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Co-Teaching: Loss of professional space from the perspective of special education and general education teachers

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CO-TEACHING: LOSS OF PROFESSIONAL SPACE FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF
SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Godfrey Owoicho Obulu and Achetu Salome Obulu; my husband and children, Floyd Mitchell Yates, Igbe Omadachi, Inalegwu Omadachi, Penelope Ross, Jenny-Sarah Yates, and Justin Yates, for the joy you have all brought to my life.

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Abstract

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This study investigated the perspectives of special and general education teachers on the loss of their professional space because of the co-teaching program. This was accomplished through the qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, by in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews that were recorded using an electronic device and note taking. The interviews were conducted individually with six high school teachers from public schools, of which four were special education teachers and two were general education teachers. These interviews revealed that teachers defined professional space as personal identity and felt that the loss of their professional space emotionally impacted them. The interviews further revealed the lack of acceptance of the program by the teachers, who felt that administrative support was insufficient. Also, the findings revealed that the special education teachers felt marginalized and disrespected by the students in the co-taught classroom. This was largely because of the visual impact of the small space allocated to them in the co-taught general education classroom; while the general education teachers felt inconvenienced and pressurized into making space for the SPED teachers. The study concludes that school leaders, program developers, and policymakers should consider the perspectives of co-teachers and include them in the decision-making process before program implementation, thereby fostering teacher acceptance and program effectiveness, which would ultimately benefit the students. The key suggestions of this study are the need for the school

district to hire new teachers, specifically for the co-taught program, and to provide training for both school leaders and the teachers.

Keywords: Co-Teaching, Professional Space, Personal Identities, Space Loss

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study investigates the perspectives that special education and general education high school teachers hold about the loss of their professional space. I explored how Special Education and General Education teachers feel about been relocated from their classrooms; and how general education teachers feel about sharing their classroom space with the SPED teachers. Co-teaching is a strategy of instruction that requires SPED and the general education teachers to teach students of general education and special education in the same classroom and environment. The introduction of the program to many organizations of learning in American was aimed at satisfying the desires of many concerned citizens who felt that the teaching of special education students in a separate environment is a form of unnecessary segregation.

Background and Related Literature

For example, "in 1970, more than 1.75 million students with disabilities were completely excluded from public schools. Those who were deemed 'educable' received their instruction in 'special' self-contained classrooms and segregated schools attended only by other students with disabilities" (Almazan, 2009, p.1). This development in the field of education has created conflict between those who are in support of integration of students of special education and general education in one classroom and environment, and those who are not in favor of integration (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore, 2009). The authors buttressed this point by stating that "the placement debate has particular relevance in the current political climate due to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001" (p.1). These different opinions are further magnified by the dilemma of many high school teachers who have lost their personal teaching space because of the co-teaching program.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the segregation of students with disabilities from the general education environment resulted in mass protests by parents, families, and advocates, who felt this treatment was counter to the principles of human rights and highlighted a lack of equality in the United States educational system (Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). In response to this protest, the Federal Government initiated the legislation known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA) (Trent et al., 1998). Adding to this problem was the issue of the academic gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in general education classrooms (Forte, 2010). The author states that the Federal Government, in a bid to solve this problem, instituted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB). However, even with the introduction of the act, the issues of academic gaps between students with disabilities, minorities, and students from poor backgrounds, when compared to students in the general education classrooms, continued to be an issue of contention (Forte, 2010).

Many concerned citizens, politicians, and educators felt the disparity in the academic outcome of students of special education were due to not being exposed to the same level of academic curriculum and rigor of work as their peers in the general education classrooms (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Thus, as the number of students categorized as Special Needs students increased in the population, the controversies about their placements also amplified. For example, statistics from the National Center for Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) showed that the period between 1990–1991, spanning the years 2004–2005, witnessed a surge in the population of children between the ages of 3 to 21 years-of-age being qualified for special education programs, with an increase from 4.7 million (11 percent) to 6.7 million (14 percent) enrolled in public schools.

These combined issues pressurized both the government and policymakers to come up with different mandates for educational institutions to develop programs that would integrate the students with disabilities with students without disabilities in general education classrooms (Bessette, 2007). These mandates ordered educational institutions to ensure that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible and be provided all the necessary supports required for the success of the least restrictive environment programs (Solis, Vaughan, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012). Zigmond (2003) further added the following government stipulation that:

> Procedures be established to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children…are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that …removal of handicapped children from regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of that handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (p. 193)

These laws and reform movements have developed into co-teaching programs to ensure that students with disabilities are exposed to the same curriculum as the general education students (Friends, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Many schools responded to this prompt and are instituting various programs to integrate students of special education into general education classrooms, which marks a relocation from self-contained classrooms and pull out remediation (Shamberger, Williamson-Henriques, Moffett, & Brownlee-Williams, 2014). The examples of these programs are co-teaching, differentiated instructions, peer-mediated instructions, and interventions (Ford, 2013). Among these approaches, co-teaching has become a more prominent strategy (Bauwens, & Hourcade, 1991). This new approach has resulted in the partnership of high school special education teachers and general education teachers in one classroom; since they must co-teach both students in the same classroom (Ripley, 1997, Santamaria, & Thousand, 2004). Thus, the co-teaching

program has grown in popularity but lacks an empirical basis to testify to its potency as an instructional strategy (Santamaria & Thousand, 2004). Therefore, many schools have been carried away by the current shift in teaching strategy, including the high school in California in which I taught.

Peterson Unified School District, the district I previously taught at, joined in the clarion call for a merger between the general education teachers and the SPED teachers to co-teach students with mild to moderate disabilities and general education students under the same environment in one classroom. The announcement of this program created a great deal of anxiety and apprehension among many teachers, including myself. We asked the administrators many questions about the new program and how the services of special education students would be implemented in the general education classrooms. After considering the administrators' responses, my colleagues and I felt that we did not receive sufficiently clear answers to these questions. For the other teachers and I, the most important issue was space sharing. The veteran teachers who had taught for upwards of 30 years were not happy to know they could lose their personal space to the co-teaching program. This situation developed my current interest in the co-teaching program and formed the backdrop of my research topic, which was to investigate the perspectives of high school SPED teachers and general education teachers about their experiences with co-teaching, and how it affects their professional space.

Statement of the Problem

Thus, this research study examined the loss of professional space by the SPED teachers and General Education teachers due to the co-teaching program. The co-teaching program was implemented by many schools in the nation to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities with students without disabilities in the general education classroom. Furthermore,

the co-teaching program was instituted to bridge the academic gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. The objectives of the co-teaching program are relevant to a student's educational and social development; however, there are still many problems requiring further investigation (Malian & McRae, 2010). According to the authors, "barriers in the co-teaching range from lack of time to shared space, adding more content to an already full curriculum, and lack of adequate training" (p. 1). Adding to these observed issues, Malian and McRae stated that, "teachers in co-teaching relationships have analogous beliefs" (p.18), and they concluded that more research was needed to ascertain the necessary factors that could initiate a positive working relationship between SPED teachers and general education teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Furthermore, several observations in co-taught classrooms and a survey conducted on students revealed that SPED teachers and general education teachers did not demonstrate shared teaching roles during instructional practice; instead, one teacher was observed making photocopies, and other times working on the computer while the general education teacher only providing instructions (Holiday & Lindsay, 2011). In line with these observations, after conducting a research study on co-teaching, Lamport (2012) concluded that many teachers were still reluctant to accept a co-teaching role in a co-taught program. He stated that "it is when teachers are fully prepared that the inclusion model will yield positive results" (p.54). Adding to this issue were several observations made by Miller and Oh (2013), who stated that even when many teachers are in favor of the co-teaching program, there is a lack of support and logistics in schools to facilitate the success of the program. A research study on co-teaching by Keefe and Moore (2004) revealed a similar result, in that both the special education and general education

teachers felt inadequately prepared for the responsibilities and demands placed on them by the co-teaching program. According to the authors, teachers of special education complained of a lack of content knowledge, while both general education and special education teachers believed they lacked the skills necessary for collaboration as co-teachers.

Corroborating this, Brinkman and Twiford (2012) found that SPED and general education teachers identified problems, such as a lack of skills in classroom management, collaborative lesson planning, communication, information-monitoring and collecting, interpersonal skills, and differentiated instruction, as inherent in the co-teaching program. Also, Walthier-Thomas (1997) stated that his research studies revealed teachers' opinions as lacking support from school administrators, inadequate professional development, and minimal time availability for case scheduling.

From this alternative analysis of the current issues in the co-teaching program, this dissertation has three main objectives:

1. Develop a theoretical understanding of high school special education and general education teachers' perspectives on how the co-teaching program affected their professional space;

2. Examine their opinions on the co-teaching partnership and how this affects their perceptions of their professional space and their jobs as co-teachers; and

3. Create an awareness of the inherent issues in co-teaching from high school teachers' perspectives among policymakers, as well as reporting relevant data that would form the backdrop of subsequent co-teaching program implementation to school administrators.

The following sections deal with issues of co-teaching in schools with a focus on how the program affected the professional space of high school teachers. Also, the section highlights the

critical theory and the theoretical framework that guides the study before then briefly introducing the modalities of the studies. I start by outlining the purpose of the research study and discussing the significance of the issue.

Significance of the Study

What is the relevance of attempting to understand the perspectives of high school teachers to this research study? Co-teaching means a fundamental change in the teaching experiences of teachers and giving them ownership of the program through the understanding of their experiences and perspectives could provide vital data to program developers, and directly place the responsibility for the success or failure of the program in the teacher's hands (Ripley, 1997). Furthermore, teachers' shared experiences of the problems and benefits of a co-teaching program can become a useful resource to program evaluators and institutions who are planning their own co-teaching programs (Walthier-Thomas, 1997).

Also, understanding of teachers' perspectives can help to bring any misgivings regarding the co-teaching partnership of space-sharing between the SPED teachers and the general education teachers to the fore. Also, highlighting the relationship to space-sharing can lead to a conflict resolution and consensus, which will, in turn, lead to the success of the program. This is a very important factor in co-teaching since "the essence of co-teaching is about building a professional relationship between the co-teachers, which is motivated by the drive to increase student performance" (Migiera, Simmons, Marotta, & Battaglia, 2005, p. 2). Furthermore, teachers are at the foundational level when developing co-teaching programs. The acknowledgment of this factor has motivated some researchers to seek their active engagement through knowing their attitudes and perspectives about the program, which was used in the co-teaching program development in countries such as Australia (Beamish & Davies, 2006).

Furthermore, even though co-teaching appears to have been present in the field of education for decades, there remains a dearth of data about its efficacy, which calls for greater research that would yield more information on the involved population and provide a rubric for its differentiation from the previous educational programs and practices provided (Tremblay, 2013). Tremblay's views appeared to corroborate the observations of Stigler and Hiebert (2009), who criticized the way many educational programs have been implemented in the society, as many tend to employ a 'roll out and see what happens' approach before collecting data. Thus, the authors state that:

> Our past practice policymakers adopt a program, then wait to see if student achievement scores will rise. If the scores do not go up—and this is most often what happens, especially in the short run—they begin hearing complaints that the policy is not working. Momentum builds, experts meet, and soon there is a recommendation, followed by a change of course, which is often in the opposite direction. (p. 8)

Stigler and Hiebert (2009) further reiterated that policymakers rarely collect data from the classrooms to know if the programs they instituted were effective or not and why they failed. This perspective supports the significance of this study. The co-teaching program has been instituted in many schools in society, with new roles and responsibilities for teachers. For example, general education teachers are expected to know how to manage the behaviors of students with disabilities, as well as provide adaptations, accommodations, and modifications, as legally mandated for students with disabilities, while special education teachers are expected to teach the general classroom curriculum, which often means losing their classroom space (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 2010). In retrospect, this is a fundamental change to the roles of the teacher that requires the perspectives of the stakeholders involved before the changes are made. In my opinion, people are more generally open to changes when their interest is considered, and opinions recognized in the implementation process.

These are just a few changes that have been observed by many researchers. One would expect that fundamental educational changes that involved the key stakeholders at the forefront of implementing the program would lay credence to the voices of the parties involved by seeking their perspective and expertise before the implementation process. This is the view that supports the significance of this research, meaning that we need to hear the voices of both general education teachers and special education teachers, as well as their perspectives on these current changes in the field of education, particularly to include the co-teaching program as an inclusion strategy.

Furthermore, other underlying issues that were not seriously considered were the feelings of the general education teachers who are already struggling to cope with large class sizes and accommodating the diverse number of students they already have in their classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). The authors questioned the rationale of inclusionists' efforts in this marriage between general education teachers and special education teachers. First, Pugach and Sapon-Shevin (1987) stated that the general education teachers barely recognized the relationship between them and the special education teachers as a partnership. Also, they further stated the observations of Lieberman (1985), in which they described that the general education teachers feel like "an uninvited bride for a wedding thrown together by special educators" (p. 294).

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research study.

1. How do high school teachers define professional space?

2. What are the perceptions of the high school special and general education teachers about the change to their professional space?

3. What are the perspectives of the high school special and general education teachers about the co-teaching program?

4. How do high school special education and general education teachers describe the co-teaching partnership and cohabitation in one classroom space?

5. How do the high school special education teachers and general education teachers describe the sharing of responsibilities and roles in the classroom?

6. How do the high school teachers view the support and concerns of administration for the loss of their professional space?

Within 20 years, many legislative laws have pressured educational organizations to create educational programs that are more inclusive and effective for students with disabilities. This stance emanates from the general opinion that inclusion means equal education rights for all (Ford, 2013). As the argument continues to grow stronger, it seems that advocates of inclusion are not concerned about the minimal evidence that supports the effectiveness of the program, or if students of special education can be successful in the program (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuff, 2007). The salient point was the view that if two teachers worked together in the same classroom, the productivity would be higher (Civitillo, DeMoore, & Verloed, 2016). These mounting pressures have resulted in the initiation of various programs, including co-teaching.

Many people understand co-teaching as an inclusion program for students with disabilities, and teachers are expected to embrace the program in this way and in a simplistic manner; however, co-teaching has deeper impact and meaning than this because of the fundamental changes that are involved in the process (Miler & Oh, 2013). These fundamental changes were reflected in the opinion of Downing (2005) when the researcher stated that:

> The special educator's role has changed more than the general educator's role. The general educator is still expected to be in the classroom and carry the curriculum, but the

special educator doesn't have a classroom anymore. We're asking people to share space with several other adults, and that's one of the areas they often become uncomfortable; they want to have their own plants, and they want to have their own pictures of their loved ones on the desk. When they're in their own room with paraprofessionals who report to them, they are in charge. (p. 297)

Study Design

The theoretical framework of this dissertation is nested within the interpretive approach, which is rooted in social science research. The interpretive approach is built around the understanding that humans act towards things based on the meanings they construct from those circumstances (Esterberg, 2002). Based on the reasoning that people understand the phenomena of their lives based on the meaning they ascribe to it, "Researchers should begin by immersing themselves in the world inhabited by those they wish to study instead of beginning a theory or preconceived notion" (Esterberg, 2002, p.88).

Thus, having been a SPED teacher who also had the experience of co-teaching, I was able to connect with the participants of this study and understood the information they shared with me. For example, I was familiar with the descriptions of the teaching environment as they described it to me in the interviews, including the sizes apportioned to the SPED teachers in the general education classrooms.

This, notwithstanding the issue of subjectivity, is crucial in social science research and continues to be addressed in this research field (Bowen, 2009). However, Esterberg (2002) responded to this question when he stated that, "In social science research, humans are the researchers as well as the objects of study, which means that pure objectivity is impossible. We have a vested interest in what we study" (p. 88). Based on the understanding of the theoretical framework of this dissertation, this research study is positioned from the vanguard point of the critical theory.

Thus, the semi-structured interview method was used to gather the data that was used to answer the research questions. Six participants were interviewed individually. The interview was recorded using an electronic device and later transcribed by me, the researcher. Furthermore, notes were taken during the interview process as this enabled me to describe the body language, facial expressions, and gestures of the participants. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 min. The participants were two general education teachers and four special education teachers. The interview data were organized into themes, sub-themes, and emerging themes as they related to the research questions.

Theoretical Framework

Co-teaching emerged in response to many conflicts concerning the best strategies to use to educate students with disabilities while adhering to their human rights by not segregating them in a different environment from the general education students. In attempting to solve these problems, further controversies developed, since SPED teachers and general education teachers must co-teach under one environment in one classroom, thereby leading to the loss of their classroom space for the SPED teachers and autonomy of instruction to both teachers.

To address this, Valenzuela, Connery, and Musanti (2000) suggested that critical pedagogy might offer a theoretical dimension that would explicitly address the conflict of the power and status that affects the application of practice in a system. In other words, the adoption of the use of the critical paradigm enables the evaluation of social inequalities and oppressive institutional structures, which might eventually lead to institutional and program transformation.

Critical theory has earned the recognition of being a bedrock for social science research targeted at encouraging freedom of speech and the emancipation of humanity in any given situation that is oppressive to human rights (Hosking, 2008). Its development is related to the

Institute for Social Research, formed in Germany in 1923 under the auspices of Theodor W.

Adorno, Marx Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, and Walter

Benjamin (Agger, 1991). Critical theory is well-grounded in democratic legitimacy, which

implies that it acknowledges conflicts and the need for consensus among all parties involved

(O'Neil, 2000). Based on this rationale, the author stated that every citizen has a right to a

democratic process. Thus:

> Critical Theory refers both to a way of theorizing and to the product of that theorizing
> and is a way of submitting the very 'givenness' or 'taken-for-granted' character of the
> social world to critical reconsideration and is thus part of the self-reflective public
> discourse of a democratic society. (The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, 2015, p.
> 51)

Adding to this, O'Neil (2000) stated that a key principle of critical theory is a democratic

process, which gives voice to the oppressed and provides a channel of discourse that concerns

the interests of everyone in arising conflicts in society. This opinion identifies with American

key democratic principles, which mandate the institutions in the nation to adhere to the

fundamental rights of all human beings, which means that teachers are no exception. This

understanding supports the following question:

> Why this quest should outweigh any other interests, we might have in resisting such
> engagement or breaking off from it before resolution. Why listen to opposing
> viewpoints, accommodate the interests of others, or revise our goals for the sake of the
> common good? What is needed is an account of the emancipatory features of a
> discursive democracy. (O'Neil, 2000, p. 504)

Consequently, by exploring high school teachers' perspectives on the loss of their professional

space, the critical theoretical framework guided the process of examining and analyzing teachers

shared professional experiences relating to co-teaching, which is understood by the critical

theoretical framework as a "self-reflective public discourse of a democratic society" (The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, 2015, p.51).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a foundation understanding of the research topic, which is the investigation of the perspectives that high school SPED and general education teachers hold about the loss of their professional space because of the co-teaching program. It also dealt with the background and related literature about the topic statement of the problem, which was to examine the effect of the co-teaching program on the professional space of the SPED and general education teachers. Also, the purpose of the study was highlighted in the chapter, which was to develop a theoretical understanding of SPED and general education teacher's perspectives about the co-teaching program.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This study examines the perspectives of high school special and general education teachers about the loss of professional space due to the co-teaching program. Co-teaching is a strategy of instruction that requires the SPED and the general education teachers to teach students of general education and special education in the same classroom and environment.

The introduction of the program to many institutional organizations of learning in America was to satisfy the desires of many concerned citizens who felt the education of special education students in a separate environment is a form of unnecessary segregation. This development in the field of education has created conflict between those who are in support of the integration of students of special education and general education in one classroom and environment, and those who are not in favor of integration. These different opinions are further magnified by the fact that many teachers lost their personal teaching space because of the co-teaching program.

The term co-teaching has been misinterpreted and misused in various forms (Bessette, 2008). The lack of consensus in its definition is due to the program being in the experimental stage (Beamish, Bryer, & Davies, 2006). Although different models of co-teaching exist, the program lacks a universal definition and structure, such as being explicit on the different roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and general education teachers in one classroom (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & McDuffie, 2005). These observations support the argument of Slavin (1996), who asserts that many people have a misconception that there is an abundance of research work on co-teaching, which is contrary to

the fact that there are still many unanswered questions on this topic. Slavin reemphasized this point by stating that, in its fullest conception, cooperative learning provides a radically different approach to instruction, whose possibilities have been little explored.

