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Peer Perceptions of Students without Learning Disabilities toward Students with disabilities and a Self Perceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities

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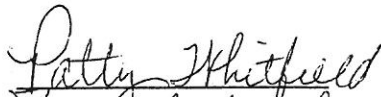
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Running head: PEER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES

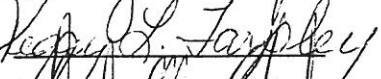
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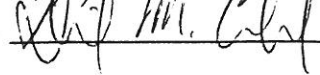
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the nondisabled students toward students with learning disabilities and the self perceptions of learning disabled students. A survey research design was used for this study. Subjects were students in grades 6-8 with and without disabilities from a rural area in Virginia. The participants who were chosen were general and special education students at the middle school level.

The results from this study showed on most issues the two groups agreed, on such topics as friendship, social gathering, and favoritism. Findings indicated students without disabilities are accepting students with disabilities within the school and other social gatherings.

Acknowledgments

First, I give thanks to God for giving me the perseverance to reach this point in my career. Without Jesus in my life I could not have made it to this point and I could not have accomplished any goals. Jesus is my life, my strength, and my all!

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To my family, thank you for your love and support. Mom, thanks for your prayers and a shoulder to cry on. Mom, thanks for believing in me. Thanks for the encouragement!

To a dear friend, Sylvia, thank you for your words of encouragement and listening to me when I needed someone to talk to. You always had encouraging words and a shoulder to cry on. Thanks for being a wonderful friend.

Longwood College will always be dear and special to me.

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Peer Perceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities and a Self-Perceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities

Attitudes are personal values, judgments, assumptions, opinions, ideology, perceptions, and orientations (Malouf & Schchiller, 1995). Attitudes are difficult to define and study, however, they influence practice. People without disabilities may base their attitudes toward persons with disabilities upon the amount and quality of information they have about people with disabilities. People alter their attitudes as a function of information obtained from the media, education, and contact with people with disabilities in the community (Eichinger, Rizzo, & Sirotnik, 1992). People's attitudes and beliefs shape into systems and self-perpetuate. Attitudes are hard, but not impossible, to change. Attitudes form perception and thought; they act as filters for interpreting reality; and they may influence behavior. (Malouf & Schchiller, 1995).

When school system administrators look at the possibilities of mainstreaming or including students with disabilities, the desired results for those students are more positive attitudes, self-esteem, social competence, and social relationships (Helmsteller, 1994). Strategies to establish meaningful social interactions between children with and without disabilities have been reported in special education literature. Stainback and Stainback (1992) stated that there are benefits of integrative and inclusive classrooms for students with disabilities. Inclusive classrooms give the children with disabilities the opportunity to develop social support networks with students from the non-disabled community (Hall, 1994). According to Odom, McConnell, and McEvoy (1992), preschoolers with disabilities engage in fewer social interactions and exhibit less mature social behaviors than their peers. Therefore, assistance with promoting social interactions between children with disabilities and their classmates is recommended (Hanline, 1993). There is strong observational support proving the effectiveness of peer tutoring, peer

modeling, and cooperative learning for the promotion of both socio-personal and academic growth (Hall, 1992).

Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993) detailed the "transforming" experiences of regular education teachers in an inclusion program. The placement of students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms tended to produce more positive perceptions from the teachers about these students. The attitude shift was made easy by such factors as shared framework and goals, physical presence of the student, validation of teacher's contribution, and teamwork (Malouf & Schchiller, 1995). Wilson and Silverman (1991) stated that teachers' attitudes about the nature of disabilities and professional responsibilities correlated with teacher practices in serving special needs students. Smylie (1988) found that personal teaching efficacy and certainty of practice were related to teachers' use of new practices. Soodak and Podell (1993) found self-efficacy to be related to teachers' acceptance of regular classroom placements for students with learning and behavioral problems.

Some regular educators have not reacted kindly to the increased mainstreaming of students with disabilities (Bacon & Schulz, 1991, Larrivee & Cook, 1979). These studies showed teachers were very anxious about the quality of the academic work that children with disabilities in mainstream classes could produce. Teachers expressed other concerns, such as concerns about their own levels of preparation for inclusion and the amount of individualized time that these students would or might require (Bender et al 1995). But, more recent studies have shown a more positive perception of mainstreaming services by regular education teachers (Whinney, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1991).

