A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY EXPERIENCES

OF SECONDARY CO-TEACHERS

by

Stuart Paul Brady

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. Shared responsibility is generally defined as both teachers perceiving each other as co-equals in instructional responsibility and that neither teacher perceives the other as the subordinate or primary teacher in the co-taught classroom. The frameworks that guided this study is sociocultural theoretical framework, as developed by Vygotsky extended in recent co-teaching literature and Howlett and Nguyen, and teacher belief theory, developed by Parajes and adapted for co-teaching research by Kim and Pratt, which is supported by Bandura's social cognitive theory. This study investigated how sharing content teaching responsibilities influence a co-teaching teams' professional relationship experience. The design of this qualitative study was hermeneutical phenomenology. Twelve to fifteen participants are necessary to ensure saturation. All participants were selected based on a set of criteria. Only secondary special education, or general education teachers that have or currently share instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom were included in the participant group. The participants varied in age, sex, ethnicity, grade level, and subjects taught. The setting for this study is Major City Metro School District, which is in Northwest, Georgia. Three different data collection methods were used to achieve triangulation; interviews, letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher and open-ended questionnaires. Creely's four-stage method of interpretation was used to analyze the collected data.

Keywords: special education, co-teaching, phenomenology, collaboration

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List of Abbreviations

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Least restrictive environment (LRE)

Students with disabilities (SWD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Researchers indicate special education teacher often function in an assistive role in the co-taught classroom, because of this some students with disabilities (SWD) do not ask for help. (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018; Hackett et al., 2021). However, when co-teachers share instructional responsibilities, all students benefit (Saterlee Vizenor & Matuska, 2018). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. Co-teaching has been a mode of instruction for SWD that began mainstream use in United States classrooms in the 1990s. The co-teaching model of instruction is used by co-teachers to ensure SWD are taught in the least restrictive environment (LRE). SWD being taught in the LRE was mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004 (IDEA, 2004). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) mandated schools to improve the educational results of SWD. The inclusion of SWD in the general education classroom has influenced the roles and pedagogical practices of both special education and general education teachers (Friend et al., 2010; Valle & Connor 2019). One pedagogical model that ensures SWD receive services in the general education classroom, or co-taught classroom, is co-teaching. This study focused on the voices and experiences of co-taught team members concerning their content teaching responsibilities. This study addresses the body of knowledge on co-teaching relationships and experiences and addresses a gap in the research on special education.

Background

The main method by which SWD are educated in the United States has evolved over the

last century (Hornby, 2015; Solis et al., 2012; Valle & Connor 2019; Zirkel & Hetrick, 2017). The way in which SWD receive instruction is the context of this study. In this section, special education is examined from a historical perspective exploring how it has changed in the United States over the last century. This section addresses the current effects on society. Finally, this section presents how theoretical perspectives have been used to address special education research.

Historical Context

Until the 18th century many families hid their children with disabilities from the public (Spaulding & Pratt 2015). Spaulding and Pratt (2015) noted that people with disabilities were often institutionalized until the 19th century. Samuel Gridley Howe convinced the Massachusetts Board of Education to educate students with severe mental disabilities alongside the blind in 1848 (Smith, 1998). This was a major step forward from complete institutionalization. However, in 1893 the Massachusetts Supreme Court upheld a ruling that students with severe mental disabilities could be expelled from school since teachers and administrators felt that they were receiving no benefit from the school (Yell et al., 1998). Wisconsin's Supreme Court upheld a similar ruling in 1923 indicating that a student with severe mental disabilities could be expelled past the fifth grade for similar reasons to that of the Massachusetts ruling (Yell et al., 1998). Similar laws were passed and upheld throughout the United States up until 1969 (Yell et al., 1998). The *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) ruling did not initially ensure that all U.S. children received a fair and appropriate education. It was not until the passage of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act that students with disabilities received a fair and appropriate education (Yell et al., 1998).

Numerous court rulings and legislative mandates have shaped the way in which SWD are educated. The *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) ruling was meant to ensure all U.S. children receive a free and appropriate public education. IDEA (2004), initially known as the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, reauthorized in 1990 and 2004, ensured that all public schools receiving federal funds provided equal access to education for SWD. NCLB (2002) mandated that educators were certified and met specific qualification criteria. The ideas of NCLB (2002) were echoed in ESSA (2015), in which state officials are required to hire capable educators and provide them professional development to ensure students are taught to high academic standards. Both NCLB (2002) and ESSA (2015) mandated that schools be held accountable for students with and without disabilities' academic success. One method of instruction that ensures inclusion and academic support for SWD in the general classroom is co-teaching (Zirkel & Hetrick, 2017). Co-teaching has become one of the most popular models for serving SWD in the LRE (Friend & Bursuck, 2003; Lehr, 1999; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997)

Friend et al. (2010) indicated that in the 1980s and 1990s, SWD were not receiving the support they needed to succeed academically. Shin et al. (2016) explained that co-teaching became prominent in the last twenty years to ensure the mandates of NCLB (2002) and the reauthorization of IDEA (2004) was implemented in U.S. public schools. Co-teaching involves SWD being taught alongside their peers without disabilities in the same classroom. Both a special education teacher and a general education teacher work together to meet the educational needs of all students in the co-taught classroom. The co-taught method of instruction ensures SWD are taught in the least restrictive environment. Friend et al. (2010) indicated co-teaching is a collaboration between a special education teacher and a general education teacher. Both are

responsible for planning, instructing, and assessing students with and without disabilities (Friend et al., 2010). There are five different models of co-teaching instruction (Cook & Friend, 1995). The models are team teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, station teaching, one teach-one assist, and one teach-one observe (Alnasser, 2020; Cook & Friend, 1995; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). This study focuses on a model where both participants alternate leading instruction while employing the co-teaching method.

As co-teaching has become more prominent in the United States over the last twenty years, researchers have explored co-teaching relationships and experiences (Campbell, 2017; Curtin & Egan, 2021; Damore & Murray, 2009; Lakkala et al., 2021; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Nikula et al., 2021). Some studies have focused on the attitudes of co-teachers towards co-teaching (Bešić et al., 2017; Kirkpatrick et al., 2020). Also, recent studies have focused on the experiences of co-teachers sharing the co-taught space (Rytivaara et al., 2019; Salifu, 2021). Researchers have not explored the experiences or attitudes of co-teaching team members sharing instructional responsibility. This study explores the experiences of co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility.

Social Context

Co-teaching has changed the roles of general education and special education teachers. Co-teaching has also changed the learning environment of SWD. In the last half-century, many SWD have been moved from separate schools or classrooms to inclusive classrooms with their peers without disabilities (Hornby, 2015; Solis et al., 2012). Francisco et al. (2020) suggested that the passage of the NCLB (2002) caused a major societal shift in perception. Many SWD were subsequently educated alongside their peers without disabilities and held to the same academic standards (Francisco et al., 2020; Weiss et al., 2015). The inclusion of a larger number

of SWD in general education classrooms has changed how many SWD and students without disabilities receive instruction (Valle & Connor 2019). Co-teaching has become a prominent pedagogical method in the last two decades. Across the United States, as of 2017, more than 60% of SWD spend more than 80% of their school day in general education classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). In Georgia, as of 2013, nearly 65% of SWD spend at least 80% of their school day in the general education classrooms (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, the way in which SWD are receiving their services in the general education classroom is of paramount importance. Co-teaching is one method of special education instruction delivery in the general education classroom. Co-teaching allows SWD to be in the same class as their peers and for both to be held to the same academic standards. The co-taught classroom becoming mainstream has changed society from one that excluded SWD to one that includes them in the general classroom. SWD and students without disabilities are benefiting from two teachers in the classroom (King -Sears & Strogilos, 2020; Strogilos, & King-Sears, 2019). Robinson et al. (2021) indicated that researchers are beginning to explore how SWD being included in education in general may lead to people with disabilities being treated more inclusively in society at large outside of school. Researchers hope that inclusion leads to relationships between people with and without disabilities inside and outside of schools that will last for both parties' lifetimes (Robinson et al., 2021). This study explores the sociocultural experiences of co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility.

Theoretical Context

The way in which co-teachers experience the co-taught classroom has been explored through the theoretical lens of social constructivism (Jang, 2006). Jang (2006) explored how co-teaching effected secondary school teachers through the lens of social constructivism. Jang

(2006) indicated that knowledge is constructed collaboratively amongst persons, then it can be learned by each person in that group (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism has led to newer models of special education research theoretical frameworks such as the social-relational model (Reindal, 2008). Also, Sullivan's and Artiles's (2011) special education research's theoretical framework of structural inequity theory is heavily influenced by social constructivism. Hackett et al. (2021) explored how co-teachers implemented instructional changes through a theoretical lens developed from Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. Researchers also examined co-teaching through Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, the precursor and foundation for Pajares (1992) teacher belief theoretical framework. Stefanidis et al. (2019) and King-Sears, Stefanidis, and Brawand (2019) utilized Bandura's (1971) social learning theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory to explore the collective agency of co-teachers. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) has also been used to research the collective expectations of co-teaching teams (Krammer, Gastager, et al., 2018). Similar research on cooperation between special education teachers and regular education teachers is framed in a theory of professional bureaucracies (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020). Skrtic (1991), who based his theory off Max Weber's work, notes, schools are casually arranged as specialized organizations on the interior, centered on the specialized and standardized norms of teachers. The specialized organization's normalization is established and preserved through teachers' routines, rooted in formalized and social norms.

Problem Statement

The problem is the lack of parity between special education teachers and regular education teachers while addressing the needs of SWD in the LRE. One pedagogical model that ensures SWD receive services in the LRE is co-teaching (Friend & Cook, 2017; Iacono et al.,

2021). The co-teaching model places a qualified regular education teacher and special education teacher in the same classroom (Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). However, some teachers and students have perceived special education co-teachers as assistants to the general education teacher (Gavish, 2017; Stefanidis et al., 2019). The literature suggested that some special education co-teachers often function in a supportive role, such as assistant or observer (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Gavish, 2017; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Due to the special education teacher often functioning in an assistive role, some SWD will not ask for help for fear of being stigmatized (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018; Hackett et al., 2021). They may feel that repeatedly receiving help from the same teacher who rarely leads instruction indicates a different educational status to their peers (Casserly & Padden, 2018). SWDs are not reeiving their services to the fullest extent if they do not feel comfortable asking both teachers for assistance. Shared responsibilities, which can also be termed parity, between co-teachers is essential in order for the students to want help from both teachers and for a healthy professional relationship between both co-teaching team members (Pratt et al., 2016; Stefanidis et al., 2019; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). However, some special education co-teachers feel as though they are not perceived equally by the students in the co-taught classroom (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Gavish, 2017). Research has indicated that each teacher's role in the classroom affects students' and teachers' perceptions of each other (Gavish, 2017; King-Sears, Brawand, & Johnson, 2019; King-Sears, Stefanidis, & Brawand, 2019). Some studies have also shown that students who have co-teachers that share instructional responsibilities often feel they have two equal teachers in the classroom (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Stefanidis et al. (2019) and Pratt et al. (2016) conducted similar studies exploring how teachers attitudes towards co-planning affected perceived parity. Yet, researchers have not investigated the lived experiences

of co-teaching teams that share instructional responsibilities. Some research focused on the

effects of co-teaching professional development modules where both teachers were instructed to

share instructional responsibilities (Faraclas, 2018; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Research

has focused on professional development or, by chance, co-teaching teams that alternate roles

(Carty & Farrell, 2018). Some literature has focused on the experiences of co-teachers sharing

the co-taught classroom (Rytivaara et al., 2019). Moreover, researchers have addressed the

attitudes of co-teachers towards co-teaching (Bešić et al., 2017; Kirkpatrick et al., 2020).

However, the body of literature does not focus on co-teaching team members' experiences

regarding shared instructional responsibility.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences

regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. At this stage in

the research, shared responsibility is generally defined as both teachers perceiving each other as

co-equals in instructional responsibility and that neither teacher perceives the other as the

subordinate or primary teacher in the co-taught classroom (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). The

frameworks guiding this study is sociocultural theoretical framework, as developed by Vygotsky

(1978), extended in recent co-teaching literature (Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019) and Howlett and

Nguyen (2020), and teacher belief theory, developed by Parajes (1992) and adapted for co-

teaching research by Kim and Pratt (2020), which is supported by Bandura's (1986) social

cognitive theory.

Significance of the Study

American schools are meant to provide the best education for the next generation of

citizens. SWD and non-disabled peers are being held to the same academic standards and many

are required to take the same standardized tests (DeMartino & Specht, 2018). In order to ensure

all students are receiving the best education possible, all teachers need to be employing the best

pedagogical practices. Research into different models of co-teaching may aid teachers in

providing the best education possible.

Practical

Schools in the United States are asked to ensure student academic achievement regardless

of disability status (DeMartino & Specht, 2018; Francisco et al., 2020; Nichols et al., 2010; Pratt,

2014; Weiss et al., 2015; Valle & Connor, 2019). Both co-teaching team members are

responsible for the student achievement of all students in the co-taught classroom, both students

with and without disabilities. Thus, it is vital for stakeholders, administrators, in-service, and pre-

service educators to understand how different co-teaching models, including sharing content

teaching responsibilities, improve student achievement in American high schools (DeMartino &

Specht, 2018; Kamens et al., 2013; Pratt, 2014; Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013; Valle & Connor

2019). Findings may be of interest to stakeholders, administrators, and teacher preparation

programs. Also, the findings may influence the pedagogical practices of in-service and pre-

service teachers. Of paramount importance, this study seeks to help ensure the academic success

of all students in the co-taught classroom.

Empirical

This study is significant because there is limited amount of research on high school co-

teachers that share instructional responsibilities, to achieve parity in the co-taught classroom.

This study adds to other studies, such as the work of Rytivaara et al. (2019) on the experiences of

co-teaching team teachers. Rytivaara et al. (2019) researched how general education teachers and

special education teachers negotiated, shared, and created an educational co-taught space for

themselves and their students. They did not specifically explore the experiences of team teachers that shared instructional responsibilities. They suggested that future studies should examine power dynamics and how different models of co-teaching may influence co-teachers' experiences (Rytivaara et al., 2019). This study intends to address how co-teaching models that allow co-teachers to share instructional responsibility affect their experiences of parity, a power dynamic. Hester et al. (2020) suggested that future studies should interview special education teachers to understand why they may feel underappreciated in their roles. This study addresses that problem and interviews some special educators. Kirkpatrick et al. (2019) suggest that future research should examine partnership models. Research on those models could move beyond the Cook and Friend (2010) model towards incorporating evidence-based instructional approaches (for example, Gersten et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2012) within the collaborative partnership model to engage and support students with special educational needs specifically. King-Sears and Strogilos (2020) noted that special education co-teachers need to try and achieve parity in the co-taught classroom. The researchers also noted that future research should elicit from co-teachers how they believe they can achieve parity in the classroom. This study adds to the existing literature by investigating what constitutes the experiences of co-teachers experiencing parity in the co-taught classroom.

Theoretical

This study may add to breadth to the theoretical framework of social constructivism and teacher belief framework. While studies exist that analyze special education related research situated in a sociocultural framework or teacher belief framework, they do not specifically analyze how co-teaching partners co-construct meaning and individually experience shared instructional responsibility (Friend et al., 2010; Hackett et al., 2021; Jang, 2006;). This study

conjointly employs the sociocultural framework and teacher belief framework lenses to analyze the meaning constructed by co-teaching team members sharing instructional responsibilities. Guise et al.'s (2017) interpretation of social constructivism fits well within the sociocultural framework when applied to the development of a co-teacher. Co-teachers learn from each other by being near one another in the school for lengthy intervals (Guise et al., 2017). This study extends Guise et al.'s (2017) interpretation of social constructivism within the sociocultural framework to explore how co-teachers learn to share responsibilities. This study focuses on the co-teacher's experience of distributing instructional responsibility, and the researcher examines the phenomenon through Guise et al.'s (2017) lens. This study also extends Kim and Pratt's (2020) version of teacher belief framework to understand a co-teacher's beliefs regarding sharing instructional responsibility.