Furthermore, co-teaching has been perceived as more of a response to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individualized with Disabilities Education Act of 1994, rather than a program that is tailored to meeting the academic needs of students (Simmons & Magiera, 2007). This common perception has pressurized many schools to implement inclusion programs without consideration for teachers' perspectives and students' feelings. For example, a study carried out by Pavri and Lugtig (2001) revealed that students with disabilities felt dissatisfied with the placement based on the feeling of loneliness, rejection, and a lack of complete acceptance by their peers in the general education environment. Further examination highlighted the division among the teachers involved in the program. While some embraced it, others dreaded it and had panic attacks (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). The authors explained that teachers who had co-taught often experienced disappointment because of a lack of adequate planning time and curriculum development that would meet the needs of the special education students. Thus, the basic assumption that co-teaching is generally accepted is erroneous (Tanner, Linscott & Galis, 1996).

Thus, with these varied developments in the field of education, as well as the mounting pressures from the Federal Government and multiple societal arenas, special education and general education teachers are also caught up in the debate about the best approach to effectively teach students and make positive changes to their teaching assignments and classroom displacement (Malian & McRae, 2010).

To understand the full scope of the issue of co-teaching and why teachers' perspectives are vital to buttressing this understanding, it is necessary to recapture some essential facts in the development of different special education programs in the educational system of the United States.

History of Special Education Programs and Laws

In the 17th century, literacy in society was defined as reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, as the years passed, this definition expanded to include more subjects, which was not extended to all students, since students with disabilities were excluded (Burgdorf & Burgdorf Jr., 1975). Since students with disabilities were relegated to the background in curriculum development, their academic progress was slow and retrogressive compared to students without disabilities who were the full beneficiaries of the expanded educational programs (Burgdorf & Burgdorf Jr., 1975). Concerned citizens, parents, and families protested these noticeable differences, which led to the development of many programs and laws to include students with disabilities (US Department of Education, Offices of Special Education, and Rehabilitation Services, 2010). For example, in 1930, the educable-trainable distinction was established after a meeting at the White House Conference on Children and Youth for starting formal classes for the severely disabled and mildly disabled children. Then, in 1950, the state of California required inclusion programs in public schools for specific groups of handicapped children, thus culminating in more districts developing specialized programs that were documented as 1500 in 1948, 3600 in 1958, and 5600 in 1963 (Burgdorf & Burgdorf Jr., 1975).

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed into law, thereby facilitating schools to receive federal funds to fund public education. Twelve months later, this law was amended to specify the inclusion of sponsoring special education programs for

students with disabilities (Esteves & Rao, 2008). This law connects the arising issues in co-teaching, which attempts to integrate both special needs and non-special needs students in one environment because it was a response to the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 that forbade the discrimination and segregation of students based on their racial background in public schools.

Furthermore, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which is a Civil Right Legislation, ruled against students with disabilities being discriminated against in any program funded by the federal government. Section 504 was mainly established for students who have some learning challenges but did not qualify for special education services and is a program overseen by the general education program.

As issues concerning the best way to provide services to students with disabilities continued to develop, in response to these mounting pressures, the federal government also responded with the formation of laws. Thus, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was signed into law in 1975 by President Gerald Ford and reauthorized in 2005 (US Department of Education, 2005). This law was passed in response to the general observations in the society, in that approximately 8 million children with disabilities in the society were not receiving a proper education or were being secluded from the general education environment (Esteves & Rao, 2007).

Also, the federal government created another law in 1990—the Americans with Disabilities Act—which mandated that all school districts and institutions adhere to all federal laws concerning the education of handicapped children, irrespective of whether they received federal funds or not (Esteves & Rao, 2008).

By 2002, the federal government further established another law known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which is the current educational law concerning students with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2002). The NCLB holds schools and educational institutions accountable for the academic performances of students with disabilities, supports the inclusion of students with disabilities in all formal assessments, and mandates schools to fill the educational gap between students with disabilities and their counterparts in the general education classrooms (Department of Education, n.d.).

The overarching question is: How do these laws impact the current educational issues, such as co-teaching, which is a central point in the ongoing changes in the educational sector of society today? The importance lies in the underpinnings that law is a moderating factor of people's behavior in the society and determines who is in control between the government and the governed (Turnbull, 2005). Elaborating on this relationship, the author highlighted that society is generally guided and administered by laws. He supported this perspective with several examples by stating that:

> The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) engineer's society and shapes behavior in three basic ways. First, it authorizes the expenditure of federal funds and shapes how those funds and the complementary state and local Educational agencies' funds are spent, and it aligns those funds and their expenditure patterns with the earlier IDEA (1997) and with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Although it continues to be, it becomes more like a school reform law. Second, IDEA grants rights to students and their parents: it continues to be a civil right law. Third, IDEA particularizes the relationships that students and their parents have with local and state educational agencies. It partakes in social reform on a large scale, becoming more like a "welfare state" reform law than a civil rights or school reform law. (p. 320)

What this means is that the mandatory government law coerces schools to introduce programs that show compliance with government laws and policies, which include the No Child Left Behind Laws, irrespective of whether they meet students' needs or not. Lack of compliance with

federal government educational policies also means a lack of federal funds for the non-compliant schools. Is it surprising then that many schools started the co-teaching programs before seeking data on its effectiveness, and that those schools that implemented the program also lacked supporting data on the effectiveness of the program? Describing this situation, Stigler and Hiebert (2009) stated that, "Significantly, this whole process goes on without ever collecting data on whether or not the original program was ever implemented, how effective it was in promoting student learning" (p. 8). The literature above testifies to the fact that the debate about appropriate placement of students with disabilities and how best their educational needs can be met in schools and educational institutions dates to decades ago. Thus, schools are caught up in the dissecting voices of what the best options are for educating students with disabilities. The same argument led to the euphoria of the issue of co-teaching, and since teachers are at the center stage for the execution the program, it thus becomes necessary for this researcher to attempt to understand the program from their perspectives. Furthermore, because of the many controversies surrounding the definitions of co-teaching, there is a need to clarify the definitions of key terms as related to this study.

Definition of Key Terms

Space. It is a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983, p. 59.).

Inclusion. According to Bryant, Smith, and Bryant (2008) (as cited by Loiacono & Valenti, 2010), inclusion is an educational environment that facilitates the education of special

education students and general education students' side-by-side, including integration in all general school activities within the same school locality. Elaborating on this definition, Dev and Haynes (2015) stated that, "inclusion is used to mean a service-delivery model, whereby students with and without disabilities are taught the same content and in the same setting, with modifications and accommodations as necessary" (p. 53). Further, building on these definitions, Friend (2014) defined inclusion to be the acceptance and integration of diverse learners within a learning community, irrespective of their educational placement.

Resource room. This classroom is typically established to provide interventions in different subject areas for students of special education. Students needing resource services receive part-time instructional help from the education specialist teacher in this environment and are then sent back to the classroom after such interventions (Dev & Haynes, 2015).

Least restrictive environment. This means educating students with disabilities with their peers in the general education environment to the maximum extent possible (Voeltz, 1980). Expanding this definition, Ford (2013) states that least restrictive environment means students with disabilities are to receive their educational services within the general education classroom to the highest degree to which their disability permits, including the use of any form of supportive equipment, accommodations, and modifications within the same environment.

Special education. Special education means educational services that require additional support, such as accommodations and modifications that are provided by an educational organization to meet the educational needs of a student categorized as qualifying for special education services (Florian, 2013).

Co-teaching. Co-teaching is when two or more people cooperatively teach students with disabilities and students without disabilities in one classroom and under the same environment.

Such co-teaching involves partnership in responsibilities, planning, instruction, and assessments of students in a classroom (Cushman, 2004). In other words, co-teaching is the sharing of all teaching duties by a special education teacher and general education teacher within a classroom that is made up of students of special education and students of general education (Gately & Gately, 1993). Also, co-teaching is a teaching strategy that provides the educational needs of special education students in a general education classroom, thereby removing the need for other alternative educational placements (Friend, 2014).

Different Models of Co-Teaching

One of the key points of the co-teaching strategy is the lack of a universal definition. Due to the lack of consensus on the operational meaning, many approaches to co-teaching have been developed. Thus, Friend and Cook (2007) defined the five approaches to co-teaching as follows:

Station teaching. This is when the special and general education teachers create three groups in the class. Two groups are taught separately by the two teachers while the third group works independently. The three groups rotate around the two teachers until, eventually, they have all received instructions from both teachers.

Parallel teaching. This is when the special education and general education teacher divide the class into two groups, and the two groups are taught separately by the two teachers at the same time in the same classroom. For example, the first group comprises the general education students while the second group comprises the special education students. The students are taught the same concept with a different instructional approach that meets the skill needs of the students in their group. However, at the end of the lesson, the teachers pair the two groups together to exchange their knowledge.

Alternative teaching. This is when both the special education teacher and the general education teacher create small groups of struggling learners so that they can receive intensive instruction. For example, they could be students with severe behavior problems or with too many absences from school. Either of the two teachers can provide the intervention needed.

Teaming. This is a whole group instruction that involves the two teachers providing instruction together. For example, while one teacher introduces the concept, the second teacher creates a visual map on the smart board for the understanding of the students, or sometimes they play-act the concept to help students understand.

One-teach, one-assist method. This is the most popular form of co-teaching and can become a distractive factor as students want to seek help all the time from the rotating teacher instead of paying attention to the teacher in front of the classroom. Students develop the wrong impression with this method by refusing to take directives from the special education teacher.

Station Teaching consists of three groups of students, two of which are taught, while the third group works independently.	Parallel teaching consists of two groups taught separately and categorized into special education students and general education students.	Teaming involves both teachers teaching at the same time.
Alternative teaching is when an intervention group is created, which comprises behavior students who are taught separately.	The one teach, one assist model means one teacher provides instruction and the other teacher walks around the classroom.	

Figure 1: The five models.

Thus, these different approaches could further compound the current problems in the co-teaching programs in schools, especially since there is lack of consensus in the acceptance of the program and the modalities of operation (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). This makes it necessary and establishes the rationale to know the views of both the special education teachers and the general education teachers, as this would produce useful data on selecting the best method of instruction that is unique to each of the partnered teachers in the co-teaching program.

Variations of Co-teaching

Due to the many approaches to co-teaching, there are different modalities of its implementation. Thus, understanding the characteristics from the different perspectives and opinions of educational researchers would help to create an understanding of the general opinion of the co-teaching strategies and support the general opinion that co-teaching has different meanings for different people. Co-teaching should also entail an environment where there is a partnership between the special education teacher and general education teacher, reading specialist, speech/language therapist, or bilingual instructor; also, both teachers in the classroom should be actively involved in the instruction of the students of general education and students with disabilities, engage in shared responsibilities, and facilitate a learning environment that is created by both teachers, without each teacher mapping out their own personal territory (Friend, 2008). Similarly, Ripley (1997) analyzed co-teaching to be an equally shared relationship between effective professionals who are jointly responsible for the daily planning of the lesson plan and the classroom, and the management of students' behavior.

However, Solis, Vaughan, Swanson, and Mcculley (2012) view the co-teaching model differently. The authors, based on the results of the research they carried out in the field on co-teaching, explained co-teaching to be an inclusion strategy where the general education teacher

acts as the lead teacher in the general education classroom and provides most of the key instructions, while the special education teacher plays the subordinate position by only providing support when necessary. Furthermore, Sileo (2012) also attempted to clarify what co-teaching entails. The author highlighted that the co-teaching model includes one teacher teaching while the other teacher observes and manages the behavior of the students and provides interventions through observations. The two teachers practice a parallel teaching strategy at any given time when students are split into two small groups. This facilitates station teaching, whereby students rotate from one group to the other, as taught by each of the two teachers during group rotation. Also, teachers practice alternative teaching as necessary, which involves one teacher conducting the direct teaching, while the other teacher provides intervention, pre-teaches students the concept, and enhances learning by making clarifications of key content and vocabulary terms. Thus, the two teachers practice the 'one teaches while the other assists' approach, as well as team teaching to facilitate clarifications of misunderstood issues and provide opportunities for interactions and dialogues with students.

Through careful evaluation of these different explanations of the model of co-teaching, it is apparent that co-teaching means different things to different people. Consequently, this might pose a conflict of understanding among teachers, and could, therefore, create friction of implementation in a co-taught classroom. As pointed out by some of the researchers in the literature, co-teaching lacks a universal definition and a blueprint of the operational strategies understood by the stakeholders. Thus, this situation makes it important for further studies to be carried out on the model.

I believe that teachers' views would be useful in creating a structure and parameters of operation that would be understood by all. Laying credence to this point are the views of

Migiera, Simmons, Marotta, and Battaglia (2005), who stated that a key step to the successful execution of a co-teaching program is evaluating the perspectives of teachers since teachers are the foundation of the implementation process. They combined this view with evidence from a study they carried out in the Union Free school district of Kenmore Town, Tonawanda. In their study, the researchers found that administrative support for teachers' views motivated the teachers to "take risks and more fully implement varied groupings in their classrooms for the benefit of students with and without disabilities" (p. 8).

What Co-Teaching Is and Is Not

Due to the many controversies that exist on what co-teaching means and what it does not mean, different scholars have attempted to explain the elements of co-teaching. Thus, Friend (2014) explicitly highlighted that co-teaching is the performance of a teaching assignment by two professionals with equal credentials in two different areas of specialization. This includes both the special and general education teacher, speech pathologist, school psychologist, or other professionals performing related duties. On the other hand, co-teaching is not going on when there is a setup created where one teacher teaches while the second teacher prepares instructional materials either in the class, the photocopy room, or in the lounges (Cushman, 2004). According to the author, this was the type of relationship that existed between paraprofessional and special education teachers in a special education classroom.

Furthermore, in an actual co-taught classroom, instruction must be tailored to meet the specific needs of all students within the general education classroom and should be taught by two credentialed teachers of record (Friend, 2014). Providing a contrast to this element, Cushman (2004) stated that co-teaching is not going on when one teacher teaches and the other teacher acts as a standby staff who walks into the classroom to observe the other teacher teaching.

In a co-teaching relationship, responsibilities and roles must be equal as each partner assumes their turn within the teaching relationship for the maximum benefit of the students (Friend, 2014). In contrast, co-teaching is not going on when the lesson plan is developed by one teacher, and when the other teacher does not know the content being taught; in other words, there is no co-teaching when there is no collaboration or equal partnership between the two credentialed teachers (Cushman, 2004).

In an actual co-teaching set up, both the special education teacher and the general education teacher must step out of the traditional system of claiming ownership and form a new relationship of collaboration and exchange new ideas on how to develop a meaningful lesson plan that would meet the educational needs of the students (Friend, 2014). On the other hand, co-teaching is not a tutorial session where one teacher teaches, and the other assumes the responsibilities of providing individual help to students in the classroom. This kind of set up negates the concept of collaboration, joint ownership, and the cohesive presentation of united learning experiences for students (Cushman, 2004).

Also, in a co-taught classroom setup, the special education teacher and general education teacher must learn to respect each other's different ideas and approaches to teaching and integrate their diverse expertise into strong academic knowledge that would enrich the learning students in the classroom (Friend, 2014). Thus, co-teaching is not when one teacher finishes teaching a subject, and the other teacher follows up teaching another subject or topic (Cushman, 2004).

These authors have attempted to make clarifications on the assumption that co-teaching means having the general education teacher, who is considered the content knowledge expert, while the special education teacher assumes a lesser role of providing adaptation support for

special education students. The implication of these for policymakers and educational leaders who have intent on developing co-teaching in their various schools is to combine this theoretical knowledge with the practical experiences of teachers to develop an effective co-teaching program.

Making Co-Teaching a Success

Many researchers have attempted to guide executing a successful co-teaching relationship between the special education teacher and the general education teacher. Three examples are given in the bullet point below:

- Divide students into three groups. Two groups are taught by each teacher, while the third group works independently.

- Co-plan the lesson and divide responsibilities evenly before class time. "How can two teachers practice their craft simultaneously in front of a classful of students without having time to plan?" (Kohler-Evans, p.262).

- Collaborate after lesson plan execution to analyze what worked and what did not. Thus, "By beginning with the expectation that the 'co' in co-teaching truly means that both teachers should deliver instruction, co-teachers can become creative in how they go about their work" (Friend, 2008).

- Furthermore, co-teaching can be effective if the special education teacher and the general education teacher build a relationship that is based on deep communication and diffusing the contrary opinions that might create conflicts between them (Ploessl, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010). The authors compared the co-teaching relationship to an art and science that cannot be separated from each other.

Thus, as suggested above, it appears that many people have focused on recommending different panacea that can help solve the current muddle in co-teaching relationships. However, I believe that to resolve any of these conflict situations, the underpinnings of the conflict must be delved into and resolved; otherwise, it is like constructing a house without the laying of a foundation—how long can the building stand? I believe this is the present predicament of the co-teaching programs, which were executed on the ideas of education leaders while underplaying the role of teachers in forming the core of the program. O'Neill (2000) supports this point, stating that "Democratic legitimacy that identifies with the current diverse nature of the society must agree with the possibility of conflict and disagreement in the society" (p. 503).

Lack of consensus and unequal relationships can lead to a dissolution of the marriage in a co-teaching program. The opposing arrows demonstrate the type of relationships that exist in most of the co-teaching programs. The lack of consensus between the bridegroom (general education teacher) and the bride (special education teacher). It was not a matter of choice for the teachers; they were to comply with the expectations of policymakers, and school administrators.

The General Education Teacher is the lead teacher, content knowledge specialist, and teacher of record in the general education classroom and a co-taught program.

The Special Education teacher is the subordinate teacher, and provides assistance in curriculum adaptation and behavior management to the general education teacher. The special education teacher is not the teacher of record.

General Education Teacher

Special Education Teacher

Figure 2: Definition of the roles of the general and the special education teachers (Nierengarten & Hughes, 2010).

Overview of Perspectives of Teachers from Past Studies

Many researchers have argued both for and against the model of co-teaching, including the attitudes and perspectives of teachers. For example, Minke, Bear, Deemer, and Griffin (1996) carried out a study on this topic, finding that general education teachers were more likely to resist the placement and integration of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Reiterating this point, the authors stated that, "…the relatively few surveys that have solicited the opinions of regular educators generally show that regular educators remain reluctant to accept the wedding invitation" (p. 153).

Further elaborating on this point, Zigmond (2003) explained that "General educators cannot imagine focusing intensively on individual students to the extent that different instructional activities for different students are being implemented at the same time" (p.197).

This analysis indicates the resistance of some teachers to the co-teaching program and makes it necessary for policymakers and education leaders to seek the perspectives of teachers since the success of a co-teaching program depends upon them (Avraamides & Norwich, 2002).

The Pros of Co-Teaching

I will start this section by posing the following questions: How do people perceive the benefits of co-teaching when there are so many controversies surrounding the definition and meaning of the term? What would be the standard rubric used to measure the efficacy of the program across the board? Can the perspective of current teachers in the practice of co-teaching provide an overview of how they measure the effectiveness of the program?

Despite the ongoing arguments on schools' lack of preparedness to host a flawless co-teaching program and teaching strategy, other scholars and researchers have attempted to view the initiation of the program as a positive move in education that would benefit students immensely. For example, one of the key benefits brought about by the continuum of federal laws, such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) is the opportunity to end the segregation of students with disabilities from their peers in the general education environment (Santamaria & Thousand, 2004). The authors reiterated their opinion by stating that many schools are moving from the idea of self-contained classrooms and resource rooms to co-teaching because of the nature of the program, which will be beneficial to a wide population of students in schools generally. They discussed these benefits as opportunities for collaboration and co-teaching between subject specialists and teaching strategists. Building on this point, Gately and Gately (1993) stated that no matter what expertise a special education or general education teacher has as an individual, the combined expertise of the two-in-one environment

could be more beneficial to students in a classroom. To further clarify their stance, the authors

explained that there are limitations to one teacher meeting the needs of a diverse number of

students with different needs in a classroom versus the presence of two teachers who are co-

teaching. Two teachers co-teaching presents many models of social skills interactions for

students to emulate a conducive environment of humor and development of positive sharing

attitudes, which all adds up to the social and emotional development of students (Gately &

Gately, 1993). However, Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) challenged these opinions when they argued

that:

> Why do full inclusionists believe general education can respond appropriately to all
> students heretofore receiving special education, chapter 1, and ESL instruction? How can
> the mainstream improve so dramatically to incorporate an increase in diversity when it
> has such obvious difficulty in accommodating the student diversity it already has? The
> infusion of specialists, bought with dollars saved from the dismantling of special
> education, would be a start, but nearly all agree it would be only a start. Fundamental
> changes in mainstream classes would seem necessary. And some full inclusionists
> believe they have the answer. Their solution reveals how poorly they understood general
> education and how shaky is the ground on which their movement is being built. (p. 22)

Again, these opposing arguments draw attention to the present contentions in the field of

education, particularly as it regards the integration and inclusion of students of special education

in the general education environment. Many researchers, as seen from the ongoing literature

reviews, have argued about the lack of planning time, partnership, and collaborations between

the general education teacher and special education teacher. Their perspectives negate the views

of Gately and Gately, who appeared to be highlighting the same points as the pluses of the co-

teaching programs. Again, I feel that in a bid to support an ideology, inclusionist-advocates

argue from a theoretical point-of-view, and thus underplay the practicalities of the situation in

contention. To bridge the gap between theory and applications, I suggest that concerned

stakeholders seriously take the input of special education and general education teachers into

consideration and gauge their attitudes before making conclusive statements on what is advantageous and not advantageous to the development and academic outcomes of students.