Many special education students are moving within the orbit of the public schools to become the responsibility of general education classroom teachers. As the responsibility for these students increases, regular education teachers face new instructional and management challenges, together with the need of assuming new roles

and developing new competencies. Teachers must become aware of the laws and process of mainstreaming, the available resources and support systems, and the inherent tendencies of the exceptional students. Regular education teachers must possess positive attitudes toward exceptional children and the notion of mainstreaming. Attitudes are critical in mainstreaming students with disabilities. The way in which teachers respond to the needs of special students may be valuable in determining the success of mainstreaming (Chow & Winzer, 1992).

Although minor modifications such as shortened assignments and preferential seating are made more frequently, studies have shown that regular education teachers make very little substantive instructional modifications in their classes (Bender et al. 1995). The regular teachers do not use the types of modified instructional strategies that would facilitate successful learning by pupils with special needs in the general education classrooms. Gibson and Dembo (1984) demonstrated by their research that regular education teachers' attitudes toward his or her personal teaching efficacy may affect the selection of instructional strategies in regular education classes. Further studies on the correlation of teachers' attitudes on mainstreaming and efficacy revealed a positive correlation with the number of courses taken on teaching children with disabilities. Teachers with more course work had more positive attitudes (Bender, et al. 1995).

Parental Perceptions

More and more special needs children are being placed in regular classrooms. Effective methods to insure pupils' social, instructional, and physical integration are readily available and easily implemented (Galant & Hanline, 1993). Research findings revealed that such mainstreamed settings encourage the growth and development of students with disabilities and are in agreement with recent public policy interpretations of the least restrictive environment (Galant & Hanline, 1993).

The question used to be, will children with disabilities be included, but now it is how to include them in a way that will promote positive outcomes for all involved. Positive parental attitudes toward mainstreaming have been shown to be crucial for successful inclusion. Parents are apprehensive about including children with disabilities in regular classrooms and in neighborhood education programs (Galant & Hanline, 1993).

Inclusion holds the promise of integrating not only the children, but also their families into full community participation. Families of children with disabilities often feel isolated from activities of early childhood community, such as parenting classes and play groups. Parent involvement is the first step toward achieving full participation. Successful inclusion depends upon the families' feeling welcome and comfortable in the mainstreamed early childhood settings. This participation and support are critical to the success of mainstreamed programs (Galant & Hanline, 1993).

Most parents of children with special needs want their children to form friendships with nondisabled peers and receive the benefits of real world experiences offered by inclusion (Galant & Hanline, 1995). Parents want their children to be around non-disabled children. Parents have two major concerns about integration. One concern is the possibility of negative interactions with peers. The other concern is the quality of the program. Sometimes, parental desires to protect their children from verbal abuse, isolation, and ridicule over-shadow the opportunity for friendship development and other benefits. In reality, parents of students in integrated programs report fewer problems with peers and agree that inclusion promotes positive social contact for all children (Galant & Hanline, 1993). Another concern parents have reported is the possible decrease in the quality and quantity of specialized services their children will receive in an integrated program. Parents desire the same quality and number of therapy services available in special education programs, including access to adaptive equipment and materials and intervention by specially trained professionals. The most significant factor parents stated

for ensuring the success of an integrated program are the training and support that teachers receive (Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989 & McDonnell, 1987).

Parents of children without disabilities fear that inclusion may have negative effects on their children's development or skill acquisition and express concern that their children will not get adequate attention from teachers (Peck, Carlson, & Helmsteller, 1992). Researchers (Odom & Covey, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1981) have expressed that integration programs do not unfavorably affect developing children. Other researchers (Green & Stoneman, 1989, Peck, Hayden, Wandschneider, Peterson & Richarz, 1989; Reichart et al., 1989) have reported that parents with non-disabled students believe their children receive sufficient attention in integrated programs. They feel that positive exposure to children with disabilities will promote acceptance and tolerance (Galant & Hanline, 1993).