Research Questions

The goal of this phenomenological study is to understand co-teaching team member's experiences of shared instructional responsibility. The following research questions guide this study:

Central Research Question

How do secondary education co-teachers describe their experience of sharing instructional responsibility?

Sub-Question One

How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe their sociocultural experiences of co-teaching?

This question seeks to understand the experiences of a co-teaching team member as they negotiate the educational space (Rytivaara et al., 2019). The question also reveals the kind of

collaborative relationship shared by the teachers (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Social constructivism, which is a building block of the sociocultural framework, indicates that a person's social environment affects how they perceive the world around them (Eun, 2019a). This question reveals how co-teachers experience their social-cultural environment and its influence on their experience.

Sub-Question Two

How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe the experience of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-teaching?

This question focuses on a co-teaching team member's experience when they prepare to negotiate the educational space (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Rytivaara et al., 2019). This question seeks to understand how teachers create lessons, determine who and how the content is taught.

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Definitions

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1. *Co-teaching* – A special education teacher and a general education teacher in the same classroom provide instruction to students with and without disabilities (Friend et al., 2010).

2. *Team Teaching* – It is a co-teaching model where both teachers lead instruction concurrently (Cook & Friend, 1995).

3. *Inclusion* – A classroom setting where students with and without disabilities receive instruction (Westling & Fox, 2009).

4. *Special Education* – Kauffman et al. (2018) indicated it is the process of educating students with disabilities with differentiated instruction.

5. *Highly Qualified* – NCLB (2002) noted it as a term that denotes a teacher that has taken and passed the state certification for the specific content area they teach.

Summary

The problem this study addresses is the lack of parity between special education teachers and regular education teachers while addressing the needs of SWD in the LRE. The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has changed the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and general education teachers who team teach together. This hermeneutical phenomenological study examines the experiences of secondary education co-taught team members when both share content teaching responsibilities. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The study seeks to examine the lived experiences of both secondary general education teachers and secondary special education teachers in the shared co-taught classroom.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the problem of co-teachers being viewed as unequal in teaching stature by students and their peers, as well as the role of co-teaching models in eliciting perceptions of co-teachers' equality or disparity in stature. This chapter presents a review of the current literature related to the topic of the study. In the first section, the theories relevant to co-construction of knowledge, social constructivism, and teacher belief framework is discussed, followed by a synthesis of recent literature regarding co-teaching in general, teachers' perceptions of co-teaching, and students' perceptions of co-teaching. Lastly, literature regarding co-teaching professional development is addressed. In the end, a gap in the literature is identified, presenting a viable need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism and teacher belief framework (Parajes 1992) are the two theories by which this study is framed. Vygotsky's (1978) theory is concerned with how children learn and develop. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism is developed further for education and the purposes of this study by Adams (2006) and Guise et al. (2017). Adams (2006) posited that both teachers and students co-create their learning environment, and the individual's construction of knowledge is affected by the co-created learning environment. Guise et al.'s (2017) interpretation of social constructivist theory applied to teacher development of a co-teacher. Both co-teachers were learning from each other by being in proximity in a social setting, the school, for prolonged periods (Guise et al., 2017). For this study, Adams's (2006) and Guise et al.'s (2017) interpretations of Vygotsky's (1978) theory is conjoined. Furthermore, Pajares (1992) SLT articulates that humans learn by observing and modeling the behaviors, emotional

reactions, and attitudes of others. These theories combined form the perspective by which the results of this study are examined and better analyzed.

Sociocultural Framework

The inclusion of SWD with their non-disabled peers aligns with the sociocultural framework theory. Individuals negotiate the world around them by interacting with their peers. Żółkowska (2016) indicated that social constructivism is a very useful lens for studying people with disabilities. Smagorinsky (2012) explained that inclusion for those with disabilities derives from Vygotsky's theories. Furthermore, Gredler (2012) explained that individuals develop and grow by interacting with others to solve problems. Eun (2019b) noted that interaction with one's peers influences a person's development. Vygotsky (1978) argued that children first learn at the social level and then internalize the knowledge. The internalization of cultural or social behaviors changes children's psychological processes from animal processes to uniquely human processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Humans can share their internalized knowledge of socially shared human experiences, and animals cannot share internalized knowledge of shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism rejects that a child develops independently of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) also rejected that learning is development. Moreover, social constructivism does not explore a child's development and learning conjointly.

Instead, social constructivism explores the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development describes the area of development between a student's actual level and potential level of development, collaborating with skilled peers or guided by a knowledgeable adult (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher or teachers are the knowledgeable adults. Adams (2006) explained that the generation of knowledge is inseparable from the social systems and environment in which it is created. Adams (2006) further explained that learning actively

constructs knowledge from and within processes and social contexts. Adams's (2006) understanding of social constructivism indicated that teachers and students co-create their learning environment and affect each other's constructions of knowledge. Furthermore, Guise et al. (2017) indicated that co-teachers are placed in the cultural and social setting of a school for a protracted amount of time and actively construct identities in relation to the setting. Guise et al.'s (2017) interpretation of social constructivism, along with Adams's (2006) insistence that knowledge is co-constructed by all parties in the classroom, justifies Vygotsky's (1978) theory as a relevant theory for this study. This study seeks to understand the experiences of co-teaching team members, who, in this case, are knowledgeable adults. Thus, this theory is warranted as the perspective by which one can ascertain the co-teacher's perceptions of their collaborative relationship with their partner, how they share content responsibility, how they relate with their students, and how they experience their own or her co-taught classroom environment.

Teacher Belief Framework

Similar to the sociocultural theoretical framework, Bandura's (1971) social learning theory, the precursor to the teacher belief framework (Parajes, 1992), articulates humans learn by observing and modeling behaviors, emotional reactions, and attitudes. Humans' reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences are explained by social learning theory (Bandura, 1971). Social learning theory indicates that behavior is a cognitive process within the larger social environment (Bandura, 1971). Also, social learning can occur beyond observation based on direct rewards and punishments. Moreover, social learning theory indicates that reinforcement alone does not support learning. Learning occurs concurrently with observation within a social context (Bandura, 1971). Social learning theory indicates that learners are active in thinking about how they engage in their environment and negotiate how

influences affect them. Learners are not just students. All human beings, including co-teachers, are constantly learning, and engaging in their environment.

Human beings must absorb the information they gain and regulate themselves using a "self system" (Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1979). Bandura (1978) described the self system as providing a person the cognitive constructions that offer reference mechanisms and a collection of subfunctions for regulation, perception, and evaluation of behavior. The self system helps human beings understand the world around them and how to guide their behavior. Bandura (1979) further explained the self system when he stated, "the self system operates through a designated set of self structures and processes in the ongoing regulation of all types of behavior" (p. 441). The self system is a human's way of interpreting and behaving towards the world based on the triadic reciprocal interaction of the influences of one's behaviors, internal personal factors, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1978). The self system helps humans determine future social interactions. The self system is incorporated into Parajes' (1992) teacher belief framework.

The teacher belief framework is relevant to this study because it highlights the social interactions between co-teachers based on their internal reasoning. A co-teacher's belief system heavily influences the experience of the co-teacher, and this study explores their understanding of how they engage the social environment of their co-taught classroom. Also, an exploration of a co-teacher's detailed description of collaboration with their partner and interactions with their students through the triadic reciprocal perspective of their sociocultural environment may further help this study analyze their experience.

Application of Sociocultural Framework and Teacher Belief Framework in Past Co-teaching Studies

Scruggs et al. (2007) suggested that the ideal practice of co-teaching, in which two equal partners focus on the students' academic needs, best practices, and individualized instruction, has not been implemented. Hackett et al. (2021) indicated that a significant reason Scruggs et al.'s (2007) ideal has not been implemented is that co-teaching researchers have not thoroughly investigated co-teaching social activity systems. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory allows researchers to frame the knowledge that both students and co-teachers create within the social context of the activity systems. Jang (2006) and Takala and Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2012) framed their studies with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, the precursor to Schmulian and Coetzee's sociocultural framework (2019). Takala and Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2012) interpreted Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism to mean that their mixed-methods study of co-teachers' perceptions of co-teaching could only be understood in the context of the entire system of interactions. Jang (2006) indicated that a theoretical premise of their study was that knowledge is constructed collaboratively amongst persons from where it can be taken by each person (Vygotsky, 1978). Also, Hackett et al. (2021) and Wiebe Berry (2006) framed their study with elements of Vygotsky's (1978) theory. Furthermore, both Hackett et al. (2021) and Wiebe Berry (2006) indicated that the co-teachers were the knowledgeable adults that helped students develop their zone of proximal development. However, Hackett et al.'s (2021) ethnographic research revealed that co-teachers, both general and special educators, often do not initiate changes to the curriculum without fear of negative social repercussions.

Stefanidis et al. (2019) and King-Sears, Stefanidis, and Brawand (2019) built on Bandura's (1971) SLT by examining how co-teachers function as collective entities. King-Sears,

Stefanidis, and Brawand (2019) posited that effective co-teachers combined what they knew, what they could do, and how their combined actions could influence the co-teachers' environment in the future. Similarly, Stefanidis et al. (2019) posited that social learning influences collective agency through personal and environmental factors. The interactions of the elements influence co-teachers' perceptions (Stefanidis et al., 2019). King-Sears, Stefanidis, and Brawand's (2019) study focused on how co-teachers as collective agents delivered reading instruction for students with disabilities. Furthermore, the study focused on how co-teachers collectively negotiated barriers to implementing specialized reading instruction (King-Sears, Stefanidis, & Brawand, 2019).

Hackett et al. (2021) suggested that co-teaching constructs develop over a period of time and should be studied through the sociocultural framework perspective. Moreover, Hackett et al. (2021) indicated that future studies of co-teaching should be theoretically framed by Vygotsky's (1978) theory. Past and current co-teaching studies have theoretically framed their research with Vygotsky's (1978) theory (Jang, 2006; Hackett et al., 2021; Takala & Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2012; Wiebe Berry, 2006). Moreover, Adams' (2006) assertion that the generation of knowledge is part of the social system in which it is created allows the teacher belief perspective, one that examines activity within a social system, to be applied in tandem with social constructivism. Furthermore, the studies of prominent co-teaching researchers (King-Sears, Stefanidis, & Brawand, 2019; Stefanidis et al., 2019) framed their co-teaching research within Bandura's (1971) SLT. King-Sears, Stefanidis, and Brawand 's (2019) and Stefanidis et al.'s (2019) theoretical framing provides this proposed study with the theoretical foundation to analyze this co-teaching study through the perspectives of the teacher belief framework and the sociocultural framework.

Related Literature

Co-teaching research often emphasizes the importance of students with disabilities learning alongside their peers without disabilities (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). Moreover, research indicates that co-teaching has become mainstream in the United States and Europe (Curtin & Egan, 2021; Gokbulut et al., 2020; King-Sears et al., 2021; Lakkala et al., 2021; Nikula et al., 2021; Rodriguez, 2021a; Semon et al., 2020; Stiefel et al., 2021; Strogilos et al., 2016; Sundqvist et al., 2019). Both countries in South America are beginning to adopt co-teaching practices (San Martin et al., 2021), and countries in Asia are beginning to adopt co-teaching (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2021). However, the literature indicated that many special education co-teachers often function in a supportive role, such as an assistant or observer (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Unfortunately, because the special education teacher often assumes an assisting function, some students with disabilities will not ask for assistance for fear of being stigmatized (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018).

The following subsections addressed important themes regarding perceptions of co-teaching's advantages and disadvantages and co-teaching models. The next subsections were on students' observations of the co-taught classroom and their perception of teachers' equality. Then the subsections investigated teachers' experiences of collaboration and co-teaching relationships. The final theme addressed was professional development. The related literature highlighted important information regarding the triadic reciprocal nature of co-teachers' collective agency and the co-constructed learning space the co-teachers and students share.

Advantages and Challenges of Co-Teaching

Pairing a special educator and a general educator in the same classroom can present both opportunities and barriers to students with disabilities' success (Goldan & Schwab, 2020; Härkki et al., 2021; King-Sears, 2021; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Saloviita, 2019; Schwab et al., 2020; Strogilos et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2018). The literature indicates multiple advantages. Co-teachers report that an extra teacher in the classroom allows the content to be presented in multiple ways to the students (Akyuz & Stephan, 2020; Carty & Farrell, 2018; Kearns et al., 2021). Carty and Farrell (2018) explored the phenomena of teachers' perspectives on co-teaching and their thoughts on co-teaching models. The researchers only sampled general education and special education co-teachers. They revealed that co-teachers believed they were able to present multiple methods to solve math problems better together than alone (Carty & Farrell, 2018). Lehane and Senior (2020) noted that co-teaching produced a statistically significant improvement in math scores for students with and without disabilities. Both groups of students improved their standardized test scores on the post-test compared to the pre-test (Lehane & Senior, 2020). Research also indicates that the co-taught classroom reduces the pupil-to-teacher ratio, allowing co-teachers to give students extra support (Casserly & Padden, 2018). Students have reported that support and extra help are the significant advantages of co-teaching (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). Moreover, students report that co-teaching increases engagement in the content by making instruction more enjoyable (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Throughout the literature, there is consistent evidence that co-teaching can be advantageous for both teachers and students, but this literature review discusses the conditions research has suggested bringing about the positive results later in this chapter.

Co-teachers have reported that lack of planning time is a barrier to student success (Mihajlovic, 2020; Strogilos et al., 2016). Furthermore, some co-teachers do not effectively use

the planning time to develop effective interventions and inclusive strategies for students with disabilities. Strogilos et al. (2016) noted that special educators often planned to revise the content being taught and remove the students with disabilities they serve. Removing students from the co-taught classroom more than necessary is antithetical to the inclusive nature of co-teaching. Chitiyo's (2017) study noted that a majority of respondents indicated they lacked the skills necessary to co-teach effectively. Moreover, the literature indicated that co-teachers lack knowledge about co-teaching models or their confusion about the different models of co-teaching has also been a challenge (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018; Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018). Weiss et al. (2020) noted that co-teaching team members might unclearly define their respective teaching roles.

Furthermore, one study has empirically demonstrated that students with disabilities receive little support from special educators (Wexler et al., 2018). The special educator only led the class 14.1% of the time (Wexler et al., 2018). However, Wexler et al. (2018) indicated that both educators led 35.3% of class time. Wexler et al.'s (2018) results seem to indicate that special educator rarely leads class. The results seem to support other researchers' assertions that the special education teacher carries out an assistive role in the co-taught classroom (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Gavish, 2017; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). The literature also provided evidence of co-teaching providing co-teachers challenges. The challenges may have led to SWD not receiving the supports they needed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Wexler, 2018). The literature indicated that special education teachers rarely led class (Wexler, 2018), did not fully understand the co-teaching models (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018; Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018), and were often seen as an assistant to the regular education co-teacher (Gavish, 2017). The three challenges, not leading class, not fully

understanding co-teaching models, and special education co-teachers being seen as an assistant, may be why SWDs are not served properly in the LRE of the co-taught classroom.

The collective agency of the co-teachers allows them to present various methods to solve problems (Bandura, 1971; Carty & Farrell, 2018). Furthermore, the socially constructed learning environment is affected by two teachers, which reduces the teacher-to-pupil ratio and affects the triadic reciprocal interactions between students and co-teachers (Adams, 2006; Bandura, 1978; Casserly & Padden, 2018). The literature indicates that some students experience positive perceptions of co-teaching due to introducing an extra teacher in a co-constructed learning space (Adams, 2006; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Furthermore, two teachers can more effectively help the students develop their zone of proximal development (Hackett et al., 2021; Vygotsky, 1978: Wiebe Berry, 2006). Two teachers can act as Vygotsky's (1978) knowledgeable other, in this case others, as adult mentors for the students. . SWDs and students without disabilities perceive co-teaching as fun and an opportunity for more assistance (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). All of the interviewed students felt that having two teachers in the classroom offered them extra support (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). The fun that students experience may inform their interactions with the co-teaching team positively. The co-constructed learning space benefits from students and teachers reciprocating each other's conviviality while teaching and learning.

