenomenological research study to help investigate the factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust in co-teaching relationship collaboration and the co-teachers' perceptions of their co-teaching relationship. The co-teachers' voices were captured by ten open-ended interview questions that were guided by four research questions. The theoretical framework consists of three theories to support the study's research design. The target population and setting and selection of the co-teachers will be described in

Chapter 3 to illustrate the purpose for the study. The description of the procedures contributes to an understanding of the research study process and the analysis of data provide the method for understanding the co-teaching relationship.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to investigate co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship. Co-teachers are seldom effectively paired since school administrators usually assign co-teaching teams and co-teachers do not volunteer. Co-teachers are not able to choose their co-partners (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014). A successful co-teaching relationship fosters collaboration to allow instructional best practices in the inclusive setting. The Social interdependence theory, Social cognitive theory, and the Social development theory provided the theoretical framework that allowed the researcher to explain the unique collaborative relationship of two or more teachers functioning as a team to meet student learning styles and needs in an inclusive classroom setting.

The four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust strengthen co-teacher collaboration and can be used for co-teacher relationship collaboration professional development for school administrators, co-teachers, and pre-service teachers. The four factors provided a framework to examine the lived experience from the co-teachers' perspective of relationship collaboration. Since a majority of co-teaching relationships are unsuccessful (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010), the knowledge may provide a proactive approach to foster longevity in the co-teaching relationship by effectively pairing co-teachers into successful co-teaching teams and helping co-teachers to strengthen their teamwork.

Research Questions

Relationship collaboration factors and the co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship were investigated using ten open-ended co-teacher interview questions. Four research questions guided the ten open-ended interview questions. The researcher investigated only co-teaching relationship factors and did not ask about other practical matters, such as preparation time, administration support, or class size. The researcher probed for more specifics as needed during the interviews. The four research questions were:

1. How do the co-teachers describe their collaboration in terms of the relationship factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust?
2. How are the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors impacting the relationship?
3. Which relationship collaboration factors are strengthening the co-teaching relationship?
4. What relationship collaboration factors are hindering the co-teaching relationship?

The interview questions helped the researcher to investigate the unique co-teaching relationship and illustrate how these relationship collaboration factors contribute to the co-teaching effort. The Social interdependence theory, Social cognitive theory, and the Social development theory supported the investigation of the co-teachers' four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust and the co-teachers' perception of their collaborative relationship. The study's results provided a richer understanding of the dynamic relationship of collaboration in the inclusive classroom setting.

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your co-teaching relationship with your co-teaching partner.
2. If you can continue your co-teaching arrangement with the same co-teaching partner, would you? Why or why not?
3. Can co-teacher collaboration impact co-teaching team results? Why or why not?
4. Is collaboration important in your co-teaching arrangement?
5. Can your co-teaching arrangement become stronger? Why or why not?
6. Is something missing in your co-teaching relationship? Why and what is it? or why not?
7. Discuss your experiences with co-teaching success? Why was it successful?
8. When co-teaching arrangements fail, what do you believe is missing?
9. Are there areas that you believe that need to improve in your co-teaching arrangement?
10. Discuss your experiences with co-teaching failure? Why was it a failure?

Research Design

The qualitative research study investigated the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust in co-teaching relationship collaboration and the co-teachers' perceptions of their relationship. A total of eight co-teachers consisted of two general education and two special education teachers from SDA School District as well as the SDB School District. Four research questions guided the ten open-ended interview questions and captured the perceptions of the co-teachers. The theoretical framework consisted of the Social interdependence theory, Social cognitive theory, and the Social development theory and helped to interpret the

collaborative relationship. Finally, the phenomenological research study may provide knowledge for stakeholders in higher education, school administrators, and co-teachers to apply when selecting co-teaching teams and may improve co-teaching professional development needs.

Target Population and Setting

The target population consisted of secondary general and special education co-teachers in the SDA School District and the SDB School District. The public school districts are located in the northeastern region of the United States. SDA School District consists of 3,500 students and 274 teachers and SDB School District consists of 2,894 students and 178 teachers. SDA School District consists of a large special education population, when compared to surrounding school districts. SDA School District consists of 29% of students receiving special education services. SDB School District's special education population is smaller consisting of 16% students that are identified in special education. The co-teachers' responsibilities for each grade level are to design and implement instruction to meet students' unique learning styles and needs in the inclusive setting of general and special education students.

Participant Selection

First, recruitment of the participants began by the researcher obtaining written permission to conduct the study from the Superintendent of SDA School District and the Superintendent of SDB School District. Secondly, after permission was granted, the school districts' central administration office provided the researcher with the contact information of the current co-teachers in the district. Thirdly, the researcher

contacted each secondary school building principal and discussed the procedures and expectations of the research study. Fourthly, the researcher then contacted the co-teachers by a school visit, via the telephone, or email and explained the research study's purpose and procedure. Fifthly, the co-teachers were selected by purposeful sampling by the researcher anticipating eight individual co-teachers, two regular and two special education teachers from each of the two school districts and interviews were scheduled at a mutually convenient place and time.

Procedures

First, the study instrument was developed by the researcher who designed forming interview questions to investigate the co-teaching relationship and to examine how relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust contribute to the co-teaching effort. According to many researchers, the factors were components that influenced the co-teaching relationship and provided a framework for the experience from the co-teachers' perspectives. Therefore, the participants were interviewed using ten open-ended interview questions. The four research questions guided the ten open-ended interview questions.

The researcher used pseudonyms so the school districts' identity remained confidential. The first school district was referred as "a suburban public school district in the United States northeast region" with a pseudonym of SDA. The second school district was referred as "a public school district in the United States northeast region" with a pseudonym of SDB.

Secondly, the researcher obtained permission from the superintendent of each school district to conduct research within the school district by using a research study

permission letter. The building principals were notified and the procedure was discussed.

Thirdly, the school district central offices provided the researcher with the names and contact information of currently involved co-teachers. The participants' names and work related information remained confidential. The researcher discussed the research study, procedure, and expectations with the superintendents and the principals. These discussions helped the researcher to select co-teachers for the focus of the research study.

Fourthly, the researcher distributed the invitation to volunteer to participate form and discussed the procedure and expectations with the selected co-teachers. The researcher began to file all procedural information for documentation and analysis in a log book. The log book established organization for the researcher of the planned protocol for the study.

Fifthly, when the researcher obtained verbal consent from the co-teachers, the signed voluntary consent form was collected by the researcher or mailed to the researcher. The research study's purpose, confidentiality, and any other participant questions were explained at a convenient location. Sixth, the interview questions were provided to the participants and then the researcher scheduled the interviews. The researcher allowed the participants to decide the location of the interview. Seventh, the researcher provided information on the length of the study, the responsibilities, expectations, and the monetary incentive of a \$10 gift card per co-teacher. If the participants objected at any time in the study, then all research documents and information were destroyed.

Eighth, once written consent was obtained, the audio recording of the actual interview began. The researcher asked ten open-ended co-teacher face-to-face interview questions that were guided by four research questions. Two questions asked the participants to describe their collaboration in their co-teaching arrangement. The participants answered two questions that discussed how collaboration factors impact their co-teaching relationship. The group of questions identified factors assisting the relationship and the final two questions helped to understand the factors that were interfering with co-teaching relationship success. In addition, direct speech of the participants was minimized and identifying characteristics were eliminated.

As each interview began, the researcher stated to the participants that the research study will investigate the relationship collaboration factors and their perception of their co-teaching relationship and will not focus on other practical matters, such as preparation time, administration support, resources, class size, or the related.

When all of the interview questions were asked, the researcher conducted the debriefing process and invited the co-teachers to select a \$10 restaurant gift card as a token of appreciation for their participation. Finally, for the member check, the emailed copy of the interview transcription was sent to the participants for validity and reliability concerns (Hycner, 1999). The purpose of the emailed copy was for participant review of interview accuracy and each participant had the freedom to add or change the document if necessary so that it accurately reflected the subject's recollection of the responses. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality for the school districts and the participants.

The phenomenological study deepened the researcher's understanding of the co-teachers' perceptions in their collaborative co-teaching relationship. For voices to be expressed, the participants reflected on their feelings. Therefore, the researcher used open-ended guided questions and reduced bias (Creswell, 2007). Giorgi articulated on the participant voices, "To go to the everyday world where people are living through various phenomena in actual situations" (Giorgi, 1985, p. 8). To capture the voices, as per the recommendations of (Van Manen, 1990), participants' conversations were audio recorded when interviewing participants. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to describe the authentic voices from the co-teacher perspective. For reliability and validity purposes, the transcriptions from the audio recordings were confirmed by the researcher and the participants. The data collection continued until data saturation or when the interview data perspectives were similar and obtained the similar results (Seidman, 2006).

Pilot Study

The pilot test was given to a special education co-teacher and the interview lasted for about forty minutes. The results of the pilot test indicated that the research interview questions number 3 and number 6 should be adjusted for a more accurate representation of the co-teachers' perceptions of the co-teaching relationship. The adjustments were minor changes to the questions.

Question #3: Can co-teacher collaboration impact student learning?

Why or why not?

Newer Question #3: Can co-teacher collaboration impact co-teaching team results?

Why or why not?

Question #6: Is something missing in your co-teaching relationship?

Why or why not?

Newer Question #6: Is something missing in your co-teaching relationship?

Why and what is it? or why not?

Data Analysis

Eight interviews were audio-digitally recorded and transcribed and investigated co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the perceptions of their collaborative co-teaching relationship. The interview questions investigated the relationship collaboration factors of (1) respect, (2) communication, (3) parity, and (4) trust in the co-teaching relationship and the perceptions of the collaborative co-teaching relationship. A computer program was used to store the recorded interviews and the researcher used manual data management for coding purposes to assist in the analysis of the data to classify emerging themes.