Friend (2008), to state the advantage of co-teaching, emphasized the opportunity of combined knowledge from two professionals (special and general education teachers), which she defined as: (a) an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum and how it should be taught, (b) the ability to manage a large group of students through the various activities that occur in their classes (classroom management), (c) an understanding of typical learning and behavior patterns of students, and (d) a focus on the pacing of instruction so that the rigor expected can be accomplished (p. 10).

In support of this statement, Friend, Sweigart, and Landrum (2015) stated that having the strength of two teachers in the classroom divides the students' teacher ratio into two, thereby creating appropriate class sizes for more effective instruction. Elaborating on this advantage, the authors stated that a classroom environment where students would have more opportunities to receive the teacher's attention, as well as small size group instructions, creates the possibility of more interactions between the teachers and students, and that the students receive faster feedback on their assignments. Also, the authors believed that in a co-taught classroom, the inappropriate behaviors of students of disabilities would be reduced since there would be opportunities for greater student engagement.

Further expounding the thoughts of these different scholars, Walthier-Thomas (1997) stated that "co-teaching facilitates the comprehensive assessment of students' academic development based on the evaluations of two teachers, which forms the backdrop of intervention plans for struggling students". Thus, the overall implications and reasons for co-teaching are the basic assumptions that partnership and collaboration between the special education teacher and

the general education teacher will yield maximum educational and social development benefits

for all students. I believe that these views and understandings of the role teachers play in the

success of co-teaching programs support the importance and rationale to evaluate teachers'

perspectives, as these could produce useful data for schools on the verge of initiating a co-

teaching program.

Despite the advantages highlighted and argued by these different scholars, the success of

co-teaching is dependent upon multiple factors, such as schools having a blueprint of

implementation and assessment procedures (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). The authors further

elaborated on this point by highlighting their observations of different educational programs that

were started in the past in many schools, considering the systematic procedures of

implementation and monitoring, which, if haphazardly executed, can fail. Adding a voice to this

caution, Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2008) stated that "the first step in successfully

implementing co-teaching models in a school is to allow teachers to be a part of the planning and

preparation process" (p. 126). Again, this opinion supports the understanding that seeking the

perspectives of teachers would help the schools and educators better understand the concept of

co-teaching program.

Arguments Against Co-Teaching

Many schools and educational institutions are resorting to co-teaching because of the

mandate placed on schools by the No Child Left Behind Act, in addition to pressure from

families, parents, and advocates of special education students that schools need to do more to fill

the achievement gaps between the students of special education and general education (Simmons

& Magiera, 2007). Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) argued this point and believed this perspective to be

one-sided, and thus lacked consideration for every child, as purportedly claimed by advocates of

inclusion. Questioning the constant reference to the interest of all children, the authors stated:

> Why are at least some full inclusionists out of step with general education's steady
> drumbeat? Because as zealous advocates of children with severe intellectual disabilities,
> they march to a beat of their own. Despite their slogan of 'all children', they are
> concerned primarily about their own children. Their plan for school reform is driven by
> the concern regarding 'what type of school will be best for our children?' and by the
> related presumption that 'what's best for our kids is good for all kids'. (p. 27)

In further support of this point, the authors argued that the needs of other children, including the

low, average, and above average, are ignored, as well as some categories of disabilities.

Furthermore, the positive acceptance of the program by the key players, such as

education leaders in schools, teachers, and staff is still questionable (Scanlon & Baker, 2012).

This is not surprising, especially for the special and general education teachers, who are expected

to co-teach, yet are not provided with the identified process of implementation (Scruggs &

Mastropieri, 2017). This problem is further compounded by the lack of defined roles and

responsibilities between the two teachers, as well as the lack of content knowledge by the special

education teacher (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

Besides all these problems, in addition to the struggle to create an appropriate model that

would suit practical situations (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 2010), there is a continuous

development of inclusion; thus, the co-teaching model appears to be a promising effective

strategy for many people to tackle the current inclusion problem (Simmons & Magiera, 2007).

In support of this point, Slavin (1996) stated that co-teaching, which he refers to as co-operative

teaching, appears to be a popular concept in the field of education. However, the author

highlighted the misconception that there is no need for further studies on this topic due to the

prevalence of existing literature and debunked that this impression is erroneous since there are

many unanswered questions. Slavin reiterates that co-teaching offers a new approach to teaching, but these opportunities have barely been utilized to their fullest potential.

Thus, Simmons, Magiera, and Slavin (1996) seemed to agree that co-teaching is a prospective teaching strategy towards developing the academic outcomes of students with disabilities if given a universal definition and understanding of the concept. Since the program lacked a universal definition and defined model of operation, contributions from teachers, who are the field executors of the program, might yield useful information towards creating a more effective program and developing a universal definition and understanding of the term.

Furthermore, another problem associated with the co-teaching strategy was that both special education teachers and general education teachers would co-teach large numbers of students (e.g., up to 125 students in a day), thereby increasing their workload and making it impossible for them to have adequate instructional time to meet the individualized educational needs of special education students (Tralli, Colombo, Deshler, & Schumaker, 1996). On the other hand, the general education teacher would be stressed by the slow pacing of the class instruction, thereby jeopardizing passing evaluations, since only a small proportion of the lessons are completed. Supporting this view, Dev and Haynes (2015) stated that teachers' evaluations in many schools are dependent upon the assessment results of students. One implication of this is that many teachers would rather focus on developing the academic skills of the general education students to pass state testing rather than to try to accommodate a struggling learner due to disability. In addition, as much as proponents of inclusion are eulogizing the integration of special education students with the general education students in the general education classroom, they fail to take into consideration the feelings and lack of preparedness of the general education teacher who is not a specialist or trained in this area (Scanlon & Baker, 2012).

Furthermore, thus far, regarding the implementation of co-teaching in elementary, middle, and secondary schools, teachers have complained of a lack of adequate planning time between the special education teacher and the general education teacher, which affects the effective implementation of the program (Friend, 2008). Elaborating on this point, Friend (2008) states that the planning problem includes a lack of coordination, opportunities to develop a relationship between the two parties involved, a lack of defined roles and responsibilities, and a lack of administrative support.

Adding to this, Bessette (2008) states that even when there is role sharing, the general education teacher assumes the lead role, which affects the co-teaching partnership, since the special education teacher feels relegated to the background. Reemphasizing this point, the author states that, "Assuming that a special educator is highly qualified to provide direct instruction, is it ethical to underutilize his or her instructional expertise?" (p. 1392).

Examining these problems, Zigmond (2003) stated that the issue of best practices for students of special education and their educational placement is far too complex and complicated to provide just a simple answer to the questions involved. The author stressed the importance of reevaluating the view that co-teaching is the final solution for solving the problems of students' placement and academic achievements. Zigmond further restated that although there are lots of studies in co-teaching, there is little data available to support the notion that students with disabilities excel academically due to their classroom placements.

Thus, to support her opinion, she provided several examples of the key problems in this area. According to Zigmond (2003), there is no universal definition as different researchers continue to provide varied meanings of delivery models. Inconclusive research indicates that special education students only represent part of the headcount in the general education

classroom without being part of the learning process. Moreover, the lack of empirical research

data that specifies the academic growth of special education students in one setting instead

depicts successes that cut across the board of different settings. Summing this up, Zigmond

(2003) stated that, "Place is not what makes special education 'special' or effective. Effective

teaching strategies and an individualized approach are the more critical ingredients in special

education, and neither of these is associated with one environment" (p. 198).

Sileo (2011) made further observations on the current challenges of co-teaching when she

stated that co-teachers are randomly placed in co-taught classrooms without reasonable

consideration given to the importance of relationship development in the partnership process.

The author believed this aspect needed to be given serious consideration since a co-teaching

relationship is comparable to a professional marriage relationship.

Thus, she reiterates that this lack of consideration in teacher pairing often leads to a

communication problem between the two parties involved. Collaborating Sileo's opinion,

Bessette (2008) stated that, "Partnership can make the teaching enterprise more fulfilling and

more satisfying, as co-teachers form bonds, teach and learn from one another, and provide

mutual support" (p. 1377). Since relationship building and partnership are highly critical to the

success of a co-teaching program, it becomes necessary for administrators and program

developers to seek the views of the special education and general education teachers that are

entrusted with the operational responsibilities of the co-teaching program.

Another important point highlighted by Bessette is the misunderstanding that co-teaching

simply signifies teaching arrangements. The author argued that this assumption is erroneous

since co-teaching can be in the form of many special education teachers and general education

teachers working together for a part of the day, or on specific subjects. Furthermore, Bessette

identified a problem with the schedule, where one special education teacher is assigned to several teachers specialized in different content areas, such as physical science and trigonometry, as a way of saving resources for the school district.

Thus, she summed up these observations as irregularities in the co-teaching program and advised the need for further research in collaborative practices by integrating the voices of the special education and general education teachers to achieve a more effective teaching strategy. Thus, despite how much enthusiasm is demonstrated for co-teaching, there are still key problems that cannot be ignored. For example, there remains a lack of understanding as to the concept of co-teaching, the unavailability of universal definition of the term, and a documented operational blueprint that is understood by all, a lack of teachers' appropriate and adequate professional development to prepare them for the task, and conflict in positioning co-teaching within a school culture and the resultant administrative and staff supports (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Thus, even though many schools and educationists are currently scrambling to implement the No Child Left Behind Law and implement other educational laws in the society, there are others who doubt that the adoption of co-teaching as a strategy can meet the educational rights of children. In turn, this can leave them feeling uncertain as to whether teachers automatically succeed with the program (Lakkala & Maatta, 2011). Lakkala and Maatta reiterate that this kind of mindset—that schools feel the introduction of a co-teaching program is the ultimate solution to educational problems—is idealistic; therefore, schools must consider the perspectives of teachers if they are to succeed. The authors emphasized the importance of developing teachers along with co-teaching programs, if necessary. Thus, they stated that, "The indexes of inclusion are important, as is developing new pedagogies. The teachers' profession must be estimated and

constructed again. Also, the changed working conditions, new competencies, and teachers' in-service and preservice training have to be renewed" (p. 9).

Similarly, Bixler (1998) supported Lakkala and Maata when the author asserted that it is not enough for the power holders in schools and institutions of learning to verbalize their interest in inclusion programs and the integration of special education students with the general education students. Thus, they challenged educational authorities to move beyond such philosophical thoughts into the realm of reality by making informed decisions and carrying out actions. In support of this point, Bixler stated that, "As public schools and parents strive to educate students with disabilities proximity students without disabilities, members on placement teams need to have the knowledge to make informed decisions about programs in which inclusive settings are not only possible but effective" (p. 4).

Further complicating this issue are the thoughts of how new teachers would deal with these problems if the veteran teachers, who are experienced in the field, are challenged by the inherent problems of co-teaching programs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). The authors propose a need for a complete overhaul of mainstream classrooms if co-teaching is to succeed. They explained this as a wide gap in the understanding of the term collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers' due to lack of an explicit definition of each person's role in the classroom and how instructions should be facilitated. Supporting this point, Kilanowski-Press, Foote, and Rinaldo (2010) stated that there are too many controversies, together with the lack of a common definition, which makes co-teaching ineffective.

Shin, Lee, and McKenna (2016) validated the stance of Kilanowski-Press and colleagues (2010). After conducting 11 studies on co-teaching, the authors came up with a consistent team, with their findings indicating a lack of collaboration between preservice teachers and in-service

teachers in co-teaching programs. The authors captured the exact feelings of a preservice teacher in the study, who stated that, "…The very first social studies collaboration that we had was a big disaster because we weren't even teaching the same grades…it was two veteran teachers that didn't want to ask for suggestions or discuss strategies" (p. 91). This view aligns with the opinions of many other researchers, as noted in this literature, that the perspectives of teachers are highly important for the co-teaching program to succeed. I believe that soliciting the voices of teachers will continue to expose the areas of challenges in the program and help program developers to formulate appropriate solutions to arising situations.

The common themes identified in these observations are the importance of how teachers feel, the prospect of co-teaching if properly implemented, and the need for more research in this area so that co-teachers can make more informed decisions in their schools. Also, as reiterated by Bixler, there must be a proper professional development that targets these problems, so teachers can achieve the onerous task of implementing co-teaching practice in the classroom.

Co-Teaching in Other Nations

The controversies generated by this topic, the lack of consensus on the acceptance of the program, as well as the conflicting definitions of what it means, make it necessary to conduct an overview of how it is viewed in other parts of the world. Thus, the overview of co-teaching in other nations provides a premise for comparison and additional knowledge for policymakers and school administrators who are on the verge of developing their own co-teaching programs or restructuring what is in current practice.

Co-teaching is a teaching strategy that has received mixed feelings in American society from the preceding literature reviews above. As noted, some of the studies highlighted many controversies and conflicting situations, which included how teachers in American classrooms

view the program. Other researchers, who carried out studies in other parts of the world, have reported similar results. For example, in the Netherlands, pre-service teachers showed a lack of support and were reluctant to accept the responsibility of teaching special education students in their classrooms (Civitillo, De Moore, & Vervloed, 2016). Thus, the authors emphasized the importance of policymakers taking into consideration the perspectives of teachers to facilitate the effectiveness of inclusion (co-teaching) programs.

Furthermore, another study carried out in Norway by Scanlon and Baker (2012) revealed that, for general education teachers, the additional responsibility of learning to adapt the lesson plan and academic curriculum to the needs of students with disabilities, including learning behavior management, could be exhausting in a co-taught class. This is also the case for special education teachers, who must also learn the academic content of specialized subjects to meet the needs of general education students. In support of this view, the authors stated that, "A notable negative aspect reported by participants related to teacher's potential for exhaustion. The demands of inclusion can mean they are tired. This can result in a decline in the quality of teaching" (p. 212). Thus, it is apparent that co-teaching in other parts of the world is besieged by many controversies, including teachers' opinions, which indicate a need for the reevaluation of the teaching strategy. I believe that teachers' perspectives will go a long way to reforming the program and providing solutions to many of these stated problems.

Similarly, another study carried out on co-teaching in Hong Kong by Crawford, Heung, Yip, Yuen, and Yim (1999) revealed that, since the 1970s, the Hong Kong government had been attempting to integrate the students of special education in general education classrooms but had not been successful in this effort. According to the authors, general education teachers often feel the instructional pace in their classroom is being slowed down by having to give more attention

to the special education students who have learning needs and are not used to the fast pace of the general education classroom. This view again falls in line with the many arguments from special education teachers in schools across the United States, as indicated by the existing literature, which states that general education teachers lack the necessary skills to accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms. Further elaborating on this point, the authors argued that their study found that the schools were not adequately prepared for the challenges inherent in an inclusion (co-teaching) program, and that teachers were not told their specific duties as co-teachers in one classroom. Thus, Crawford et al. concluded that, "Moving to a position where all schools are inclusive is a complex process" (p. 15).

In Australia, Pearce and Florin (2005) found that the challenges of co-teaching programs included issues that concerned the transition of students with disabilities from flexible special education programs and classrooms to a highly structured general education environment. Further, there was a lack of teaching ability in catering to students of special education with varied needs and behavior management, in addition to a difficulty for students of disabilities to integrate into general education classrooms because of their disabilities. Thus, the authors, like other authors in the literature reviews above, concluded that even though the Australian society yearn for inclusive education, such as co-teaching, the integration of students with disabilities in general education classrooms will continue to be an area of challenge in the field of education, which they believed would pinpoint the inadequacies in the educational system of Australian society.

In Finland, an evaluation of the co-teaching program revealed challenges, such as behavioral management, found that co-teachers having little time for planning, difficulty in building partnership relations, work overload, and a lack of defined roles between general

education teachers and special education teachers in a co-taught classroom (Takala, Pirttimaa, & Tormanen, 2009).

These observations reflect the perspectives of many researchers on the co-teaching programs, as noted in this study, and build on the theory that suggests the need for further studies on the co-teaching program. Thus, I believe that to identify problems that continue to limit the potentials and effectiveness of the program, school administrators, leaders in education, policymakers, and reformers cannot continue to ignore the importance of seeking teachers' perspectives. Furthermore, these studies continued to highlight the gaps in the attempts by different nations to shift the focus from educating students of special education in different environments and integrating them with their peers in the general education environment.

Critically reflecting on these observations of the problems inherent with the co-teaching program, I believe there is a need for further research in this area. This view is further supported by the analysis of the co-teaching program by Dev and Haynes (2015) who posed important questions on the underlying issues such as:

> What about teachers who have no preparation in special education but are expected to help students with disabilities meet state standards? Will school districts be able to provide them with the material and human resources necessary to meet the needs of all students? Should schools hire only those certified (licensed) in special and general education, that is, with a dual- or multiple-teaching certificates? Are existing teacher education programs designed to adequately prepare teachers to teach students with varying abilities from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds in an inclusive setting? (p. 61)

Thus, it is imperative that educators, policymakers, and program developers find answers to these questions to help schools successfully execute co-teaching programs. Again, I emphasize that teachers' perspectives will serve a vital role in finding the answers to many of these questions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a literature review of other studies on co-teaching to create an understanding of the full scope of the issues of co-teaching. Furthermore, Chapter 2 highlighted the definition of key terms as they relate to the study; and identification of the different models of co-teaching, such as station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, teaming, and one-teach, one assist method. Also, Chapter 2 highlighted the different variations of co-teaching, the benefits, and its challenges. Furthermore, Chapter 2 highlighted similar trends of challenges in co-teaching programs in other nations and attempts to shift focus from educating students of special education in a different environment and integrating them with their peers in the general education classroom.

Chapter Three: Study Design

This study examined the perspectives of high school special education and general education teachers about how the co-teaching program affected their professional space. Co-teaching is a strategy of instruction that requires the special education and the general education teachers to teach general and special education students in the same classroom. The introduction of the program to many institutional organizations of learning in American aimed to satisfy the desires of many who felt the education of special education students in separate environments was a form of unnecessary segregation. This development has created conflict between those who support of integration of students of special education and general education in one classroom and environment, and those who do not. These different opinions are further magnified by the fact that many teachers lost their personal teaching space because of the co-teaching program.

Research Questions

The specific research questions were formulated in Chapter 1, as restated below: (1) How do high school teachers define professional space? (2) What are the perceptions of the high school special education and general education teachers about the change to their professional space? (3) What are the perspectives of the high school special education and general education teachers about the co-teaching program? (4) How do the high school special education and general teachers describe the co-teaching partnership and cohabitation in a one-classroom space? (5) How do the high school special education teachers and the general education teachers describe the sharing of responsibilities and roles in the classroom? (6) How do high school teachers view the support and administrative concerns for the loss of their professional space?

Thus, Chapter 3 presents the research design, data collection, and data analysis

procedures that were believed to be the most appropriate for addressing the stated research

questions. The practical applications and rationale for selecting these approaches will be

discussed.

Research Design

   Qualitative versus quantitative research. I conducted a qualitative research study

because qualitative research has been used at various times in history by multiple researchers,

including education researchers, to address research questions that are needed to explore social

issues and happenings in the society (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Furthermore, the choice of

qualitative research over quantitative research was due to the rationale that the qualitative

research method would allow the use of contextual data; whereas the quantitative method is

selective and excludes circumstantial evidence (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Even though

quantitative research has always been acclaimed for the rigor of its techniques and validity,

qualitative research has always been considered a better option for studies on human beings and

their lived experiences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), the

qualitative research design allows the researcher a flexible strategy and permits naturalistic

inquiry in the real world, whereas quantitative research is focused on the experimental and

controlled environment. Also, the qualitative research method permits the use of contextual

evidence, while the quantitative method targets the use of subsets of variables and negates the

context of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

   The importance of qualitative research. Further highlighting the benefits of qualitative

research in the study of humans and their lived experiences, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) stated that

the flexible characteristic of qualitative research design allows data generalization, which is

sensitive to the social context within which the data was acquired, and allows the researcher, as a primary instrument, to have a close association with the participants under study.