The challenges of co-teaching may be viewed through the sociocultural framework perspective because they are historical and social (Hackett et al., 2021; Vygotsky, 1978). Co-teachers are subject to the limits of their social environment. Lack of planning time affects co-teachers' self systems and collective agency. Hackett et al.'s (2021) assertion that fear of social consequences is why co-teachers do not discuss content instruction and may explain why co-teachers who modify content prefer to remove students with disabilities from the classroom

(Strogilos et al., 2016). Co-teachers that do modify content may not wish to address social consequences. Often, special education co-teachers can withdraw their students from the classroom without the consent of the general education teacher. Perlado Lamo de Espinosa et al.'s (2021) research noted similar findings to Strogilos et al.'s (2016) research. Perlado Lamo de Espinosa et al. (2020) indicated that many teachers removed or simplified tasks for SWD. The collective agency of both teachers is not being utilized when one teacher plans without the other. The special education co-teacher's action of removing the SWD from the classroom without collaborating with their counterpart may lead to the general education teacher internalizing that they do not need to collaborate in return. The general education teacher's self system may reinforce this lack of collaboration in the future which will cause a similar reaction in the special education co-teacher. This cycle could cause a progressively less collaborative co-constructed learning space. Another theoretical reason for special educators to withdraw their students for modified content without consulting their general education partner is that their self system has constructed the belief that their students cannot understand the content in the general education classroom (Strogilos et al., 2016). Finally, a failure of both teachers combining their knowledge and abilities in the classroom may be why students with disabilities were spending a vast majority of class time receiving whole group instruction or working independently (Wexler et al., 2018). These challenges lead to SWDs not being served in the LRE.

Models of Co-teaching

The literature focused on the perceptions of co-teaching teams on co-teaching models. The six co-teaching models are one teach, one observes; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team-teaching; and one teach, one assist (Alnasser, 2020; Carty and Farrell, 2018). Qualitative studies reveal co-teachers' attitudes about employing the six models of co-

teaching in their classroom (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018; Iacono et al., 2021; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Casserly and Padden (2018) conducted a study where the variables of interest being explored were the co-teachers' views of co-teaching models and how well they address the needs of SWD.) The researchers found that the data revealed three themes: teachers' role, learners' role, and developing co-teaching. Casserly and Padden's (2018) discovered that collaborative practice needed to be supported by detailed co-planning. The researchers also indicated that every student with a disability should have an individualized learning program (Casserly & Padden, 2018). The individualized learning program should indicate which method of co-teaching is most effective for the student. Unfortunately, the study revealed that some teachers neither understand the concept of co-teaching nor know the various models of co-teaching (Casserly & Padden, 2018). Teachers who are not knowledgeable about co-teaching often only employ "one teach, one assist" (Carty & Farrell, 2018). Some studies briefly focused on teachers' perceptions of how effectively they implement the various models (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Iacono et al., 2021). Carty and Farrell (2018) indicated that they even alternated between who leads and who assists. However, Carty and Farrell (2018) did not explore how that shaped their experience in the co-taught classroom. The theme of the importance of collaboration between the two co-teaching team members was consistent throughout the literature. Moreover, the stronger the collaboration between the two teachers, the more likely they were to feel as though they successfully employed a collaborative model of co-teaching.

Quantitative studies examine how often the various co-teaching methods are employed (Iacono et al., 2021; Jurkowski & Müller, 2018; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Saloviita, 2018; Strogilos et al., 2016; Sundqvist et al., 2021). Iacono et al. (2021) conducted a literature review that revealed four studies where collaborative co-teaching models were implemented most in the

classroom. The literature review suggested that co-teaching is an area of education that needs future studies to investigate how various co-teaching models improve classroom inclusion of students with disabilities.   However, the remainder of the literature suggested that one teach, one assist was the most common type of co-teaching model employed (Iacono et al., 2021). Strogilos et al. (2016) revealed that out of 400 special educators surveyed, the preferred co-teaching model is one teach, one assist with the general educator leading instruction. The descriptive statistics revealed the special educators' co-teaching model preferences (Strogilos et al., 2016). The next model the co-teachers endorsed was one teach, one assist without specifying who functions in what role (Strogilos et al., 2016). The descriptive statistics for other co-teaching models indicated they were less preferred by co-teachers (Strogilos et al., 2016).

The quantitative studies' findings that co-teachers prefer one-teach one-assist seems consistent with other studies indicating that special education co-teachers are seen as assistants to their regular education counterparts (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Gavish, 2017; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). The literature suggests that special education teachers prefer the assistant role within the co-taught team. Literature regarding in-service teachers co-teaching professional development needs notes that many co-teachers feel they need training regarding collaborative co-teaching models (Farclas, 2018; Norwich et al., 2021). The lack of training in-service co-teachers have with regard to collaborative models may be why special education co-teachers often assume an assistive role. The lack of in-service co-teaching training regarding collaborative co-teaching models may have a negative effect on SWDs asking special education co-teachers for assistance.

Some quantitative studies explore how often co-teachers implement different models and aspects of co-teaching and why they chose to implement the different models and aspects.

Quantitative studies also focused on variables such as the duration a co-teaching team has been paired together to how often different co-teaching models are employed by the co-teaching pair (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Pancsofar and Petroff (2016) indicated that co-teaching pairs who collaborated longer than a year often employed more than one co-teaching model. Paulsrud and Nilholm (2020) noted that co-teaching efficacy develops conjointly with developing a professional relationship between co-teachers. However, Jurkowski and Müller (2018) noted that a year was not a sufficient amount of time for their co-teaching participants to form a harmonized co-teaching partnership. Jurkowski and Müller's (2018) findings of the perceived relationship between the length of partnership and the harmony of a collaboration concur with Pancsofar and Petroff's (2016) study. The literature indicates that co-teachers who implement multiple models of co-teaching often have strong professional relationships. Research has been conducted on quantifiable measures such as how long co-teachers have been paired together and how many different models of co-teaching they implement. The literature has not explored how implementing collaborative models of co-teaching affects co-teaching team member's lived experiences.

The co-teachers are co-creating a learning space for themselves and their students as they employ the various co-teaching models (Adams, 2006). Each model they use affects their triadic reciprocal interaction with their self system, partner, and students (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978). Their self systems generate the constructs that guide their perceptions of various co-teaching models (Bandura, 1978). Each teacher's perceptions will guide their collective decision making which will affect the social learning space of the co-taught classroom (Adams, 2006; Bandura, 1978).

Literature regarding co-teaching continues to elicit mixed reports. Some literature reports

that co-teachers need more planning time to effectively employ co-teaching models (Carty & Farrell, 2018). Also, the literature noted that some co-teachers are unaware of or misunderstand the different co-teaching models (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018). Carty and Farrell (2018) explained that teachers in their study were unfamiliar with the different co-teaching models. Casserly and Padden (2018) revealed that some participants misunderstood parallel teaching or station teaching as team-teaching. However, Iacono et al.'s (2021) literature review described collaborative co-teaching models such as alternative, parallel, and team teaching were applied the most in several reviewed studies. Sundqvist et al. (2021) noted that parallel teaching was the preferred teaching method of their respondents. Unfortunately, the one study that focused on the length of time a special education co-teacher spent interacting with students during class revealed that co-teaching models were used a small percentage of the time (Wexler et al., 2018). The mixed reports indicate that more research on co-teaching model implementation is necessary if researchers understand how well models have been implemented in the field recently. The literature did not explicitly state how co-teachers felt when sharing content-teaching responsibility by implementing collaborative co-teaching models. Moreover, the literature suggested that sharing content teaching responsibility through employing collaborative co-teaching models or varying who leads instruction did not consistently occur in the studies. The inconsistent accounts of co-teaching and the challenges highlighted in the literature show a lack of collaborative models being implemented.

Teachers' Experiences of Co-Teaching

The literature also revealed how teachers experienced co-teaching (Eklund et al., 2020; Howard et al., 2021; Mackey et al., 2018). Many studies examined how teachers collaborated (Akcamete, & Dagli Gokbulut, 2018; Hackett et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2020; Krammer,

Gastager, et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2019; Stefanidis et al., 2019; Strogilos et al., 2020; Wherfel et al., 2021). Other studies examined co-teaching relationships and how co-teachers described their co-teaching relationships (Dávila et al., 2017; Gomez-Najarro, 2020; Hester et al., 2020; Kirkpatrick et al., 2020; Rytivaara et al., 2019; Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020). Friedman et al. (2020) investigated what co-teachers' expect from their students and themselves. Some studies examined co-teachers views on implementing certain interventions (Aspiranti, 2021, Kennedy et al., 2017; Kennedy et al., 2018). Gavish (2017) examined the special education co-teachers' perceptions of their status in the inclusive classroom. Lindacher (2020) conducted a qualitative study on how co-teachers understood their own and their co-teachers' pedagogical skills. All of the studies asked the teacher directly to explain their co-teaching experience. However, the studies did not focus on how different models of co-teaching or who led instruction affected the co-teaching team members' lived experiences.

Research regarding teacher perceptions of co-teaching also revealed various results. Pancsofar and Petroff (2016) indicated that co-teachers who do not implement collaborative co-teaching models often maintain a negative view of co-teaching. The studies that examined co-teaching relationships and collaboration between co-teachers often described how they felt working together (Kokko et al., 2021; Pesonen et al., 2021; Rytivaara et al., 2019). Many of the studies described the experience of co-teaching with a partner in the co-taught classroom. Some studies examined how often co-teachers collaborated with their partner (Strogilos et al., 2016). Strogilos et al. (2016) found that co-teachers believed they needed one hour and fifty-five minutes per week to plan their co-taught classes adequately. Unfortunately, they only spent an hour and twenty-six minutes planning together weekly. Other studies that did not examine

perceptions of co-teaching supported lack of planning time as a challenge co-teachers face (Jurkowski et al., 2020; Mihajlovic, 2020).

Collaboration

The literature disclosed studies that examined various aspects of collaboration (Berry, 2021; Jurkowski et al., 2020; Krammer, Rossmann, et al., 2018; Lindacher, 2020; Meadows & Caniglia, 2018; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Strogilos et al., 2016). Pancsofar and Petroff (2016) found that many co-teachers who did not implement collaborative co-teaching models maintained a negative attitude towards co-teaching. However, the teachers, both general and special education, with negative attitudes towards co-teaching were also paired with multiple co-teachers at the same time (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Therefore, they were engaged in multiple partnerships, leading to their negative attitude. Moreover, teachers who had been paired longer than a year co-planned their classes more frequently (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Conversely, multiple studies found that teachers that implemented more collaborative models of co-teaching had a more positive view of co-teaching (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Väyrynen & Paksuniemi, 2020). Bilican et al. (2020) found that co-teaching can improve a co-teacher unfamiliar with the content's knowledge and content instruction capability over time if both co-teachers share content teaching responsibility. However, Strogilos et al. (2016) found that many co-teachers desired to plan thirty-three minutes more weekly than they were able. Stroglilos et al.'s (2016) study did not indicate the length of time the co-teachers had been teamed together. Despite the teachers wishing to plan more, special education co-teachers preferred to employ the one teach, one assist model (Stroglilos et al., 2016).

Jurkowski et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study to discover what in-service co-teachers believed were necessary conditions for a successful collaboration. The research indicated that co-teachers need planning, resources, and administrative support (Jurkowski et al.,

2020). Ghedin and Aquario (2020) and Jortveit and Kovač (2021) conducted similar qualitative studies in Italy and Norway, respectively, to investigate general and special educators' perspectives on successful collaboration. Both studies indicated that both regular education teachers and special education teachers wish to collaborate effectively and believe that is one of the most important elements when implementing the co-teaching model. However, Ghedin and Aquario (2020) indicated that teachers often disagree when they are sharing the co-taught space. Ghedin and Aqurio's (2020) findings are consistent with another qualitative study regarding co-teachers' reflections on collaboration (Meadows & Canigula, 2018). Meadows and Canigula (2018) conducted a phenomenological study of co-teachers' critical reflections. One of the themes that Meadows and Canigula (2018) extrapolated from the data was that co-teachers' beliefs on collaboration were inconsistent. The study revealed that the participants were likely unaware that their beliefs on co-teaching collaboration were inconsistent (Meadows & Canigula, 2018). Meadows and Canigula (2018) postulated that the inconsistencies would be addressed by a co-teaching pair when an issue arose between the co-teachers but did not observe an issue arising during the study.

However, Lindacher (2020) found that when co-teaching partners have inconsistent instructional intents, their knowledge may still adequately complement each other in the co-taught classroom. Lindacher (2020) conducted a case study to understand better how special and regular educators perceived their co-teachers and their instructional capabilities. Lindacher (2020) noted that the data indicated that regular education teachers are more often responsible for teaching the content of a subject, while the special educators are more often concerned with ensuring SWDs are able to understand and interact with the content being taught. Lindacher's (2020) observation of the special educator's role in the co-taught classroom is similar to other

studies' findings (Jortveit & Kovač, 2021; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). Lindacher (2020) posited that both SWDs and students without disabilities benefited from the collaboration and combined knowledge of the co-teaching team. Both SWDs and students without disabilities benefit from co-teaching because they receive clarified explanations and clear directions from the co-teachers (Lindacher, 2020). The literature notes that collaborating co-teachers benefit all students, not just SWD, when co-teachers collaborate. Conversely, when co-teaching teams are unable to collaborate, not only do all the students receive a subpar education, but SWD are not receiving the services fully in the LRE.

Co-teaching Relationships

Kokko et al. (2021) posited that a co-teacher's main benefit from the co-teaching relationship is one's ability to share one's experiences and feelings with their partner. Kokko et al.'s (2021) quantitative findings coincide with the qualitative findings of Rytivaara et al. (2019). Rytivaara et al. (2019) indicated that co-teachers learning from one another was vital for a successful collaboration. Furthermore, Pesonen et al. (2021) suggested that co-teachers developing mutual respect and understanding is vital to improving a co-teacher's sense of belonging. Also, Kokko et al. (2021) posited that many challenges to co-teaching relationships could be overcome by the length of time a team co-teaches together. However, both Dávila et al. (2017) and Rytivaara et al. (2019) indicated that co-teachers should negotiate a shared understanding of co-teaching to avoid poor collaboration. Pesonen et al. (2021) indicated that a lack of trust and respect could negatively affect a co-teaching team. Perhaps, synthesizing the results of the three studies, a shared understanding of co-teaching can be negotiated, and trust and respect can be gained between co-teachers over time. Research has noted that trust and understanding are important for collaboration (Shin et al., 2016)

Theoretical Implications of Teachers' experiences of Co-teaching

Guise et al. (2017) indicated that co-teachers are together in the co-taught classroom and school's social setting for extended periods of time and continuously contribute to constructing each other's identity in the context of their roles and setting. How each co-teacher negotiates their teaching role will affect how others perceive them through their self system (Bandura, 1978). Most research indicates that planning with a co-teacher often leads to employing collaborative co-teaching models. Furthermore, the co-constructed identity of the co-teaching team is highlighted by the articles dealing with co-teacher relationships (Kokko et al., 2021; Pesonen et al., 2021; Rytivaara et al., 2019). Each teacher contributes to the identity of the other to form the collective agency of their co-taught team (Bandura, 1971).