In 1985, Giorgi created the Giorgi phenomenology model. This model was used for the analysis of data. Bracketing was used for “Separating impressions, feelings, and early interpretations from descriptions during qualitative data collection” (Hatch, 2002, p. 86). The research findings from the data collection were validated by triangulation. Triangulation consisted of comparing the related co-teaching literature, co-teaching empirical studies, and the three supporting theories to the research data to establish and check for validity.

Inter-Rater Reliability

For sampling of the results, inter-rater reliability consisted of three individuals coding one participant's interview transcript for reliability concerns. The goal for the three individuals was to agree on the same coding results when coding the same interview transcript of co-teacher 1. First, the researcher discussed the coding process to the individuals. Secondly, the three individuals reviewed the transcript by reading the researcher's questions and the participant's responses. Thirdly, after the individuals' discussion, the individuals coded the transcript by identifying common words. Fourthly, the individuals agreed on a majority of words and later all of the similar words centering on the four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust and contributing to the research study's identified four themes. Lastly, the individuals agreed on the same and final coding results and the researcher then used the inter-rater reliability transcript as a model for reliability concerns.

Summary

This chapter has provided the open-ended interview questions that investigated the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust that impact the co-teaching relationship in the inclusive classroom setting and the co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship. Successful co-teaching relationships require further research in co-teaching relationship collaboration to maintain meaningful longevity and to help improve student learning by creating effective co-teacher relationship collaborative teams. Co-teaching relationships need support in the preplanning stage and

throughout the collaborative relationship process and can be strengthened and are dependent upon collaboration interdependence. In addition, stakeholders in higher education can apply the information from the research study to design coursework and objectives for practical co-teaching settings for pre-service teachers focusing on the collaborative relationship. The following chapter provides the analysis and results of this qualitative research project.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter provides the data analysis and results of the phenomenological research study of the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust in co-teaching relationship collaboration and the co-teachers' perceptions of their relationship that impacts student learning in the inclusive setting. A pilot test was conducted and resulted in only minor changes in the open-ended interview questions and helped to create the final instrument for the research study. The co-teacher interview results created a framework that examined the eight co-teachers' co-teaching experiences from the co-teachers' perspective of relationship collaboration.

Description of the Participants

The study participants consisted of eight co-teachers from two school districts. Two general education co-teachers and two special education co-teachers from each school district described their collaboration in their co-teaching arrangement. The co-teachers discussed the relationship collaboration factors assisting and delaying their co-teaching success.

Table 1

Participant Data.

	<u>Years of Teaching</u>	<u>Years of Co-Teaching</u>	<u>Teaching Level</u>
School District SDA			
Susan	11	2	Regular Education
Carol	2	2	Special Education
*Mike	15	3	Regular Education
*Betty	13	3	Special Education

*Mike and Betty were a co-teaching team.

School District SDB

Amanda	18	3	Regular Education
Lilly	25	10	Special Education
*Kristen	12	6	Regular Education
*Taylor	30	6	Special Education

*Kristen and Taylor were a co-teaching team.

Susan

Susan is an English teacher and has 11 years of teaching experience and two years of co-teaching experience. Co-teaching is new for her and she discussed that, “I try to not take any schoolwork home to check.” Susan also indicated that in the next year, she plans to work on her Master’s degree in special education. She is interested in special education because of her work as a co-teacher and her discussions with her co-partner. She is in her mid-thirties and talked quickly.

Carol

Carol is a special education teacher and has two years of teaching experience and two years of co-teaching experience in school district SDA. The field of education is very new for Carol and she is learning how to manage a classroom and the ongoing IEPs. Her teaching mentor typically helps her on a daily basis and is concerned about her students’ learning needs. For her first year teaching at her home school district’s high school, she began as a co-teacher. Carol is in her mid-twenties and has earned her Master’s degree in special education. Carol appears to be a take

charge individual and indicated that her students should understand her classroom rules.

Mike

Mike is an English teacher and has 15 years of teaching experience and three years of co-teaching experience in school district SDA. With over a decade of teaching experience, he has established his own style of teaching and seldom interprets ideas from the required professional development trainings. He is a middle-aged athletic individual that reminded the researcher of his scheduled five-mile run after the research study interview. Mike was a co-partner with Betty.

Betty

Betty is a special education teacher and has 13 years of teaching experience and three years of co-teaching experience. She has over a decade of teaching special education and was concerned about how special education paperwork has become overwhelming for her. She discussed that, "I constantly work on students' paperwork every evening after school." Betty has had the same co-teaching partner for the last three years. She is in her late thirties and is currently working on her Master's degree in school administration and indicated that she is looking forward to becoming a principal outside of her school district.

Amanda

Amanda is an English teacher and has 18 years of teaching experience and three years of co-teaching experience. She indicated that she is tired of her position at the high school and is willing to make some kind of career change; she is in her early

forties. She indicated that her students' parents are finding fault in her rigid class project due dates and expressed that she is not willing to compromise.

Lilly

Lilly is a special education teacher and has 25 years of teaching experience and 10 years of co-teaching experience. She expressed that she is planning to retire in the next five years, even though she enjoys special education. Professional development trainings have provided her with stronger insight into instructional strategies she can implement into her classroom. She celebrated her fiftieth birthday a month ago and stated that she is the youngest in her family of six siblings.

Kristen

Kristen is an English teacher and has 12 years of teaching experience and six years of co-teaching experience. She appeared to be a serious, energetic, and devoted educator. She is in her late thirties and indicated that she is an avid swimmer and is training for a future competition. Kristen lives a few miles from the high school and at times works late after school to check students' classwork. Kristen and Taylor work together as a co-teaching team.

Taylor

Taylor is a special education teacher and has 30 years of teaching experience and six years of co-teaching experience. She has a principal certification and has decided to remain in special education. Taylor indicated that she wants to retire soon and later become a building substitute teacher in her school district. She indicated that she will turn 60 years of age in the next school year. During the interview, she adjusted her red glasses and constantly sipped her large coffee seeming to be tired.

Research Question One

Findings in research question one consisted of general and special education co-teachers describing their collaboration in terms of the four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust. The factors allowed the researcher to further understand the co-teachers' collaboration and the perceptions of their relationship. The first research question constructed the findings for research question one. Research question one: How do the co-teachers describe their collaboration in terms of the relationship factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust? Research question one consisted of two interview questions: Tell me about your co-teaching relationship with your co-teaching partner. (Interview Question # 1) If you can continue your co-teaching arrangement with the same co-teaching partner, would you? Why or why not? (Interview Question # 2)

Co-teachers may perceive their co-teaching relationship differently than their co-partner's perception of their relationship. Therefore, co-teachers' descriptions of their collaboration can vary. Burkitt (2013) stated, "Perception is the ability to see, hear, or become aware of the world through the senses we possess, such as sight, hearing, or touch" (p. 268). Co-teacher perception is internalized differently and is unique, since not all perceptions are similar. When a co-teacher perceives an idea or an object, the co-teacher may or may not have the similar perception as his co-partner. "We do not primarily encounter the world intellectually, but sensibly - through perception by the bodily senses, including feeling and emotion" (Burkitt, 2013, p. 270). An emotion allows a perception to be personalized and as a result, a co-teacher's perception will more likely be different from his co-partner's perception.

Therefore, a co-teacher may not be aware of his actions regarding the four factors and team efforts may not be mutual.

If the co-partner does not address the needs of co-teaching relationship, then the co-teaching team may not be able to improve their relationship collaboration and have a similar vision. Co-teachers should have similar goals for their relationship collaboration so that team needs are met to strengthen the collaborative effort of meeting student learning goals, especially when co-partners' perceptions are similar. The co-teachers' perceptions of their collaboration was described in terms of the relationship collaboration factors and the factors created a framework for understanding of how the co-teachers described their collaboration.

The eight co-teachers discussed how co-teacher collaboration can impact the results of their co-teaching team and how collaboration is important in their co-teaching arrangement. The relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust examined the experience from the co-teachers' perspective of relationship collaboration. The co-teachers' perceptions of their collaboration are illustrated in the following findings:

Communication fostered Mike's team to discover new ideas to help problem solve for greater interdependence.

I think that any relationship is partnership, communication. We get along very well, she is very open-minded and I am open-minded to a point and I think that we are able to talk things out, maybe able to resolve issues with the class. But, ultimately, helps as many students as possible.

Mike also talked about trying newer ideas, open communication, and the relationship for collaboration needs.

I think we have a comfortable relationship. So, I think that many times that we can try many new things or talking more about it from her end, she is so busy.

Betty discussed how communication and parity influenced her co-partner collaboration.

Very professional. We get along just great. We talk often about the lesson and along with the student teacher. He has a student teacher. Collaborating, helping the student teacher with the lesson. So we'll, especially on Friday, we'll say do this part and I'll do that part.

Susan described parity and collaborating with her co-partner.

Formerly, I co-taught with a lady who has a special education degree. She and I would collaborate together and our job was our class that we were doing this with. It was a remedial reading program. So, it was really nice.

Lilly discussed her collaboration and the factors of communication and trust described her strong interpersonal relationship.

I have co-taught before in our school. I was brought in as an inclusion teacher and you know, we were able to bounce ideas off each other and kids and we were able to read each other very good. I count on her for the meat of the material and that way, I could gather parts for the special ed.

Kristen talked about respect impacting her collaboration with her co-partner.

My relationship, currently with my partner is a good one. We work well together and compliment each other.

The eight co-teachers were interviewed and the following areas that were discussed focused on their collaboration in terms of the four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust. The factors allowed the researcher to further understand the co-teachers' collaboration by their perceptions of their relationship.