A study by Miller, Strain, Boyd, Hunsicker, McKinley, & Wu (1992) found that parents of children with and without disabilities children whose children had been mainstreamed in early childhood programs expressed more desirable attitudes toward integration opportunities in school-age programs than other parents. These finding indicated that exposure to mainstreaming increased parental acceptance of students with disabilities and could have future implications for the support of inclusion (in Galant & Hanline, 1993).

Student Perceptions

Tennant (2000) investigated how middle school students described their understanding of membership and sense of belonging in inclusive classrooms and their perceptions of classmates with disabilities. The study consisted of a total of 51 middle school students from two school districts in rural and urban areas. Four of the fifty-one participants had severe disabilities. More females than males were included in the study. All participants in this study had a minimum of one year of experience in inclusive classrooms that had at least one student with severe disabilities. Individual interviews

were conducted to provide a better understanding of how peers perceived membership for their classmates with severe disabilities. Videotaped observations were conducted to serve as a means of verification of the multiple perspectives shared by the participants. This exploratory study addressed two major questions: first, what does classroom membership or sense of belonging mean to middle school students without disabilities? Second, how are students with severe disabilities perceived as members of their inclusive educational classes by their classmates?

One perspective of the social context in education is students' sense of belonging or membership in the school or classroom. The degree to which a student feels accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school are significant aspects of belonging. The results of the study revealed that students felt that being part of the class meant that they had a place in the classroom, and were respected and wanted. Participants reported being familiar with their classmates and having friends who understood them, made them feel as if they belonged to a group and or to a class as a whole. A majority of the middle school students considered their classmates with disabilities as their friends (Tennant, 2000).

Researchers investigating social acceptability have continually found that special needs children placed in integrated classrooms are less accepted than their non-disabled peers (Larrivee & Horne, 1991). Special education students suffer inferior social status. Students describe their social interactions with peers with disabilities as both reciprocal/friendship type (Voeltz & Brennan, 1984) and hierarchical/helper -type relationships (Murray-Seegert, 1989; in Kishi & Meyer, 1994). Feelings of loneliness, social anxiety, and peer avoidance have been proposed as important indicators of children's perceptions of distress or dissatisfaction within the peer group (e.g., Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Hymel & Frankie, 1995; in Crick & Ladd, 1993).

A variety of models for describing and structuring interactions between disabled and nondisabled students have been evident. Program such as Special Friends supported social play relationships between same age peers with and without severe disabilities (Voeltz, 1980, 1982). This study was later extended in research carried out in a large urban school system and in various community recreation programs. The data from these studies supported the effectiveness of a primarily socially focused program to promote positive attitudes toward students with disabilities as well as positive peer relationships among the children as supported by parent, teacher, administrator, and children's self reports (Kishi & Meyer, 1994).

For each of these models of peer interaction and peer involvement, a variety of claims have been made regarding effects on the nondisabled children who participated. Reported findings included positive outcomes such as improved attitudes toward the disabled, more sophisticated and improved interpersonal skills in social interactions with a more diverse range of people, increases in intrapersonal skills such as maturity, self-confidence, and enhanced self-esteem and valued friendships and social relationships with peers with disabled (Kishi & Meyer, 1994). Peer acceptance is a primary outcome of schooling with important consequences for the quality of life of students with disabilities (Haring, 1991). Low acceptance deprives children "of opportunities to learn normal, adaptive modes of social conduct and social cognition and undermine academic progress as well" (Parker & Asher, 1987, p.358). Will (1986) argued, in her speech advocating the Regular Education Initiative, the present structure and division of special and regular education fails to serve large numbers of persons who need help, and the current categorization leads to stigmatization for the students involved. Stigmatization segregates students with disabilities from peers and from regular education activities and leads to lower academic and social expectations on the part of the teachers and students, which in turn may lead to poor performance (Padeliadu & Zigmond, 1986). Hager and Vaughn (1995) found teachers viewed students with learning disabilities (LD) and low

achievement (LA) as demonstrating poorer social skills and more behavior problems than average when compared average to high achievement (AHA) students. Peer ratings showed that peers less liked pupils with LD and LA than HA students. LA students received significant higher peer rejection. The social competence of students with learning disabilities, low achievement, and average to high achievement was examined from the perspectives of parents, teachers, peers, and self, guided by a theoretical model of social competence (Vaughan & Hogan, 1990) that included social skills, behavior problems, peer relations, and self-perceptions.