Students' Perceptions of Co-Teaching

Researchers have realized the importance of students' experiences of co-teaching (Gaffney, 2020; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Holm et al., 2020; Kelley et al., 2017; King-Sears et al., 2014; Johnson & King-Sears, 2020; Rytivaara et al., 2021; Shrogan et al., 2015). Johnson and King-Sears (2020) noted the importance of understanding the student's perspective because how well the teacher perceives they are teaching or supporting and how well the students are learning or being supported may vary drastically. Multiple studies have been conducted to examine SWD's perceptions of inclusion and academic rigor (Dare & Nowicki, 2018; Dare & Nowicki, 2019; Dare et al., 2021). The literature suggested a wide range of perceptions by students about co-teaching and co-teachers. King-Sears, Brawand, and Johnson (2019) included a student-created exemplar that indicated a student believed the co-teacher did very little besides sitting at her desk and working on her computer. The special educator seemed unaware that the students did not believe they were supporting them (King-Sears, Brawand, & Johnson, 2019).

Conversely, another study revealed that although the one teach, one assist model was employed most often in their co-taught classroom, many students enjoyed the class and felt they had extra support (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). All students may also believe that the special education co-teacher makes sure they understand the content (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). The literature notes that students' perceptions of co-teaching affect their attitudes towards their co-teachers (Carty & Farrell, 2018; King-Sears, Brawand, & Johnson, 2019; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). If students' perceptions of co-teaching are negative, it may cause SWD to not wish to ask for the assistance of both teachers. An SWD may feel that a special educator does not care what is happening in the classroom and then not ask the special education co-teacher for help. However, a positive perception of co-teaching may lead all students to ask for assistance from both teachers.

Spörer et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study in a co-taught classroom. Ten of the participants were SWD. The researchers conducted the study to observe students' interactions with their classmates and teachers. Interestingly, the researchers noted that SWD interacted with their teachers more in the co-taught classroom than in a classroom taught by one teacher (Spörer et al., 2021). However, SWD interacted less frequently with their classmates in the co-taught classroom as opposed to how often they interacted with their classmates in a classroom with only one teacher, either special education or regular education. These findings challenge the findings of other studies that indicate some SWDs will not ask for help out of concern of being deemed different from their peers (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018). Also, the investigators posited a different challenge co-teachers and SWDs face in the co-taught classroom, the ability for SWDs to interact with their peers as much as students without disabilities. It is of note that this is the single study in the literature review that indicates that

SWDs interacted with teachers more in a co-taught classroom as opposed to a classroom with only one teacher.

Connor and Cavendish's (2020) and King-Sears and Strogilos's (2020) studies revealed one joint theme between student perceptions: fun. Students enjoyed the interplay between the teachers and how they would often joke with each other throughout the class period. Connor and Cavendish (2020) indicated that co-teachers making the classroom fun was a sign of an effective co-teaching team. Interestingly, the students in King-Sears and Strogilos's (2020) study noted that the students thought that their co-teachers were fun. Saterlee Vizenor and Matuska (2018) also revealed that students found co-teaching fun due to the interactions between co-teachers. Fun seemed to be a positive theme that helped students enjoy the co-taught classroom. The literature indicated that when the co-taught classroom was fun, both SWD and students without disabilities were happy to be in a co-taught classroom. Furthermore, although one teacher may take on a more assistive role (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020), if the students have fun, they may regard both teachers as equals. The research that fun may be a factor that helps students see parity between co-teachers is limited to a conjoined pair of recent studies (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019).

Literature regarding students' perceptions of co-teaching also provided reviewers with mixed results. Students may avoid the co-teacher for fear of being viewed differently by their peers (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018). Furthermore, this may be caused by teachers not fully understanding the concept of co-teaching (Casserly & Padden, 2018). However, some students may find co-teaching helpful and may even consider it fun (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Unfortunately, the article indicating that students believed co-teaching was fun was unable to determine the influence of co-teaching on the students (Strogilos & King-

Sears, 2019). Even the perception students have of co-teachers' stature in the classroom varies (Carty & Farrell, 2018; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). The actions of the co-teachers influence student perception. However, nothing in the literature specifically focused on teachers who share content teaching responsibilities.

Students' Observations on Teachers' Equality

The literature reported that some students do not like to seek assistance from a teacher that rarely leads instruction (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018). Casserly and Padden (2018) indicated that students with disabilities feel stigmatized if they receive help from a teacher who often does not lead instruction. However, Carty and Farrell's (2018) qualitative study indicated that members of one co-teaching collaboration believed students regarded their team as equals because they alternated who led the class and assisted.

A quantitative study conducted in conjunction with another qualitative study (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019) revealed a different result for another team that mainly employed one teach, one assist. King-Sears and Strogilos (2020) conducted a descriptive analysis of a sixth-grade co-teaching team and that teams' students' self-rated measurements of co-teaching. Also, the students rated themselves on how much they felt they belonged at school as well as their self-efficacy. The co-teachers rated their instructional approach and self-efficacy. However, the team also employed alternative teaching almost one-third of the time, and occasionally the station teaching model King-Sears and Strogilos (2020) studied a sixth-grade co-taught math class at the end of the school year. King-Sears and Strogilos (2020) indicated that the teachers shared equal stature in the classroom. The Strogilos and King-Sears (2019) study conjointly supplemented King-Sears and Strogilos's (2020) findings. The team still implemented the collaborative models of co-teaching, alternative teaching, and station teaching, a significant percentage of class time, which may account for a majority of students regarding both teachers as equals.

Also, King-Sears and Strogilos (2020) indicated that students with disabilities were rarely pulled out of the classroom. Literature indicated that students who withdraw from classes might feel stigmatized (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011). However, some teachers believe students with disabilities should be withdrawn from the class for special instruction if the students are struggling to learn math (Shin et al., 2019). Some students are expected to be pulled from the co-taught classroom for special instruction (Mihajlovic, 2020). Another qualitative study extrapolated from the same participants as the King-Sears and Strogilos (2020) study indicated that some students will still ask the teacher for assistance that they do not perceive as the main teacher (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Students may perceive the special educator as the helper teacher. Pupils may well ask the helper teacher for assistance because of the rapport the helper teacher has established with the students. The literature indicates that special education co-teachers who implement collaborative co-teaching models a significant portion of class time, at least one-third, build rapport with their students, and rarely pull students out of the classroom or special instruction may be seen as equal to the general education co-teacher by a majority of the students.

Theoretical Implications of Students' Perceptions of Co-teaching

Adams (2006) explained that students help create the co-created learning space with their teachers. Students' perceptions are influenced by the triadic reciprocal interactions with their co-teachers (Bandura, 1978). A student may observe other students not asking for assistance and choose not to ask. Conversely, a student may see other students ask for help and decide to ask for help. Embury and Kroeger (2012) indicated that students are aware of a power differential between the two teachers. Furthermore, when teachers harness their collective agency, they can vary who leads instruction or implement collaborative models of co-teaching (Carty & Farrell, 2018). Moreover, research indicates that when co-teachers harness their collective agency and

effectively teach their students, students often observe them as equals (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020).

Co-Teaching Professional Development

The literature reported the professional development of co-teaching. Collaboration between the teachers was emphasized in some studies (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Farclas, 2018; Shin et al., 2016). Literature reviews and meta-analysis studies have examined co-teaching professional development (Shin et al., 2016; Weinberg et al., 2020). Collaboration seems to be an essential facet of co-teaching for both in-service and pre-service teachers. Personality compatibility was an issue in one study that impeded professional development and collaboration (Shin et al., 2016).

The purpose of Shin et al.'s (2016) qualitative study was to synthesize pre-service teachers' co-teaching experiences. Themes were identified using the grounded theory method of qualitative data analysis. The six themes discovered are as follows: mutual communication, meeting the needs of diverse learners, the impact of personality, challenges of co-teaching, changed views on collaboration, and different views on content knowledge. The first five themes were shared between general education and special education pre-service teachers. The sixth theme was a point of disagreement between special education and general education pre-service teachers.

One of the main challenges revealed by the study was that pre-service special education teachers felt like assistants to the in-service general education teachers. Shin et al.'s findings are consistent with other studies where special educators feel as though they are assistants (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Gavish, 2017; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). Educators' views on co-teaching are heavily shaped by pre-service experiences (Alsarawi & Sukonthaman, 2021). The pre-service

special education teacher's inability to achieve parity with their in-service general education counterpart may cause them to maintain a negative view of collaboration. In the future, when the pre-service special educator becomes in-service, they may not collaborate or not believe they can successfully collaborate with their co-teaching partner. If co-teachers do not collaborate, they are unlikely to implement collaborative models of co-teaching and will not fully serve SWDs in the LRE.

Shin et al. (2016) revealed that frequent informal discussions between pre-service and in-service teachers were found to increase collaboration regarding students' academic success. Furthermore, co-teachers' believing communication between team members increases students' achievement is similar to other studies finding that communication is important to building strong co-teaching teams (Kokko et al., 2021; Pesonen et al., 2021; Rytivaara et al., 2019). Shin et al.'s (2016) literature review is highlighted because it exemplifies the experiences of teachers developing professionally. The similarity of themes regarding co-teaching experiences between pre-service teachers being developed into teachers in the field and in-service teachers indicates that clinical and field experiences may elicit similar experiences in both groups.

Both special education and general education pre-service teachers found personality compatibility with their co-teaching partner to be a challenge they experienced during professional development (Shin et al., 2016). All pre-service teachers felt that they were not supposed to offer suggestions but merely listen to the in-service teacher's advice. A majority of the general education and special education pre-service teachers learned the value of collaboration through co-teaching in the co-taught classroom. General education pre-service teachers felt they lacked knowledge on instructional strategies for SWD. Shin et al. (2016) also revealed that many special educators perceive they are ineffective at planning instruction due to a

lack of content knowledge. General educators consider themselves ineffective at planning instruction for SWDs due to a lack of training (Shin et al., 2016). The challenges that the pre-service teachers cited in Shin et al. (2016) are also cited by in-service teachers. Many in-service teachers feel they need more training in order to co-teach adequately (Basckin et al., 2021; Takala et al., 2020). One of the challenges that researchers believe can be addressed through professional development is ensuring both teachers are responsible for teaching SWD (Takala et al., 2020). Another challenge in-service teachers note is that they cannot implement the best practices because of a lack of professional development.

The themes and ideas revealed by Shin et al. (2016) are echoed in other studies (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021; Ricci et al., 2017). Crispel and Kasperski (2021) and Ricci et al. (2017) also indicated that pre-service co-teacher training was crucial to ensure teachers served all students. Ricci et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study to investigate the perceptions of pre-service special educators co-teaching on fieldwork. The six central themes the open comments revealed were as follows: personal growth as teachers, developing a good relationship as the key to co-teaching success, benefits of equality in co-teaching partnerships, lessons learned from collaborative co-teaching, challenges of collaboration, and positive outcomes for students. A theme found in Ricci et al.'s (2017) study was similar to a theme found in Shin et al.'s (2016) literature review. Ricci (2017) and Shin (2016) found that co-teaching team members grew as educators due to collaboration.

Advantages of Co-teaching Training and the Challenges Training Addresses

The recent literature on professional development focused on pre-service teachers. The studies focused on the teachers' feelings about co-teaching and how it might prepare them for the classroom in general (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Gottfried et al., 2019; Grey et al.,

2020; Kim & Pratt, 2020; Ricci et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2016 Weinberg et al., 2020). The

literature also focused on pre-service training and in-service training for teachers focusing on

inclusion and co-teaching (Drescher, 2017; Griful-Freixenet et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2021;

Kim & Pratt, 2020; Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2021; Ricci & Fingon, 2018; Rodriguez, 2021b;

Sebald et al., 2021). Furthermore, the examined literature focused on the advantages of pre-

service and in-service co-teaching training. Another theme found in the explored literature was

how the challenges were addressed.

Alsarawi and Sukonthaman (2021) conducted quantitative research to determine pre-

teachers' understanding, capabilities, and opinions regarding inclusive practices. The researchers

postulated that pre-service special education teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding

inclusion were influenced by superfluous variables. The superfluous variables were academic

programs, amount of time in their respective program, number of courses they had taken related

to SWDs, number of hours working with SWDs during field and clinical experiences, and

gender. Crispel and Kasperski (2021) indicated that if co-teachers did not have pre-service

training on proper pedagogical methods for SWDs, they might harm the students' educational

outcomes. Weinberg et al. (2020) noted that pre-service teachers engaged in co-teaching in 67%

of the studies and revealed that only 18% of pre-service teachers received training regarding co-

teaching outside coursework. Furthermore, only 17% of cooperating or mentor teachers received

co-teaching professional development or training (Weinberg et al., 2020). The literature indicates

that pre-service special education understanding of collaboration and attitudes towards co-

teaching are mainly formed by their classwork and field experience, and some co-teachers are

not learning co-teaching methods in the field (Alsarawi & Sukonthaman, 2021; Weinberg et al.,

2020). If the pre-service co-teachers maintain poor attitudes and have a weak grasp of collaboration when they become in-service teachers, they might harm the SWD they serve.

Robbins et al. (2019) and Landon-Hays et al. (2020) revealed that immersive simulation training might properly prepare special educators for co-teaching in the field. In both studies, the pre-service teachers interacted with avatars that simulated students they might interact with in the co-taught classroom. The pre-service teachers were able to practice the different co-teaching strategies they learned in their college classrooms virtually risk-free. Robbins et al. (2019) noted that pre-service teachers were better able to co-plan after engaging with virtual students, and Landon-Hays et al. (2020) indicated that pre-service teachers were more effective at implementing high leverage practices that are important to serving SWD, such as differentiation, collaboration, and giving students feedback. Pancsofar and Petroff (2016) noted that teachers with more pre-service training that discussed co-teaching often shared more responsibility for teaching, assessing, and planning with their partners. The literature indicates that pre-service training can properly prepare special educators for the co-taught classroom. There is consistent evidence that preparing the special education pre-service co-teacher for the co-taught classroom through virtual training or discussion about co-teaching will help the future special educators collaborate with their general education partners better when they enter the field professionally.

Their academic and clinical experiences form the majority of pre-service teachers' understanding and attitudes toward co-teaching during their pre-service training Alsarawi & Sukonthaman, 2021). Research suggests that many co-teachers are not prepared in pre-service training for co-teaching and that their lack of training may academically harm SWDs. Furthermore, recent research has explored how educator training introduces pre-service teachers to various co-teaching models (Chang, 2018; Duran et al., 2020). One study examined the

different co-teaching models used during student-teacher field experiences and how that prepared them for the classroom (Chang, 2018). Another study examined changing attitudes towards co-teaching during field experiences due to student teachers implementing co-teaching models (Duran et al., 2020). Other research focuses on some pre-service training that might ensure pre-service teachers are prepared for the co-taught classroom, such as simulation training (Robbins et al., 2019; Landon-Hays et al., 2020).

Basckin et al. (2021) posited that many in-service teachers do not feel they have enough co-teaching professional development opportunities. A case study was conducted in which researchers measured the effectiveness of in-service co-teachers before and after professional development sessions that highlighted co-teaching best practices (Farclas, 2018). Norwich et al. (2021) revealed that a best practice for professional development is collaboration. Furthermore, teachers with in-service training concerning co-teaching share similar responsibilities with their co-teaching partner (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Also, noted that in-service co-teachers felt they needed more professional development focusing on behavior management, mathematical instruction, and language development (Takala et al., 2020). The consistent theme found in the literature regarding in-service teachers and co-teaching is that they feel as though they need more professional development regarding co-teaching (Basckin et al., 2021; Farclas, 2018; Takala et al., 2020). The recent literature suggesting that in-service teachers feel as though they need more co-teaching professional development to be more collaborative and address issues found in the co-taught classroom seems consistent with other literature indicating that co-teaching teams are not implementing collaborative models of co-teaching in the co-taught classroom. Farclas (2018) seemed to address the problem with their study. However, research regarding implementing

collaborative co-teaching models and measuring effectiveness does not reveal the lived experience of the co-teachers implementing them.