Interdependence in co-teaching is essential. Co-teachers rely on one another for support and learning for their co-teaching arrangement. However, lack of time may inhibit the collaborative effort. Co-teachers can understand co-partner differences that help to establish the co-teacher's role in the relationship and understanding the co-partner's view is important for meeting instructional goals and newer goals. Verbal and non-verbal communication needs can be met when co-teachers make the collaborative effort for team success. On-going communication allows special and general education co-teachers to share new ideas and differences. Effective communication supports the team effort and creates the sharing of differences for ideas and strategies. The co-teachers' statements illustrated unique perceptions for an understanding of how each individual co-teacher perceived collaboration.

Research Question Two

Findings in research question two consisted of how the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors are impacting the co-teaching relationship. Research question

two was investigated through the use of two interview questions: Can co-teacher collaboration impact co-teaching team results? Why or why not? (Interview Question # 3) Is collaboration important in your co-teaching arrangement? (Interview Question # 4)

The four relationship collaboration factors can impact co-teaching relationship success. The relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust helped to investigate co-teaching relationship. The factors can positively and negatively impact the co-teachers in the co-teaching arrangement. The first relationship collaboration is respect and this factor is acknowledging and accepting a co-partner's characteristics. The second relationship collaboration is communication and this factor consists of verbal and non-verbal thinking processes for shared ideas and common goals. The third relationship collaboration is parity and this factor is present when co-partners have shared roles and responsibilities and are equal partners in the collaborative effort. The fourth relationship collaboration is trust and this factor is present when a co-partner believes that his co-partner is able to commit to successful team goals.

The following are the co-teachers' interview results of the relationship collaboration factors impacting the co-teaching relationship described in two sections. The first section describes how the relationship collaboration factors positively impacted the co-teaching relationship. The second section describes how the relationship collaboration factors negatively impacted the co-teaching relationship. Mike mentioned the availability of the co-partner.

A real good relationship. She is only a couple of doors down.

Amanda discussed the relationship collaboration factor of parity. She expressed the commitment toward team goals and learning to collaborate successfully. Trust was also indicated in her description of a supportive learning environment.

From the other side, (Laughed) I am trying. I will say that I am an only child and have a hard time sharing, but I had been in pretty much good shape with learning how to share once again. But, when this whole co-teaching model was going up and we were still, kind of feeling it, but we had to share. I would say another thing a co-teacher and I unfortunately rely more on her more than I even should and I shouldn't do that. (Laughed) But, I really shouldn't, but she knows that at times the little secrets that are very helpful to me to unlock some of the kids.

A special ed. teacher is going to tell another one and then she's got that information and a nice stroke line in the classroom.

Taylor talked about support in the classroom and the personalities influencing the relationship.

Obviously, this year is probably one of the most successful and it is really nice that you have someone else in the room and personalities. Two of you remembering what you said to the kids or forget about something and that's what's nice, too.

Betty shared that she was not respected in the inclusive classroom setting.

Years ago, I was with another teacher and she kind of treated me as an outsider in her classroom. I think she was a very senior teacher.

Amanda talked about communication and parity issues and how it impacted the co-teaching relationship. Trust became an issue for her co-teaching relationship and the time to plan for instructional needs became another issue.

I truly think so, because I had another co-teacher that I co-taught with and that it was not as much cohesive. It was a more linear. She said stuff to me and I would do my part, more separate. I don't know. But, I see the other teachers, the special education teachers coming in. But I have seen a lot of a lack of trust or just getting the ability to plan.

Kristen discussed the need for preparation in her co-teaching experience and that respect and communication are needed in the co-teaching arrangement.

Not enough collaboration on the same page. You have to be prepared and then on the other hand, the people have to respect and to communicate well. Umm... in this co-teaching relationship, I am not aware of anything. Of other co-teaching relationships, there was a degree of communication that was affected and that affected the relationship.

Taylor described communication and parity concerns with her previous co-partners influencing the relationship.

You know I had math teachers in here before. They have always been great. Sometimes, they jump in and talk, because they don't necessary instruct, then they are not necessary there.

Taylor also talked about parity concerns in her co-teaching arrangement.

I feel that they were more like, afraid to jump in, because they think that they were guests and they did not feel like they were like your equals to go around

to help the kids, to go around for someone to talk and officially that that was the kind of role.

And in the beginning, we were not accustomed to it and you are on your own little island and having another adult and what if they are judging me?

The co-teachers' relationship collaboration factors that impacted the co-teaching relationship consisted of respect, communication, parity, and trust. These factors were expressed in the findings indicated: Respect needs to be earned for the co-partner relationship. Parity in the relationship depends upon co-teachers' respect. Communication was addressed as the essential relationship collaboration factor and allowed for greater team ideas. Trust was not addressed as a need by many co-teachers. Roles and responsibilities can be enhanced for greater cooperation and teamwork. The general and special education teachers rely on one another for implementing a learning environment to meet student learning goals and personalities can impact co-teacher compatibility. Finally, the previous findings illustrate how co-teacher relationship collaboration factors impact the co-teaching relationship.

Research Question Three

When co-teaching relationship collaboration factors are successful for the co-teaching team, they typically contribute toward a successful relationship. The third research question assisted in the findings: Which relationship collaboration factors are strengthening the co-teaching relationship? This question illustrates relationship collaboration factors that strengthen the co-teaching relationship and were expressed throughout the co-teachers' interviews. Interdependence in the co-teaching relationship allows co-teachers to be equally dependent on one another. When the

four relationship collaboration factors are present, then the collaborative effort will more likely be maximized for instructional success. The co-teaching relationship relies on a successful interaction of the four relationship collaboration factors. The dominant relationship collaboration factors that strengthen the co-teachers' relationship are indicated in the findings section.

Findings in research question three identified the relationship collaboration factors that are strengthening the co-teaching relationship. Research question three is comprised of two interview questions: Can your co-teaching arrangement become stronger? Why or why not? (Interview Question # 5) Discuss your experiences with co-teaching success? Why was it successful? (Interview Question # 7) The following are the co-teachers' interviews of relationship collaboration factors that became essential in strengthening the co-teaching relationship and are explained in the findings:

Carol spoke about students valuing her co-teaching team and her experience with collaboration.

I teach the low level science in the building and it is my second year with him.

Students tend to be better with two of us in the room. It works for us and I'll

be doing this for the next several years.

Betty chatted about communication and parity in her co-teaching arrangement.

We'll say do this part and I'll do that part. We chime in on each other. So,

our relationship is very good.

Susan talked about communication and trust assisting her co-partner's skills.

I think so. I think that it most definitely provides an extra set of eyes or another brain. To the whole planning and collaboration. There might be something that I do, work or not work, or something. She might have an idea, where I may not have thought of before. I think that it would definitely improve the quality of the results.

Kristen conversed on how time can improve her co-teaching relationship.

I think that there is a possibility that it could and the variance that there is a new curriculum and the material. I feel that there might be a more of a comfort level and for thirty years that it could be stronger.

This is our first year together and there is a new curriculum. Additional years of experience together could generate a stronger experience.

Taylor discussed that time will allow her relationship to be stronger.

Over time that is something that you can always build. Even when you are teaching the same thing year and every year, I think that we get better. So, I think that we are together, that we get better. So, I think that we are working together already in an awesome way.

Taylor also indicated that her team has similar beliefs and values to accomplish the similar goal.

You can always perfect things with time and build on what is already good. It is more successful because we have the same beliefs and values about our students and we work as a team to make sure they get what they need.

The eight co-teachers were asked if their co-teaching arrangement can become stronger and to discuss their experiences with co-teacher success. The co-teachers'

relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust strengthen the co-teaching relationship. Overall, the areas of communication and time allowed for the co-teachers to strengthen the co-teaching relationship for co-teaching success. The communication factor was expressed the most and the trust factor was expressed the least. These factors were expressed in the research findings and indicated that co-teachers can learn from one another and enhance their compatibility. Communication was a major relationship collaboration factor contributing to the strengthening of the co-teachers' relationship. Time to plan to collaborate and personality conflicts are a challenge for a majority of the co-teachers and time to improve the relationship was also described as important.

Time can improve co-teachers' relationships and effective communication is also essential. Time is needed to strengthen compatibility and to resolve differences to achieve team goals. Communication allows co-teachers to have an understanding of the team effort and contributes toward a learning environment for the co-teachers to help strengthen the relationship. Co-teachers can focus on their conflicting personalities and use these traits as strengths to contribute to the co-teaching relationship. Further understanding is needed of co-partners' needs, compatibility, and personality that impact the co-teaching relationship. Teamwork, roles, and responsibilities are essential and create a greater understanding for team success. When co-partner communication needs are addressed, then the understanding on how to minimize differences and maximize interdependence can be possible.

Research Question Four

Co-teachers should maximize the collaborative effort to help impact their instructional goals. Relationship collaboration helps to unite the four factors that strengthen the co-teaching relationship for the effort to be successful. When one of the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust hinder the co-teaching relationship, then the factors contribute to unsuccessful relationship collaboration. Time, conflicting co-teacher personalities, and communication became issues contributing to hindering the co-teaching relationship for the co-teachers. When one or more than one factor is not present, the collaborative relationship may be compromised. As a result, the co-teachers' collaborative effort can impact instructional results. Findings in research question four consisted of identifying the relationship collaboration factors that hinder the co-teaching relationship. The fourth research question helped to derive the findings. Research question four: What relationship collaboration factors are hindering the co-teaching relationship?

The following four interview questions were utilized to answer research question four. Is something missing in your co-teaching relationship? Why and what is it? or why not? (Interview Question # 6) When co-teaching arrangements fail, what do you believe is missing? (Interview Question # 8) Are there areas that you believe that need to improve in your co-teaching arrangement? (Interview Question # 9) Discuss your experiences with co-teaching failure? Why was it a failure? (Interview Question # 10) The following are the co-teachers' relationship collaboration factors that are hindering the co-teaching relationship and the results of the interviews are illustrated in the following findings:

Mike talked about the lack of time to plan and prepare.