When integrating students the desired outcomes are positive attitudes, increased self-esteem, social competence, and positive social relationships. Biklen, Corrigan, and Quick (1989) used observations and interviews about experiences at an elementary school to describe the relationships between pupils with severe disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Students without disabilities increased their understanding of other children's behavior and acceptance of individual differences through these experiences. In a year-long qualitative study of integration experiences at the high school level Murray-Seegert (1989) found that students without disabilities sometimes become involved in relationships with persons with disabilities as a means of addressing their basic human interest in helping others. She also found that students without disabilities benefited from the interactions in terms of learning more about themselves, such as their own strengths and weakness, improve self-concepts, acceptance of individual differences, and development of friendships. The least mentioned type of interaction was fear, anger, or dislike as from the behavior of the student with disabilities, and students with disabilities being teased by peers without disabilities (Helmsteller, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994).

Haring's research (1991) supported the effectiveness of peer modeling, peer tutoring, and cooperative learning for the promotion of both socio-personal and academic growth by children. When non-disabled students have contact and exposure to students

with disabilities there is more positive perception and acceptance. Regardless of contact experiences, girls were more positive and accepting than boys, and were more willing to initiate social contact. This was an investigation of what teenagers reported and remembered as a function of elementary school experiences involving different levels of social contact with peers with severe disabilities. Two self-report interpersonal measures were administered to 183 students without disabilities comprising social contact, exposure, and control groups. A sub sample of 93 teenagers was interviewed about experiences and attitudes about persons with disabilities and their memories from earlier school experiences (Kishi & Meyer, 1994).

Research generally upholds the conclusion that persons with less frequent and less initiated contact with persons with special needs tend to express stereotypical negative reactions (Gaier, Linkowski, & Jacques, 1968). In addition, persons with disabilities are seen as being less competent, less motivated, less sociable, more passive, less likable, less happy, less sensitive, and less free than nondisabled students. Studies examining the effects of physical disability on individual perception have shown less eye contact, less acceptance, and less preference for individuals with disabilities than for nondisabled individuals. People who have a problem communicating are viewed negatively and are frequently rejected by others (Wood & Williams, 1976).

Many non-disabled pupils experience a growth in their commitment to personal moral and ethical principles as a result of their relationship with pupils with disabilities (Peck, Donaldson, & Pezzoli, 1990). The non-disabled children have experienced an increase in self-esteem after building relationships with students with disabilities (Staub & Peck, 1995). Warm and caring friendships have developed between students with and without disabilities. These relationships grow into meaningful, long-lasting friendships (Staub & Peck, 1985).

Finally, the nondisabled and the disabled students can learn and grow from each other. Early exposure and contact help decrease negative perceptions and stigmas about the disabled student (Staub & Peck, 1995).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the nondisabled student toward students with learning disabilities and the perception of learning disabled toward himself/herself. More specifically the study addressed the following questions:

1. Are non-disabled students embarrassed to have friendships with learning disabled students?
2. Do non-disabled students feel students with learning disabilities take too much of their time?
3. Do nondisabled students feel having a student with learning disabilities in class wastes a lot of the teacher's time?
4. Do learning disabled students feel they are not accepted by nondisabled student?
5. Do learning disabled students feel being in a classroom with nondisabled students negatively affects their learning?

Method

Design and Subjects

A survey research design was used for this study. Subjects were students in grades 6-8 with and without disabilities from a rural county in Virginia. This county was selected using a convenience sampling method. Thus the total number of subjects consisted of a random selection of classes with disabled and nondisabled and a random selection of students from those classes. The participants were randomly selected from each grade level. The participants who were chosen were general and special education students at the middle school level.

Instrument

The instruments used were two self-developed questionnaires. The surveys (see Appendix D & E) contained ten statements concerning friendship, embarrassment, social contact, peer perception, self-perception, intelligent, and favoritism of the disabled and nondisabled student. The participants rated the questions as agree or disagree. Agree and disagree was used by the researcher to ensure the students with disabilities could read and understand the meaning of the words.

A demographic sheet was attached to the front of the survey. The questions on the demographic sheet asked for useful background information on the subjects, such as gender, grade level, and previous contact with people with disabilities.