Theoretical Implications of Co-teaching Professional Development

Adams's (2006) suggestion that knowledge is co-constructed by all persons in the classroom can be extrapolated to mean the co-taught, university, or professional development classroom. Professional development can be an opportunity to either shape a pre-service co-teacher's attitude towards collaborative co-teaching (Alsarawi & Sukonthaman, 2021) or help in-service co-teachers implement collaborative co-teaching models (Farclas, 2018). The information that pre-service and in-service teachers receive in teacher programs or professional development courses affects their construction of knowledge. The new knowledge construct affects their self system and their teacher belief system; therefore, how they will interact with others. The development of one individual will affect the other individual in a dyad and therefore affect their collective agency (Bandura, 1971). Thus, professional development shapes one co-teacher, which shapes the collective agency of a co-teaching team. The collective agency of the co-teaching team is crucial in meeting the needs of all students, both SWD, and students without disabilities.

Summary

Co-teaching has become a mainstream pedagogical tool to ensure students with disabilities are taught alongside their peers. Unfortunately, some students do not fully access both teachers. Students might not pose questions to the special educator due to the potential social stigma associated with such an action. Many students, whether they are SWD or not, do not want to convey an educational status different from their peers. Some SWD will fail to ask the special educator for assistance based on their peer's unwillingness to ask for help; they base their action on the information given to them by others in the space (Bandura, 1978). However,

all members of the classroom, including students and co-teachers, are responsible for co-constructing knowledge in the co-taught classroom (Adams, 2006; Guise et al., 2017). Co-teachers co-construct knowledge by being active members of the co-taught classroom community, and their actions affect the other co-teachers' construction of knowledge, as well as the students. Moreover, although some studies briefly mention the benefits of sharing content teaching responsibilities (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Farclas, 2018), little is known about the perceptions of co-teachers that often vary who leads instruction or employs team or parallel teaching. A gap exists in the literature pertaining to a co-teaching team member's experience with their partner and students when co-teachers share content teaching responsibilities.

There exists a gap regarding the experiences of a co-teaching team member sharing content responsibility as they negotiate the educational space with their partner, the nature of the collaborative relationship shared by the teachers, how they interact with their students, and how teachers experience their class's social environment and its influence on their experience. This study fills this notable gap with the reflections of co-teachers informing future policy decisions. In Chapter Three, the methods underpinning this study are described.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS
Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The inclusion of SWD with their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom has changed how both groups receive instruction. This change has also changed the roles and pedagogical methods of both general education and special education teachers (Francisco et al., 2020). Accountability for the educational results of students with and without disabilities necessitates co-teaching team members to provide quality instruction by employing the best pedagogical practices (Valle & Connor 2019).

Major City Metro School District (MCMSD; pseudonym) instituted the co-teaching model of instruction. General education and special education teachers educate students with and without disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting (MCMSD County School District, 2019). This chapter presents the methods used to discover the perceptions of both special education and general education teachers regarding sharing content teaching responsibilities to an inclusive class. This chapter includes information on the qualitative hermeneutical research design. The methods of data collection and data analysis are also presented. Finally, provisions of trustworthiness and ethical considerations are expressed.

Research Design

There are two major research methods, qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative research is meant to reveal the factors that influence an outcome, the effectiveness of an intervention, and understanding the best forecasters of a result (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Holm et al., 2019). The quantitative method can examine the progress of trends and ideas over periods of time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Marek, 2021).). Quantitative

research methods do not reveal the individuals' meanings of a social problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Power & Velez, 2020). A qualitative study allows for the observer to analyze experiences with the meanings participants project onto them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research often employs open-ended questions to elicit participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fontanella et al., 2006). Creswell and Creswell (2018) postulated that qualitative research is an approach that helps researchers comprehend the meaning individuals project onto an issue or social problem.

The study notes the problem of a co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom. Each co-teaching team member may experience the phenomenon of sharing content teaching responsibility differently. I conducted this study using a qualitative design because it seeks to describe the experience of 12 secondary school co-teachers engaged in the phenomenon of participating in a co-teaching team that shares instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom. I employed the qualitative research method because investigating and explaining participants' lived experiences cannot be revealed through quantitative research. Also, Brantlinger et al. (2005) noted that qualitative research can inform special education policy and practice. Multiple qualitative designs were considered for this study. Grounded theory was considered for this study, but the research does not focus on a process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnographic research was considered for this study, but the focus of the study is not the conduct and communications of co-teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus of the study is the phenomenon of co-teaching team members sharing instructional responsibilities.

Laverty (2003) indicated that Husserl was the father of phenomenology. Husserl believed that psychology should not apply strict scientific methods to human beings (Laverty, 2003). Laverty (2003) related that Husserl did not think human beings reacted instinctively to outside

influences. Husserl believed that each person responded to stimuli according to their perception

of the stimuli (Laverty, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Kafle (2013) posited that Heidegger moved

phenomenology away from philosophy and reformed it as an understandable science. Husserl's

and Heidegger's ideas have been used by hermeneutical phenomenologists such as van Manen

(2014) and Creely (2018). Moran (2000) described phenomenology as describing experiences

broadly as they are to describe the experience as it appears in the mind of the experiencer. Moran

(2000) explained that phenomenology must meticulously describe things as they appear to the

experiencers conscious mind. This study warrants a phenomenological design because it seeks to

describe a co-teaching team member's conscious experience of the phenomenon of sharing

content teaching responsibilities. I contend that a phenomenological design allows me to explain

the experiences of a co-teacher sharing instructional responsibilities. I understand that the

phenomenological design allows me to explore a co-teachers understanding of their experience

of their sociocultural environment when they share instructional responsibility in the co-taught

classroom. I also believe the phenomenological design allows me to explain how their beliefs

affect their experiences.

Of the qualitative phenomenological designs available, a hermeneutical

phenomenological design is best suited to capture the experiences of co-teaching teams who

share content teaching responsibilities. To further explain this research rationale, Bynum and

Varpio (2018) indicated that hermeneutical phenomenological research is meant to understand a

person's experiences and perceptions within the framework of all of humanity's experiences.

Hermeneutic phenomenology lets researchers grasp the concealed layers of an individual's

experience, hidden by conscious awareness, and how their "lifeworld" influences their

perceptions and experiences (Bynum & Varpio, 2018, p. 1). The lifeworld is how an individual

"pre-reflectively" experiences a phenomenon (Bynum & Varpio, 2018, p. 1). The objective of hermeneutical phenomenology is to cultivate prospective insights that connect the researcher more with the world in which they work and live (Babich & Ginev, 2014; Bynum & Varpio, 2018). A hermeneutical phenomenological design is warranted due to the researcher's experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenological research allows the researcher to draw on their personal experiences because the researcher knows that their experiences may be similar to the experiences of others (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 2014). My personal experiences helps me understand the participant's experiences. I have shared instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom. I understand the participants' sociocultural environment. I also know how my personal beliefs affect my co-teaching when I share instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom.

Research Questions

The goal of this phenomenological study was to understand co-teaching team member's experiences of shared instructional responsibility. The following research questions guides this study:

Central Research Question

How do secondary education co-teachers describe their experience of sharing instructional responsibility?

Sub-Question One

How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe their sociocultural experiences of co-teaching?

Sub-Question Two

How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe the experience of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-teaching?

Setting and Participants

The following section serves two purposes. First, it describes in adequate detail the research setting for readers to imagine the setting of my study. The research setting of my study is MCMSD. Second, I describe the criteria for participation in my study. They are secondary teachers, special or general educators who have co-taught within the last two school years. I also briefly indicate the likely descriptors of my participants by virtue of my study's criteria.

Setting

The setting for this study is MCMSD (Pseudonym), which is in Northwest Georgia. The district encompasses 434 square miles. MCMSD employs over 4800 full and part-time employees. The district educates over 42,200 students in 23 elementary schools, eight middle, six high schools, and four unique schools. MCMSD employs 2622 teachers (Public School Review, 2021a). The school district is administered by a superintendent, a school board chair, six school board members, and a student advisor (MCMSD School District, 2021b). According to the Georgia Department of Education (2020), 12.5% of MCMSD enrollees are SWD. MCMSD was chosen for this study because it is responsible for educating a larger percentage of SWD than the Georgia public school average of 11.6% (Georgia Department of Education, 2019). Also, MCMSD was chosen for this research because both the middle and high school level campuses use co-teaching to ensure the inclusion of SWD in general education academic classrooms. MCMSD offered advanced co-teacher training to its co-teaching teams in 2019 (MCMSD County School District, 2019).

Participants

All co-teaching team members were selected based on a set of criteria. Only 12-15 secondary, meaning middle or high school, special education, or general education teachers who have been or currently lead instruction in the co-taught classroom were included in the participant group. Furthermore, similar to previous studies on co-teaching, participants must have a least one full school year of co-teaching experience (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018). The participants vary in age, gender, ethnicity, secondary school grade level, and subjects taught. The participants' age, gender, ethnicity, secondary school grade level, and subjects taught were of no significance in the planning or focus of the study.

I sent an initial qualifying questionnaire, to a gatekeeper for disbursal to potential candidates, to assess if potential participants meet the qualifications for the study (see Appendix A). Participants must be a secondary special education or general education teacher who has, in the last two school years, led instruction in the co-taught classroom. The questionnaire focuses on if the teacher has shared content teaching responsibilities with their co-teaching partner. The first questionnaire helped reveal a potential participant's teaching experience and background.

Researcher Positionality

This section provides an explanation of my interpretive frameworks, the sociocultural framework and the teacher belief framework conjointly, and the three philosophical assumptions that guide my study. The interpretive frameworks of my study are the sociocultural framework and teacher belief framework. The philosophical assumptions discussed are my ontological assumption, which is a Biblical worldview. The epistemological assumption is that qualitative researchers collect subjective evidence. I also discuss my axiological assumption that general education and special education co-teachers need to be viewed as equals by each other, students, and stakeholders.

Interpretive Framework

My research intends to address the experiences of the participants. The exploration and description of lived experiences are key aspects of a phenomenological study. Phenomenological research "describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). Furthermore, I applied the constructivist worldview to this study. Constructivists, or social constructivists, think individuals seek to understand the world in which they work and live (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural framework researchers focus on the participants' perceptions of the issue being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Takala & Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2012). This study focuses on the participants' perceptions of both co-teachers sharing content teaching responsibilities. Moreover, constructivists believe individuals construct meaning through interactions with others (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study intends to examine the meaning constructed by a co-teacher's interactions with their partner and how they disseminate academic instruction to students in the co-taught classroom. Also, my study intends to analyze secondary school co-teacher descriptions of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-teaching. I want to analyze how teachers' belief systems affect their experiences when they share instructional responsibilities while co-teaching. I want to understand how their social interactions, in combination with their past experiences and beliefs, affect their experience of sharing instructional responsibility as well.

Philosophical Assumptions

I outline my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. I articulate my positionality to articulate the lens through which I view the world. How I view the world affects my research, and as such, I briefly explain my philosophical values and belief systems and how

they interact with the study's articulated research methods. By articulating my positionality, I intend to assist the reader in comprehending my Biblical worldview and clarify my how my experiences affect my research approach.

Ontological Assumption

I hold a Biblical worldview that I practice intrinsically. I believe that God created a single reality. However, Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that qualitative scholars report participants' experiences as multiple realities. Multiple realities are evidenced by words and themes presented by different participants in different qualitative studies that demonstrate different perspectives when discussing the phenomenon (Creely, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moran, 2000). It is of note that my personal ontological assumption is not the same as my scholarly assumption. In order to report varied perspectives, I have to bracket my belief that there is a single reality. However, I do not personally believe multiple perspectives negate a singular reality. There are many members of the Body of Christ, and we make up the different parts of our Lord's body, with Jesus being the head. The head leads the body. Similarly, our multiple perspectives make up an understanding of reality, but the objective reality is mediated by God. God is the objective reality by which all perspectives are guided. Therefore, multiple perspectives and participant experiences are part of the singular reality.

Epistemological Assumption

Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that qualitative researchers understand knowledge through people's individual experiences. Each person's experience is subjective and unique, and a qualitative researcher collects subjective evidence (Creely, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014). Creswell and Poth (2018) also indicated that a qualitative researcher should understand what the participants are experiencing by being near where they experience the

phenomenon. I believe that reality can be understood by experience. My epistemological assumptions are similar to Creely's (2018) and van Manen's (2014) with one major caveat. While each person's experience is unique, each experience combines to form the whole and is mediated by the objective reality of God. I am a co-teacher and therefore understand the phenomenon my participants are experiencing. I chose a hermeneutical phenomenological design because I understand the phenomenon. I believe that I have experienced sharing instruction in the co-taught classroom. Therefore, I can sort their experiences through the filter of my own.

Axiological Assumption

I am an interrelated special education teacher. Co-teaching is a method of instruction delivery that I practice and hold in high regard. My reason for conducting this research is to ensure that all SWD receive the best instruction possible in the least restrictive environment (LRE). In order to do so, I believe that both co-teaching team members must view each other as equals. Furthermore, I believe all students in the co-taught classroom must view both teachers as equals. I bracket my biases according to Creely's (2018) suggestions. I specifically chose a hermeneutical phenomenological design to bring my lived experiences to the research to help me understand the experiences of other teachers. However, I do not let my personal feelings affect my interactions with others.

I have eight years of teaching experience in public schools. I have served in MCMSD for two years and have spent seven years as a special education teacher and case manager for SWD. I have special education and secondary English certifications from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC). My undergraduate degree was conferred from Georgia State University, and I possess a master's in arts and teaching Secondary English degree from Georgia State University. I am an interrelated secondary English teacher in MCMSD schools.

I am passionate about working and advocating for SWD. At my core, I believe all students can learn. However, I do not believe all students learn the same way or at the same pace. Teachers must blend enthusiasm and content knowledge with proper delivery methods to engage and educate all students. I believe that a discussion about ensuring both students with and without disabilities receive the best education needs to take place. Public schools need to ensure that co-teaching teams employ the best pedagogical methods in their inclusive classrooms.

Researcher's Role

I am acting as a human instrument of data collection. I must be aware of my role in the research process. I am a special education co-teacher at an MCMSD high school. Some participants may be colleagues or people I have met at district professional development events. I may have worked with participants in the past. Also, I may never have met a participant before the start of the study. I in no way have any authority role over any of the participants.

The hermeneutical phenomenological research method is used in this study. I consider my interpretations of the lived experiences of the study's participants. A literature review was established before conducting the study. I attempt to examine the information associated with the upcoming study using Creely's (2018) hermeneutical phenomenological method for educational research. I allow for self-reflection of possible personal feelings that could influence my interactions with participants. The self-reflection of personal experiences and feelings should enable me to put them aside when I collect data and perform data analysis. I wish to have an unbiased view of new viewpoints. My bias is formed by personally feeling and experiencing that the special education co-teacher is the general education teacher's assistant. Furthermore, I have been told by students and former co-teachers that I am the helper. These memories must be set aside if I am to conduct an unbiased and objective empirical inquiry.

Procedures

Next, in the Procedures section, I indicate the steps I used to complete the study. I include who at MCMSD I need to contact to receive site permission, information discussing receiving site permissions, and IRB approval. I also detail recruiting participants, including contacting secondary special education administrators. I then explain my three data collection methods, interviews, letters, and electronic open-ended questionnaires. Finally, I then describe how the data analysis uses Creely's (2018) four-stage hermeneutic phenomenological analysis and how my study achieves triangulation. I have listed the steps to the degree that my study could easily be replicated.

Permissions

First, I concurrently sought IRB approval (see Appendix B) and MCMSD district and campus approval (see Appendix C). Next, I contacted the appropriate person at the district office, Dr. Juno Sigma (pseudonym). Then, I filled out the MCMSD permission form. The form requires that I submit a letter from my Committee Chair that supports my research and data collection validity. The form also asked me to detail the purpose of my study, research questions, a description of my study, and data collection methods (see Appendix D). I did not collect any data until I have obtained and documented all necessary permissions.