We always go back to time and with a real good plan and maybe and I am expecting her to do something and she you know... There are always issues with two people when they are not on the same page. We don't get to plan together and we don't have many set up times or anything like that. It is just like us on the fly and five minutes here and five minutes there. Maybe no homeroom or duty for her or just have ten or fifteen minutes to sit down and really plan, rather than her coming in and for a morning meeting and throw ideas at her.

Susan discussed about limited time to collaborate.

Probably, the only thing in my own experience would be the planning time. There really is not enough time to sit down to sit with that person and really have the moments to plan ahead and work together.

Amanda conversed about time issues and the demands of meeting student learning needs.

Absolutely, do you know what is missing? Time. Time to be able to work together. Time to be able to discuss the kids, but that is the hardest. It is nothing in between the two of us and it is just our lunches that they put together and even that is hard and we might be working on prep and I have three preps and myself it is still difficult. And it is new, and it is new. And we think in the next year, it is going to be a little easier and all those things together and not going to drop the ball, but I would also like to comment that they have given us, I think that our class size 32, 33, or 25, something like that

with a good percentage, anywhere 30 to 50 to 55 % of the kids being special ed. That's ah... to say the least.

Lilly talked about limited time for her co-teaching team.

Just time, you need time to form the plans together and maybe we can... this worked, this didn't work this... so and so didn't catch it. Just, time.

Lilly disclosed issues regarding communication and respect.

I think that it is a lack of respect. I have seen it. I have felt it. One of my special ed. teacher's friend, hum... it got to a point where the teacher and she had to be disciplined by the principal and it was that bad. She felt that she was, you know, told that she was so poorly in front of the whole students. Excluded from department activities, excluded from planning activities, not given opportunity to have ownership of classroom and not feeling valued, feeling like my efforts are not worthwhile.

Kristen reflected on her past experiences with two different personalities in the classroom.

In the past, ah... maybe (Laughed) maybe not to take things personally. Ah... if things don't go well. With two different personalities, to take that, to not let that, all to succeed beyond well than that.

Kristen also stated about co-teacher personality conflicts and respect.

Not enough collaboration or personality differences between the teachers. Personality differences. Teachers' unwillingness to view other co-teachers with respect in front of the students.

Parity and trust are centered in Kristen's discussion and personality issues are also discussed.

Ok. Previously, um... I don't believe it went well as it should. Not the word, failure. I believe that there wasn't as much success as we are having now and I honestly, part of it maybe that I was in a math class and out of my content area and I wasn't as comfortable and familiar and the teacher that I worked with um... was kind of ah... wasn't as familiar and we weren't able to share, as much as Mrs. X was with them and let's let them take responsibility for, it was kind of personality issues as well.

Taylor talked about cooperation, teamwork, values, and trust. Parity and communication also became the center of her discussion.

You know that we have the same values and beliefs and ours is like what we expect from our kids and ask from ourselves. We don't disagree on the approach to kids and what to expect from them and I find that to be helpful. I feel that they were more like, afraid to jump in, because they think that they were guests. And they did not feel like they were like your equals to go around to help the kids, to go around for someone to talk and officially that that was the kind of role.

The researcher interviewed eight co-teachers and asked them to identify if something is missing in their co-teaching relationship and what contributes to a failing co-teaching arrangement. The co-teachers' relationship collaboration factors that hindered the co-teaching relationship consisted of respect, communication, parity, and trust. Communication is essential for co-partners' strong understanding of

roles and responsibilities and the special education co-teacher helps to support the general education co-teacher in meeting team goals. The factor that was stated the least was trust. These factors were illustrated in the findings indicated that effective communication skills and parity contribute to newer ideas and were expressed as essential in the co-teaching relationship. The co-teachers were also asked to identify areas that need to improve in their relationship and to discuss their lack of success and why it contributed to a failure in the co-teaching arrangement. The co-teachers expressed the following: effective communication skills are needed and co-partners should have open communication to share newer ideas.

Additional issues regarding the co-teaching arrangement were central in theme four. Time and conflicting co-teacher personalities were expressed as additional issues hindering the co-teaching relationship. Limited time to plan and prepare for instructional purposes was an issue for the inclusive setting. Time was expressed as needed to improve some relationships and some co-teachers indicated that they made time for planning and preparation. Conflicting personalities became a concern in the co-teaching relationship and the general education teacher can understand the special education students' learning styles and needs. Co-teacher personalities interfered in the co-teaching relationship and also may become an obstacle when providing instructional support for inclusive students. When co-teachers are respectful in their relationship, they may overcome conflicting personalities with their co-partner. Finally, the co-teachers discussed their concerns of the three major areas: communication, time, and conflicting co-teacher personalities impacting co-teaching relationships.

Major Themes

The four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, trust, and parity created a stronger understanding of the co-teaching teams. Co-teaching teams consisted of co-teachers' collaboration and the relationship that was addressed as assisting or hindering the co-teachers' collaborative effort. The following relationship collaboration factors consisting of communication, parity, respect, and trust were the themes that were discussed in the co-teachers' interviews. Time and conflicting personalities were the two additional themes that emerged from the interviews.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Communication

Communication was addressed as the most important relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. Communication needs were a major concern and also in other relationships. The sharing of ideas and effective communication were important in the relationship, especially for planning and preparation purposes. The literature review of the relationship collaboration factor of communication is indicated in the following findings. First, McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, and Lupart's 2013 study indicated that at the elementary level effective communication was important. However in this research study, the communication was found to be the most important factor at the secondary level. Therefore, the findings of this research study support McGhie-Richmond's et al. research findings.

Secondly, Sileo's (2011) study findings showed that communication and respect are important for co-teacher relationships and this study's findings support

Sileo's research findings. Third, Jeon's (2010) research results found that communication was important for co-teachers. The researcher indicated that successful communication styles and social interaction skills were essential in co-teacher interdependence. Therefore, this study's findings were supported by Jeon's (2010) communication research results. Overall, this study's findings showed that communication was a central factor for a successful co-teaching arrangement and are reflected in the study's findings.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Parity

Parity emerged as the second important relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. Parity issues were a major concern and contributed to an unfair co-teacher workload. Parity exists when co-teachers have equal roles and contribute the workload equally for shared responsibilities. The literature review of the research studies for parity indicated that co-teachers expressed a concern for parity and the findings support this research study's parity findings. First, this concern was addressed in Fenty and McDuffie-Landrum's 2011 research study findings of creating equal co-teacher roles and responsibilities. Secondly, Trent's (1998) research study investigated that parity impacts co-teacher interaction and goals. Thirdly, Scheeler, Congdon, and Stansbery's research study in 2010 noted that co-teacher parity created a learning environment in the inclusive setting. Fourthly, Embury and Kroeger's (2012) study indicated that parity also influenced co-teachers and students. Therefore, the research findings for parity, as indicated in literature review, support this study's findings as a major co-teacher issue of creating equal roles and responsibilities to help meet team goals.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Respect

Respect was addressed as the third important relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. Respect was an issue in the co-teaching experience for some co-teachers and is important for parity concerns. In addition, conflicting co-teacher personalities may become limited when co-teachers can be respectful. When co-teachers respect one another, they honor their similarities and their differences. Co-teachers in this study have expressed that respect is a factor that can predict longevity success. The literature review of the relationship collaboration of respect was indicated in the following studies. The key empirical studies for the factor of respect have illustrated that respect is an essential relationship collaboration factor for the co-teaching arrangement. First, the 2005 research study of Magiera, Smith, Zigmond and Gebaner specified the significance of the special education teacher as an equal with the co-partner and respect contributed to successful collaboration. Secondly, Gürür and Uzuner's (2010) study indicated that respect was needed for successful co-teacher communication. Thirdly, Magiera, Lawrence-Brown, Bloomquist, Foster, Figueroa, Glatz, Heppeler, and Rodriguez (2006) showed that respect and understanding co-partner differences contributed to collaboration success. Fourthly, Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, and Gebaner (2005) conducted research that respect needed to be honored for responsibilities of the co-teachers and existed toward collaboration success. Fifth, Sileo's (2011) research study indicated that co-teacher respect contributed toward a stronger relationship. Therefore, the previous research study findings for respect were supported by the findings of this research

study in that respect contributed toward collaboration by strengthening co-partner differences and responsibilities.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Trust

In the current study trust was addressed least frequently as a relationship collaboration factor in the co-teaching relationship. There is a need for co-teachers to trust one another for collaboration success and trust allows co-teachers to depend on one another. Trust contributes to the learning process of the co-teaching relationship and for the co-partners to take newer challenges. It is likely that trust was expressed as the least important relationship collaboration factor because trust needs to be earned when the co-teaching relationship is new for the co-partners. Most of the co-teachers have indicated that their co-partner is a veteran co-partner. Therefore, the factor of trust has already been established and trust was not expressed as an issue for most of all of the co-teachers. The co-teachers had two to three years with the same co-partner and had already established trust.

The literature review of trust was indicated in the following four empirical studies. First, Bishop and Stevenson (2000) expressed that trust contributed toward collaboration for co-teacher success. Secondly, co-teacher learning relied on trust was found in Nichols and Sheffield's (2014) study. Thirdly, Christophersen, Elstad, and Turmo's (2011) research study indicated that co-partner trust fostered collaboration for co-teaching teams. Fourthly, Van Maele and Van Houtte (2011) investigated that student learning environment relied on trust for the co-teaching team. Therefore, the previous research study findings for trust support the findings for this research study. Trust was expressed as a minor concern for this study and

supports the previous research study findings. Trust allows a co-teaching team to share and explore ideas to implement for newer goals to be achieved. Co-partners earn trust over time and it is more likely to be found with more experienced co-teaching teams.