Procedure

A convenience sampling method was used to select a county in Virginia. Fifty nondisabled subjects and fifty learning disabled subjects were selected from the school using a simple random selection classes and subjects were selected using a simple random sampling method. Classes and subjects were selected from the 6th through 8th grade.

A letter was written to the superintendent of the school system (see Appendix A) to gain permission to begin research in that particular school system. The researcher followed up this letter with an office visit approximately one week after mailing to confirm receipt of the letter and to answer possible questions.

After receiving permission from the superintendent of the school system, the principal received a letter (see Appendix B) from the researcher to inform her of permission obtained from division superintendent to the middle school students, to participate in a research study. Approximately one week after mailing the letter, the researcher called the principal to confirm receipt of the letter and to answer possible questions.

After classes and students were selected, a letter (see Appendix C) and permission slip (see Appendix D) were sent to each participant parent, and a letter (see Appendix E) was sent to each teacher whose class was randomly selected to participate in the study. Teachers' names from each grade level were placed in a container than one name at a time was drawn from the container. Then the name of each student in the randomly selected teacher's class was placed in a container and a random selection of participants was drawn. Parents were requested to sign and return the consent form in 10

days. Once the consent form was obtained, the teachers were requested to distribute the questionnaires to each participant. A reminder letter was sent if questionnaire was not returned within 15 days. The participants received a cover letter (see Appendix F), which explained the purpose of the study. It also assured the parents that participation of the children in the study would be voluntary and their identification and the responses would be anonymous and confidential.

Although reminders were sent to increase the return of questionnaires, only 26 (52%) of the questionnaires for students with learning disabilities were returned and 50 (100%) of responses from students without disabilities were returned. The total sample size was 76, including 50 nondisabled students and 26 learning disabled.

Results

Responses to each statement on the surveys were reported in percentage see Table 1 and Table 2, for comparison purposes of the two groups. Information from the demographic sheet indicated more boys (58%, n=15) than girls (42%, n=11) participated in the survey for students with disabilities. Twenty-seven percent (n=7) of the participants were 6th graders, thirty-one percent (n=8) were 7th graders, and forty-two percent (n=11) were 8th graders. Girls had more previous contact with someone with disabilities than the boys. The information from the demographic sheet for students without disabilities revealed more girls (64%, n=32) than boys (36%, n=18) participated in this study. Twelve percent (n=6) of the participants were 6th graders, sixty-eight percent (n=34) were 7th, and twenty percent (n=10) were 8th graders. Again girls had more previous contact with a disabled person.

No major differences existed between the responses from the learning disabled students compared to the non-disabled students. When comparing the two groups there are certain issues they agree on. The 58% of the non-disabled students and 87% of the learning disabled students agreed they would make friends with each other. Both groups had no hesitation in attending social gatherings or parties where there were non-disabled students or learning disabled students. Non-disabled students (82%) are not embarrassed to be seen with the learning disabled students. Eighty-eight percent of the learning disabled students do not feel the non-disabled students are embarrassed to be seen with them. Eighty percent of the nondisabled students did not feel the learning disabled students look up to them as a tutor rather than a friend. Eighty-five percent of the learning disabled students did not feel the non-disabled students view them as someone who needs tutoring. When it comes to carrying on an intelligent conversation, the non-disabled students felt the learning disabled students can speak in an intelligent manner. In

addition, students without disabilities did not feel teachers showed favoritism toward the students with learning disabilities

Although both groups agreed on certain issues, there were a few areas where they disagreed. Results from this study indicated that when learning disabled students are placed in classrooms with non-disabled students, they are viewed as persons who slows down the pace of the class. Sixty percent of the students without disabilities viewed the students with disabilities as taking up too much time in the classroom. Seventy-seven percent of students with disabilities disagreed with this statement, "I think the nondisabled students feel I take up too much time."

The finding from this study indicated students without disabilities are willing to make friends with the learning disabled students but are not willing to date them. From their responses, 76% of the nondisabled students would not date a learning disabled student. The students with disabilities (81%) felt the students without disabilities would date them.