Recruitment Plan

I did not begin recruitment until after I received both site and IRB approvals. After I receive both approvals, I used the MCMSD website to identify administrators to contact for the research. Site approval includes permission to contact teachers via administrator and administrator's assistant. The MCMSD website post links to different secondary schools in the school district (MCMSD County School District, 2021a). Each secondary school's website posts

administrators' contact information, often including the departments they oversee. I sent the

initial letter to principals and their administrative assistants and ask them to forward it to the

appropriate gatekeepers The email ask the administrator and the administrative assistant to

forward the email to all secondary teachers who have co-taught in the last two years, both special

and general education. Some principals sent the emails to the secondary school special education

administrators and their administrative assistants the email introducing myself, presenting my

permissions, and asking them to forward the recruitment email to all potential participants (see

Appendix D). Next, the administrator who supervises special education or their administrative

assistant emailed the teacher with information about the research and its purpose (see Appendix

E). The potential participants complete an email questionnaire to ensure they have co-taught, are

currently co-teaching at the secondary level, and have or are sharing content teaching

responsibilities with their co-teaching partner (see Appendix A). The email included an

invitation asking for their participation. If they wish to participate and meet the qualifications,

they responded via survey monkey. I sent qualifying participants an informed consent form (see

Appendix F). The consent form addressed the voluntary nature of the research, the requirements

to participate, and the assurance of confidentiality. I asked them to sign and return the form.

Next, I contacted all participants and schedule their one-on-one interviews. At the conclusion of

our interview, I asked them to write a hypothetical letter to an amalgamated co-teacher. The

letter is addressed to a pseudonym and is only be seen by me.   Participants can divulge how they

interact socially with their co-teacher and how that affects their view of the world and their belief

system.

　　　　To understand the experiences of secondary education co-taught team members who

share content teaching responsibilities, only participants who have lived that experience for a

least one full school year were selected. I reviewed the answers from returned qualifying

surveys. Also, I only asked respondents that note they have shared content teaching

responsibilities to participate. The purposeful sampling technique is when a researcher

intentionally selects a group of participants best suited to provide information that addresses the

research questions being examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). The purposeful

sampling technique ensures that participants are best suited to help the researcher answer their

research questions. I used the qualifying questionnaire, answered by the respondents via the

Survey Monkey link, to choose participants that meet the study's criteria. Snowball sampling, or

respondent-driven networking, is a sampling technique where initially qualified respondents,

usually acquaintances of the researcher, help the researcher find additional qualified respondents

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling, or respondent-driven networking,

was used to ensure saturation. I ensured the study has 12 participants to ensure saturation.

Saunders et al. (2018) explained that saturation indicates further data gathering is unnecessary

because enough data has been collected and analyzed. I accessed the potential participants by

reviewing administrators' profiles on MCMSD school websites. I then sent secondary school

special education administrators and their administrative assistants an introductory email

presenting my permissions. The email also asked them to forward the recruitment email to all

potential participants, both special education and general education teachers (see Appendix E).

The email asked the administrator and the administrative assistant to forward the email to all

secondary teachers who have co-taught within the last two school years. The recruitment email

included a pre-screening questionnaire via a link to Survey Monkey to ensure participants meet

the criteria (see Appendix E). Those interested and who meet the criteria can opt to be emailed

consent forms to sign via Adobe Sign. After they electronically signed them on Adobe Sign, they emailed them back to me.

Data Collection Plan

After receiving approval from the IRB, MCMSD, and their campuses, and informed consent from the participants, I began the data collection process. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined triangulation of substantiating information as using multiple data sources collectively when performing a study. I used interconnected procedures, a technique known as triangulation, to answer the research questions. This study triangulated corroborative evidence from multiple data sources. I used three data collection methods to achieve triangulation: interviews, letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaires. First, I conducted the interviews. They focused on the co-teaching partner's experiences sharing content teaching responsibilities. Participants then wrote the letters to their amalgamated co-teacher. The letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher are meant to elicit further sharing of experiences from co-teachers about content teaching responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. Finally, after both the one-on-one interviews have taken place and letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher have been received, an open-ended questionnaire was be sent out. The questionnaire allowed the participants to provide rich descriptions of their individual experiences sharing content teaching responsibilities. Also, the questionnaires helped validate the findings of the interviews, letters to the participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and the study as a whole.

Individual Interviews

I conducted interviews individually. I conducted them via Microsoft Teams; interviews were scheduled according to my participants' schedules and availability. Memoing, video, and audio recording were used to ensure the accuracy of the interviews. Memoing recorded the

participants' actions and behaviors, and the video and audio recordings recorded their words, physical actions, and voice accentuations. I conducted semi-structured interviews to make changes, when necessary, without requiring me to reconduct them (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured environment. The interviews were conducted and recorded using Microsoft Teams. I used a backup recording device in case my primary device fails; it was a video application on my Android phone. The video application also recorded the Microsoft Teams meeting. The interview questions allowed the participants to give richly detailed answers (Olson, 2011; Packer, 2011). As mentioned above, I scheduled each interview when I contacted willing, qualifying participants. Each interview lasted between 8-45 minutes. Interview locations need to take place online. I transcribed the audio recordings to ensure both their trustworthiness and validity. I did my utmost to protect the participants' anonymity. I will safeguard all data collected for five years. I asked the following questions (see Appendix G).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself? What do you like to do when you have free time?

2. In what ways do you feel that your personal beliefs or attitudes about co-teaching have affected the way you deliver instruction in the co-taught classroom? SQ2

3. How has your personal belief system affected the way you share instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? CRQ

4. If you became a teacher through a teacher preparation program, how did your program prepare you for sharing content teaching responsibility with a co-teacher? SQ2

5. Describe how you and your co-teaching partner plan for classes. SQ2

6. Describe the positive attributes of collaborative planning with your co-teacher? SQ2

7. Describe the challenges of collaborative planning with your co-teacher? SQ2

8. How has your sharing content teaching responsibilities affected your experiences as a co-teacher? CRQ

9. How has your sharing content teaching responsibilities affected your experiences with your co-teaching partner? SQ2

10. How has your sharing content teaching responsibilities affected your experiences with the students in your co-taught classes? SQ1

11. Describe how you and your partner decide who will lead instruction in the class. SQ2

12. In what ways do you feel personally and professionally developed as a co-teacher? SQ1

13. In what areas do you and your co-teaching partner's relationship still need further development to ensure both teachers are viewed as teachers by both the students and your colleagues? SQ1, SQ2

14. Please tell me about a time you felt you shared responsibility with your co-teacher. How did that experience affect your experience of sharing content teaching responsibilities? CRQ, SQ1

Question one allows the interviewer to establish a rapport with the participant and corroborate their answers on the study qualification questionnaire. Rossman and Rallis (2017) indicate that open-ended questions can be used with phenomenological research designs. Therefore, since this is a phenomenological study, all interview questions are open-ended.

The second and third questions help the interviewer better understand how the teacher perceives the co-teaching model. Question two relates to SQ2; also, one's personal beliefs are a reflection of their self system. The third question relates to the CRQ and how co-teaching team members co-construct the learning space. The questions are meant to uncover possible reasons

the co-teaching team member shares content-teaching responsibilities. Other studies have analyzed the attitudes and beliefs of co-teachers (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015; Strogilos et al., 2016). Research has not been done to understand better the phenomenon of co-teaching team members that share content-teaching responsibilities.

Question four is meant to help the interviewer understand how the participants were introduced to the concept of co-teaching. This question also relates to the teacher belief framework by exploring how a co-teacher's beliefs about co-teaching. This question relates to SQ1. The question seeks to unearth how pre-service preparation may have influenced the participant's experience of co-teaching. Research has studied pre-service teachers' attitudes towards co-teaching (Ricci et al., 2017). This question is meant to understand how teacher preparation has influenced in-service co-teachers who share content-teaching obligations in the classroom.

Questions five through eleven seek to understand the experiences of a co-teaching team member. Questions five through seven, nine, and eleven relate to SQ2. The questions can be viewed through the conjoined lenses of SLT and social constructivism because a co-teacher's learned experience is informed by their self system. A co-teacher's learned experience informs their interprofessional interactions. Also, a co-teacher's learned experience is informed by the co-constructed space they create with their partner. The action of co-teachers employing collaborative models of co-teaching informs what the co-teachers learn, and the study wishes to examine what they learn and how it informs their experience.

Question eight deals with lived experiences and therefore is related to the CRQ. Question ten asks about participants' experiences with students and relates to SQ2. Question ten can be viewed through the conjoined lenses of social constructivism and SLT because Bandura (1978)

indicated that triadic reciprocal interactions occur between humans in social situations continuously. Co-teachers and students constantly learn from each other, which informs their self system. Furthermore, Adams (2006) interpreted Vygotsky's (1978) theory to suggest that teachers learn alongside their students and co-construct a learning space. All seven of these questions are similar to the purpose of a study that phenomenologically will illuminate co-teachers' experiences (Acosta et al., 2019; Rytivaara et al., 2019). Like previous studies, the questions seek to understand co-teaching team members' experiences with planning, interactions with each other, and interactions with the students. Unlike previous studies, these questions shed light on how sharing co-teaching responsibilities affect co-teachers' experiences.

Question twelve analyzes how professional development may influence the participants' experiences of co-teaching. This question relates to SQ1. The CRQ and SQ1 can also be viewed through the cojoined lens of SLT and social constructivism for similar reasons as SQ2. Some research has been conducted with regard to co-teacher professional development (Strieker et al., 2012). The research has not illuminated specifically how professional development affects co-teaching team members that share content-teaching responsibilities.

Question thirteen elucidates how the co-teaching team member feels they can achieve parity in the eyes of their co-teaching partner and the students. This question relates to both sub-questions. It asks teachers to discuss elements of their professional relationship and how their experiences influence their experience of sharing instruction. Rossman and Rallis (2017) indicate that if participants believe the interviewer is genuinely interested in their responses, they will be more candid. Other studies have attempted to ascertain how co-teachers and students perceive one another (Embury & Kroeger, 2012; Smith & Winn, 2017; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019).

Questions about how to reach parity in co-teacher and student perceptions have not been asked

of a team member of a co-teaching team that shares content-teaching obligations.

Question fourteen is asked at the end of the interview to ensure that rapport has had an

opportunity to be built. Rossman and Rallis (2017) indicate that rapport building is an essential

aspect of a well-conducted interview. This question allows participants to reveal any ideas or

critical points they may not have expanded on earlier in the interview. Furthermore, it asks them

to discuss an experience directly related to the CRQ. The follow-up question directly relates to

SQ1 because it asks the participant to explain how their experience affected their perception of

sharing instruction while co-teaching. Again, if the participant believes I am sincere, they may

disclose an insight I could not uncover throughout the interview.

I am keeping their answers confidential throughout the research process. The interviews

took place online. I memoed during the interviews, including a record of participant actions and

behaviors. The audio recording recorded their words and voice accentuations. The video

recording showed participant gestures and mannerisms. Both participant voice accentuations and

physical gestures can be analyzed.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Crowther et al. (2017) indicated that researchers that used hermeneutical phenomenology did not

claim that there is only one method of data analysis. Hermeneutical phenomenology recognizes

that there are many ways of analyzing data (Crowther et al., 2017). They explain that

hermeneutical phenomenological research requires flexible methods that evolve as participants

relate their experiences (Crowther et al., 2017). Creely (2018) provided one such method for

hermeneutical phenomenological education research. Creely modified Husserl's method of

phenomenological research. I have adopted Creely's (2018) four-stage method of interpretation

for this research. I used a form of bracketing, coding, and memoing to identify themes and

organize information for the data collected. Themes are identified using Creely's ontological

descriptions. For clarity, I describe how the first three stages of Creely's (2018) analysis are

applied to the individual interview analysis.

Stage One: Ontological Description. Creely (2018) indicated that the researcher should

first label transcriptions of participants' experiences of the phenomenon for explicit experiential

descriptions. The ontological descriptions, also known as coding labels, are the same for each

form of data collection. Although a researcher could use other ontological descriptions or coding

labels, Creely (2018) designated the ontological labels described in the individual interview

analysis section for hermeneutical phenomenological educational research. Creely explains that a

person senses an experience by describing it and, therefore, gives it meaning (Creely, 2018).

Creely (2018) explained that it is important to label experiential experiences and classify them.

Creely (2018) clarified that descriptions of experiences reveal a moment in time of the

experiencer's consciousness. The following labels are used to describe and classify experiences:

1. To *act:* bodily actions connected to intentionality and volition. It involves a

   movement from internality to an externality that can be observed.

2. To *be*: awareness of self and body as a visceral state of temporal being in space, and

   its links to identity and whom a user believes he or she is as a person.

3. To *sense:* states of perception and sensory input.

4. To *feel*: somatic or corporal states, felt states, and emotional categories (or the

   affective).

5. To *think:* contemplation, strategic problem solving, thoughts, and cognitive processes

   in consciousness.

6. To *connect:* inter-subjectivity and inter-corporeality or being with others through digital or disembodied (as well as corporeal) connections.

7. To *learn*: awareness of the changes, adjustments, acquisitions, and skills that are considered by a participant as educative.

8. To *create:* the making of discrete texts, media content, or objects that are seen to have existence apart from a participant.

9. To *imagine:* imagery and metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and the function of language constructs in consciousness. (Creely, 2018, pp. 113-114)

The nine categories are used to code text for ontological meaning. The importance of these categories lies in how they allow a researcher to code the participants' experiences. While a researcher could use other coding labels, Creely (2018) indicated the above ontological labels should be used for hermeneutical phenomenological educational research. Furthermore, I review the interviews for responses that are repeated frequently. If such arise, I coded them for frequency and subsequently categorize them. They were added to the Excel spreadsheet with their own category for all participants. They are annotated and recorded like the ontological labels.

The interviews were recorded using my Android cell phone and transcribed using ATLAS TI transcription software. After transcription, I ensured that each paragraph is marked with the participants pseudonym and the word interview, the mark is noted as added by me and not the participants contribution to the research. I then printed out the transcriptions of each individual interview. The transcriptions were annotated for ontological descriptions. I marked each ontological description I discover in the transcripts with the ontological descriptions noted above. Each paragraph is annotated by which ontological description it best emulates. After I

note the ontological descriptions, I cut the transcript paragraphs apart, using scissors, and organize the resulting pieces by ontological description. Then, I filled an Excel spreadsheet noting the nine ontological descriptions and how often a participant's experience emulated one of the descriptions.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2004) described coding as organizing the transcripts and analyzing discoverable patterns within the organized text. For this study, the data was coded using Creely's (2018) ontological labels. Using Creely's (2018) ontological labels, I identified the participants' experiences. Also, by focusing on the experiences of participants, I was able to transcribe transcripts and analyze them for patterns (Auerbach & Silverstien, 2004; Flick et al., 2014; Vogt, 2014). Moreover, I can begin the differentiation process to discover essences by coding for ontological content in the transcripts. I can use coding to note essential and unessential for analysis (Creely, 2018). Coding with Creely's (2018) ontological labels helps me discover repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2004; Gibbs, 2018). The repeating ideas will help me discover the participants' essences. I coded the repeating essences as themes. The essences are the meanings the participants project onto the phenomenon (Creely, 2018).

Stage Two: Phenomenological Reduction. The second element of the textual analysis is Husserlian reduction (Creely, 2018). Creely (2018) indicated that the researcher should analyze the structural underpinnings of participants' experiences and the essences of their perceptions of the phenomenon. I identified the essences by employing Creely's (2018) version of bracketing. While reviewing the data, I looked for ideas, or essences, that are substantive in the interviews (Creely, 2018). I reviewed the coded paragraphs of my individual interviews looking for ideas co-teaching team members discuss substantively during their interviews. I further sorted the paragraphs and note the conditions on a spreadsheet coding them with essence key words that are

discovered during the analysis process. The revealed essences of co-teachers experience with sharing instructional responsibilities were hermeneutically analyzed. Each ontological description received its own excel sheet The essences, along with the corresponding paragraph, is noted on the individual excel spreadsheet for each ontological description. There are ten excel spread sheets in total, one to mark the number of times participants mention an ontological description and nine individual sheets to note the essences individual members experience with the respective ontological description. I was sure to brand specific ontological description on its respective page with its participant's Greek Alphabet letter. Then the Greek letter became a contemporary name with the first Roman alphabet letter equivalent as its beginning.