In summary, based on the analysis of the interview comments, the relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust provided a deeper understanding of the co-teachers' perception of their collaborative relationship and the findings and should be addressed in professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers in relationship collaboration. Communication enhances interdependence and is the foundational component for successful collaboration. Parity contributes toward shared ideas and responsibilities for co-teachers. Respect allows co-teachers to honor differences and foster change, especially when personalities create conflict. Trust allows co-teachers to learn by taking reasonable risks. The four relationship collaboration factors were expressed by the co-teachers and contribute toward co-teacher collaboration effectiveness.

Additional Themes

The following were emerging data that was constructed into two additional themes. The following two themes of time and conflicting co-teacher personalities were created from the co-teachers' perception of their co-teaching relationship.

Time

The majority of the co-teachers addressed a concern for limited time for planning and preparation for instructional needs. This theme was not considered prior to the research study, however time needs to be discussed as a concern from the

co-teachers' interviews. A restricted school schedule limits time to allow for co-teacher planning and preparation. Co-teachers can utilize time for instructional needs and especially for understanding their co-partner. Co-teaching teams are typically formed by school administrators who often have limited understanding of relationship collaboration and the issues that may be present for co-teachers. When co-teachers have time during the pre-planning phase, they may resolve their differences or issues. When co-teachers have a schedule that allows for co-teacher planning and preparation, instructional and compatibility needs may be reached.

Time was addressed as a co-teaching challenge that impacted co-teaching collaboration from Casale-Giannola's (2012) study. In 2004, the research study of Keefe and Moore suggested the similar results of this research study. The majority of the co-teachers in their current study indicated the issue with limited time to address and minimize co-teacher compatibility concerns. Therefore, time was an essential component for co-teaching teams to have for planning and preparation and especially for compatibility concerns.

Conflicting Co-Teacher Personalities

Several of the co-teachers expressed a concern for conflicting co-teacher personalities in their co-teaching relationship. Personalities can be described as the behaviors and emotions that describe an individual and make the individual unique from others. Not every co-teacher will have a personality that will benefit his co-partner. The research of Lester and Evans (2008) found that for co-teaching team challenges to be met, co-teachers need to problem solve through their differences. Co-partners can resolve differences when they are able to prepare for relationship

collaboration. Some personalities can benefit many co-teaching relationships and a co-partner's personality can be beneficial when paired according to relationship collaboration needs. Since compatibility is important in the co-teaching arrangement, a co-teacher who can be compatible with a co-partner's personality traits can benefit the co-teaching relationship.

The majority of the co-teachers stated that personalities and styles of the co-teachers have negatively impacted co-teacher collaboration and this was also addressed by Pappamihel's (2012) study. Pappamihel's (2012) study showed that personalities of co-teachers can effect compatibility and can hinder with collaboration of the co-teachers. However, when teams are able to resolve differences by understanding how to utilize differences in their personalities, then teams may benefit by using their unique attributes to meet similar team goals.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The co-teacher arrangement can benefit students' instructional needs when collaborative efforts and co-teacher relationship collaboration are fostered for team success. Collaboration fosters team strengths in the working arrangement to share common goals. Tremblay (2013) discussed the special education teacher's role, "The role of the special educator in the inclusive classroom has gradually evolved towards a greater collaboration with the general education teacher" (p. 251). The special education and general education co-teachers can collaborate effectively for ideas, skills, and strategies to be implemented in the inclusive classroom setting. The co-teaching approach utilizes co-teachers in the same classroom. Magiera and Zigmond's (2005) research indicated that, "Both co-teaching partners must be active instructors in order to provide students with disabilities more opportunities for instructional experiences leading to student progress" (p. 84).

To help meet the needs of the students, the team can maximize their collaboration by improving their team's relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust for a shared effort. Co-teachers are successful when their co-partner's collaboration needs are interdependent and relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust are maximized for success. This research study allowed both general education teachers and special education teachers to express their perspectives of their co-teaching relationship.

Review of Methodology

The purpose of the study was to investigate co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship. The Social interdependence theory, Social cognitive theory, and the Social development theory provided the theoretical framework that allowed the researcher to explain the collaborative relationship of two teachers functioning as a co-teaching team in an inclusive classroom setting. The theoretical framework supported the investigation of the co-teachers' four relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust and the co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship. Therefore, the theoretical framework provided the researcher with a lens to help interpret the co-teaching relationship collaboration factors and collaboration of the co-teachers.

The eight co-teachers' perspectives were interpreted by Johnson and Johnson's (2005) Social interdependence theory. The Social interdependence theory explained the co-teaching relationship by providing a collaboration perspective. The Social cognitive theory created by Bandura (1986) formed a learning perspective for interpreting the co-teacher actions. Vygotsky's (1962) Social development theory established a social interaction perspective for the co-teaching relationship. The four research questions that guided the ten open-ended interview questions and captured the co-teachers' perceptions were:

1. How do the co-teachers describe their collaboration in terms of the relationship factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust?
2. How are the co-teacher relationship collaboration factors impacting the relationship?

3. Which relationship collaboration factors are strengthening the co-teaching relationship?
4. What relationship collaboration factors are hindering the co-teaching relationship?

The ten interview questions helped the researcher to investigate the unique co-teaching relationship and illustrated how the four relationship collaboration factors contributed to the co-teaching effort. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes and important findings.

Summary of the Results

This qualitative research study investigated the four factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust in co-teaching relationship collaboration and the co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative relationship in the inclusive setting. The phenomenological research study consisted of four research questions that guided the ten open-ended interview questions and illustrated how these relationship collaboration factors contribute to the co-teaching effort. The researcher investigated only co-teaching relationship factors and did not ask about other practical matters such as class size and schedule. The target population consisted of secondary general and special education co-teachers in two public school districts located in the northeastern region of the United States.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Communication

Co-teachers are able to communicate effectively when non-verbal and verbal messages are clear and effective. Verbal and non-verbal communication is important for co-teachers to enhance their interdependence and adapt to a co-partner's

communication style. Effective communication skills and respect help co-teaching teams become successful and co-teacher needs are appreciated, when verbal and non-verbal messages are expressed. The co-teachers' interdependence allows for equally dependent communication needs to be met. Co-teacher compatibility and communication needs influence the collaborative effort and when communication needs are effectively addressed, then co-teacher collaboration can remain an interdependent effort for the co-teaching team.

The co-teachers expressed the four relationship collaboration factors that created a framework for understanding the perceptions of their co-teaching relationship and collaboration. Communication was expressed as the most important relationship collaboration factor contributing to the co-teaching relationship. Communication needs are maximized for team success and teamwork is stronger when co-partners are interdependent (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Effective communication allows co-teachers to understand their co-partner and express their needs and meet team goals. In addition, communication enhances co-teacher interdependence. Successful communication is part of a co-teacher relationship that creates interdependence (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Sileo, 2011). Understanding the co-partner's communication style is important for a collaborative relationship and shapes interdependence. Team success is created when individuals are interdependent and have shared and similar goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Co-teachers' common goals help to meet interdependence for the co-teaching team.

A collaborative relationship is when communication styles are utilized for effective verbal and non-verbal efforts (McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman,

Cizman, & Lupart, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Jones & Harris, 2012; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014). Verbal and non-verbal communication allows co-partners to exchange ideas and emotions to one another. Co-teaching collaboration is centered on team goals and especially the psychological health of the co-teaching team. On-going verbal and non-verbal communication needs can be met for collaboration to become successful in the co-teaching relationship (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Typically when co-teaching teams utilize their strengths and minimize co-teacher weaknesses, then effective communication skills are effective and impact the strength of the team.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Parity

When the special education co-teacher assists in the classroom, more special education co-teachers have parity issues than general education co-teachers. Therefore, there is a need to understand co-teacher roles, responsibilities, and the effort in meeting team goals for maximizing parity. Co-teachers can learn, support, and have similar beliefs and values for team success for parity concerns. Special education co-teachers can be paired for their content area for instructional success and students depend on the co-teaching team. Understanding inclusive students' learning styles and needs are equally important for the general education teacher. When parity is a shared effort, co-teachers are able to interdependently foster fairness and compatibility and share newer ideas and goals.

Co-teacher relationship collaboration factors can impact collaboration and co-teacher interdependence for common goals. Parity was expressed as the second important relationship collaboration factor contributing to the co-teaching

relationship. Co-teacher parity helps to promote the sharing of ideas and effort for goals to be reached (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Trent, 1998; Scheeler, Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010; Beebe & Corrigan, 2013). Parity allows the co-teachers to remain as equal co-partners in the relationship and contributes to minimizing issues for effective co-teaching interdependence. When parity is present in the relationship, the co-teachers are more likely able to overcome co-teaching challenges. Co-teaching is not only the collaborative effort, but also the relationship with the co-partner to overcome challenges. Johnson and Johnson (2009) stated that the individual effort for the team is to achieve common goals. Co-teachers depend on one another for learning in the collaborative relationship and for meeting students' learning needs. The co-teachers' interaction helps to create newer concepts and strategies to implement in the inclusive classroom.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Respect

The relationship collaboration factor of respect is essential for a successful co-teaching relationship. Team goals can be honored so that the collaborative effort is a shared process and co-teacher respect. Respect helps to build communication styles, parity, and trust to foster collaboration. When co-partner differences are respected, the environment can be successful for a collaborative effort of taking team challenges. Understanding and accepting both the positive and negative characteristics of an individual requires respect. Respect fosters an effective collaborative co-teaching effort for co-partner understanding.