Furthermore, qualitative research designs have been used in the study of attitudes, personal views, and beliefs in the field of education, including special education (Richardson, 2005). Thus, this informed the use of a qualitative research method in the current study. Furthermore, the qualitative research method is suitable for answering the research questions. The use of a qualitative method enabled the participants to narrate their experiences based on the context in which they happened and allowed the researcher to maintain their humanity since they became part of the situation (Myers, 2000).

Reemphasizing the rationale for the use of qualitative research design in human studies, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the qualitative method focuses on how people comprehend their experiences and make meaning of their own world, which in turn influences their interpretations of other phenomena. Also, qualitative research is deeply rooted in the theory of constructivism, which states that meanings can be constructed as situations develop during the study and focus at gaining deeper meaning about an institution or a phenomenon within the social context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, I worked in the environment in which I conducted my field study. I do not see this as a negative, but rather a plus, providing me the opportunity to make meanings of arising situations within the daily practices of the co-teaching strategies that I observed, which made my findings more realistic and based on firsthand information from field observations.

Furthermore, the qualitative research method is suited to complex issues in society, such as providing a context within which ethnic minorities and the oppressed can express their opinions. This would yield relevant data and information that overrides preconceived its

subjectivity and researcher bias (Bogdan & Villiger, 2010). Restating the importance of

qualitative research to field studies that involve human beings, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) stated

that:

> The interrelatedness of different aspects of people's lives is a very important focus of
> qualitative research, while the psychological, social, historical, and cultural factors are all
> recognized as playing an important part in shaping people's understanding of their world.
> Qualitative research practice has reflected this in the use of a method which attempts to
> provide a holistic understanding of research participants views and actions in the context
> of their lives overall. (p. 7)

The above-stated characteristics of the qualitative research design guided this study, which

investigated the attitude and perspectives of special education and general education teachers on

the co-teaching program.

Research Model

Although there are various research models in qualitative research, ranging from

phenomenology and ethnography to narrative inquiry, the model used here is one of basic

qualitative research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), basic qualitative research

focuses on the understanding that people interpret their experiences based on their own

understanding and the meaning they ascribe to them. Also, the two authors have expounded that

basic qualitative research can be used to explain experiences in applied fields of practice,

including education, administration, health, social work, and counseling. As described above,

this study focused on the perspectives of special education and general education teachers on the

loss of professional space due to the co-teaching program.

Methods

My study used a multimethod approach, which encompassed data elicitation and data

recording. Blackwell (2004) defined data elicitation as the process of gathering information and

evaluating it, while data recording involves the process of codifying the information gathered

from the field of research to analyze the research questions. Data elicitation and data recording

allows a researcher the benefit of accessing data in different ways, which includes observation

(watching what people do and how they do it), self-report (asking people questions on their

views, attitudes, and perspectives), which includes interviewing orally or through written format,

and analysis of archive documents (Blackwell, 2004). According to Blackwell, information

gathered with the use of any of these methods will not be rejected since these are acceptable

methods in qualitative research. Buttressing this point, Blackwell states that: "…The form of the

data is not intrinsically dictated by the method of data elicitation used". Based on this premise,

my research study questions were addressed through semi-structured interviews.

Data Collection

  Interview techniques. This is a process of acquiring information through a face-to-face

communication process between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is anticipated that the

acquired information might have been influenced by the interviewee's perspectives on and

interpretations of their environment. I selected this method because of the important role it plays

in a research study that is associated with human beings.

  Importance of the interviewing technique. The interviewing method of research

provides the opportunity for the interviewer to bond with the interviewee, thereby building a

confidence and trust that allows the interviewee to provide honest answers to the questions

asked—a situation that could not be attained with the use of the quantitative method (Gill,

Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Moreover, the interviewing process is "most consistent

with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the

individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration" (Seidman 2013,

p. 14).

Furthermore, the process of interviewing provides the rationale for people's behaviors and gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the behavior (Seidman, 2013). Also, the interviewing technique is a relevant process in providing an in-depth view into educational and social conflicts through the perspectives of the people that are directly involved in the problems (Seidman, 2013). Thus, if the purpose of a researcher is to investigate the perspectives of different interest groups in education and make meaning out of it, then the best way to investigate and access this information is through the interviewing process (Seidman, 2013).

Corroborating these views, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) highlighted that interviewing in qualitative research can yield significant data to support the study of a phenomenon. Thus, I interviewed high school teachers who currently teach in different co-teaching classrooms.

Interviewing procedure. Before conducting face-to-face interviews, I emailed the questions to each participant. This was in response to the request by some of the participants that the interview questions be sent to them ahead of the interview date. The second step of my data collection was a face-to-face interview with each of the participants at a venue of their choice. The interview process lasted approximately 45 to 60 min. I interviewed each participant individually, which provided the participants' privacy and allowed them time to tell their story.

Participants recruitment process. The snowball sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. Snowball sampling is a technique that asks the participants to help the researcher recruit other participants with similar credentials or characteristics (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016). According to Etikan, Alkassim, and Abubakar, the snowball sample technique is useful in situations where it is difficult to access the target population, and when it is hard for the researcher to gather a list of the participants for the study. Furthermore, Etikan et al. highlighted the presumption that the snowballing sample method could be

uncontrolled because of the name 'snowballing'. The authors debunked this by stating that the researcher has the power to control the recruitment process and ensure the relevance of the newly identified participants. Thus, even though the co-teaching program has long been used, many schools are still planning its implementation. This made it difficult to immediately identify those high school teachers who have co-taught or are currently participating in the co-teaching program.

Thus, the use of the snowball sampling technique enabled me to access high school teachers who have co-taught previously or are currently co-teaching in the Peterson District High School, within the Northern California geographic region. Furthermore, this technique allowed me to ask my initial participants for assistance with identifying other suitable candidates.

Description of Participants

Ten participants were recruited through the snowballing method; however, only six of the participants attended the face-to-face interview. I had attended a co-teaching training paid by my school district and met some of the participants at this training. During the introduction process, I made notes of the teachers who had mentioned they were co-teachers in a co-taught classroom. I used the opportunity of the break periods to introduce myself to some of the teachers and told them about my research study, and the need to interview teachers. Some of these teachers showed interest and gave me their email addresses and phone numbers. However, the lengthy Institutional Review Board approval process resulted in me losing contact with some of the teachers. Therefore, I had to depend on those few teachers who replied to my emails to connect me with other teachers willing to participate in the study. Thus, even though I had promises from ten people to attend the interview session, only six of these attended. Four of the participants were special education teachers and two were general education teachers. The six

teachers had been teaching in public schools for between 3 and 26 years. The participants were

all female. Two of the participants immigrated from the Pacific Island to the United States; both

attended schools in the United States and got their teaching credentials in the States and

understood the Californian public-school educational system.

Table 1: Demographic representation of study participants.

	Thomas A	James J	Bermuda G	Lisbon M	Boyd J	Johnson G
Age (years)	25–30	40–50	45–50	45–50	45–50	50–55
Race	Caucasian	Pacific Is.	Pacific Is.	Caucasian	African American	Caucasian
Co-teaching (years)	3	16	26	10	13	26
Education	B.A.	B.A.	B.Sc.	B.Sc.	B.A.	M.A.
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Marital Status	Single	Married	Married	Married	Single	Married

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis as I interviewed the participants. This is in line with the

suggestions of Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who stated that "the much-preferred way to analyze

data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection" (p. 197). This assumes

that even though the researcher might know the problem to be investigated, the outcome is

unknown. Furthermore, even though I had preset research questions to guide the interviews, I

found myself having to ask questions based on the leading answers of the participants, as well as

having to follow-up their answers with the next participants. This approach was in line with the

suggestions of Merriam and Tisdell, who highlighted the need for such procedures to keep data in focus and to avoid repetitions and irrelevant and voluminous data that cannot be managed.

Also, as stated in Chapter 3, the theoretical framework of this research is built upon the interpretive approach, and the epistemology is from the critical theory perspective, which guided the analysis of the interview data. I adopted this stance based on its relevance to the research topic, which dealt with the perspectives of special and general education teachers on the loss of their professional teaching space due to the initiation of the co-teaching program. Furthermore, in the critical theoretical framework, the teachers' shared experiences are considered as a "self-reflective public discourse of a democratic society" (The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, 2015, P. 510).

Furthermore, Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) highlighted two data analysis approaches. The authors suggested that a researcher has two choices: to present the findings according to the themes with appropriate direct quotes from the participants or develop a separate chapter that includes a discussion of the findings. As suggested by Burnard et al., in the second approach, the researcher should integrate discussions into the findings of the research study. I opted for the latter approach, which provides greater clarity to the verbatim quotes from the in-depth interviews.

The inductive approach was used in the data analysis process. This involved the identification of codes and categories from the interview questions (pre-set codes) and development of the coding frame. As I analyzed the answers to the interview questions, I found new themes and concepts, which initiated the creation of new themes. Furthermore, the process of data analysis involved revision and refinement of the categorical data. Finally, findings were generated from the interpretations of the raw data.

```
┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│ Identification  │      │                 │      │ Create a label  │
│ of themes and   │  →   │ Development of  │  →   │ for new themes, │
│ categories      │      │ coding frame    │      │ with additional │
│                 │      │                 │      │ segments        │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
                                                            ↓
┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Revision and    │      │ Findings will be    │
│ Refinement of   │  ←   │ generated from the  │
│ categorical data│      │ interpretations of  │
│                 │      │ the raw data.       │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘
```
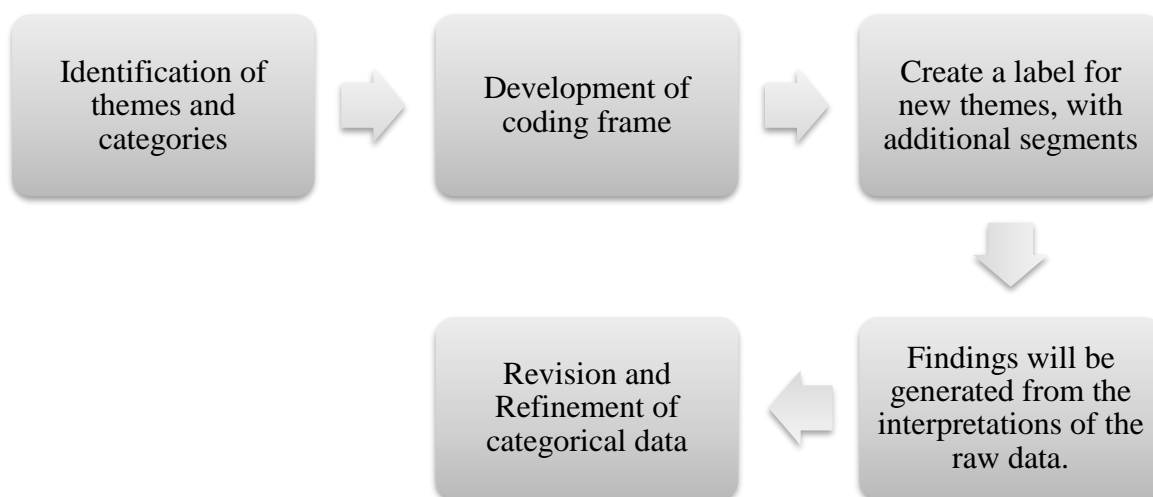
Figure 3**:** Sequence of the data analysis process.

Trustworthiness

Research studies that involve human beings as participants, in addition to a researcher, tend to create bias suspicions of issues being reported from a subjective point-of-view (Johnson, 1997). This emanates from the perspective that qualitative research is open-ended, uses a semi-structured format, and is exploratory (Johnson, 1997). Also, the author stated that research biases could arise from a researcher's tendency to be selective in observations and in the recording of information, as well as subjective by allowing personal feelings and views to influence the report. Based on this premise, it is important for a qualitative researcher to reflect and pose questions that attempt to determine what the research problems are and how the use of

a qualitative research design would be used to investigate the questions (Merriam, 1995).

Merriam reiterates this point by highlighting that qualitative research design was appropriate for:

> clarifying and understanding phenomena and situations when operative variables cannot be identified ahead of time; finding creative or fresh approaches to looking at over-familiar problems; understanding how participants perceive their roles or tasks in an organization; determining the history of situations; and building theory, hypotheses, or generations. (p. 54)

Thus, Merriam states that the question of trustworthiness must be seen from the stance out of which the study was carried out.

Multiple researchers have suggested strategies to protect qualitative researchers against bias, which include being reflective as a researcher. This means that a researcher should be conscious of their feelings in influencing what they are reporting and try to avoid bias reporting (Johnson, 1997). Participant feedback, also known as member checking, can be used to achieve trustworthiness (Merriam, 1995). This strategy involves the researcher sharing their field report with the interviewee, who can cross-check the accuracy of their reporting. Johnson (1997) also highlighted the importance of researcher cross-checking. Both reflexivity and cross-checking were incorporated into the methodology of this study.

Merriam (1995) also suggested including a statement of researchers' experiences, assumptions, and subjective views that might arise during the study. According to the author, the disclosure of this information at the initial stage of the research allows the reader to better understand how the information was analyzed. As discussed in the Introduction to Chapter 1, I was a special education teacher and co-taught English in a high school in California. In my opinion, my experiences provided the opportunity to develop a rapport with the teachers I interviewed. Furthermore, having shared a similar experience, the participants could relax and

felt comfortable talking to me. This created trust that inevitably yielded data suitable for addressing my research questions.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has some limitations. The study participants were limited to six participants: four special education teachers and two general education teachers. Ten participants had originally agreed to participate, but only six of these attended the interviews. Following Dworkin's (2012) suggestion that between five and 50 participants can be used in qualitative studies, I conducted in-depth interviews with these six participants, which yielded sufficient data to answer the research questions.

Furthermore, another limitation of this study was that the participants were drawn from one geographic region of Northern California and that the study comprised only a small number of teachers. This means that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population. Buttressing this point, Dworkin (2012), stated that:

> The findings from a qualitative study are not thought of as facts that apply to the population at large, but rather as descriptions, notions, or theories applicable within a specified setting. (p. 1319)

Also, there were no interview questions related to the emotional impact of a loss of personal space and personality matching, which, upon analyzing the data, appeared to be concepts of some relevance to the study. These later became emerging themes that I believe should be explored as part for future studies on the co-teaching program.

Context

The research setting was the Northern Geographic Region of California. The locality is suburban, under the East Contra Costa County Office of Education, which is estimated to be about 50 miles from San Francisco.

Epistemology

Epistemology defines a researcher's method (Bryman, 1984). The method used in this study was qualitative: "Qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed, multidimensional, and ever-changing—there is no such thing as a single, immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured" (Merriam, 2016, p. 54).

Thus, epistemology "is a metacognitive process that activates epistemic theories, a multidimensional set of interrelated beliefs about knowledge and knowing" (Hofer, 2004, p. 43). Epistemology also highlights how knowledge is generated by individuals and how people came by the knowledge based on their own reality and social construction of their life experiences (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). The importance of a researcher assuming an epistemological position emanates from how a person's epistemological position influences the relationship between the researcher and the participant(s), and how the researcher understands the information received and invariably interprets it (Carter & Little, 2007). Thus, the epistemology of this research study was critical theory.

The rationale for the choice of critical theory as the epistemological stance of this study was based on the understanding that teachers' perspectives and attitudes are crucial in the development of programs in educational organizations as these make up the foundations of the practical applications of theories when new programs are introduced to schools. Critical social research allows the researcher to gain a deeper view of peoples' life experiences, helps in exposing injustice and oppression of the voiceless, and the social mechanisms those in power uses to oppress their subordinates (Esterberg, 2002). Furthermore, the reflexive stance of the critical theorist as an epistemology acknowledges the researcher as an integral part of the study that cannot be excluded, and thus "recognizing the researcher 'constructs' her objective and that

her own identity shapes how she apprehends is antithetical to simplifying and decontextualizing it for the sake of producing generalizable knowledge" (Gregoire, Lamont, & Guetzkow, 2009, p. 573). Thus, as this researcher investigated the perspectives and attitudes of teachers about the co-teaching program, as well as the loss of personal space, the researcher analyzed findings based on the knowledge constructed from the perceptions of the participants, which was their own personal experiences, and how she interpreted this knowledge was based on her own understanding.

Researcher's Positionality

When I changed jobs, taking the decision to move from one school district to another in Northern California, I anticipated running into differences regarding the issues of co-teaching and the controversies it generated. Many teachers in Peterson Unified expressed concerns about the loss of their personal space. The school administrators and education leaders provided general descriptions of the program without any supportive evidence or blueprint to the teachers, which would form the basic guide to the program's take-up process.

During several staff meetings, the other teachers and I questioned the principal about whether there was data from any school that had reported the success of the program, but the answers provided were never straightforward. This is understandable considering the observations of Beckstead (1992), who highlighted that although there is a wealth of literature glorifying the ideas of inclusion, none have been able to authenticate the effectiveness of the co-teaching program and the integration of students of special needs in the general education classrooms. Hornby (1999) further collaborated Beckstead when he similarly stated that there was little to no data demonstrating the effectiveness of this program. Therefore, why should

teachers, parents, and any stakeholder in this situation not entertain reservations or misgivings about the co-teaching programs?

Thus, when I resumed my job at a new school district in Northern California, one of my assignments was to co-teach Freshman English in the general education classroom. During my new teacher orientation training, I learned that my new school was also having problems with the co-teaching program. During my orientation, I was assigned to observe a co-taught classroom. I observed that there was no communication between the special education teacher and the general education teacher; specifically, they maintained a distance from each other, and there was no coordinated teaching taking place. Since I was new, I did not ask any questions on that day. However, I had my opportunity when the school organized staff development day, which included both the newly employed and established teachers. I was able to meet the SPED teacher who was the co-teacher I observed in the general education classroom. The SPED teacher disclosed that the general education teacher does not talk to her and that they had never planned a lesson together. Her position and presence in the class were closer to an aide than a co-teacher. I instantly began to have panic attacks and anxiety and was already informed that I was going to be a co-teacher. Everyone I spoke to within my new district had nothing positive to disclose about the co-teaching program, mentioning only conflicts and lack of understanding of how the program was being implemented.

Eventually, I got to meet my co-teacher, who would be my partner in the general education classroom. The school's Vice Principal, who was in charge of the SPED programs, informed teachers during the staff development that the general education teachers were the teachers of record and content knowledge experts, while the SPED teachers would provide content adaptations for the students with disabilities within the class. As a content knowledge

expert, she would provide the direct instructions and be responsible for the gradings and academic progress report for both the special and general education students. I had the opportunity to talk to my partner before the end of the staff development. She revealed that she had never received any kind of training or blueprint concerning the co-teaching program. This corroborated the views of other co-teachers I had met, who had expressed a similar opinion. Co-teaching had applied in the district for more than 2 years, but it appeared like teachers in the program had not received any professional training concerning the program. I was nervous about the negative picture being painted by the other teachers, where the SPED teachers felt like they were being treated like paraprofessionals. These experiences formed the backdrop of my positionality in this study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 dealt with the study design and research questions that guided the study. Furthermore, the importance of using qualitative research design instead of quantitative research was discussed. Also, this chapter highlights the research methods used (data elicitation and data recording) and their significance to the study. The nature of the participants of the study was discussed, as well as the limitations, context, and epistemology of the study.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This study investigated the perspectives of high school teachers on the loss of their professional teaching space owing to the co-teaching program. Co-teaching is a strategy of instruction that requires SPED and general education teachers to teach students of general education alongside special education students.

In Chapter 3, I had discussed the research design and methodology, how the research was conceptualized, the design of the research questions, how the participants were recruited, and the description of the participants, as well as the procedure used in data collection and how the data was analyzed.

Presentation of Findings

As stated in Chapter 3, an inductive approach was used. This involved the identification of codes and categories from the interview questions (pre-set codes) and development of coding frames. As suggested in the introductory part of this chapter, discussions were integrated with the findings of other research studies from the literature. However, before discussing the themes found in the study, below I am present the voices of the individual participants, which will help the readers connect and understand the perspectives of the participants.