To facilitate the bracketing procedure, I used Creely's (2018) bracketing technique. The technique is as follows:

- Bracketing out what is immediate in experience and contingent to the context

- Bracketing in what participants identify as the core or the ground of their experiences

- Bracketing out aspects of identity that are not the essential ground of a participant's experience

- Bracketing in what are repeated patterns in consciousness that appear to be prior to or support experience. (Creely, 2018, p. 114)

Bracketing helped me locate the essences necessary to further clarify stage two of the analysis. It helped me identify what is superfluous and what is essential. Creely (2018) indicated that bracketing, or reduction, does not mean that experiences are excluded. All participant experiences are essential and were holistically reviewed to reveal the person in total (Creely, 2018). The reduction is employed only to reveal essences that underpin experiences. Creely

(2018) explained that researchers need to identify and analyze essences in order to fully understand and explicate the participants' lifeworld and engage with the meaning they project onto the phenomenon.

Stage Three: Hermeneutical Analysis. Creely (2018) suggested that humans create narratives to understand their place and the place of others in the world. Laverty (2003) indicated that hermeneutical analysis could be utilized in educational research for comprehending the meaning and how one learns and knows. Creely (2018) explained that hermeneutics is a form of knowledge of how humans relate to their understanding of the world.

Creely (2018) goes on to explain that human freedom is limited by a person's biological limits. Creely (2018) then goes on to clarify that a researcher can interpret experiences using the lenses of bios and logos. Creely (2018) explains that through the bios lens, one sees people as constrained by their biological limits. Through the logos lens, one sees that people wish to overcome the limitations placed on them by their biological limits, society, and other constraints.

Investigating the experiences of co-teaching team members revealed how they navigate their circumstances and try to transcend them. I used the descriptions derived from the ontological descriptions and phenomenological essences to create a hermeneutical analysis based on Creely's (2018) interpretation of bios and logos. The ideas are interpretive lenses to analyze the experiences of co-teaching team members as they share content teaching responsibilities in the co-taught classroom.

I applied Creely's (2018) ideas to the individual interview analysis by reviewing the separated paragraphs and looking for concepts of bios and logos. I noted bios and logos on the paragraphs. I marked the concept that is more developed on each paragraph. Then I noted which paragraphs correspond with logos and which with bios in the nine excel spreadsheets that

represent the essences of teachers' perceptions intersected with a particular ontological description.

Letters to Amalgamated Co-Teacher

Harris (2002) suggested that letter writing can be used as a primary method of data collection. This study intends to collect qualitative data from letters written by the participants. The letters were be analyzed for ontological descriptions and themes and ultimately synthesized and triangulated with the other two data collection methods. The data collection procedure is introduced at the end of the interview. A written copy of the question were handed to the participant for their reference (Appendix H). The participants were asked to write their letters and return them to the researcher within fourteen days. They wrote them electronically and send them to the researcher's Google Classroom.

Writing Prompt

Please write a letter, that is at least two hundred and fifty words long, to an amalgamation of your co-teacher. By "amalgamation", I mean combine the best and worst aspects of co-teachers you have co-taught with during your career into an amalgamated co-teacher archetype. Please be sure to include the best interactions you and your partners had with the students when sharing content-teaching responsibilities. Also, please include what needed improvement regarding the sharing of content-teaching responsibility. Please write this letter as though it would help your amalgamated co-teacher understand successful methods and what would work for any perceived challenges in the future. Moreover, as this is an amalgamation, do not address the letter to anactual person. A pseudonym is required for your amalgamation. Please note this letter will not beseen by anyone but the researcher. You will complete your letter on a separate Google Document and submit to the Google classroom assignment entitled "Writing Prompt." You should complete

this letter within 14 days of opening this document. Writing this letter may take up to 2 hours.

Sanders (2019) suggested that amalgamated cases could be used in phenomenological studies for privacy reasons. Furthermore, Sanders (2019) indicated that amalgamation could provide an accurate portrayal of the phenomenon being studied. The final interview question or writing prompt addresses the CRQ, SQ1, and SQ2. Again, other studies have analyzed the attitudes and beliefs of co-teachers (Stefanidis & Strogilos, 2015; Strogilos et al., 2016). Harris (2002) suggested that writing allows participants more privacy than face-to-face interviews. The written form allows the participants the opportunity to present personal data in a way that may be more comfortable than a Microsoft Teams interview. Harris (2002) noted that participants may be more likely to divulge embarrassing or uncomfortable information when they feel they have privacy.

The combination of amalgamation and letter writing allowed the participants a great deal of privacy. Also, the writing prompt addresses their sociocultural interactions. Hackett et al. (2021) suggested that co-teaching should be studied through the sociocultural framework perspective. A person's beliefs, which affect how they interact socially, construct how they view the world and their belief system (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By examining the participants' letters to their amalgamated co-teacher through a sociocultural lens, can also address SQ2.

Letter to Amalgamated Co-Teacher Analysis Plan

First, I marked each participant's answer with their respective pseudonym and the words letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher to represent that is where this data was derived. The mark noted as added by me and not the participants contribution to the research. The marks are important because I used the same Excel spreadsheets to sort the data for the individual interview, letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaire data. I

printed out the transcript of the letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher. The first stage of Creely's method, discussed in the individual interview analysis section, was utilized during the analysis phase of my letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher research. The ontological descriptions are listed above. The letters were annotated for ontological descriptions. The descriptions were noted in the spreadsheet similar to how they are noted in the individual interview analysis section.

I then applied Creely's second stage to the participant letters. I further sorted the participant letters and note the conditions on a spreadsheet, coding them with keywords discovered during the analysis process. Again, I noted the essences on the respective Excel spreadsheet. The essences and the corresponding paragraph were noted on the individual excel spreadsheet for each ontological description. Again, I branded each specific ontological description on its respective page with its participant's Greek alphabet letter.Then the Greek letter became a contemporary name with the first Roman alphabet letter equivalent as its beginning. It is of note that Epsilon became Elaine and Eta became Elizabeth.

Finally, I applied the third stage to the letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher transcript coding for bios and logos similar to how I coded in my individual interview analysis. I reviewed the coded answers of my letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher looking for ideas co-teaching team members discuss substantively during the session. I further sorted the paragraphs and note the conditions on a spreadsheet, coding them with essence keywords discovered during the analysis process. The essences are on the individual excel spreadsheet for each ontological description.

Then, the third stage of Creely's (2018) method was applied to the letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher data. I noted bios and logos on the answers. I marked the concept that is

more developed on each answer. Then I noted which answer corresponds with logos and bios in the nine excel spreadsheets that represent the essences of teachers' perceptions intersected with a particular ontological description, similar to the individual interview analysis.

Ultimately, the letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher data collected and analyzed using Creely's (2018) hermeneutical method were synthesized using Creely's method's fourth step. The last stage was applied during the synthesis portion of the research and synthesize the experiences recorded from participants' interviews, letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaire answers. Furthermore, after the three data sources are synthesized, they were bracketed to highlight the essence of the phenomenon being researched.

Open-Ended Questionnaires

After the individual interviews and letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher have been conducted, completed, and returned, the participants received an additional second open-ended questionnaire (Appendix I). The questionnaire is self-reporting. I sent the questionnaires via email to each participant with the request that they email it back to me. I sent the questionnaires as soon as all interviews and letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher are completed and returned. They had a 48-hour time frame to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires that were completed in Google Classroom are kept password protected and confidential. The questionnaire offers the study rich descriptions of the experiences of co-teaching partners that share content teaching responsibilities. The questionnaires helped reveal their experiences and add authenticity to the research (Charalampous & Kokkinos, 2017; Pickard, 2013; Wilson, 2013).

Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions

1. What do you value most about your co-teaching experiences regarding sharing

instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? CRQ

2. What do you value most about parity and your professional relationship while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom, what would you like to add? SQ1

3. What do you value as most important in relation to your perceptions of parity and instructional experiences while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom, what would you like to add? SQ2

4. What do you value as the most important in relation to your interactions with your students and your perceptions of parity while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom, what would you like to add? SQ2

The questionnaire is reserved for the end of the process. Rossman and Rallis (2017) indicated that if participants believe an interviewer is authentic, they will more likely give sincere replies. I saved these questions for the end of the process because I hope to have established a relationship with my participants throughout the interview and letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher processes. They might be able to honestly assess if they feel as though they honestly addressed the central question. The participants were able to add supplementary details about their lived experiences, which they deem important to the study, that may help answer the central question. The electronic questionnaire format allows the participants the time and space to reflect on their answers without feeling pressured to respond quickly (Stokholm & Lykke, 2020).

By answering question one, the participants were also be able to add further details about their perceptions of their professional relationships, possibly further developing answers to SQ1. Answering questions two and three, participants may also add further illustrative details about

their experiences regarding sharing instructional responsibility, further developing answers to

SQ2. Questions one and three can be viewed through the conjoined lenses of SLT and social

constructivism because a co-teacher's self system informs how they co-construct their learning

space with their partner. Question two can be viewed through the conjoined lenses because it

examines how a co-teacher's self-system advises their interpersonal interactions. Moreover,

question four allows participants have another opportunity to share their lived experiences

regarding their interactions with their students while sharing instructional responsibilities,

enriching participant descriptions of SQ2. Question four can be viewed through the conjoined

lens of SLT and social constructivism because triadic reciprocal interactions occur between co-

teachers and students in their co-constructed learning space. Furthermore, the participants might

feel comfortable enough to divulge information they did not divulge in either the interview or

letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher. The information that was not hitherto divulged,

may enhance the ontological descriptions of the participants experiences.

Survey/Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

I also used stage one of Creely's (2018) four-stage method of interpretation for this

portion of the research. The first stage of Creely's (2018) four-stage method employed in a

similar fashion to the interview transcript and letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher

analysis. I examined the returned word document. The word documents have the advantage of

not needing to be transcribed nor can there be a transcription error. Similar to both the individual

interview analysis and the letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher analysis, first, I marked

each participant's questionnaire answers with their respective pseudonyms and the word

questionnaire to represent that is where this data was derived. The mark was noted as added by

me and not the participant's contribution to the research. The marks are important because I used

the same Excel spreadsheets to sort the data for the individual interview, letters to participants'

amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaire data. I printed out the questionnaire answers. The first stage of Creely's method, discussed in the individual interview analysis section, was utilized during the analysis phase of my questionnaire research. The ontological descriptions are listed above. The transcript was annotated for ontological descriptions. The descriptions were noted in the spreadsheet similarly to how they are noted in the individual interview analysis section.

I then applied Creely's second stage to the questionnaire answers. I further sorted the questionnaire data and note the conditions on a spreadsheet, coding them with essence keywords discovered during the analysis process. Again, I noted the essences on the respective Excel spreadsheet.

Finally, I applied the third stage to the questionnaire answers by coding for bios and logos similar to how I coded in my individual interview analysis. I reviewed the coded answers of my questionnaire answers looking for ideas co-teaching team members discuss substantively. I further sorted the answers and note the conditions on a spreadsheet, coding them with essence keywords discovered during the analysis process. The essences are on the individual excel spreadsheet for each ontological description.

Then, the third stage of Creely's (2018) method was applied to the questionnaire data. I noted bios and logos on the answers. I marked the concept that is more developed on each answer. Then I noted which answers correspond with logos and bios in the nine Excel spreadsheets that represent the essences of teachers' perceptions intersected with a particular ontological description, similar to the individual interview analysis.

Ultimately, questionnaire data collected and analyzed using Creely's (2018) hermeneutical method was synthesized using Creely's method's fourth step. The last stage was

applied during the synthesis portion of the research and synthesized the experiences recorded from participants' interviews, letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaire answers. Furthermore, after the three data sources are synthesized, they were bracketed to highlight the essence of the phenomenon being researched.

Data Synthesis

First, I used Atlas TI qualitative software to help me transcribe my individual interviews. I ontologically described, phenomenologically reduced, and hermeneutically analyzed the data collected from the interviews, letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaires. In the individual interview analysis section, I described how labeled ontological descriptions, phenomenologically reducing, hermeneutically analyzing, and organizing my transcribed information. Then, I employed the fourth stage of Creely's (2018) method. I synthesized the essences I have discovered through my three forms of data collection and analysis by employing Creely's fourth stage of hermeneutical phenomenological analysis.

Stage Four: Synthesis

Creely (2018) posited that synthesis is a combination of the underpinnings of consciousness, such as the noted essences and the hermeneutical perceptions about the participants' understanding of the phenomenon. I synthesized the data derived from the interviews, letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended questionnaires to present the participants' experiences. I synthesized the data by developing a synthesized account of the ontological descriptions and noting the aspects of bios and logos in each. Moreover, I noted the essences I annotated during stage two. I used the data gathered during the first three stages of my analysis and the Excel spreadsheets to accomplish this task. My assembled synthesis description revealed an amalgamation of the explanatory and revealing phenomenological analysis. The synthesis description revealed the essences shaping participants

experiences in their consciousness (Creely, 2018, p. 119). My ontological descriptions are already a form of categorization that are further separated by the notation of bios or logos. I examined the essences that are coded with bios and logos for themes. I use any themes discovered to create a description of the data that reflects the participants' experiences. The final synthesis is a description of the data that is an incorporation of the vivid and the hermeneutically interpreted phenomenological analysis process. This consolidation of perceptions revealed the core essences that shape the co-teaching team member's experiences of their co-constructed space and their social interactions as they perceive them.

Memoing

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that memoing helps the researcher develop ideas when analyzing the data. In a sense, memoing could be considered a form of data synthesis. Birks et al. (2008) explained that memoing allows researchers to understand better abstract concepts surrounding the phenomena. I wrote reflective reports throughout the interview, and letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher processes after they are completed. I often notated on words, phrases, statements, themes, and observations important to the participants as they describe their lived experiences in relation to both co-teaching team members sharing content teaching responsibilities. Furthermore, I ensured I explained why I code a certain phrase or paragraph as a particular ontological description. Memoing further explored data, categories, and meanings, ensuring the accuracy of this study's findings (Bailey, 2014; Leavy, 2020; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004; Johnson, 2017).

Trustworthiness

By following the recommendations of van Manen (2014), and reinterpretations of his work and methods by qualitative researchers, this study established levels of trustworthiness by focusing on positioning, strength, rich descriptions, and depth of analysis (Creely, 2018; Crist &

Tanner, 2003; Heinonen, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Rumrill et al., 2020; Sloan, & Bowe, 2014; Spence, 2017; Standing, 2009). In order to ensure trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) presented four criteria. The criteria are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that credibility indicates the degree that the study's findings represent reality as understood by the participants' experiences of the phenomenon in question. I endeavored to accurately represent participants' experiences of the phenomenon of sharing instructional responsibility in order to achieve parity in the co-taught classroom. I established the study's credibility in three ways: (a) through triangulation (b) member checking and (c) audit trails.

Triangulation

Creswell and Poth (2018) described triangulation of corroborative evidence as using various data sources conjointly when conducting a study. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a researcher should assess how their data can be used conjointly with other corroborative evidence as it is being collected. I triangulated my data collection methods, sources, and theories to explore the stories told by special education and general education co-teachers. The data collection methods included one-on-one interviews, a letter to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and an open-ended questionnaire. I achieved source triangulation by using the data gained from special education and regular education co-teachers experiences of sharing content teaching responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. Theory triangulation was achieved by using Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory and teacher belief framework (Pajares, 1992) as both theoretical frameworks and conjoined lenses through which to analyze the data.