The overall findings from this study showed on most issues the two groups agreed. On the topics of friendship, social gathering, embarrassment, intelligent conversation, waste of time in the class, and favoritism the non-disabled and learning disabled students agreed. The findings of this study showed the non-disabled students are accepting of the learning disabled students within the school and other social gatherings. Also, the non-disabled students are willing to be friends with the learning disabled students but are apprehensive about dating them.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that on the surveys no major differences were found between the responses of the non-disabled and those of learning disabled students to the statements. In response to the following topics, having friendship with each other, embarrassed to be seen with each other, and attending social gatherings and parties, the non-disabled and learning disabled students agreed to these statements. Findings showed that the groups are accepting each other. These findings were consistent with the results of Kisher and Meyer (1994), in the aspect of the non-disabled students. Kisher and Meyer (1994) found when non-disabled students have contact and exposure to students with disabilities there are more positive perceptions and acceptance.

The findings from this study showed students without disabilities are willing to make friends with the learning disabled students but are not willing date them. From their responses, 76% of the non-disabled students would not date a learning disabled student. It is unbelievable that students without disabilities responded so high on this statement compared to their responses to statement one. The different between the responses might be do the stigma associated to special education. The students without disabilities are willing to have friendships but not on the intimate level. Maybe to them, it is not cool to have a girlfriend or boyfriend in special education. The students with disabilities (81%) felt the students without disabilities would date them.

In response to the to the statement, "The teacher shows favoritism toward students with learning disabilities," both groups disagreed with this statement. The non-disabled students and learning disabled students feel there is no different in how they are treated by the teacher. Teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities can play a major role in the way learning disabled students are accepted by their peers. Whinney, Fuchs, and

Fuchs (1991) found that teachers have shown a more positive perception of mainstreaming services by regular education teachers.

Limitation

In all areas of research, it is important to consider the possibilities of strengthening the study. One area that was rather limited in this particular study was the sample size. Perhaps, if the sample size were larger the findings could have been more reliable. In addition, the survey for the learning disabled should have been read to the students to clarify meaning of words and to pronounce certain words on the survey. Finally, statements in the survey were not written so that a significant comparison could be made.

To test for validity to the survey a pilot study was conducted. Ten special education graduates students read the questionnaire and provided feedback concerning their comprehension of the questionnaire. They also completed the questionnaire. In retrospect, a pilot study with middle school students would have been more appropriate.

Future Research

Implications for further research include investigating the area of perceptions of students with disabilities. The researcher should consider personal interviews with each student participating in the study. Further research could possibly answer questions as to why students without disabilities would not date students with disabilities and why do they feel the learning disabled students take up too much time.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

Superintendent

226 Scott Hill Lane
Saxe, Virginia 23967

School Division's Address

Dear Superintendent,

I am a graduate student at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia. I am pursuing a Master of Science degree in Special Education. To accomplish this goal, I must complete a thesis.

I am interested in the perceptions nondisabled students hold toward learning disabled students and perceptions the learning disabled has toward himself or herself. The research involves two short questionnaires on which the nondisabled and the learning disabled students rate their overall perceptions. The survey will take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

I am requesting permission to use your school division in my research and I have two statements at the bottom of this letter. I ask that you check the appropriate statement whether or not you grant me permission to use your school division in my research. I have included a copy of the surveys. In the interest of confidentiality, I would like the principal to distribute the surveys to the appropriate teachers. The teachers will be instructed to have students complete the survey and return to teachers to be mailed directly back to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provide. In addition, I assure you that the name of your school division, principal, teachers, or students will not be mentioned in the research. In conclusion, please check one of the two statements below and return this letter to me within 7 days.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Vernell Scott

_____ I grant Vernell Scott permission to use my school division in her research.

_____ I do not grant Vernell Scott permission to use my school division in her research.

Appendix B

Cover Letter

Principal

226 Scott Hill Lane
Saxe, Virginia 23967

School Name and Address

Dear Principal,

I am a graduate student at Longwood College. I am conducting a study on the perceptions of the students without disabilities of students with learning disabilities and a self perception of the students with learning disabilities as part of my masters degree requirement.

I have received permission from the superintendent to request the involvement of teachers and students at _____ Middle School. The surveys are concerned specifically with comparing the attitudes of middle school students with and without learning disabilities. The research involves two short questionnaires on which the students rate their overall perceptions. The average time required for completing the survey is 5 minutes. The responses to this survey will be confidential; no school or individual will be identified with his or her responses.