The Participants

Jane James (Special Education Teacher). I emigrated from the Pacific Island many years ago to the United States of America. I was a teacher before I came to the United States of America because both my parents were teachers in the Philippines. I have been teaching for a total number of 16 years now, with 10 of the 16 years in the field of Special Education. I started my career as a Special Education Teacher in a Non-public Special Education School in Pittsburg,

California, before I transferred to a public school. I have been a co-teacher for 3 years. I co-taught World History in 10th grades and United States History in 11th grade.

When co-teaching was started in my school district, teachers were hesitant. We were not given any training and had no idea about our roles or responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. We had no idea how to divide the responsibilities or split the classroom. About 80% of both the general education and special education teachers rejected the idea of co-teaching and did not want to do it. Students were thrown into confusion on whose authority to follow in the classroom since there were two teachers. There was confusion about everything. Co-teaching is a learning process, a learning relationship, and requires time to establish or build a relationship between teachers. Teachers were dumbed together without knowledge of each other or what to do. There was no training of any form giving to us. It was like, 'Here you go.'

So, when I walked into another teacher's space, I was confused, not knowing what to do. I stood at the back of the classroom without the knowledge of the subject assigned, without prior meeting with the other teacher. The teacher and I met randomly that first day. We were not introduced to each other, and I did not have the opportunity to shadow anybody. Nobody explained anything to us.

Space sharing takes a lot of time, hard work, and discussing the boundaries. How is it going to work? Most of the general education teachers do not welcome the idea of sharing space. There should be only one queen in the house.

Aisha Thomas (Special Education Teacher). I attended Chico college in California and graduated with a liberal Major's degree. When I had started school, I planned to be an English Major to teach in a high school general education classroom. However, my mom had taught students with moderate to severe disabilities, and that influenced me to eventually become

a special education teacher. I co-teach Algebra 1 with a general education teacher who has taught algebra for 6 years. I feel like when the program was introduced it was the idea that two teachers should be partners in the classroom so that they can meet the needs of both the general and special education students. But what I currently experience in the field is like the difference between reading a textbook and experiencing it. About 60% of teachers do not accept the program, while 40% appear to be interested in co-teaching. However, the 40% of teachers that are interested are the newer teachers hired by the school district, and teachers who went into a new subject area after having taught a different subject in the past and are looking for extra support in the classroom.

I move round to five different classrooms every day of the week while my co-teacher stays in one classroom. Personal space is very important to teachers. Space is everything. If you have your own classroom, you can decorate it, able to keep everything in a certain way; like you have your system in place.

Last year, I walked into my co-taught classroom, it's kind of an awkward moment. It made me…she was kind of reserved. She did not want to have any communication with me. There was a student in the class watching the whole thing. I walked into the classroom and said 'Hi.' She looked up and said nothing. I went on to say, 'I am your co-teacher.' And she replied, 'okay?' The classroom was empty at this time because all freshmen students were gone for the freshman orientation. She did not stand up from her desk, or anything. So, I was like, 'should I come back later, or do you need me to do anything?' and she said 'nope.' She left me hanging and continued to do her paperwork. So, I ended up leaving.

Joyce Boyd (Special Education Teacher). I have been a teacher for 13 years and have co-taught for 2 years now. When I was asking what it means to be a co-teacher, I had no

information from the administration about it even though I ask. I used to be a Life Skills teacher. Eventually, I went online and conducted my own research on what it means. I also studied a couple of books on it to get a general idea on what co-teaching was about. Otherwise, we were pretty much left on our own to figure out things, like thrown out there.

For example, the first time I arrived in my co-taught class, I was nervous, did not know what was coming since I was coming from an SDC classroom. This was my first time going to a class with high functioning students. In all my teaching career I have always been in a Life Skill classroom and dealt with life skills students. My first 2 weeks in the general education classroom was overwhelming. It's tough. Also, one of my biggest challenges emotionally was the students thinking and treating me like an aide in the classroom. They did not consider me a teacher. I have tried to correct this impression and make them understand that I am a trained teacher, like the general education teacher except that we have different credentials in different areas of education. They still look at me like a paraprofessional. I spent a whole year trying to dispel this assumption and gave up. I accept my situation. Now I don't correct them anymore; I don't care anymore. One day I just said to myself, 'Whatever'. They don't get it. They continue to see me as an assistant teacher and the general education teacher as the main teacher in the classroom. The general education teacher does all the instructions in the classroom, and I do all the behavior referrals, which does not help the situation.

I don't have any personal space. I am just like the kid in the classroom. The general education teacher has all the space, it is her classroom, and I just come in like one of her students. I feel very confused about the co-teaching setup. I carry everything. All my stuff is all over the place since I move from one class to the other with no space of my own.

Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher). I have been a teacher for 26 years. I started teaching in the Pacific Island before coming to America. I wanted to be a surgeon but could not afford the financial obligations. I had done a Career Inventory Survey that indicated teaching as an area of interest. I opted out to become a teacher, a second career, which is a second career choice, though I have no regrets.

I have been a co-teacher in different school districts over many years. The government claimed there are schools in California that have successes in co-teaching using both SPED teachers and general education teachers in the classroom to support students. However, the most important point is, are teachers open about how they feel about the program? In the perspectives of the special education teachers, from my knowledge, you cannot do anything about how you feel. We were told to go to the general education classroom and co-teach, and we complied. It was not an issue of choice. From the perspectives of the general education teachers, I believe not every one of them welcomes the idea. They don't want anybody in their classroom, is the impression I always get and what I always hear. I also believe their resistance stems from the fact that many of them were not trained on co-teaching before the program was introduced and have no clue on what the goals or expectation of co-teaching are.

Some teachers take it negatively. Some SPED teachers are lucky because some co-teachers are welcoming. For example, my co-teacher is welcoming. However, do I have space in her classroom? I believe no, I don't. This is because it is her room and not my room. I have just a small table and see that I don't have an equal partnership with the general education teacher. This visual creates the wrong impression about who I am to the students. They see that I have a very small table and see that I don't have an equal partnership with the general education teacher. Some of the students treat me like I am a lesser teacher than the general

education teacher. The general education teacher is the one that leads the instruction and viewed

by the students as the real teacher in the classroom.

Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher). I came from the families of teachers.

My background prepared me to become a high school teacher. I currently teach as a general

education teacher. However, when I started my credentials, I wanted to be a special education

teacher but switched along the way to become a general education teacher. I currently teach 12th

grade English Language and have 26 years of teaching experience. I have co-taught for 5 years

now.

The set-up of co-teaching in my school district makes it impossible to achieve equal

status. How can I and the SPED teacher teach the subject 50-50 when I am the content

knowledge specialist in the subject? After the implementation of the program, as time went on, it

became clearer to me that many of the teachers that were placed from the SPED classroom did

not have background knowledge in the subject areas where they were placed. It really kind of

placed the SPED teachers in the classrooms like paraprofessionals since their job was reduced to

helping individual students with who have 504 plans. Also, they help to modify the curriculum.

They do not stand in front of the classroom teaching the subjects like the general education

teachers or know the subject matter to carry out the task effectively.

For example, from the English department, few teachers accept the co-teaching. The

majority of the general education teachers are skeptical of having the special education co-teach

with them. I have never felt uncomfortable having a co-teacher come to my classroom. I also

feel and wished they could have their own desks but because the classrooms are so small, they

don't. The co-teaching classrooms were not prepared for this program, to accommodate two

teachers. Maybe a few of the classrooms have been able to create a little desk for their co-teachers, but the majority of the classrooms do not have desks for co-teachers.

Mary Lisbon (General Education Teacher). I have been a teacher for 10 years and co-taught for 4 years. I teach geometry and Algebra 1. I co-teach geometry and received only a 1-day workshop on the co-teaching program. Teachers were just thrown into this program. The SPED teachers leave their classrooms and go to the general education classrooms. The SPED teacher comes to my classroom. I brought a little desk to create space for the SPED teacher, so she can feel welcomed when she comes to my classroom. She was appreciative. However, she did not feel the sense of having her own personal space, even with my effort. You know the SPED teachers are like chameleons; always having to change and adapt to the general education teachers' classroom space as they move around different classrooms. This puts the general education teachers more in control. Space sharing should be 50-50, but this is not so. The SPED teachers do not have their personal space, and this makes them feel bad.

You won't feel like you are a 100% teacher, like the general education teachers. The general education teachers do most of the work, which makes the SPED teachers feel bad because the SPED teachers are out busy with lots of special education responsibilities. We have no planning time together. When the SPED teacher enters the classroom, she is always lost because she came in during the middle of the lesson. She tries to help. I keep photocopies on her desk, so she can help use the photocopies.

Again as stated in the introduction of Chapter 4, by presenting the voices of the participants, I was aiming to create a connection between the readers and the participants, to identify with each of their experiences, and understand the feelings of loss, the lack of identity they felt from being dislocated from a familiar space to an unfamiliar space, and the impact these

displacements had on their working life. The first four narratives were the voices of the special education teachers who participated in the co-teaching program, whereas the last two narratives were the voices of the general education teachers, as they experienced the co-teaching program and had to share their own classroom space with the special education teachers.

Themes

Six themes were identified from the narratives of the participants: Co-teaching program perspectives; co-teaching partnership and cohabitation; theoretical understanding, and perspective about changes to professional space; emotional impact; personalities; and perspectives of teachers on administrative support

These themes will first be organized into categories with emerging sub-themes, which I will then describe further.

Theme 1 – Co-teaching program perspectives.

a. Definition of co-teaching

b. Understanding co-teaching strategies

c. Connecting theory to practice

Many of the literature reviews on co-teaching highlight the lack of universal definitions of the term and the misunderstanding of its application. Theme 1 investigated how the teachers define co-teaching and relate the meaning to their field practice.

Ms. Lisbon, a general education teacher, defines co-teaching as a collaborative process between two teachers, where the two teachers plan the class lesson together, and each of the two teachers partially teaches the lesson (50-50); when one is teaching in front of the classroom, the other teacher walks around the class, and they both take turns in teaching. Adding to these

definitions, Ms. Johnson (General Education Teacher) defined the term as: "co-teaching is the sharing of teaching responsibilities, and the subject area equally, 50-50."

While Ms. Thomas (Special Education Teacher) defined co-teaching as "a classroom with two teachers with co-shared responsibilities equally, a combination of switching off between lecturing and classroom monitoring roles." Ms. James (Special Education Teacher) stated that:

> when two teachers sharing the classroom, it should be a 50-50 arrangement. There should be equal responsibility, but this is not the reality and is not happening in the program. There is insufficient time to prepare. As a SPED teacher, I have my own responsibilities that the general education teachers do not have, such as working on IEPs.

Similarly, Ms. Bermuda (Special Education Teacher) further explained that the concept of the co-teaching program requires that the general education teacher and special education teacher combine their expertise to help both the general and special education students. However, a 50-50 sharing of responsibility does not happen. Furthermore, according to her, "central space must be created for two teachers to set up together at 50-50". Also, Ms. Boyd (special education teacher) stated that co-teaching is when the general education teacher and the special education teacher work together to ensure the special education students, resource students, and the general education students stay at the same level. Explaining this further, Ms. Boyd said, "co-teaching is helping students with disabilities achieve the same academic level as the general education students".

These definitions from both the general and special education teachers have one common theme: co-teaching is about two teachers with different expertise in the same classroom working together to support students of different categories.

Table 2: Direct quotes from the six study participants.

Jane James (Special Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching is a learning process, a learning relationship, and requires time to establish or build a relationship between two teachers."
Marylee Lisbon (General Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching is a collaborative process between two teachers, where the two teachers plan the class lesson together, each of the two teachers partially teach the lesson, 50-50; when one is teaching in front of the classroom, the other teacher walks around the class; and they both take turns in teaching."
Aisha Thomas (Special Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching, in my opinion, is a classroom with two teachers with co-shared responsibilities equally; a combination of switching between lecturing and classroom monitoring roles."
Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching is when general education and special education teachers put together their expertise to help the students in the class—whether general or special education students, to support them to have access to the curriculum."
Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching is the sharing of teaching responsibilities, and the subject area equally, 50-50."
Joyce Boyd (Special Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching is when the general and special education teacher work together to support the special education students, resource students, and general education students to stay on the same level."

These findings show that the participants have a clear understanding of the concept of co-teaching, as explained by Murawski (2009), in that co-teaching must include "two or more adults, both professionals, working collaboratively, delivering substantive instruction, to a heterogeneous group of students, in the same space" (p. 25). In retrospect, this finding suggests that the participants have a foundational knowledge of the strategies for implementing the co-teaching program. Thus, understanding of the concept is unlikely to be a core challenge in co-teaching.

Theme 2 – Partnership and cohabitation in a co-teaching program.

a. Theoretical and practical understanding of a shared relationship.

b. Subject area knowledge.

c. Shared responsibilities

The findings on theme two revealed that both the special and general education teachers understand the theory and practice of co-teaching, which includes maintaining an equal co-teaching partnership with neither of the co-teaching partners subservient to the other partner. This understanding is consistent with the views of Murawski (2009), who stated that the co-teaching partnership should be "two or more co-equal (preferably credentialed) faculty working together" (p.30). Furthermore, these findings indicate that the participants understand that co-teaching requires the teachers to cohabitate with one another as equal partners sharing the same classroom, which they disclosed affects the co-teaching partnership since this is not happening 50-50, as specified in theory. Again, this finding is in line with the research study of Murawski (2009) who explained that, when a teacher feels she or he has more claim in the classroom as the teacher of record, it negates the whole concept of equal partnership and makes the other partner feel unequal in the relationship. This view was buttressed by the participants, who used the term 50-50 to describe what they meant by an equal partnership. Furthermore, the participants

believed the relationship should involve each partner sharing responsibilities equally, in addition

to having similar background knowledge and experiences in the subject area they have been

selected to co-teach. However, some of the participants expressed that this has not always been

the case. As stated by Ms. Johnson (General Education Teacher):

> In practice, co-teaching principles have been unattainable, especially in the subject area. The SPED teachers do not stand in front of the classroom teaching the subject like the general education teachers or know the subject matter to carry out the job effectively.

Collaborating this view, Ms. Bermuda (Special Education Teacher) stated that "in actuality,

sharing responsibilities 50-50 does not happen". Furthermore, the finding showed that the

special education teachers believed some of the general education teachers who have co-taught

classes are territorial about their classrooms; and even though they understand that the co-

teaching partnership should be 50-50, they were not willing to allow an equal divide. Ms. Boyd

(Special Education Teacher) stated that:

> ...the collaboration between the two teachers mainly depends upon the general education teachers. This is because sometimes they have their own agenda and prefer not to collaborate with the special education teachers at all. This is actually quite challenging in the co-teaching partnership.

The observations of Ms. Boyd were also reflected in Pugach and Sapon-Shevin's (1987) research

study when the authors stated that the general education teachers barely recognized the

relationship between them and the special education teachers as a partnership. To explain this

point further, Ms. Boyd expressed that:

> The responsibilities should be equal; however, I and the general education teacher do not have the same prep with each other. We are both given different prep periods. How can we collaborate together when we don't share the same prep time?

Furthermore, the special education teachers acknowledge not having the same level of content

knowledge as the general education teachers. Also, the participants believed that adequate

planning of class time and cooperation with the general education teachers (by letting them have the curriculum and lesson plans at the beginning of the school year) might help the situation. This view of the special education teachers was reflected in Moore's (2004) research study, who stated that special education teachers complained of a lack of content knowledge, while both the general education and special education teachers believed they lacked the skills that are necessary for collaborations as co-teachers.

Also, most of the participants believed that the school district needed to take responsibility for helping the special education teachers acquire expertise in the subject area they are expected to co-teach. For example, Ms. Bermuda (Special Education Teacher) stated:

> In the area of content knowledge, SPED teachers also need to be supported to become content experts like their counterparts so that they are not relegated to the background by the general education teachers.

Table 3: Co-teaching partnership and co-habitation (Theme 2).

Jane James (Special Education Teacher)	"50-50 should be what is happening between two teachers sharing a co-teaching classroom. There should be equal responsibility, but this is not happening in the program. There is not enough time to prepare. As a SPED teacher I have my own responsibilities, like the IEP, that the general education teachers do not have".
Mary Lisbon (General Education Teacher)	"Co-teachers are overbooked. They wear many hats and are thinly spread out by their schedules. For example, SPED teachers do the IEPs, annuals and triennials, parents' conferencing, students' assessments or testing, and a lot of other responsibilities. Their many responsibilities prevent them from having enough time to collaboratively plan with the general education teachers"
Aisha Thomas (Special Education Teacher)	"I feel like when the program was introduced it was with the idea that two teachers should be partners in the classroom so that they can meet the needs of both the general education students and the special education students. But what I currently experience in the field of practice is like the difference between reading a textbook and experiencing it. I don't think it was implemented correctly as it should. The practical implementation process in person is different…"

Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher)	"I went to a lot of co-teaching seminars and trainings. The co-teaching models and structure that were taught are very ideal. However, it is very frustrating to see that none of those principles are being implemented."
Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher)	"How can I and a SPED teacher teach the subject 50-50 when I am the content knowledge specialist in the subject? After the implementation, as time went on, it became clearer to me that many of the SPED teachers placed in the general education classrooms as co-teachers did not have the background knowledge in the subject areas in which they were placed to co-teach. For example, I have a SPED teacher that had been placed in my English classroom that had more knowledge in math…"
Joyce Boyd (Special Education Teacher)	"I tried to collaborate ahead of class to kind of know what the general education teacher was teaching so I could support her. I was very interested in knowing the content, so I could help teach the students if she got called out in an emergency. However, this was tough to balance and divide my duties as a SPED teacher and supporting the general education teacher."

The views expressed by the general education teachers in Theme 2 indicate a lack of acceptance that the roles between them and the special education teachers could be shared equally in cognizance of the fact that special education teachers have many other responsibilities and lack the same level of content knowledge. On the other hand, the special education teachers expressed their frustrations at not experiencing an equal partnership, as would be expected in co-teaching.

Thus, the expressions by the general education teachers show feelings of being forced (by the school district) into a situation without their consent, and the special education teachers are feeling robbed of their image as professionals in a relationship that should be 50-50 in nature. These feelings were captured by Pugach and Sapon-Shevin 1(987) and Lieberman (1985), with the latter describing how general education teachers feel like "an uninvited bride for a wedding thrown together by special educators" (p. 294).

Theme 3 – Perspectives about the changes to professional space.

a. Definition of space

b. Changes to professional space

c. Perspectives of special education teachers about space loss

d. Perspectives of general education teachers about space loss

Special education teachers' perspective. The findings on this theme show that, compared to the general education teachers, the special education teachers were more impacted by the co-teaching program in terms of space loss. For example, Ms. Johnson (General Education Teacher) stated that "the loss of space is felt more by the special education teachers, not by the general education teachers". Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher) added that the current co-teaching set-up "puts the general education teachers in control…the SPED teachers do not have their personal space".

However, both the special education teachers and the general education teachers have similar opinions about the concept of personal space and what loss of space meant to them.

Thus, most of the participants explained that personal space extends beyond a physical environment, whether it is professional or not. In their perspectives, space includes a person's personal identity and everything about who you are. Many of them compared professional space to living in your own home. For example, Ms. James (Special education teacher) explained that "space is part of someone's personal identity, there should be only one queen in the house". The special education teachers felt ostracized in their own work environment and put in uncomfortable situations. Corroborating this, another special education teacher stated:

> Space sharing takes a lot of time, work, and discussing. How is it going to work? Most of the general education teachers do not welcome the idea of sharing their own classroom space.

Furthermore, Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher) explained: "The SPED space sharing

should be 50-50, and this is not so… and this makes the SPED teachers feel bad". As I listened,

one participant after the other expressed their feelings on this theme. I listened to the tones of

their voices and inflections and observed their hand gestures and facial expressions. I detected

feelings of frustrations and helplessness. Describing this situation, Ms. James (Special

Education Teacher) expressed:

> The administration did not think about this because they acted like when you are giving
> the job, you should do whatever comes with that job. In their view, you should make it
> work. You are asked to jump in and do what you need to do.