Collaboration can be most effective when co-teachers respect one another and understand their co-partners' differences. Respect was present in the co-teaching

relationships that consisted of communication and parity. Respect was expressed as the third important relationship collaboration factor in the relationship of the co-teachers. Respect, communication, and understanding the co-partner help to establish longevity in the co-teaching relationship (Ashton, 2014; Magiera, Lawrence-Brown, Bloomquist, Foster, Figueroa, Glatz, Heppeler, & Rodriguez, 2006). Respect allows co-teachers to understand their differences.

Relationship Collaboration Factor of Trust

Trust fosters a co-teaching learning environment and is strengthened by the factors of respect, communication, and parity. Time and dependability to learn from the co-partner is needed for trust to be established for the co-teaching team. Since co-teacher trust helps to influence collaboration, trust can impact a learning environment in the inclusive setting. Learning to collaborate successfully and display teamwork in a co-teaching setting establishes co-teacher trust for newer inclusive environments (Bennett & Fisch, 2013; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014). Trust can allow for co-teachers to overcome daily challenges in the inclusive setting when this factor is honored by the co-teaching team.

Another relationship collaboration factor is trust and this factor helps to develop interdependence. Trust was expressed as the least important relationship collaboration factor contributing to the co-teaching relationship. Trust fosters a supportive learning environment for co-teachers (Christophersen, Elstad, & Turmo, 2011; Pasha, 2012; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Trust allows the co-partners to believe in one another for newer ideas for the co-teaching team. Trust needs to be earned and once established, the co-partners' interdependence can take challenges.

The Social interdependence theory provided a perspective of Mike's collaboration to explain his co-teaching relationship. He discussed his collaboration and the factor of communication contributing toward newer shared ideas. He indicated that his co-partner is busy, however he is willing to understand her ideas for a shared effort to overcome challenges. Usually, the co-teaching team will have an individual that has more co-teaching or content area experience than the co-partner. The co-teaching relationship will consist of a More Knowledgeable Other or the MKO. This individual has the higher skill ability or provides additional support for the team member to further the understanding of a given task (Vygotsky, 1978). When the co-partner understands differences of the co-partner as the MKO, respect and trust are typically in the co-teaching arrangement. Therefore, learning from the co-partner by understanding and sharing co-teaching team roles help to meet student learning objectives as designed by the co-teaching team. A social interaction perspective from the Social development theory explained Taylor's co-teaching relationship. An understanding and sharing of team roles existed in her relationship. The co-partners learn from one another and have shared responsibilities and similar values and beliefs. In this particular case, Taylor is considered as the MKO. She is able to modify and adapt students' unique learning needs and her co-partner relies on her knowledge. This shared effort allows students to reach the team's learning goals and Taylor is valued in the inclusive setting to accomplish team goals.

Overcoming Personality Differences

This study also illustrated that some co-teaching teams expressed challenges and believed that overcoming personality differences is essential to help strengthen

the collaborative effort. Challenges that impact co-teaching are in the areas of compatibility, communication, and collaboration (Bennett & Fisch, 2013; Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Jones & Harris, 2012). Additional challenges were limited time to plan and prepare for the inclusive setting and conflicting personalities. Individuals' learning is developed when they interact with one another (Vygotsky, 1978). When co-teachers learn from one another they can overcome their differences in personalities. Co-teaching teams can learn how to target challenges to help improve relationship collaboration. According to Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013), "In the co-teaching relationship, the individual educator's reflection on teaching strengths and weaknesses becomes an open, shared process rather than remaining private and introspective" (p.110). Co-teachers can improve their relationship collaboration when their interdependence is effortless. Establishing time and understanding personality differences can contribute toward greater interdependence. When co-teacher relationship collaboration factors are present in the co-teaching arrangement, then co-teachers can minimize differences and maximize the collaborative effort. Overcoming co-teacher issues is central for co-teacher relationship collaboration success.

The Social cognitive theory's Triadic Reciprocal Determinism Model explained Lilly's relationship with her past experiences with her co-partners. The three areas interacted with one another and defined Lilly's perception of her negative collaboration. Lilly's negative perception was influenced by the interactions of her co-partner's cognitions or personality traits in the social setting of the co-teaching environment. Therefore, her negative perspective of respect issues was established

by her co-teaching experiences and was created from her co-partners' lack of respect (environmental) and also of not feeling valued and respected (personal factors). Even though personality differences existed in Lilly's previous co-teaching relationships, her past experiences with the lack of respect and not feeling valued do not interfere with her current co-teaching relationship. Therefore, she was able to overcome differences that interfered in past co-teaching arrangements.

Co-Teacher Interdependence

Relationship collaboration can benefit co-teacher teamwork and interdependence is necessary for a successful collaborative effort. Interdependence is when co-teachers depend on one another to meet team goals and minimize issues. Relationships help shape collaboration and successful collaboration relies on relationship collaboration factors (Ashton, 2014). Relationship collaboration factors can strengthen co-teacher interdependence for collaborative results to minimize differences and maximize collaborative results. When co-teacher relationship collaboration impacts team interdependence, then collaboration can excel and influence the inclusive classroom setting.

Co-teacher relationship collaboration is essential for co-teaching teams for effective interdependence. Not only are co-teachers to collaborate effectively, they can utilize their relationship collaboration factors for a greater team effort to help meet students' learning needs. In 2009, Johnson and Johnson indicated that common goals are important for a team to achieve. Co-teachers depend on one another for learning in the collaborative relationship and for student learning. When time is provided to the co-teaching team to plan and prepare for shared goals, collaboration

can become successful for the co-partners. Therefore, the co-teachers' interdependence consists of their relationship collaboration for shared goals.

The co-teaching arrangement and the co-teachers' relationship is a collaborative process that is central in fostering success for inclusive students. Cooperation and teamwork were expressed in this study as important for the co-teaching relationship. A team's collaboration is influenced by the psychological health of the team (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). For successful team collaboration, effective co-partner communication skills are essential.

Cooperating and working in the team by utilizing effective communication skills allows for the sharing of newer ideas, strategies, and the effort contributes toward successful collaboration. Ideally, the co-teacher collaboration fosters best practices for meeting students' instructional needs. The Social interdependence theory explained Mike's relationship collaboration factor of communication. Since communication was identified as essential for the co-teachers, he mentioned the importance for communication in the relationship. Communication allowed his team to discover new ideas to help problem solve for greater interdependence. Interdependence contributes newer ideas and strategies for a stronger team effort to help meet students' instructional goals in the inclusive setting.

Respect is important for co-partner parity concerns and when co-teachers are respected, they are more likely to have limited parity concerns. As a result, the co-teaching team can maximize their collaborative effort for stronger interdependence. Co-teacher parity helps to promote the sharing of ideas and effort for goals to be reached (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Trent, 1998;

Scheeler, Congdon, & Stansbery, 2010; Beebe & Corrigan, 2013). When co-teaching teams have parity, then trust issues are typically limited. Trust fosters a supportive learning environment for co-teachers (Christophersen, Elstad, & Turmo, 2011; Pasha, 2012; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). However, some co-teaching teams are not paired effectively for co-teacher relationship and their conflicting personalities may create obstacles. Effective communication skills can overcome the challenges of conflicting co-teacher personalities for a collaborative process that fosters the co-teachers' relationship.

A greater understanding of the co-partner's views strengthens co-teacher interdependence and can create a shared effort for instructional results. Shared goals and the interdependence of relationship collaboration for newer ideas and strategies are essential for collaboration. Tremblay (2013) stated, "Special education services are now taking place within the general classroom (pull-in) in a co-teaching approach with the general educator" (p. 251). When the general education co-teacher and the special education co-teacher learn from one another about their co-partner's personality, then the collaborative effort can foster successful collaboration skills. Cooperation, team values, and compatible co-teacher personalities were addressed as important to the co-teaching relationship and contribute to meeting team goals. When the co-partner's views can later become the team's shared goals, then the co-teachers are more likely compatible.

Effective communication is essential for a successful co-teaching arrangement and the sharing of ideas were addressed by several co-teachers. As the general and special education co-teachers contribute their communication styles and roles that are

beneficial toward the team, then relationship collaboration can be a success for the co-teaching team. The Social development theory provided a social interaction perspective for Betty's successful co-teaching relationship. Betty's socialization with her co-partner helps to improve her skills. Betty communicated about limited time as an issue for planning and preparation for instructional purposes. However, she is able to communicate effectively and her teamwork improved to meet student learning needs based on a successful relationship. The understanding of co-teaching roles and responsibilities creates greater team interdependence. When co-teachers are compatible, they interdependently share team roles to meet student learning needs and the co-partners contribute their strengths toward meeting the team's goals.

A collaborative relationship is when communication styles are utilized for effective verbal and non-verbal efforts (McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, & Lupart, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Jones & Harris, 2012; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014). As a result, the relationship can impact co-teacher interdependence. When co-teachers use effective communication styles to enhance their relationship, their interdependence can benefit their team. Co-teachers depend on their co-partner's roles for meeting student needs and team goals can be shared among the co-partners. Even though differences may exist, especially for personality conflicts, co-teachers can learn to minimize their differences. When co-teachers establish time to learn from one another and utilize their co-partner's strengths, the relationship can have a foundation for collaboration success. The co-teachers' shared effort with relationship collaboration contributes toward instructional results in the inclusive classroom setting. As the co-teachers learn from the co-partner's view, the

sharing of roles and responsibilities can become effortless for the team. Even though personality conflicts may exist, when the relationship collaboration factors are present, the team can maximize their interdependence.

Collaboration Issues for Co-Teachers

An unsuccessful co-teaching relationship may foster collaboration issues. The empirical studies, discussed earlier, illustrated relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust and explained the significance of the factors fostering collaboration in the co-teaching arrangement. The co-teachers expressed three major areas that can contribute toward collaboration issues in co-teaching relationships: limited time for planning and preparation, communication, and conflicting personalities in the co-teaching team.