Enclosed are several packets, each of which includes a cover letter to the teachers, surveys, parent consent form, and a stamped self addressed envelopes. Please forward a packet to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade teachers (regular education and special education teachers. This will conclude your role in the study, as each participant will return the completed survey directly to me, using the envelope provided.

Should you have questions, please call me at 804-_____. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Thank you,

Appendix C

Cover Letter

Parents

Vernell Scott
(Address)

Dear Parents;

I am a graduate student at Longwood College. I am conducting a study on the perceptions of students without disabilities of students with learning disabilities and a self perception of the students with disabilities as part of my masters degree requirement. The research involves two short questionnaires on which the students will rate their overall perceptions.

Your child has been selected to participate in this study. The responses to this survey will be confidential; no school or individual will be identified with his or her responses.

Your cooperation is very important to the success of this study. I will appreciate it very much if you would please give permission for your child to participate in this study. Attached is a permission slip to complete and return by March 17, 1997.

Thank you,

Vernell Scott

Appendix D

Permission Slip

Permission Slip

I give my consent for my child, _____ to participate in the research project conducted by Vernell Scott. I understand there will be complete anonymity and confidentiality of my child in this study.

I do not give my consent for my child, _____ to participate in the research project conducted by Vernell Scott.

Signature

Date

Appendix E

Cover Letter

Teachers

Vernell Scott

Dear Teachers,

I am a graduate student at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia pursuing a Master's degree in Special Education. The attached survey instrument is for the purpose of conducting research for my thesis in determining the perceptions of the nondisabled student toward the learning disabled student and self perception of the learning disabled student toward himself/herself.

Your cooperation is requested in collecting the surveys. Receiving completed surveys from every student who was asked to participate is necessary in order to assist in the research. Your responses to this survey will be confidential. At no time will you or your school division ever be identified.

Sincerely yours,

Vernell Greene-Scott

Master's degree

Appendix F

Cover Letter

Participant

February 24, 1997

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia pursuing a Master's degree in Special Education. The attached survey instrument is for the purpose of conducting research for my thesis in determining the perceptions of the nondisabled student toward the learning disabled student and self perception of the learning disabled student toward himself/herself.

Your cooperation is requested in completing the survey. Receiving completed surveys from every student who was asked to participate is necessary in order to assist in the research. Your responses to this survey will be confidential. At no time will you or your school division ever be identified.

I will appreciate your completing the attached survey and returning it to me within two weeks, using the self addressed stamped envelope enclosed. Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely yours,

Vernell Greene-Scott

Master's degree candidate

Appendix G
Survey Questionnaire of perception of
learning disabled students toward
himself or herself

Survey Questionnaire of perceptions of learning
disabled students toward himself/herself

Part I

Directions. Check what is most appropriate for you.

1. Gender

Male _____

Female _____

2. Grade enrolled

Gr. 6 _____

Gr. 7 _____

Gr. 8 _____

3. My father works

Yes _____

No _____

4. My mother works

Yes _____

No _____

5. I had previous contact with people with disabilities

1. I have a brother/ sister _____

2. Aunt/Uncle _____

3. Dad/Mom _____

4. Other (specify) _____

Survey Questionnaire on perception
of learning disabled students toward himself/herself

Part II

Directions. Read the following questions carefully and circle the answer you think is the most appropriate for you. The statements are rated as Agree and Disagree.

- | | | |
|---|-------|----------|
| 1. I have nondisabled students as my friends. | Agree | Disagree |
| 2. I think nondisabled students hesitate to
make friends with me. | Agree | Disagree |
| 3. I feel the nondisabled students are
embarrassed to be seen with me. | Agree | Disagree |
| 4. I feel the nondisabled students do
not want to attend parties or social
gathering with me. | Agree | Disagree |
| 5. I think the nondisabled students feel I
take up too much time. | Agree | Disagree |
| 6. I feel the nondisabled students see me
as someone who needs tutoring and
not a friend. | Agree | Disagree |
| 7. I feel the nondisabled students will
not date me. | Agree | Disagree |
| 8. I feel the nondisabled students think
I cannot carry on an intelligent
conversation with them. | Agree | Disagree |
| 9. I feel the nondisabled students think | Agree | Disagree |

I waste their time in class.