These feelings were reflected in Monnet's (2011) analysis of the symbolism of space to human

beings when he explained that, "A place can be considered symbolic whenever it means

something to a group of individuals, in such a way that it contributes to giving an identity to the

group" (p. 562). To buttress this view, the author stated further that, "the symbolic dimension of

space should not be taken lightly since it is what gives internal coherency to the living space of

each person." (p.562). This explains why the concept of space cannot be overlooked in the set-

up of a co-teaching program because of the way it impacts the stakeholders involved. Ms. James

(Special education Teacher) defined space to mean:

> Space is part of someone's personal identity. For example, how you want to welcome
> your student through the routine arrangement of the classroom, how you arrange the
> chairs in your classroom, your personal touch to the classroom set up makes it your
> personal space.

While Ms. Thomas (Special Education Teacher) views space as:

> Space is everything. If you have your own classroom, you can decorate it, able to keep
> everything in a certain way; like you have your system in place.

Also, Boyd, J. (Special Education Teacher) stated that personal space "reflects who you are, and

how you handle things, the way you organize the classroom is a reflection of you". In Ms.

Bermuda's (Special education teacher) view, "personal space is where I could work, decide what I am going to teach, or what activities to do with my students". In a similar light, Ms. Lisbon (General education Teacher) defined space to be, "a place you can work, and you know where everything is laid out. Personal space reflects who you are". Further elaborating on this definition, she added, "…awards displayed on the walls, family pictures, a classroom set up for students, and how desks are arranged, students' work displayed, students' reference books, etcetera, etcetera…". These varied explanations of what space means to the participants was reflected in Proshansky's work (1983), when he explained that the concept of a place and identity is a "potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings" (p. 60).

The definitions given by both the special education and the general education teachers, as corroborated by Proshansky's research, signifies the central importance of professional space in a person's life. Furthermore, in retrospect, the descriptions provided by the participants, which include personal identity, memories (such as family pictures and the display of awards), a classroom set up through the arrangement of students' chairs, and work materials, provide the students a feeling of belongingness in the classroom, which helps to form an in-depth view of the teachers' feelings on loss of their professional space. Further highlighting these views, and in support of this analysis, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) stated that:

> …when individuals are preparing for some occupation or profession, the relevant physical settings in this socialization period undoubtedly have a very strong influence on place-identity. In these instances, as well, that is, not only in early childhood, we can expect place-identity to occur with respect to the places and spaces of educational and occupational training. Many examples can be given: the school and classroom for the teacher…

This explanation, which connects the relevance of the work environment to place-identity, also supports the feelings of the teachers on how strongly they feel about the loss of their professional space.

Further findings on the theme revealed that the special education teachers felt demoted to the position of paraprofessionals, marginalized, and disrespected in the way the students viewed their current positions as co-teachers when compared to the general education teachers. On the other hand, the general education teachers appeared to be empathetic to the special education teachers and felt like the positions of the special education teachers were reduced to that of paraprofessionals in the co-teaching classrooms.

Expressing their perspective on how they feel about such as loss of space, Ms. James (Special Education Teacher) stated, "It is a very stressful situation to leave my space. It is a struggle every day to prepare". In response, I asked, "Why is it a struggle?", to which she replied:

> One is thinking and worrying about where to put their stuff in the other's classroom–where to put your teaching materials–and also worrying about respecting the other teacher's space, which is not your own space, and also respecting their stuff.

The feelings expressed by this participant denote not only the physical inconvenience of not having a place to put things but also the emotional impact of the worries and feelings of uncertainties that come with being moved around. Furthermore, Ms. Thomas stated:

> I move around to five different classrooms every day of the week while my co-teacher stays in one classroom…like me going from classroom to classroom, I don't have one spot where to keep all of my things. I have little tiny places in each classroom where I keep them, but even that tiny space is disrupted by other teachers using the same space and keeping their things there.

The perspective of this participant indicate the lack of a permanent classroom where she co-teaches, as well as a lack of assigned space and desk in any of these classrooms since she must carry all her belongings on her person wherever she is assigned to co-teach. Also, this situation

also denotes that the participants co-teach more than one subject in the program. This collaborates the opinions of the general education teachers that one of the challenges in the co-teaching program is a lack of subject matter competency by the special education teachers. For example, Ms. Johnson (General Education Teacher), stated, "After the implementation of co-teaching program, as time went on, it became clearer to me that many of the SPED teachers that were placed in the co-taught classrooms did not have background knowledge in the subject area they were placed".

Furthermore, the findings showed that even though some of the general education teachers attempted to bring a small desk into their classroom to accommodate the SPED teachers, this gesture did not change the feelings of not having personal space. For example, Ms. Bermuda (Special Education Teacher) stated that:

> Some teachers take the loss of space negatively. Some SPED teachers may be lucky because some co-teachers are welcoming. My co-teacher is welcoming. However, do I have space in her classroom? I believe that no, I don't.

The participant explained that she views the co-teaching classroom as the general education teacher's room, and "not my room". Similar feelings were expressed by most of the special education teachers. She further explained that all she has there is a small table which creates the wrong impression of her position to the students. According to the participant:

> This visual creates a wrong impression about who I am to the students. They see that I have a very small space with a very small table and see that I don't have an equal partnership with the general education teacher.

The same the participant stated: "Some of the students treat me like I am a lesser teacher than the general education teacher." These same feelings were expressed by Ms. Johnson (Special Education Teacher) who stated that:

> One of my biggest challenges emotionally was the students thinking and treating me like an aide in the classroom. They did not consider me a teacher. I have tried to correct this impression and make them understand that I am a trained teacher, much like the general

education teacher, except that we have different credentials. They still look at me as a paraprofessional. I spent a whole year trying to dispel this assumption and gave up.

These perspectives of a loss of professional space by the special education teachers due to the co-teaching program indicate their lack of satisfaction in the current set-up of the co-teaching program, feelings of being relegated to the background, and not being rightly recognized as credentialed teachers who, similarly to the general education teachers, have many years of college education. Thus, Lamport (2012) stated it well when he concluded that many teachers were still reluctant to accept a co-teaching role in a co-taught program. According to the author, "it is when teachers are fully prepared that the inclusion model will yield positive results" (p. 54).

Perspectives of general education teachers. The findings on the perspectives of the general education teachers revealed that they felt more advantageous in the co-teaching program relationship because they were not relocated from their classrooms. As Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher) stated, "the SPED teacher comes to my class". However, the general education teachers felt empathetic to the special education teachers and stated that the general education teachers tried to make the best of the situation they have been forced into by the school district. To support this view, Lisbon stated:

> I believe relocation is hard for the special education teachers. It is hard for them to do their job when they don't have something permanent in the co-taught class or general education classroom.

Thus, according to the general education teachers, even though they tried to create some small space in their classrooms for the special education co-teachers, it was nevertheless a very challenging process.

Also, the findings in this theme indicated that the participants (General Education Teachers) found their classroom spaces too small to accommodate a co-teacher based on the

rationale that the original set up of the classroom did not consider the co-teaching program. Further findings from the participants showed that even after the conception of the program, the school administrators did not make any arrangements, such as bringing in extra furniture or computers to accommodate two teachers. The general education teachers explained that there was no consideration given for co-teachers to relocate to a bigger space, which made it difficult for them to accommodate the incoming SPED teachers who were sent to their classrooms as co-teachers.

Thus, the general education teachers stated that they felt sorry for the special education teachers who must move from class to class or period to period throughout the day and must carry their personal teaching materials with them because of a lack of space in the co-taught classroom. For example, Ms. Johnson (General Education Teacher) stated:

> The problem here is that there are no spaces in the classroom and no adequate furniture for the co-teaching set-up. This means that the co-teacher must carry all their belongings for each class that they go into with them, from one period to period.

Also, the findings on this theme show that the general education teachers made efforts to integrate the special education teachers by providing a small desk area in the corner of their classrooms. To support this point, Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher) stated that she "brought a little desk to create space for the SPED teacher, so she can feel welcomed when she comes to my classroom." Corroborating this view, Ms. Johnson (General Education Teacher) also expressed that "I feel like and wished they could have their own desks, but because the classrooms are so small, they don't." Also, the special education teachers acknowledged the gesture of having a small desk in a small corner of the classroom but explained that it was still not their space. According to most of the SPED teachers, the general education teachers' assistant, who are normally senior students in the school, also use the same desk.

Furthermore, the SPED teachers explained that some students also use the desk when they are not in the classroom because, when they come back, they are often unable to find things they had left in that area that they thought belonged to them. In line with this finding, one of the special education teachers stated that:

> Probably 10% of the space in the general education classroom is all you have that is allocated to you by the general education teacher. We are not able to put our belongings there because some teachers don't care about cautioning the students against meddling with your things or going into the little space giving to you by saying, 'Hey, don't go there—that space belongs to so and so teacher'. (Boyd, J., Special Education Teacher).

What this indicates is that the general education teachers desired to make space for their incoming co-teachers but felt constrained by their classroom sizes, which were not specifically designed for the co-teaching program, as well as a lack of extra furniture and computers. Thus, even though the special education teachers acknowledged these efforts, they still felt marginalized, developed a sense of loss, felt uprooted from their comfort zone, and were emotionally impacted by lack of recognition as an equal teacher.

Considering the participants' statements above, I have provided some of the direct quotes from the participants of the study that described the importance they attach to space and how they feel about the loss of their professional teaching space.

Table 4**:** Perspectives of teachers about changing their professional space (Theme 3).

Jane James (Special Education Teacher)	"Space is part of someone's personal identity. A teacher's classroom is part of personal identity. You turn the classroom into your personal space. For example, how you want to welcome your student through routine arrangement of the classroom, how you arrange the chairs in your classroom—your personal touch to the classroom set-up makes it your personal space. It should be for yourself, like your own personal home. There should be only one queen in the house."
Mary Lisbon (General Education Teacher)	"The current co-teaching set-up puts general education teachers in control. The SPED teachers do not have their own personal space. You won't feel like you are a 100% teacher like the general education teachers."
Aisha Thomas (Special Education Teacher)	"Personal space will be a spot, whether at home or any place that would be you, or specifically yours. Personal space is very important to teachers—space is everything. If you have your own classroom you are able to decorate it, able to keep everything in a certain way; like you have a system in place. If someone comes in and disrupts it, that is very frustrating."
Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher)	"…personal space is where I could work, decide what I am going to teach, or what activities to do with my students. The fact is that even though my co-teacher is sweet and nice, I don't have personal space… my co-teacher is welcoming. However, do I have space in her classroom? I believe no, I don't. This is because it is her room and not my room. I have just a small table there. This visual creates a wrong impression about who I am to the students. They see that I have q very small space with a very small table and see that I don't have an equal partnership with the general education teachers."
Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher)	"I have never felt uncomfortable having a co-teacher come to my classroom. I also feel like and wished they could have their own desks, but because the classrooms are so small, they don't. The co-teach classrooms were not prepared for this program to accommodate two teachers. Maybe a few classrooms have been able to create a little desk for their co-teachers, but the majority of the classrooms do not have desks for co-teachers… the loss of personal space is felt more by the special education teachers, not by the general education teachers."
Joyce Boyd (Special Education Teacher)	"Personal space reflects who you are and how you handle things; the way you organize the classroom reflects you. Personal space? I don't really have a personal space. I am just like the kids or students. The general education teacher has all the space. It is her classroom, and I just come in like one of the students. I am like a visitor; I have no personal space. I don't have a desk. I don't have a computer. I sort of just sit on the students' desk just like the students who come into the classroom."

This theme resonates in me when I reflect on my own experiences of teaching in a general education classroom as a co-teacher. Also, it helped me to identify with the views of Esterberg (2002) when the researcher stated that, "Researchers should begin by immersing themselves in the world inhabited by those they wish to study instead of beginning a theory or preconceived notion" (p.88). Relating to this view, I reflected on my experiences as a co-teacher. My co-teacher was welcoming and collaborated with me immensely on the lesson plans. We both had a similar background in a subject area from both of our first degrees, even though I was a special education teacher. We co-taught first-year English Language classes. The general education teacher studied journalism for her first degree, and I studied mass communications, which included journalism; and so, we were equals in subject area competency. However, the lack of space was huge for me in the sense that I never had my own desk and chair, or my own little cupboard or area to keep my personal belongings. I found myself keeping my things at the back of the classroom together with the students' backpack because that place was designated for the students. I had to carry my things all day long. It was very inconvenient, and this made me feel like a total stranger in that environment. Also, I had to ask for permission to use anything or touch anything.

These experiences helped me to understand the many terms used by the participants of the interview when they expressed their feelings. I became very familiar with the data since I conducted the interviews, listened to the recordings several times, and did the transcription; all of which contributed to having a clear understanding of the vantage point of the participants as I analyzed the data.

Theme 4 – Emotional impact.

a. Glorified aide

b. Demoralization

c. Feelings of inadequacies

d. Feelings of helplessness and dejection

The Emotional Impact theme was not part of the pre-set questions for the interview. This theme emerged during the analysis of the interview data. Much of the existing literature on co-teaching programs have highlighted the problems with co-teaching as a lack of time and shared space (Malian & McRae, 2010), a lack of skills in classroom management, and a lack of collaborative lesson planning (Brinkman & Twiford, 2012); a lack of administrative supports (Walthier-Thomas, 1997); and a lack of adequate planning time between the special education teachers and the general education teachers (Friend, 2008); however, the loss of personal space and the theme of emotional impact, as expressed by the participants in their responses, has not been explicitly identified as a core problems associated with co-teaching. Thus, as I engaged each of the participants during the interviews and analyzed the data, the theme of emotional impact emerged from the responses of the special education teacher. Analyzing many of their expressions on their feelings of frustration due to their nomadic movements as part of the co-teaching program; from class to class and period to period, Ms. James stated: "It is a very stressful situation to leave my space; it is a struggle every day to prepare." I asked, "Why is this a struggle?" and she responded, "One is thinking and worrying about where to put your stuff in the other classroom, where to put your teaching materials, and worrying about respecting the other teacher's space, which is not your own space, and respecting their stuff as well." She began to whisper, which gradually faded away. I paused for a moment. There was complete silence between the two of us. I wanted to keep going with the interview but had to stop momentarily since the participant appeared to be struggling to catch her breath as she spoke in a

shaky voice, using repeated hand gestures and motions to demonstrate the intensity of her

feelings about the situation. After a while, she began to speak again in a quieter voice. "When it

is not your own classroom, you cannot put your personal pictures or arrange your personal

things. You cannot give the space a personal touch. It is emotionally stressful every day when

sharing space, cleaning up somebody else's mess." These expressions suggest that the loss of

the special education teachers' professional teaching space impacted them emotionally.

Ms. Bermuda expressed similar feelings by stating that "sometimes we are referred to as

glorified aides by the general education teachers; I hate to repeat it, but I do not buy this idea".

Furthermore, as my interviews with the participants progressed one after the other, when they

responded to the question of how they felt about space sharing and loss of their professional

teaching space, the emotional impact of the experience was frequently expressed and in very

deep tones. For example, Ms. Boyd, a special education teacher, stated:

> One of my biggest challenges emotionally was the students thinking and treating me like
> an aide in the classroom; they did not consider me a teacher. I have tried to correct this
> impression and make them understand that I am a trained teacher, similar to the general
> education teacher. They still look at me like a paraprofessional. I spent a whole year
> trying to dispel this assumption and gave up. I accepted my situation. Now I don't
> correct them anymore; I don't care anymore. One day, I just said to myself—whatever.

This statement, in my opinion, depicts a feeling of helplessness; a view which was corroborated

by the general education teachers' explanations on the opinion the general education teachers

hold about the special education teachers. For example, when I asked Ms. Bermuda (General

Education Teacher) how she would view the co-teaching partnership, she replied, "They are

glorified paraprofessionals." Furthermore, Bermuda explained that special education teachers do

not have their own space and, therefore, are not regarded as a "100% teacher like the general

education teachers". These statements support the feelings of the special education teachers,

who felt demoralized by not being recognized as an equal of the general education teachers. Ms.

Johnson (General Education teacher) stated that:

> From my perspective and the feedback received from my co-teachers, the students do not
> see them as real teachers; the students see them as paraprofessionals, who are just there to
> support the general education teachers. The students treat them as inferiors relative to the
> general education teachers.

A careful analysis of these expressions exposes the undertone of put-downs; specifically, with

the use of a derogatory term like, "glorified paraprofessional". This undoubtedly substantiates

the feelings expressed by the special education teachers and supports the theme of emotional

impact. Also, these situations were reflected in the research of Murawski (2009), who

expounded on the behaviors of secondary students as follows:

> First, we all know secondary students. If an adult is in the room, the students will want to
> know who he is and what his role is in the classroom. They want to identify and test his
> authority. If one teacher is always taking the lead role in direction, the students will
> quickly pick up on that, and the other teacher will find himself offering to help a student
> and hearing in response, "No thanks, I'll wait for the 'real teacher'" or the special
> educator will simply get the brush-off as the student bides his time waiting for the general
> education teacher to be free for a question. (p. 35)

The described scenario and situation further verify the feelings of put-downs and marginalization

that the special education teachers expressed in the research findings; of students viewing them

as inferior to the general education teachers.

Furthermore, findings on this theme show that the general education teachers were not

impacted emotionally by the loss of professional teaching space, as expressed by the special

education teachers. However, they did feel the physical discomfort and inconvenience of having

to find space in their classrooms for the co-teachers. The participants complained that the

management did not set up the classrooms for the program, and thus, the space was too small to

accommodate another teacher as an equal partner. Describing the situation, Ms. Johnson

(General Education Teacher) stated that:

The way most classrooms are set up in my school, there is a long table that blocks the back of the classroom where the computers are. The frontal class is occupied by the general education desk, and inside the class, towards the middle, are students seating arrangements. So, there is not enough space for a set up for the co-teacher.

Table 5: Emotional impact (Theme 4).

Jane James (Special Education Teacher)	"It is a very stressful situation to leave my space. It is a struggle every day to prepare." …" When it is not your own classroom, you cannot give the space a personal touch. It is emotionally stressful every day when sharing space, cleaning up somebody else's mess."
Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher)	"Sometimes we are referred to as glorified aides by the general education teachers; I hate to repeat it, but I do not buy this idea."
Joyce Boyd (Special Education Teacher)	"One of my biggest challenges emotionally was the students thinking and treating me like an aide in the classroom; they did not consider me a teacher. I have tried to correct this impression and make them understand that I am a trained teacher like the general education teacher. They still look at me like a paraprofessional. I spent a whole year trying to dispel this assumption and gave up. I accepted my situation. Now I don't correct them anymore; I don't care anymore. One day, I just said to myself – whatever."
Mary Lisbon (General Education Teacher)	"They are glorified paraprofessionals… special education teachers do not have their own space, and therefore, are not regarded as a 100% teacher like the general education teachers."
Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher)	"The students don't see them as real teachers, the students see them as paraprofessionals, who are just there to support the general education teachers. The students treat them as inferiors to the general education teachers."
Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher)	"The way most classrooms are set up in my school, there is a long table that blocks the back of the classroom where the computers are. The frontal class is occupied by the general education desk, and inside the class, towards the middle, are students seating arrangements. So there is insufficient space for a set up for the co-teaching."

Careful assessment of the views expressed in Figure 4, which revealed the emotional impact of the co-teaching program, especially on the SPED teachers was captured in the research study of Bessette (2008) who stated that: "Assuming that a special educator is highly qualified to provide direct instruction, is it ethical to underutilize his or her instructional expertise" (p.1392). This observation supports the feelings of the special education teachers who might not be content knowledge specialist in particular subjects but completed a 4-years course of study in different colleges and are specialists in their own field.

Theme 5 – Personalities.

    a. Matching of personalities

    b. Relationship building

    c. Space sharing

The findings on this emerging theme show that the participants believed that the co-teaching program would be more successful if teachers were matched according to personalities. They explained that when two people are matched based on their personalities, they would be opened to collaborations, which will lead to relationship building and agreements on key issues, which could otherwise be contentious if school administrators forced two teachers together as co-partners.

Furthermore, the participants disclosed that a lack of personality matching by program initiators created more problem in space sharing. The participants believed that if two teachers were put together based on their acceptance of each other's personalities and allowed to set up a neutral space for the co-teaching program, instead of using a general education teacher's classroom, which belongs to that teacher already, the problem with space would be ameliorated. Also, many of them believed that when two personalities match, they could bond together and

build up a relationship that would be beneficial to the program. These views were highlighted in

previous studies that compared a co-teaching relationship to marriage or parenting partnership

(Murawski, 2009), as well as in the work of Lieberman (1985), who stated that the special

education teachers felt like "an uninvited bride for a wedding thrown together by special

educators" (p. 294). Similarly, Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher) stated that:

> Teachers should be paired up according to their personalities since they need time to
> build a relationship. Teachers should build up space together, not one teacher going into
> another teacher's personal space.