First, limited time for planning and preparation was expressed by the majority of the co-teachers. The lack of time for planning and preparation also creates obstacles for team member collaboration. Identified behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors influence an individual's efforts (Bandura, 1986). Co-teachers have one another for understanding about their co-partner and resolving differences to help build a strong relationship. It is essential for co-teachers to understand one another prior to the co-planning stage. During this time, they can further understand their co-partner's personality and resolve any differences they may have that will interfere in the co-teaching relationship.

Co-teachers also need time for planning and preparation for instructional purposes. When co-teaching teams can not depend on school administration for support and feedback, co-teachers rely on one another (Chanmugam & Gerlach,

2013). Unfortunately, time becomes an issue in this process and the lack of understanding of the significance of the relationship of the team. School administration will more likely not have the further understanding and how to support the co-teachers' relationship. In addition, co-teachers do not have the time scheduled to plan and prepare for the co-teaching arrangement and the support of any issues that may exist. Co-teacher issues exist in the beginning of the co-teaching arrangement and need to be minimized. When time is scheduled for planning and preparation and understanding the co-partner, then the relationship can have a foundation for longevity.

Secondly, the relationship collaboration factor of communication was indicated as the most important factor in the co-teachers' relationship and is essential for co-teacher interdependence. Challenges that impact co-teaching are in the areas of compatibility, communication, and collaboration (Bennett & Fisch, 2013; Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Jones & Harris, 2012). The co-teachers indicated that effective communication is central in their co-teaching relationship. When co-teachers understand and appreciate their co-partner's differences, they are more likely to have communication styles that will strengthen their collaborative environment (Casale-Giannola, 2012; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014; Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebaner, 2005). A successful co-teaching arrangement, for instructional results, is dependent on co-teacher collaboration and relationship collaboration. Co-teachers have successful relationships because co-teacher communication is meaningful, since verbal and non-verbal communication styles are mutual (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Sileo, 2011). Communication allows for co-

partners to exchange thoughts and emotions for a successful effort contributing toward co-teaching interdependence.

Thirdly, conflicting co-teacher personalities interfered with the team's interdependence and were expressed as important in the co-teachers' relationship. Typically, co-teachers have their team arranged by school administration, co-teachers can further understand how their co-partner's personality can benefit the team. When co-teachers volunteer and select a co-partner, they may find a personality that will be successful for their team (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). School administration may need to understand co-teacher personalities and styles when selecting co-teachers (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008).

Compatibility is important in the co-teaching arrangement for co-teachers, since they depend on their roles for meeting student needs. For successful compatibility results, co-teachers have parity to help contribute to the understanding of their co-partner's personality for stronger interdependence. When co-teachers are not compatible, there are issues in modifying roles, styles, and responsibilities (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013; Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Tremblay, 2013). Even though personality conflicts may exist, the co-teaching team can utilize personality differences to help strengthen the relationship. Roles, styles, and responsibilities can be supported by a particular co-partner's personality for compatibility success. The relationship collaboration factors contribute to influencing co-teacher interdependence for meeting team goals, when differences are identified and contribute in areas that need additional support.

For collaboration issues to be minimized, co-teachers need to work with one another to overcome the challenges and also improve the relationship for stronger interdependence. Co-teacher collaboration issues were limited time for planning and preparation, communication, and conflicting co-teacher personalities. Overcoming co-teaching issues is essential for the inclusive setting and co-teachers can learn how to work with differences to maximize the co-teaching effort. Professional development and coursework can address these issues to prepare co-teachers for these anticipated obstacles that will more likely interfere with co-teacher interdependence.

Professional development and coursework can address collaboration issues for pre-service and in-service teachers. Co-teachers can be trained on how to minimize issues in co-teaching relationships by addressing and working with co-teacher differences. This research study has identified the areas of concern in the co-teachers' relationship: limited time for planning and preparation, communication needs, and personalities in the co-teaching team. When the three areas are addressed, then co-teachers can hopefully maximize their co-teacher interdependence for stronger collaboration for the inclusive classroom setting.

Implications of the Results: Addressing Issues for Co-Teacher Success

Co-teachers should be aware of any issues that may negatively influence the four relationship collaboration factors. The previous areas of co-teacher relationship collaboration, communication effort, parity for common goals, respect and trust for understanding differences, overcoming differences, co-teacher interdependence, interdependence for shared goals, interdependence for newer ideas and strategies, understanding co-partner's views for interdependence, and collaboration issues

helped to create the understanding that the issues need to be addressed for co-teacher success. The three identified areas of limited time for planning and preparation, communication, and conflicting co-teacher personalities can become a foundational component for professional development programs and higher education settings for educators. When a co-teacher is aware of a relationship collaboration issue, he can address the issue. Co-teacher relationship collaboration conflict can create a beginning for improving the relationship, especially when co-teachers understand how to handle conflict to minimize issues. Co-teacher conflict can become a learning opportunity for co-partners, when professional development programs and higher education settings meet co-teachers' educational needs by identifying and addressing these areas.

The co-teachers in this research study expressed the following areas that contributed to their collaboration issues. First, limited time for planning and preparation was expressed throughout the co-teacher interviews. Secondly, communication is important for newer ideas and strategies and was expressed as the most important relationship collaboration factor. Thirdly, conflicting co-teacher personalities contributed to co-teaching team issues. If the indicated issues are not addressed, then co-teacher collaboration may be negatively impacted. Future professional development opportunities can center on relationship collaboration for pre-service and in-service teachers to learn how to minimize issues.

Discussion

Professional development programs and higher education settings can create a foundation for minimizing co-teacher issues and a design for co-teachers to learn co-

teacher collaboration and relationships. Co-teaching professional development programs provide best practices when centered on co-teaching skills and knowledge for the co-teaching relationship (Bryant Davis, Dieker, Pearl, & Kirkpatrick, 2012; Noonan, McCormick, & Heck, 2003; Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta, & Menendez, 2003; Buell, Hallam, & Gamel-McCormick, 1999). Professional development can provide co-teachers with a greater understanding of how to learn from one another and especially with furthering the understanding of co-partner compatibility.

In addition, programs can be designed to help co-teachers overcome issues regarding limited time for co-teacher planning and preparation, communication needs, and conflicting co-teacher personalities. Relationship collaboration factors provided a foundational component to support co-teacher collaboration and co-partner relationships when teachers are provided with the skills to minimize co-teaching issues.

Training is necessary for pre-service teachers to understand collaboration in the co-teaching relationship. Pre-service training in collaboration for the inclusive setting and the co-teaching relationship is needed for future co-teacher success (Gürür & Uzuner, 2010; Gardiner & Robinson, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Higher education settings can develop programs centering on collaboration, relationship of co-teachers, and provide the conditions for practical inclusive co-teaching settings. This research study can address the need for teacher collaboration by providing further insight into the perceptions of co-teachers' relationships of the collaborative effort. The study will also prepare educators in professional development programs and in higher education for success in co-teacher relationship collaboration. The co-

teachers expressed major concerns in the areas: additional time to plan and prepare, communication needs for stronger relationship collaboration, and conflicting personalities in the co-teaching team.

Recommendations

Future research is needed to further investigate the understanding of relationship collaboration factors in the co-teaching relationship. Relationship collaboration factors can allow for the opportunity of co-teacher best practices when collaborating in the inclusive classroom setting. First, since limited time to plan and prepare was an issue, co-teachers should learn how to maximize time to plan and prepare especially when limited time is available. Secondly, communication and parity were addressed as essential relationship collaboration factors in the co-teaching arrangement. Therefore, additional research is needed to investigate co-teacher communication styles, both verbal and non-verbal communication. As co-partners understand and share differences with one another and practice effective communication, they can improve their relationship.

Thirdly, conflicting co-teacher personalities was an additional area that should also be addressed by researchers. In addition, future research is needed to investigate the perceptions of co-teachers in their co-teaching relationship and additional qualitative research studies can provide further insight into the complex relationships of co-teachers. Higher education and professional development programs can address the learning needs as addressed in this research study.

The findings of this study have shown that communication was the most important relationship collaboration factor. Communication allows co-partners to use

verbal and non-verbal messages for co-teaching team goals to be reached. Limited time for planning and preparation contributed toward co-teacher collaboration issues. The co-teachers have also indicated a problem with conflicting co-teacher personalities in the relationship. The relationship collaboration factors of communication and parity were indicated as main concerns and respect and trust were expressed as concerns. The co-teachers indicated that trust was the least important relationship collaboration factor. Therefore, when these needs are investigated further in future research, then higher education and professional development programs can address these co-teacher needs. The results will provide knowledge for stakeholders in higher education, school administrators, co-teachers, and pre-service co-teachers to understand and help design successful co-teaching teams.

Conflicting co-teacher personalities was a fifth relationship collaboration factor that emerged from this research study. The co-teachers expressed conflict of co-teacher personalities and influenced compatibility and especially impacted team collaboration. When co-teaching teams were able to set aside their differences and utilize effective communication styles, then co-personalities can positively influence collaboration. The following research studies illustrate the importance of addressing conflict in the beginning of the relationship. Keefe and Moore (2004) specified that co-teacher issues need to be addressed in the beginning of the co-teaching relationship. Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2008) indicated that personalities of co-teachers were not considered in the beginning of the arrangement and influenced the co-teachers' relationship. Time allows for teams to strengthen their compatibility and personality conflict can be minimized when co-partners address this need in the

beginning of the relationship. As a team shares similar goals, then co-partners can minimize their differences for stronger compatibility.

Relationship collaboration, co-teaching collaboration coursework, and practical experiences are needed to create a foundation for pre-service teachers. Co-teachers are typically assigned by a school administrator and may have challenges when collaborating, therefore the pre-service and practicing co-teachers can become aware of the significance of maintaining the four relationship collaboration factors. When relationship collaboration is improved, then co-teacher interdependence can foster co-teacher collaboration success for newer team goals.