10. I feel the nondisabled students think
the teacher shows favoritism toward me.

Agree

Disagree

Appendix H

Survey Questionnaire of perceptions
of nondisabled students toward
learning disabled students

Survey Questionnaire on perceptions of nondisabled
students toward learning disabled students

Part I

Directions. Check what is most appropriate for you.

1. Gender

Male _____

Female _____

2. Grade enrolled

Gr. 6 _____

Gr. 7 _____

Gr. 8 _____

3. My father works

Yes _____

No _____

4. My mother works

Yes _____

No _____

5. I had previous contact with people with disabilities

1. I have a brother/sister _____

2. Aunt/Uncle _____

3. Dad/Mom _____

4. Other (specify) _____

Survey Questionnaire on the perception of nondisabled
students toward the learning disabled students

Part II

Directions. Read the following questions carefully and circle the answer you think is the most appropriate for you. The statements are rated as Agree and Disagree.

- | | | |
|--|-------|----------|
| 1. I have learning disabled students as my friends. | Agree | Disagree |
| 2. I have no hesitation in making friends with students having learning disabilities. | Agree | Disagree |
| 3. I am embarrassed to been seen with students having learning disabilities. | Agree | Disagree |
| 4. Learning disabled students take up a considerable amount of time. | Agree | Disagree |
| 5. I do not mind attending a party or social gathering if there are students with learning disabilities. | Agree | Disagree |
| 6. I feel learning-disabled students look up to me as a tutor rather than a friend. | Agree | Disagree |
| 7. I would date a student with learning disabilities. | Agree | Disagree |
| 8. I feel learning disabled students are not able to talk with me intelligently. | Agree | Disagree |
| 9. When there are learning disabled students in class the teacher will have to go slow and that is a waste | Agree | Disagree |

of my time.

10. The teacher shows favoritism toward students with learning disabilities.

Agree

Disagree

Appendix I

Table 1

Table 1

Perceptions of nondisabled students toward learning disabled students

Statements	Agree	Disagree
1. I have learning disabled students as my friends.	58% (n= 29)	42% (n=21)
2. I have no hesitation in making friends with students having learning disabilities.	68% (n=39)	32% (n=16)
3. I am embarrassed to be seen with students having learning disabilities.	18% (n=9)	82% (n=41)
4. Learning disabled students take up a considerable amount of time.	60% (n=30)	40% (n=20)
5. I do not mind attending a party or social gathering if there are students with learning disabilities.	84% (n=42)	16% (n=8)
6. I feel a learning disabled students look up to me as a tutor rather than a friend.	20% (n=10)	80% (n=40)
7. I would date a student with learning disabilities.	24% (n=12)	76% (n=38)
8. I feel learning disabled students are not able to talk with me intelligently.	22% (n=11)	78% (n=39)
9. When there are learning disabled students in class the teacher will have to go slow and that is a waste of my time.	28% (n=14)	72% (n=36)
10. The teacher shows favoritism toward students with learning disabilities.	30% (n=15)	70% (n=35)

Appendix J

Table 2

TABLE 2

Perceptions of learning disabled students toward himself \ herself

Questions	Agree	Disagree
1. I have nondisabled students as my friends.	87% (n=22)	13% (n=4)
2. I think nondisabled students hesitate to make friends with me.	42% (n=11)	58% (n=15)
3. I feel the nondisabled students are embarrassed to be seen with me.	12% (n=3)	88% (n=23)
4. I think the nondisabled students feel I take too much time.	23% (n=6)	77% (n=20)
5. I feel the nondisabled students do not want to attend parties or social gathering with me.	23% (n=6)	77% (n=20)
6. I feel the nondisabled students see me as someone who needs tutoring and not a friend.	15% (n=4)	85% (n=22)
7. I feel the non-disabled students will not date me.	19% (n=5)	81% (n=21)
8. I feel the non-disabled students think I can not carry on an intelligent conversation with them.	12% (n=3)	88% (n=23)
9. I feel non-disabled students think I waste their time in class.	27% (n=7)	73% (n=19)
10. I feel the non-disabled students think the teacher shows favoritism toward me.	38% (n=10)	62% (n=16)