Placing further emphasis on this, Ms. Thomas (Special Education Teacher) stated that:

> Personality matching will help. Having worked with different teachers for case
> managing, it's very difficult working with somebody who is unyielding and rigid; it will
> be difficult to work with somebody who does not want suggestions or implementing
> students' accommodations versus working with a partner who is more than happy to do
> it.

Expressing a similar view, Ms. Bermuda, stated that "You cannot place two strong people

together; or maybe you can, but only if they know each other very well and understand each

other's expectations from the beginning of the school year". Also, this participant provided

varied examples to explain her views. According to her:

> Both teachers should get clear expectations about discipline, how they will support the
> students together, what things one teacher likes, and the other teacher does not like, a
> matter of giving and taking. This makes the relationship to work.

Corroborating this opinion, Ms. Johnson who is a general education teacher, expressed that:

> If each teacher knows that they have the same kind of minds, share the same goals,
> believe in the same things, then they know that they are going to make it work and be
> effective in teaching students. If co-teaching is set up this way, it will eliminate personal
> conflicts between two teachers.

Furthermore, the findings on this theme indicate an interest in central space creation by the

stakeholders involved. The participants believed that if two people were to share space, it was

better to let them set up space together to achieve a 50-50 partnership. Supporting this view, Ms.

Bermuda (Special Education Teacher) stated that: "Ideally, the two teachers involved should be given a central place to set up together; to give both a sense of identity and equal right".

Expressing the same view, Ms. James (Special Education Teacher) stated that:

> co-teaching can work if two teachers have their separate classrooms, and they are giving a neutral space to set up together for co-teaching. If you are part of a space creation, it will help you to be prepared mentally and give you ownership of space in the classroom. Also, you will be able to create an identity for the students as well by the way you set up the classroom, such as chairs, their works, and establish expectations for them.

Also, the findings on this theme show that a lack of personality matching created friction in communication between the special education teachers and the general education teachers. Ms. Thomas (Special Education Teacher) explained her experience of walking into a class she was designated to co-teach. According to the participant:

> Last year, I walked into a classroom as co-teacher, and it felt awkward. She was kind of reserved. She did not want to have any communication with me. There was a student in the classroom watching the whole thing. I walked into the classroom and said, 'Hi'. She looked up and said nothing. I went on to say, 'I am your co-teacher'. To which she replied, "Okay?". The classroom was empty because all the freshmen had gone for orientation. She did not stand up from her desk or anything.

Evaluating this situation, one might ask how a supposed marriage relationship between the co-teachers would work under the described scenarios? Again, this takes us to the study of Murawski (2009), who posed the question of, "Why does it matter if teachers reflect and communicate?" (p.39). Responding to this question, the author stated that:

> In this respect, co-teaching is more like a marriage than in any other respect; communication is critical. If co-teachers are not able to share with each other, the relationship is doomed. (p. 39)

Thus, this analogy justifies the concerns of the participants that it was important to match personalities in space sharing and to facilitate communications between the co-teachers, which might help the co-teaching program to succeed.

Table 6**:** Personality matching (Theme 5).

Mary Lisbon (General Education Teacher)	"Teachers should be paired up according to their personalities since they need time to build a relationship. Teachers should build up space together, not only one teacher going into another teacher's personal space."
Aisha Thomas (Special Education Teacher)	"Personality matching will help. Having worked with different teachers for case managing, it's very difficult working with somebody who is unyielding and rigid…"
Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher)	"You cannot place two strong people together; or maybe you can, but only if they know each other well and understand each other's expectations from the beginning of the school year."
Jane James (Special Education Teacher)	"Co-teaching can work if two teachers have their separate classrooms; and they are giving a central space to set up together."

The feelings about co-teaching expressed by the different participants above clearly buttress the importance of personality matching in a co-teaching program. Furthermore, the opinions of these participants could be used as a reference point when setting up a co-teaching program, as highlighted by multiple researchers in the literature. For example, Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2008) stated that "the first step in successfully implementing co-teaching models in a school is to allow teachers to be a part of the planning and preparation periods" (p.126). In addition, Bessette (2008) stated that, "Partnership can make the teaching enterprise more fulfilling and more satisfying as co-teachers form bonds, teach and learn from one another, and provide support" (p.1377).

Theme 6- Administration.

a. Perspectives of general education teachers on administrative support

b. Perspectives of special education teachers on administrative support

c. Acceptance of the co-teaching program

d. Training

The findings of this theme are consistent with previous studies by Walthier-Thomas (1997), who stated that his research studies revealed teachers' opinions as lacking support from school administrators, inadequate professional development, and minimal time availability for case scheduling. The current study revealed that when the co-teaching was initiated for the first time, participants were not given formal training on the strategies of implementation and were scheduled for co-teaching classes without having the choice to choose who to co-teach with. For example, Ms. James (Special Education Teacher), when discussing teachers' reactions to the introduction of the co-teaching program, stated that:

> At first teachers were hesitant. They were not given any training; they had no ideas about their roles or responsibilities in the co-taught classroom.

Ms. Johnson, (General Education Teacher) responded similarly:

> We were not given any training during the initiation of the program. Later, a month or two into the program, we had a training in the form of a workshop when the district brought in outside educators. We have had training twice within the 5 years I have been in the co-teaching program.

These responses suggest the lack of support of the school administrators to provide training at the beginning stage of the program. In addition, the findings indicated that administrators did not consider the issue of space sharing when the program was initiated, nor did they seek input from the teachers on the appropriate partners to be paired with, nor put special education teachers to teach in the subject areas they felt competent in. This view was highlighted by Ms. Thomas (Special Education Teacher):

Information on classrooms were not discussed. It was in the head schedule, and we had to figure out what classes. Space was not taken into consideration. There was no training. The director forgot to train before the program started. Many people had been co-teaching for 3 years before having the opportunity to see what co-teaching is in practicality.

Corroborating this view, Ms. Bermuda (Special Education Teacher) stated:

Ideally, the two teachers involved should be given a central space to set up together; to give both a sense of identity and equal right. I went to a lot of co-teaching seminars and training. The co-teaching models and structure that were taught are very ideal. However, it is very frustrating to see that none of those principles are been implemented.

Further analysis of this response indicates that there is no connection between theory and practice. The teacher's observations, as noted here, reflect the lack of consistency by administrators to follow through with expectations. Bermuda stated that:

Relationship building, and personality matching were not considered in the co-teaching program. I was informed that I would co-teach and sent to a general education classroom. I had no choice. When you are asked to go, you just did what you are asked to do, no choice.

Further reemphasizing these views, Bermuda stated:

If I were an admin, I would not just support teachers to know what co-teaching looks like and what model to practice. Instead, I would work by preparing them emotionally, psychologically, mentally, giving them support on how to understand each other's personality.

These opinions reemphasize the views of Miller and Oh (2013), who stated that even when many teachers are in favor of the co-teaching program, there is still a lack of support and logistics in schools to facilitate the success of the program. Further mimicking these views, Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher), when speaking about the administrative role, stated, "Their hands are tied because of finances; they are working hard but are strapped for cash". Murawski (2009) stated that administrative support in a co-teaching program is a strong determinant factor in its success, stating that, "Administrators set the tone for the success-or failure-of inclusive practices such as co-teaching" (p.29).

Based on these responses and the theoretical framework of this dissertation, which constitutes the critical theory, I believe the mitigating circumstances of the introduction of the co-teaching program helped to generate a situation that encompassed the teachers' lack of acceptance of the program, highlighting a deficiency in emotional satisfaction due to loss of space and feelings of helplessness. This opinion might sound subjective, which is crucial in social science research (Bowen, 2009). However, Esterberg (2002) clarified this point when he stated that:

> In social science research, humans are the researchers as well as the objects of study, which means that pure objectivity is impossible. We have a vested interest in what we study. (p. 88)

Similarly, Flick (2014, p.67) highlighted that "texts are the basis of reconstruction and interpretation" and that "What status the text is given depends on the theoretical position of the study".

To further support this opinion, Ms. James (Special Education Teacher) stated that "About 80% of both the general education and special education teachers rejected the idea of co-teaching and did not want to do it". Similarly, Ms. Lisbon (General Education Teacher) stated, "Not all the teachers buy into it; approximately 30% buy into it". Further corroborating these, Ms. Thomas (Special Education Teacher) stated that:

> about 60% of teachers do not accept the program, while 40% appear to be interested in co-teaching. However, the 40% of teachers that are interested are the newer teachers hired by the school district, and teachers who went into a new subject area after having taught a different subject in the past and are looking for extra support in the classroom.

To sum this up, Lamport (2012) stated that co-teaching programs would continue to lack teachers' complete support and acceptance until they feel fully satisfied by the mode and model of operation.

Table 7**:** Administrative support (Theme 6).

Jane James (Special Education Teacher)	"At first, teachers were hesitant. They were not given any training; they had no ideas about their roles or responsibilities in the co-taught classroom."
Grace Johnson (General Education Teacher)	"We were not giving any training during the initiation of the program. Later, 1 or 2 months into the program, we had a training in the form of a workshop when the district brought in outside educators."
Aisha Thomas (Special Education Teacher)	"Information on classrooms were not discussed. It was in the head schedule, and we had to figure out what classes… Space was not taking into consideration. There was no training…"
Gloria Bermuda (Special Education Teacher)	"Relationship building, and personality matching were not considered in the co-teaching program. I was informed that I would co-teach and sent to a general education classroom. I had no choice. When you are asked to go, you just did what you are asked to do, no choice."

The opinions of the lack of administrative support, as highlighted in Figure 6, was also reflected in the study of Friend (2008), who expressed lack of administrative support as part of the failure to effectively implement co-teaching.

Respondents' Generated Imagery

Again, it is important to reemphasize that the purpose of this research was to investigate the perspective of the special and general education teachers on the loss of their professional teaching space. Since the discourse was mainly on the participants' experiences and how the participants perceived the phenomenon of loss of space as a result of the co-teaching program, I prompted the participants to represent their descriptions of the concept of space as it relates to the co-teaching program visually. I believe the use of visual or graphic representation can help enhance understanding of the concept, as previously discussed. Furthermore, to lay credence to

the participants' use of visual representations in a social science research study, Prosser (2008),

explained that:

> Visual methods can do the following: provide an alternative to the hegemony of a word-and-number based academy, slow down observation, and encourage deeper and more effective reflection on all things visual and visualizable, and with it, enhance our understanding of sensory embodiment and communication; and hence, reflect the diversity of human experiences in a more human sense (p.1).

  These visuals will be interpreted by the researcher based on the respondents' explanations of

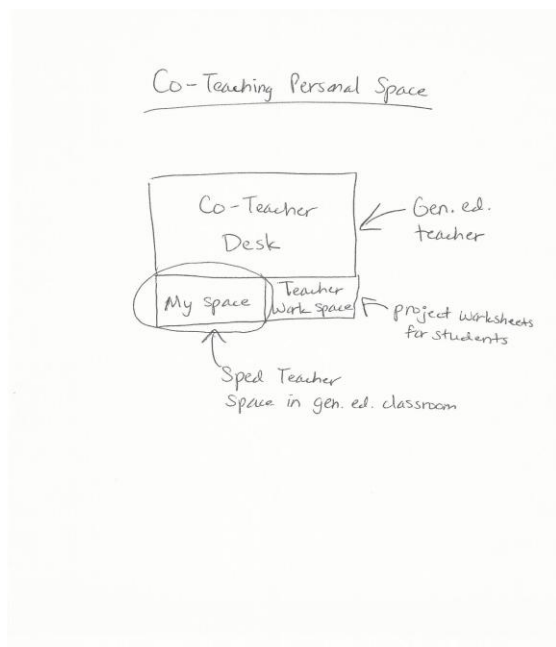the visuals during the interview for the understanding of the readers.

Figure 4: Special Education Teacher's visual representation of uneven space division between the general education teachers and the Sped Teachers.

In Figure 11, the respondent, a special education teacher, attempted to show the size of her space

in a general education classroom. The respondent also depicted the size of the general education

teacher's space. The special education teacher's space appeared small compared to the general education teacher's space. This suggests the disparity in space sharing between the two co-teachers and negates the concept of equal partnership, as stated by many authors in the literature.

Another respondent attempted to provide a visual that represents her actual expectations of space divided between two co-teachers. As depicted in figure 5, the space depicted is for two teachers sharing 50-50. However as explained by the respondent, this is not obtainable.
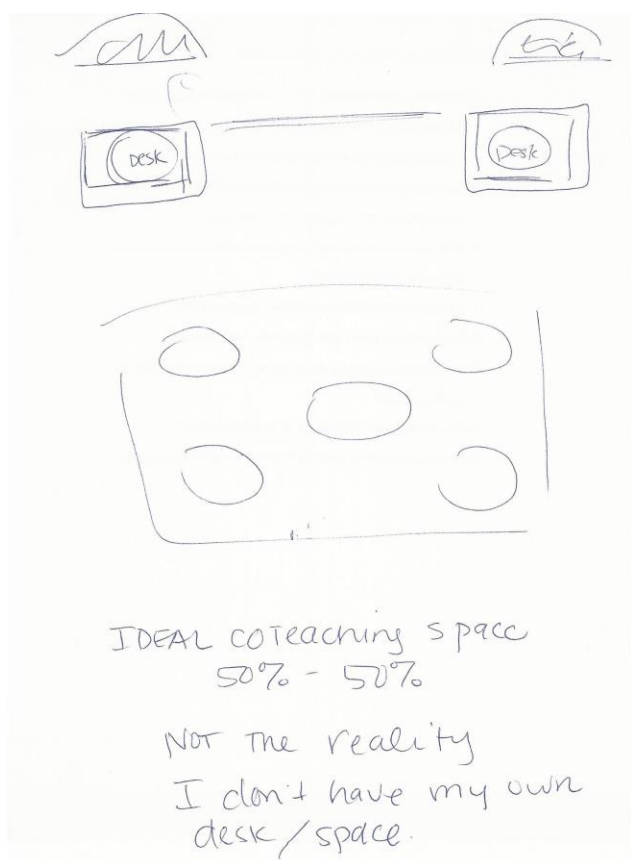

Figure 5: Visual representation by a Special Education teacher of the idea of even space sharing by Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers.

Bookshelf

Computer

Whiteboard

Front of Class

Bookshelf

Computer

Desk

Information on the board would be written by both teachers

Desk

Ideally, with the co-teacher in mind

Students' Desks

Door

(Created by both teachers)
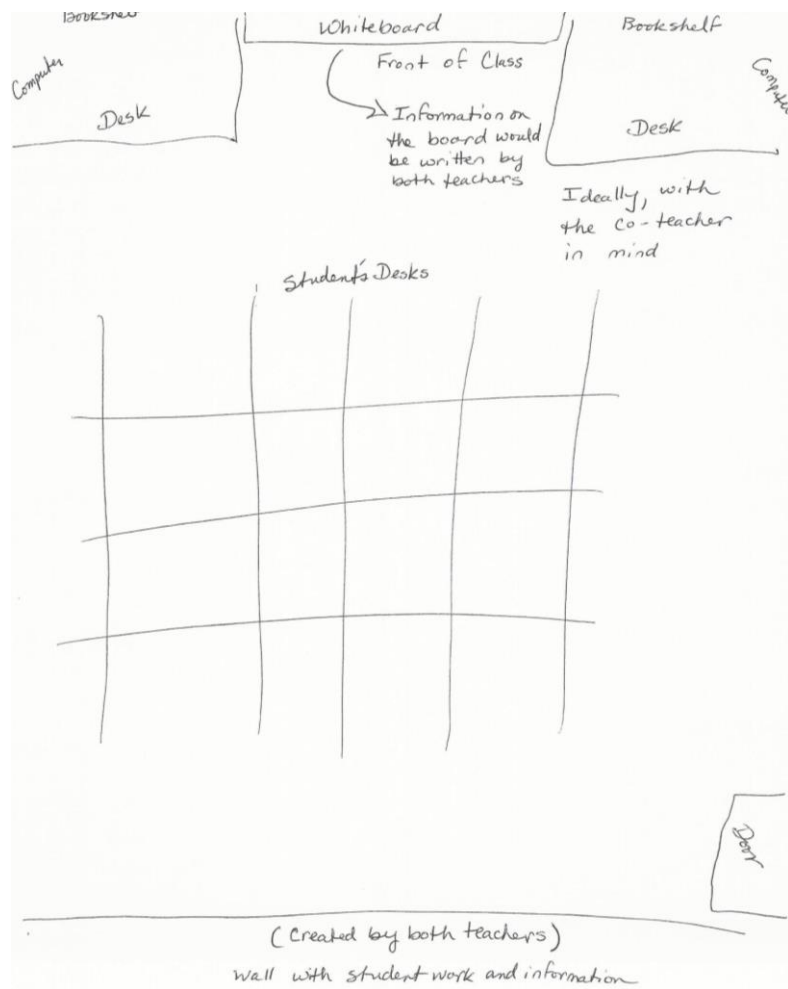
Wall with student work and information

Figure 6: Visual representation by General Education Teacher of an ideal co-taught classroom space set up by two teachers.

The visual in figure 6 as created by a general education teacher respondent who attempted to represent her ideal co-teaching classroom, with the two co-teachers setting up space together.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 summarizes the themes and findings to the questions that guided the research study, discusses the significance and contributions of the study, and highlights the researcher's recommendations, study limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the perspectives of the high school SPED and general education teachers about the loss of their professional teaching space because of the co-teaching program.

Co-Teaching Program

The first theme identified was the perception of the teachers on the co-teaching program, and a sub-theme highlighting the teachers' definition of the co-teaching program. These findings indicate that both the general education and SPED teachers show similar conceptual understandings of the term and understood the principles that underlie the co-teaching program; that the SPED and general education teachers should be equal stakeholders in a co-taught classroom. This finding is not in line with the views of other researchers, such as Bessette (2008) and Beamish, Bryer, and Davies (2006), who argued that co-teaching has been misinterpreted and misused in multiple forms. Also, Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gavdizi, and McDuffie (2005) reported that there was a lack of common understanding and a lack of a common definition of the term. This finding might be an indication of the need for researchers to shift focus from the idea that teachers lack understanding and are deficient of a universal definition of the co-teaching program.

Loss of Professional Space

The second identified theme in the research study was the perceptions of the SPED and general education teachers on the loss of their professional teaching space. The teachers equated

their teaching space with the concept of personal identity. In other words, the teachers attached a personal identity to their professional teaching space and felt that the loss of their professional space also meant the loss of their personal identity. Thus, they reported that they suffered great emotional distress because of this, which culminated in their lack of work satisfaction and demoralized them in the workplace.

A careful analysis of the findings on this theme raises two questions. First, I must clarify that my questions are not to denigrate the feelings of the teachers. Of course, we all have different ways of reacting to personal experiences and interpreting what these experiences are from our individual perspectives. Thus, I dare to ask, why was the situation of space loss such a critical issue for the teachers or anyone in any workplace? Second, when people leave their home every day for their workplace, is there a feeling of satisfaction that comes with the thought that you are going to a specific place where you feel secure because of the personal attachment you feel in being in that familiar environment? Positioning these two questions within the views of Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) might help provide an insight into the feelings of the SPED and General education teachers and help provide answers to these questions. Thus, according to these authors:

> When individuals are preparing for some occupation or profession, the physical settings in this socialization period undoubtedly have a very strong influence on place-identity. In these instances, as well, that is not only in early childhood, we can expect place-identity to occur with respect to the places and spaces of educational and occupational training. (p. 57)

Supporting this view, Monnet (2011) reiterated that when space means something to an individual or a group of people, it becomes symbolic to their feelings of personal identity, and thus its importance cannot be understated. These opinions appeared to legitimize the feelings of the teachers concerning the loss of their professional space. Thus, I propose that the correlation

made between space and personal identity adds a new dimension to the educational issues

concerning the co-teaching program. Furthermore, taking the stance of the critical theorist as the

theoretical framework and epistemology of this research study, I argue on the sacrosanct position

of professional space in the professional lives of the co-taught teachers, with the rationalization

that emotional satisfaction and the feelings that people develop from attachment to their

workspace are relevant to student's achievement and outcomes. This is especially relevant given

that one of the key objectives of the co-teaching program was to bridge the achievement gap

between students of special education and students of general education (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Space Sharing

The third identified theme addressed how both the SPED and general education teachers

feel about sharing space and responsibilities together in the mainstream classroom. The findings

on this theme indicate that the SPED teachers felt marginalized and reduced to the role of a

paraprofessional. Furthermore, they believed that the space sharing was not 50-50, as they were

informed it would be during co-teaching training. The general education teachers stated that the

idea of sharing space 50-50 with their counterparts was not attainable because their classroom

space was not set up for the co-teaching program. Furthermore, the general education teachers

stated that they could not equally share teaching duties with the special education teachers

because the SPED teachers were not trained to teach high school single subjects as effectively as

the general education teachers, who were considered the content knowledge specialists.