When co-teachers understand how to select their co-partner and make their co-teaching arrangement become successful, they understand the significance of the relationship collaboration factors. Chanmugam and Gerlach (2013) stated, “It is important at the outset to address these issues: power sharing, communication, roles, appropriate matching of co-teachers, methods for exchanging feedback, responsibility sharing, and scheduling” (p. 115). Co-teachers rely on one another for creating best practices in the inclusive classrooms and to minimize their issues. This arrangement can become successful, when co-teachers learn how to strengthen their relationship for co-teacher collaboration to become successful for meeting the student learning demands in the inclusive classroom setting. As a result, the co-teaching issues can be minimized and more attention can be provided to the collaborative effort of meeting student learning needs.

When relationship collaboration factors are investigated further, then co-teacher collaboration and co-partner relationships can become stronger for co-teacher

success in the inclusive classroom settings. Co-teaching arrangements continue to multiply due to the demands of meeting general and especially special education students' learning needs in the least restrictive environment due to legislative mandates. When co-teacher learning needs are addressed in pre-service and in-service professional development, stakeholders can contribute to a successful effort to meet the demands of being prepared co-teachers.

Conclusion

The findings of the research study have concluded that the co-teachers have expressed concerns in the relationship collaboration factors of respect, communication, parity, and trust. The factors created a framework to examine the experience from the co-teachers' perspective of relationship collaboration. This research study's findings have shown that communication and parity were expressed as main concerns and respect and trust issues were expressed as concerns. There were areas that were not addressed prior to the research: limited time for planning and preparation and co-teacher personality conflicts. These two areas became additional concerns for the co-teachers. Since time was an issue for the co-teachers, co-teachers can establish time for planning and preparation for instructional purposes and strengthen team compatibility.

Professional development programs and higher education coursework can address how teachers can establish time to address the co-teaching team's needs. Another concern was conflicting co-teacher personalities within the team and occurred when co-teaching teams were not paired effectively. When co-teachers are

able to use effective communication skills and utilize how to use the personality issues as an advantage, the compatibility of the co-partners can improve.

The co-teachers stated that communication was indicated as the most important factor and verbal and non-verbal communication needs contribute to communication success. Effective communication fosters a stronger understanding to assist in sharing ideas and team goals for collaboration to be successful. Also, trust was indicated as the least important factor in the co-teaching relationship. Team expectations are met by common goals centering on cooperative learning. The areas of personalities, roles, and responsibilities are successful and meaningful for a team (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Personality issues were indicated as a need in some of the co-teaching relationships and contribute to co-teacher compatibility.

Interdependence and understanding differences in the co-partner are important for effective teamwork. A supportive relationship with the special education teacher is essential, especially when roles and responsibilities are defined. However, co-teacher differences due to personality issues have interfered in team collaboration and the main concerns were expressed by communication and parity factors. Limited time for co-teachers to plan and prepare for instructional needs was expressed throughout the co-teacher interviews. As co-teachers learn from one another and are interdependent, they can support and strengthen their relationship. The four relationship collaboration factors need to be equally active for a co-teaching team to foster collaboration in the inclusive classroom setting to help meet students' learning styles and needs.

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Appendix A
Letter to the Superintendent
School District (SDA)

Dr. XXXXXX
Superintendent
School District (SDA)
XXXXXX
XXXXXX

Dear Dr. XXXXXX:

I am writing to request your permission to invite co-teachers in the School District (SDA) to participate in my Indiana University of Pennsylvania dissertation research study. I am interested in interviewing four co-teachers at XXXX School or at other school district buildings. The title of the study is *An Investigation Into Co-Teacher Relationship Collaboration Factors: Co-Teachers' Perceptions*. The purpose of this phenomenological research study is to investigate co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the perceptions of their collaborative co-teaching relationship.

The research study will further understanding of co-teaching relationship collaboration by providing knowledge for future research, professional development for school administrators and co-teachers, and coursework and training for pre-service teachers. The participants will decide the location of the forty-five minute long individual interview and ten qualitative open-ended interview questions will be audio digitally recorded. The interviews will not occur during school hours. Co-teachers will sign a voluntary consent form and research study's purpose, confidentiality, and any other participant questions will be explained. Confidentiality of the participants and the school district will be respected. The school district and teachers will have pseudonyms. I appreciate your consideration and possible contribution to the research study.

Sincerely,

David Petrick
Doctoral Candidate
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

David Petrick
XXXX
XXXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXXX

Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Professor
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
305 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects – Phone: 724-357-7730.

Appendix B
Letter to the Superintendent
School District (SDB)

Dr. XXXXXX
Superintendent
School District (SDB)
XXXXXX
XXXXXX

Dear Dr. XXXXXX:

I am writing to request your permission to invite co-teachers in the School District (SDB) to participate in my Indiana University of Pennsylvania dissertation research study. I am interested in interviewing four co-teachers at XXXX School or at other school district buildings. The title of the study is *An Investigation Into Co-Teacher Relationship Collaboration Factors: Co-Teachers' Perceptions*. The purpose of this phenomenological research study is to investigate co-teacher relationship collaboration factors and the perceptions of their collaborative co-teaching relationship.

The research study will further understanding of co-teaching relationship collaboration by providing knowledge for future research, professional development for school administrators and co-teachers, and coursework and training for pre-service teachers. The participants will decide the location of the forty-five minute long individual interview and ten qualitative open-ended interview questions will be audio digitally recorded. The interviews will not occur during school hours. Co-teachers will sign a voluntary consent form and research study's purpose, confidentiality, and any other participant questions will be explained. Confidentiality of the participants and the school district will be respected. The school district and teachers will have pseudonyms. I appreciate your consideration and possible contribution to the research study.

Sincerely,

David Petrick
Doctoral Candidate
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

David Petrick
XXXX
XXXX
XXX-XXX-XXX
XXXX

Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Professor
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
305 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects – Phone: 724-357-7730.

Appendix C
Invitation to Volunteer to Participate

I am a doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and I am conducting a research study as part of my dissertation research. I want to invite you to participate in a research study on co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborate co-teaching relationship. I will be interviewing eight middle level teachers and hope that you will volunteer to participate in my study. The study is titled "An Investigation Into Co-Teacher Relationship Collaboration Factors: Co-Teachers' Perceptions. I am very interested in your feedback and asking you to respond to open-ended interview questions. I will study only relationship factors and not ask about other practical matters, such as preparation time, administration support, or class size, etc...

As a participant, you are asked to spend approximately forty-five minutes to a one-on-one interview. The interview consists of ten questions that will be provided to you in advance that will be hand-delivered or e-mailed. Interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon setting and audio recorded. For your effort, you will earn a \$10 restaurant gift card. In order for you to speak honestly, your identity will remain confidential and participants will be known as a category/number (such as co-teacher 1, co-teacher 2, etc...). You may withdraw at any time by contacting the principal researcher by phone XXX-XXX-XXXX and any data will be destroyed.

In order to volunteer to participate, you will respond by emailing me that you are interested in the study. With a few weeks, I will discuss your co-teaching information with you and answer any questions, or order for me to select the eight co-teachers. My goal is that you will participate in discussing your co-teaching relationship.

Thank you

Principal Investigator:
Mr. David Petrick, Doctoral Candidate
XXXX
XXXX
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXX
XXXX

Co-Investigator:
Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Professor
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
305 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects – Phone: 724-357-7730.

Appendix D
Voluntary Consent Form

Your participation in this research study, “*An Investigation Into Co-Teacher Relationship Collaboration Factors: Co-Teachers’ Perceptions*” is greatly appreciated. The purpose of the study is to investigate co-teachers’ perceptions of their collaborative relationship. You were selected based on your experience as a co-teacher, either as a regular education teacher or as a special education teacher. Information gained from the study will further understanding of co-teaching relationship collaboration by providing insight into relationship knowledge for future research, and professional development for school administrators and co-teachers and pre-service teacher training. The interview is expected to take approximately forty-five minutes.

This purpose of the voluntary consent form is for you to decide to continue with the research study interview process. If you decide to become part of this research study, confidentiality will be maintained. Any identifying characteristics to you, the location, or the school district will be removed. Study results may be published in research journals and presented at educational conferences.

At any time, you may withdraw from the research study, without any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled by contacting the principal researcher by phone XXX-XXX-XXXX and the co-investigator may also be contacted. All information will be destroyed if you decide to discontinue with the research study. A pseudonym will be assigned to you to protect your identity. You will be answering ten semi-structured open-ended interview questions. Your verbal responses will be audio recorded with your permission and later transcribed by the researcher. You will be emailed your verbal responses when the responses have been transcribed and will be asked if the responses reflect your expectations. At any time if you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator (Mr. David Petrick).

Principal Investigator:
Mr. David Petrick, Doctoral Candidate
XXXX
XXXX
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXX
XXXX

Co-Investigator:
Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Professor
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
305 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects - Phone: 724-357-7730.

Appendix E
Signature Attachment of Voluntary Consent Form

I have read and understand the information on the Voluntary Consent Form and I have agreed to participate in the research study, "*An Investigation Into Co-Teacher Relationship Collaboration Factors: Co-Teachers' Perceptions*". I understand that my responses are held to confidentiality standards and that I have the right to withdraw at any time during the study. I agree to audio recording of this interview and I have been provided with a copy of the Voluntary Consent Form.

Name
(please print) _____

Email address
(required for interview transcript member check) _____

Phone number
(best days/times to contact you) _____

Signature _____ **Date** _____

=====

FOR RESEARCHER

I certify that I have explained to the individual (*above*) the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with this research study. I have also answered all questions and have witnessed the above signature.

Interviewer's Signature _____ **Date** _____