Reiterating this view, the education teachers expressed that it was not possible to entrust their

classrooms to the SPED teachers because they believed the SPED teachers would not do a good

job.

This finding is consistent with the views of Pugach and Sapon-Shevin (1987), who stated that the general education teachers barely recognize the relationship between them and the special education teachers as equal. The idea of 50-50 or equality in a partnership among the participants might have its origin in the literature, with many studies referring to the co-teaching program as an equal co-teaching partnership. For example, Friend (2014) stated that the co-teaching relationship, responsibilities, and roles must be equal in nature, as each partner assumes their turn within the teaching relationship for the maximum benefit of the students. Thus, this idea seemed to have been interpreted literary by the teachers.

A careful examination of the above issue raises the question of our perception of the program as a 50-50 arrangement or the concept of equality as an operational term in the co-teaching partnership, especially given how much time a SPED teacher spends in a general education classroom. Second, content knowledge or subject-specific specialization was the cause of conflict in co-teaching. How likely is it for a SPED teacher to teach a subject that they are relatively underqualified to teach? Third, since a SPED teacher moves around between multiple classrooms throughout the day, and has the responsibilities to co-teach more than one subject, how can this teacher achieve equal co-planning time with multiple general education teachers?

Again, I reiterate the question of 50-50 or equality, which denotes an even split of space and partnership/responsibilities in teaching duties. I argue that these are serious limitations that disqualify the idea of even split of space and partnership/responsibilities in teaching duties as definition of equality in an educational program. What if we approach co-teaching responsibilities between two co-teachers from the vantage point of equity? I position my argument in the perspective of Dworkin (2018):

> People can become equal (or at least more equal) in one way with the consequences that they became unequal (or more unequal) in others. If people have equal income, for example, they will almost certainly differ in the amount of satisfaction they find in their lives and vice versa. It does not follow of course that equality is worthless as an ideal. But it is necessary to start, more exactly than is commonly done, what form of equality is finally important. (p. 81)

Based on this perspective, I suggest a redefinition of this term within the practices of the co-teaching program; that division of duties must be based on what is reasonable in any of the given circumstances. Teachers must discuss how best to plan the curriculum and lesson plan delivery. Furthermore, they must discuss how much of the space each person needs, given the amount of time each teacher spends in the co-teaching classroom. For example, do you need half the space if you were in that classroom for only 45 minutes of the day versus the other teacher who spends 6 hours per day in that classroom. Further considerations could be teachers examining each other's school responsibilities and understanding what each person needs to contribute to support the other person, so the ensuing situations become more of a practical working relationship versus the contention of a 50-50 split. By this approach, equity would become more of the operational term in the co-teaching relationship, instead of equality. In other words, thoughts should be focused on what is most reasonable in each given circumstance to accommodate a teacher and facilitate the job to be executed effectively.

Teachers' Perception

The fourth theme addressed the perceptions of the general education and special education teachers about the co-teaching program. This theme was reflected in that the teachers did not accept the co-teaching program. Both the general education and SPED teachers expressed the view that the rationale for the establishment of the co-teaching program was laudable. However, the teachers discovered that the implementation of the program in their schools did not align with their expectations and understanding of how it should be implemented.

This finding is consistent with the views expressed by Lamport (2012), that many teachers were still reluctant to accept a co-teaching role in a co-taught program. Corroborating this, Keefe and Moore (2004) expressed that both the special education and general education teachers felt inadequately prepared for the responsibilities and demands placed on them by the co-teaching program.

The lack of support from the program among the teachers indicates a need for program developers to initiate dialogue and seek the input of teachers when introducing new programs to an educational organization. I believe that the success and acceptance of a program in any organization largely depend on the buy-in from the key players and stakeholders in the industry. Supporting this view, Ho (2010) stated that:

> Teacher participation in decision making should be conceptualized in both individual and collective terms. In this sense, the concept of teacher participation inevitably incorporates the ideas of collegiality, collaboration, and teamwork. (p. 613)

Partnership and Co-habitation

Theme 5 was on how the special education and general education teachers feel about the co-teaching partnership/cohabitation in one classroom space. Both parties felt that a co-teaching relationship would work out and be successful if teachers were not matched by administrators, but instead provided opportunities to network and choose their own professional partners. A critical examination of this finding suggests that how people feel and believe in something can be a motivating or discouraging factor to the success of a program. Supporting this view, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006), stated that:

> Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs do not, of course, operate in isolation from other Psychosocial determinants that affect their motivation and performance such as their professional aspirations, the recognition, and respect they perceive to be accorded and ultimately, the satisfaction they draw from their profession. (p. 473).

On the other hand, one can only imagine the immense pressures and responsibilities of school administrators who are constrained with logistics and financial constraints and pressurized by expectations of policy makers in government to execute certain programs in their schools. I strongly suggest in this situation that, there is a need for administrators to consider the hiring of specific staff for the co-teaching program from the outset, versus using the regular staff who were employed under different job descriptions. This will minimize confusion, demands, and the forceful redefinition of teachers' duties to suit the current situation created by the co-teaching program.

Administrative Support

Theme 6 addressed how the special education and general education teachers felt about the support of administrators for the program. Both the special and general education teachers felt there was insufficient administrative support for the co-teaching program. According to the teachers, there was a lack of proper training at the initial stage of the program and teachers were left to figure out things for themselves, inadequate information on practical program implementation in the co-taught classrooms between two partnered teachers, lack of central space for two teachers to set up together for the co-teaching program, and other logistics that would facilitate the smooth take off and successful initiation of the program. This finding is consistent with the research of Walthier-Thomas (1997), who stated that his research study revealed teachers' opinions as lacking support from school administrators, inadequate professional development, and minimal time availability for case scheduling.

Thus, this finding in line with previous research studies as stated above, suggests a lack of training for school administrators and school leaders who may have been pressurized by educational policies from policymakers and program developers to initiate new programs in their

schools as intervention strategies to close the achievement gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. For example, the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 (Blankenship, Boon, and Fore, 2009).

Thus, I propose that professional development for school leaders and administrators is a necessary factor that should take place before any program implementation. In line with this suggestion, Hallinger (1996) stated that most administrative training programs in the last 30 years have focused on theories and concepts that are not practicable when administrators become school leaders. Thus, Hallinger emphasizes the importance of professional administrative developments being aligned to the reality on the ground. Based on this suggestion, I urge school leaders that are introducing co-teaching programs to seriously consider the importance of starting top-down professional training that is related to the specific programs, so that school administrators can have a foundational understanding of the program itself before initiating it in their schools.

Research Questions

Research question 1: How do teachers define professional space? The teachers defined professional space as a person's personal identity, which denotes everything about who a person is. Furthermore, they described professional space to be like being in your own home; a place where you work, decide what to teach or what activities to do with the students. Also, the participants explained that professional space reflects a person's personal touch, which can often be seen in the displaying of awards and pictures on the desk and the walls of the classroom, and the way a teacher sets up the space for their students.

Research question 2: What are the perspectives of the special education and the general education teachers about the changes to their personal space? Regarding this

question, the findings show that teachers found the situation stressful and made their job difficult. Furthermore, the data analysis revealed that the special education teachers were more impacted by the changes than the general education teachers. However, the general education teachers felt pressured to accommodate the SPED teachers into their classroom, which was challenging. Also, the special education teachers felt a lack of equality in treatment, as well as a lack of appropriate professional space, which fostered the impression that they were less competent than the general teachers. According to the SPED teachers, the students often decline their offer of help and defer to the general education teachers, which makes them feel inferior and disrespected. In other words, the SPED teachers stated that they were treated like paraprofessionals.

Research question 3: What are the perceptions of the special education and the general education teachers about the co-teaching program? For this question, the findings show a lack of acceptance of the co-teaching program by most of the teachers. According to the participants, the co-teaching program is a learning process, a learning relationship that requires time to establish and build. Also, participants stated that the co-teaching program principles and characteristics were unattainable. The participants praised the ideas of the program but reiterated that the ideas are not feasible because program developers do not implement the program principles with fidelity.

Research question 4: How do the special and general education teachers describe the co-teaching partnership? Respondents stated that the co-teaching partnership is unbalanced and negates the ideas of co-teaching. Buttressing this point, respondents stated that the space sharing is 90% for the general education teacher and 10% for the special education teachers, or no space at all for the special education teachers. Furthermore, the special education

teachers explained that the general education teachers were territorial and felt pressurized to welcome the SPED teachers into their classroom. Thus, the teachers believed that having the autonomy to choose their own partners would have helped.

Research question 5: How do the special and general education teachers describe the sharing of responsibilities and roles in the classroom? Teachers revealed that the general education teachers took the lead position in instruction and were considered the teacher of record because they were the content knowledge specialist. On the other hand, the SPED teachers were forced into a subservient position. According to the SPED teachers, they helped from the back of the classroom or walked around the students to see who among them needed help. This finding is broadly in line with the literature. For example, criticizing this kind of set up, Cushman (2004) stated that "co-teaching is not going on when there is a set-up created where one teacher teaches, and the second teacher prepares instructional materials either in the class, the photocopy room, or in the lounge".

Research question 6: How does the special and general education teachers view the support of administration? In response to this question, the findings revealed a lack of support from the school administrators. The participants stated that there was a lack of communication from administrators on issues of modalities of the program, partnership, and cohabitation. Furthermore, respondents disclosed that their schools had started the program 1 to 2 years before they were provided with formal training. Also, participants disclosed that there was a lack of consideration for space set-up and the additional furniture needed to accommodate the co-teachers.

The Significance of the Findings and Contributions

Multiple researchers have made numerous contributions to the literature on co-teaching, which includes issues such as a lack of a universal definition for the program and its applications; a lack of appropriate staff development and trainings; inadequate support from school leaders; and integrating the program within the culture of the school organizations to foster collaborations (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Nevertheless, Friend et al. (2010) call for further qualitative and quantitative research addressing the suitability of co-teaching.

To my knowledge, although co-teaching started in the 1950s (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993), researchers have not previously investigated the loss of professional space because of the co-teaching program. Furthermore, my study was able to reveal that teachers connect their workspace to their personal identities, and that when they were dislocated from their familiar and stable environment or deprived of their space, this impacted their emotional well-being, feelings of self-actualization, and self-efficacy, resulting in a lack of satisfaction under their new work conditions. These situations affected their personal identities as professional teachers, as well as their motivation to do the job. Thus, because the loss of professional teaching space due to the co-teaching program is unfamiliar to policymakers, school administrators, and program developers, I hope the findings of this study can attract the attention of these important stakeholders and educational institutions, ultimately leading to positive changes in the way the program is implemented.

> …work is a pervasive and influential part of the individual and the Community's well-being. It affects the quality of an individual's life and his or her mental health and can thereby affect the productivity of entire communities. The ability to promote well-being rather than engender strains and mental illness is of considerable benefit not only to employees in the community but also to the employers' bottom line. The emotional well-being of employees and their satisfaction with their work and workplace affect citizenship at work, turnover rates, and performance ratings. (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003).

Study Objective and Discussions

The main objectives of this research study were to develop a theoretical understanding of special and general education teachers' perspectives on how the co-teaching program affected their professional space. This was achieved by examining the teachers' opinions on the co-teaching partnership and how this affects their perceptions of their professional space and their jobs. This study also aimed to create an awareness of the inherent issues in co-teaching from the perspectives of teachers and policymakers, as well as relevant data that would form the backdrop of subsequent co-teaching program implementation to school administrators.

Thus, the findings in this study, relating to the first objective, show that the respondents believe a person's professional space is crucial to their feelings of work satisfaction since it develops in the individual a sense of personal identity, a feeling of self-worth, and self-actualization. Thus, the teachers, mostly the special education teachers, felt emotionally impacted by the loss of their professional teaching space. The current predicament of the SPED teachers was highlighted in the study of Downing (2005):

> The special educator's role has changed more than the general educator's role. The general educator is still expected to be in the classroom and deliver the curriculum, but the special educator no longer has a classroom of their own. We are asking people to share space with several other adults, and that's one of the areas they often become uncomfortable with; they want to have their own plants, and they want to have their own pictures of their loved ones on the desk… (p. 297)

Furthermore, with reference to the second objective, the findings of this study suggest that teachers felt their perspective was not taken into consideration at the initiation of the co-teaching program, which included a lack of personality matching, a lack of central space creation, a lack of necessary extra equipment and classrooms designated for co-teaching; and a lack of emotional preparation for being relocated from their professional teaching space.

In addition, regarding bringing the current findings to the attention of policy makers and program developers, I hope the themes discussed in this study and the recommendations made by the researcher will form a bedrock to guide decisions concerning the co-teaching programs and the roles that teachers are required to play in the co-teaching program set-up. My recommendations are given below.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have uncovered many issues in the co-teaching program that must be addressed to achieve program effectiveness, which would lead to successful academic outcomes for the students. For example, the teachers in this study explicitly stated that space-sharing was an issue and that the loss of their professional teaching space was equivalent to the loss of their personal identity. Thus, I recommend that teachers must be part of the decision-making process when schools are planning the implementation of a new program, such as the co-teaching program. It is true that teachers are employees and subject to work agreement between the employer and the employee. However, I believe that if teachers perspectives on those new programs that include them as the core field executioners are included in the decision-making process; they would feel valued, treated with respect, and develop high morale, which would be a motivating factor to successfully accomplish the task. In other words, I state that it is necessary for program developers to negotiate and have an agreed plan of action that is acceptable to both parties before the rollout of the program.

Secondly, findings from this study show that teachers would prefer to choose their own partner, instead of the school administrator pairing teachers up. My recommendation for this problem would be for the program developers to avoid the use of already employed teachers who have assigned teaching responsibilities. Rather, I recommend the hiring of new teachers who are

aware from the beginning that they are being recruited to teach in the co-teaching program. In this situation, since the newly hired teachers understand the condition and specific purpose of their employment, the issue of choosing partners by themselves would not arise.

Furthermore, the lack of competency by the SPED teachers to teach subject-specifically–like the general education teachers–was an issue of contention that was highlighted in this study. Also, the general education teachers had expressed the lack of confidence they felt to entrust their classrooms to the SPED teachers. Thus, I recommend that the school leaders consider hiring new teachers with the same level of subject knowledge and competency. For example, if the teachers were hired to teach the English Language, both the SPED and the general education teachers must be qualified in that area, with the additional qualifications of their teaching credentials in special education and general education. This will foster mutual respect between the two partners, as each feels competent to do the job.

Furthermore, this study revealed the dissatisfaction teachers feel with the co-teaching program due to the lack of administrative support. The teachers expressed dissatisfaction of lack of training and other logistics problems they encountered during co-teaching. A careful analysis of this situation indicates the need for administrators and school leaders to be trained in the rudiments of such a program before introducing it to the teachers. Thus, I recommend that both the school administrators and the school teachers must attend appropriate training that provides extensive knowledge to the concerned parties on the program before it commences. The essence of the co-teaching program was to increase students' academic achievement by closing the gap between students of disabilities and students without disabilities. Furthermore, program developers believed having students exposed to the expertise of two well-trained teachers would yield maximum education benefits to students. In consideration of these program objectives, I

state that every available resource that is necessary for proper training to take place for all the stakeholders involved should be made available, starting from the school administrators must not be spared.

Lastly, based on the lack of acceptance of the program by most of the teachers, as well as the feelings of estrangement and emotional distress due to the inconveniences of lack of space and furniture to all the parties concerned, I recommend that part of the planning for the implementation of co-teaching programs should include the creation of bespoke classrooms with appropriate furnishing. I believe that the provision of a central space would give all the parties involved a sense of ownership, which would foster a positive working relationship.

Future Research Studies

This study has provided original insights into how special and general education teachers feel about the loss of their professional teaching space. These insights include the new emerging theme of the emotional impact of the loss of personal space on teachers. I suggest that future research should explore this theme and expand the study population to investigate the proportion of teachers felt emotionally impacted by the co-teaching program because of the loss of their professional teaching space.

Furthermore, the findings in this study revealed that teachers symbolize personal space with their personal identities and feel marginalized by the lack of space for them as co-teachers. This experience created feelings of dissatisfaction with their work environment. Also, the SPED teachers felt that the relatively small space allocated to them gave students the wrong impression about their status. Thus, future studies should investigate the feeling of disrespect felt by special education teachers as a result of the co-teaching program.

Also, future studies could explore the possibility that the current treatment of special education teachers (as expressed by the study participants) arises from the ways students with disabilities had always been marginalized in the history of education in America.

Finally, one of the limitations of this study was that only six high school teachers were interviewed, who were two general education teachers, and four special education teachers. Thus, future studies could build on the current research topic by including a greater number of participants.

Conclusions

Overall, the co-teaching strategy represents the unifying factor that integrates students of special and general education and the desegregation in our schools, as advocated for by families and concerned citizens. Thus, school leaders and policymakers must consider the perspectives of co-teachers and include them in the decision-making process before the implementation of co-teaching programs; this would help foster teacher acceptance and program effectiveness, ultimately benefiting the students.

Previous studies have highlighted challenges associated with co-teaching, including lack of training, lack of planning time and collaboration, lack of administrative support, lack of content knowledge, lack of common definitions and understanding of the strategies, and lack of collaboration between co-teachers. A key accomplishment of the present study is viewing the challenges of co-teaching from the perspective of teachers, as well as discovering that space loss was relevant; and that the loss of their professional teaching space impacted their feelings of work satisfaction, as well as impacted their emotional well-being, which subsequently led to a lack of acceptance of the program.

Furthermore, this study and others have yielded vital data that will help inform the decision-making process and guided school leaders and program developers who are planning or restructuring co-teaching programs. However, given its small scope and limited number of participants, the findings of this study cannot be generalized.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name of the teacher (I will use pseudonyms for privacy, as designated by alphabetic letters).

Interview estimated time: Between 45 min and 1 h.

Venue and time to conduct the interview: Choice and convenience of the interviewee. (Interviewer will accommodate this request).

1. What is your full name?

2. How did you get into the teaching profession?

3. Have you always taught at the same grade or have you also taught at other grade levels?

4. Considering the whole of your teaching experience, how would you describe the development of education?

5. What kind of programs have you witnessed in your years of teaching?

6. Why were these programs created and how did they influence students and teachers?

7. How were the programs embraced?

8. How would you describe teachers' acceptance of the programs?

9. What can you say about the co-teaching program?

10. When was it introduced to your school district?

11. How would you define the co-teaching program?

12. What is your personal perception of the program?

13. How would you describe the perception and attitudes of your colleagues towards the program?

14. What is the class location for the teachers who co-taught?

15. How do you feel about one of the two teachers relocating to another classroom?

16. How would you explain space sharing?

17. How would define space?

18. Do you feel space is part of a person's personal identity? Why?

19. Tell me your story of the first time you walked into another teacher's space as a co-teacher; or when another teacher walked into your space?

20. How would you describe the feeling of loss of space?

21. What are the perceptions and attitudes of your colleagues towards the loss of space?

22. Did your administrator take into consideration the effect of space sharing on two adults? Was there any discussion or conversations addressing this?

23. In your opinion, are there any alternatives to the co-taught program?

24. Was there any ways in which the loss of space or space-sharing could have been avoided?

25. How do you think program developers should handle the issue of space sharing?

26. Do you think a central space should be provided for co-teaching, so the two teachers can set it up together?

27. Do you think this approach can provide stakeholders in the partnership/relationship with personal identities?

28. Every time you move around, or when another teacher comes to your classroom, do you move your personal belongings, such as pictures of loved ones and little personal things that give you comfort?

29. How would you describe the partnership/relationship between the special education teacher and the general education teacher?

30. What are the roles of a special education teacher and a general education teacher in a co-taught classroom?

31. How do you share these responsibilities with your partner?

32. Do you and your partner have defined roles during teaching?

33. What model of co-teaching do you and your partner practice in the co-teaching program?

34. What are the current challenges in the co-taught program?

35. How are administrators providing support to teachers for the program?