Member Checking

As I have been a co-teacher that has shared instructional responsibility with a co-teaching partner in the co-taught classroom, I may have an insider's link with my participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). If I have an insider understanding, I reflected on the meaning of participants' responses as I review the transcripts of the interviews, letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and the open-ended questionnaires, which is one form of member checking (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). I was sure to clarify certain aspects of the data with participants after I have transcribed the interviews and letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher, to ensure I accurately capture the essence of their experiences as co-teaching team members sharing instructional responsibilities, which is also a form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also provided one to participants that request a copy of their individual transcribed interview. Also, I provided a copy of what I noted as the main essences of the particpants' letters to amalgamated co-teacher, interviews, and final electronic open-ended questionnaire to their respective participants. This allowed the participants to check the collected data for accuracy.

Audit Trails

Cope (2014) explained that audit trails are when researchers keep their notes and materials used in their research that indicate their beliefs and choices. Another individual, my Committee Chair, reviewed the audit trail to determine if they would come to the same assumptions (Cope, 2014). An audit trail denotes that I made sure my raw data, analyzed data, and the final report can be easily understood if necessary. I employed an audit trail to ensure credibility.

Transferability

Transferability is the possibility that the research is applicable to another situation (Lodico et al., 2010). I used the data analysis method recommended by a peer-reviewed journal, which implies that the method is transferable to other phenomenological studies. Furthermore, Geertz (1973) recommended that researchers write rich descriptions when describing their data and analysis, and I adhered to his recommendation. The literature offers virtually no insight into co-teaching team member's lived experiences when sharing content teaching responsibilities. This study may offer an initial step toward an improved understanding of the perceptions of co-teachers that share instructional responsibilities.

Dependability

Cope (2014) indicated that dependability indicates if findings are consistent in comparable circumstances. I consistently documented throughout the research process to allow for replication of the study (Leppink, 2017). Furthermore, dependability was established because the descriptions of the method I employed in this study are detailed enough that this study can be replicated in similar conditions. The descriptions of the methods I employed are supported by the literature. My descriptions are uncomplicated, and the methods could be repeated for future research on co-teachers or any population. My dissertation committee has reviewed my audit trails and documentation to determine if my work is sufficient to demonstrate the application of the methods I have described above. Cope (2014) indicated that documentation throughout the research process is necessary to ensure replication. I documented throughout the process to ensure replication is possible.

Confirmability

Cope (2014) also explained that confirmability means the researcher's ability to prove that data represents the participants' views and perceptions and not the researcher's biases. My

research exhibits confirmability in developing themes from the rich descriptions provided by the participants (Cope, 2014). I employed three techniques to ensure confirmability in this study. First, I used the various types of triangulations detailed above. Second, I created a thorough audit trail by which my raw data, analyzed data, and the final report can be clearly followed if needed. Finally, I also be employed memoing to ensure I reflect on my findings. I employed the aspects of memoing detailed above. By ensuring confirmability, my research described themes and findings that come directly from the data (Cope, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must be of paramount importance throughout the research process (Perera & Emmerich, 2018). All participants signed an informed consent form. This study is completely voluntary and the participants may withdraw at any time. I used pseudonyms for the participants and the research sites. Both the participants' approval and IRB approval was received before any data is collected. All data was written, transcribed, and recorded on password-protected software. All data is kept in different databases and password protected. All password-protected files will remain protected and confidential. I ensured that my research was presented truthfully and genuinely. Once the data and analysis documents are finalized, the data will be kept in a secure safe at my residence for five years. After five years, I will destroy all private information collected by destroying electronic data, hard drives, and shredding any paper documents.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. This study addresses co-teachers' experiences of how they negotiate their responsibilities as they co-teach. The participants teach different

content areas. Data was collected from one-on-one interviews, letters to participants amalgamated co-teacher and a survey. The data was analyzed according to Creely's (2018) interpretation method for hermeneutical phenomenological research for education.

Brantlinger et al. (2005) explained that qualitative research could inform special education practices. The findings of this study seek to improve co-taught pedagogical methods. Employing the best pedagogical methods in the co-taught classroom is vitally important to ensure the academic success of both students with and without disabilities.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The inclusion of SWD with their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom has changed how both groups receive instruction. A phenomenological design allowed me to explore a co-teachers experiences of their sociocultural environment when they share instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom. The phenomenological design also allowed me to explain how they interpreted their beliefs affected their experiences. This chapter includes a description of the 12 purposefully criteria selected participants, the study's findings, outlier data, and thematic and sub-thematic development based on the essences I annotated during stage two, generated by hermeneutical phenomenological reduction. Furthermore, the chapter contains the answers to the research questions generated by gathered and analyzed data and concludes with an overall chapter summary.

Participants

The 12 participants in this study were drawn from one high school within the same district and selected through purposeful criterion sampling. All participants were special education, or general education teachers, who taught grades six through twelve, and who have or currently lead instruction in the co-taught classroom. All participants had at least one full school year of co-teaching experience. A recruitment email was sent to the high school principal. The principal then sent the email to the assistant principal, and their administrative assistant that oversaw special education. That assistant principal sent out the email to co-teachers at the high school. After receiving responses, I verified each respondent's teaching schedule on their individual teacher website, by checking their schedules which list if they co-teach by listing two

teachers in a classroom and with whom, that was provided by the school website. The

participants' schedules also listed their teaching assignments along with which teacher they co-

teach. to ensure they met the criteria. Each teacher posted their schedule on their teacher page

which was linked to the school website. I assigned pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of

participants and the school, henceforth known as Geronimo High School, involved in this

phenomenological study. See table 1 for the demographic data of each participant.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Data

Participant Name*	Gender	Years of Co-Teaching Experience	Grade Level	Content Area	General Education or Special Education
Adam	M	10	11th	Social Studies	General Education
Betty	F	2	10th	Science	General Education
Gary	M	3	10th	Science	Special Education
Dean	M	14	9th-10th	Math	Special Education
Elaine	F	7	11th	Math	General Education
Zeke	M	7	8th	Math	Special Education
Elizabeth	F	3	9th	Math	General Education
Terry	M	1	11th-12th	Social Studies	Special Education
Irene	F	3	10th	Math	General Education
Kevin	M	6	11th	Language Arts	Special Education
Lisa	F	14	11th	Language Arts	Special Education
Mindy	F	1	12th	Language Arts	Special Education

Note. *Pseudonyms

Adam

Adam was a male eleventh-grade general education social studies teacher at Geronimo

High School. He has 10 years of co-teaching experience and has been both the special education

co-teacher and general education co-teacher throughout his co-teaching career. He also revealed,

during his interview, that his time as a special education co-teacher influenced his co-teaching

beliefs. When asked about how his personal beliefs affected his delivery of co-teaching

instruction, Adam responded, "it always lightens the load, and that's not the point of a co-teacher

[...] having that person in the room that is able to know the students just as well as I, I do, both the IEP students or students with disabilities in the room or even the regular Ed […] students." Adam was a general education co-teacher.

Betty

Betty was a female tenth-grade general education science teacher at Geronimo High School. She has two years of co-teaching and has always been the general education co-teacher. Before coming to Metro City County School District, Betty had been a general education science teacher without a co-teacher. During her interview, Betty revealed that she did not feel she implemented co-teaching well her first year at Geronimo High School. When asked how her personal beliefs affected her delivery of co-teaching instruction, Betty responded, "I think in for me personally, in theory it sounds great and incredible." Betty was a general education co-teacher paired with a special education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Gary

Gary was a male tenth-grade special education science teacher at Geronimo High School. He has three years of co-teaching experience and has always been the special education co-teacher. Before coming to Metro City County School District, Gary had been a general education science teacher without a co-teacher. When asked about how his personal beliefs affected his delivery of co-teaching instruction Gary responded, "I'm very, been very open to it, and I think it's a really good model." Currently, Gary is a special education co-teacher paired with a general education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Dean

Dean was a male ninth-grade special education math teacher at Geronimo High School. He has fourteen years of co-teaching experience and has always been the special education co-

teacher throughout his co-teaching career. When asked how his personal beliefs affected his delivery of co-teaching instruction Dean responded, "I'm fulfilling my role, whether it be teaching at the front or roaming around the room to help or just answering questions privately in between instruction or during practice times." Currently, Dean is a special education co-teacher paired with a general education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Elaine

Elaine was a female eleventh-grade general education math teacher at Geronimo High School. She has seven years of co-teaching experience and has been both the special education co-teacher and general education co-teacher throughout her co-teaching career. During her interview, she revealed that she had been Irene's special education co-teacher in the past. When asked about how her personal beliefs affected her delivery of co-teaching instruction, Elaine responded, "how I co-teach or how I do anything my attitudes and beliefs are gonna affect everything." Currently, Elaine is a general education co-teacher not paired with a special education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Zeke

Zeke was a male ninth-grade special education math teacher at Geronimo High School. He has seven years of co-teaching experience and has been both the general education and the special education co-teacher throughout his co-teaching career. He revealed, during his interview, that he also coaches sports at the high school. When asked about how his personal beliefs affected his delivery of co-teaching instruction, Zeke responded, "I think if you have, if you can rebuild a report with your co teacher that revolves around trust you both of you can […] [e]ffectively teach the class." Zeke was a special education co-teacher paired with a general education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Elizabeth

Eta was a female ninth-grade general education math teacher at Geronimo High School. She has three years of co-teaching experience and has always been the general education co-teacher throughout her co-teaching career. Elizabeth revealed, during her interview, that she was trained as a secondary science teacher but moved to an open math position in order to work at Geronimo High School. When asked about how her personal beliefs affected her delivery of co-teaching instruction, Elizabeth responded, "I feel like not just the delivery of instructions should be made by the Gen Ed teacher like myself, but as also with the special ed teacher." Elizabeth was a general education co-teacher not paired with a special education co-teacher.

Terry

Terry was a male eleventh and twelfth-grade special education social studies teacher at Geronimo High School. He has three years of co-teaching experience and has always been the special education co-teacher throughout his co-teaching career. However, Terry revealed, during his interview, that he had 25 years of experience as a general education social studies teacher. When asked about how his personal beliefs affected his delivery of co-teaching instruction, Terry responded, "I mean, we're there for the kids." Terry was a special education co-teacher paired with a general education co-teacher that took part in this study.

Irene

Irene was a female ninth-grade general education math teacher at Geronimo High School. She has three years of co-teaching experience and has been both the general education and the special education co-teacher throughout her co-teaching career. Irene's first experience with co-teaching was in another school district. When asked about how her personal beliefs affected her delivery of co-teaching instruction, Irene responded, "I didn't think much of co-teachers until I

became one because we had just different standards." Irene was a general education co-teacher paired with a special education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Kevin

Kevin was a male eleventh-grade special education English language arts teacher at Geronimo High School. He has six years of co-teaching experience and has always been both the general education and special education co-teacher throughout his co-teaching career. Kevin revealed, during his interviews, that he has been a special education co-teacher for secondary science and English. Also, Kevin was previously a general education secondary English teacher. When asked how his personal beliefs affected his delivery of co-teaching instruction Kevin responded, "I believe both teachers should be sharing the classroom responsibilities of the teaching part." Kevin was a special education co-teacher paired with two general education co-teachers that did not participate in this study.

Lisa

Lisa was a female eleventh-grade special education English language arts teacher at Geronimo High School. She has fourteen years of co-teaching experience and has always been the special education co-teacher throughout her co-teaching career. Lisa revealed, during her interview, that her first ten years of special education English co-teaching were at a middle school elsewhere in the district. When asked about how her personal beliefs affected her delivery of co-teaching instruction, Lisa responded, "I truly believe that every child can learn [,] [t]hey may learn differently, but they can learn [,] [t]hey may learn at a different pace, but they can learn." Lisa was a special education co-teacher paired with a general education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.

Mindy

Mindy was a female twelfth-grade special education English language arts teacher at Geronimo High School. She has one year of co-teaching experience and has always been the special education co-teacher throughout his co-teaching career. She revealed, during her interview session, that special education was important to her because a family member of hers was served by special education. When asked how her personal beliefs affected her delivery of co-teaching instruction, Mindy responded, "Co-teaching is kind of like my ideal setting because I get to collaborate with somebody else and gets to collaborate with the students a little bit to kind of see what works best with them." Mindy was a special education co-teacher paired with a general education co-teacher that did not participate in this study.in this study.

Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The inclusion of SWD with their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom has changed how both groups receive instruction. This study was guided by one central research question and two sub-research questions. Data was collected from individual interviews, letters to an amalgamated co-teacher, and a final electronic questionnaire which provided the data for analysis. All participants engaged in the interview process. Ten participants wrote a letter to an amalgamated co-teacher, and nine completed the final electronic questionnaire.

Throughout data collection, analysis, and synthesis, I wrote my presuppositions in a reflective journal, and I then subsequently set said presuppositions aside. I was then engaged in the bracketing to gain a fresh perspective of the participants' experiences. Moustakas (1994) encouraged phenomenological researchers to abandon preconceived notions, misleading beliefs, or emotions through reflective journaling. According to Moustakas's (1994) suggestions, I

engaged in reflective journaling to not have preconceived notions, beliefs that led me astray, or emotions that influenced my analysis. The interviews, letters to the amalgamated co-teacher, and the final electronic questionnaire were transcribed and thoroughly read and reread to ensure accuracy. The statements from all data sources were given equal value. I explored each statement for ontological experiential descriptions, which were then coded using ATLAS.ti and, as Creely (2018) suggested, clustered them into themes during phenomenological reduction.

I bracketed the meta-experiential within their experiences and three sets of closely related essences or themes appeared to be arrayed in juxtaposition at this demarcation of time. The co-teachers constructed a focal point of intentional action, while in the classroom, in their consciousnesses. Actions in the co-taught classroom is a construction of acting that orbited around their being a co-teacher, and the equality of sharing instructional responsibility between themselves and their partner. Four primary themes, or essences, and eight subthemes emerged from the phenomenological reduction. Then the interviews, letters to an amalgamated co-teacher, and the final electronic questionnaire were hermeneutically analyzed. The themes, also known as essences, and subthemes for all triangulated data sources in Relation to the CRQ, SQ1, and SQ2 are presented in Table 2 and are presented in the appendix (see Appendix J).

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes for all Triangulated Data Sources in Relation to the CRQ, SQ1, and SQ2

Theme	Subthemes
Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension (Informs CRQ and SQ1)	Connecting with the Students Relationships: "They Know You Care"
	Focusing on What is Important to Teach and How Co-teacher Training

The Need to be Respected as a Teacher (Informs CRQ and SQ1)		
Meeting the Needs of Students (Informs CRQ and SQ2)	I Don't Like When They": Conflicts Between Co-Teachers	
Co-Planning (Informs CRQ and SQ2)	Advantages	Challenges

Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The inclusion of SWD with their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom has changed how both groups receive instruction. This study was guided by one central research question and two sub-research questions. Data was collected from individual interviews, letters to an amalgamated co-teacher, and a final electronic questionnaire which provided the data for analysis. All participants engaged in the interview process. Ten participants wrote a letter to an amalgamated co-teacher, and nine completed the final electronic questionnaire.

Throughout data collection, analysis, and synthesis, the first theme identified during the second stage of Creely's (2018) four-stage method was a "lightened load" due to co-teacher's actions within the co-taught classroom. All twelve participants discussed actions within their classroom. Participants used the term act, or a synonym, such as action, work, or perform, a total of eighty times. Furthermore, the ontological term "to act" means "bodily actions connected to intentionality and volition," which "involves a movement from internality to an externality that can be observed" (Creely, 2018). The data coded 292 instances of the "to act" ontological description. As the overwhelming majority of the mentions of acting took place or revolved

around the co-taught classroom, the theme, or essence, of co-teacher's actions within the co-taught classroom was developed. Furthermore, "working" or a reflexive form of the word, with students or co-teachers, was a more descriptive term that was found   Interestingly, within the coded instances to act the word share was found 44 times. The descriptive term "teacher's sense alleviated apprehension" was developed from Gary's discussion of sharing actions with his co-teacher. Alleviated apprehension is a descriptive way to describe shared actions between co-teachers leading to connections and relationships between both co-teachers and students. The two subthemes were connecting with peers and students and relationships with co-teachers and students. The analysis of the interviews, letters to the amalgamated co-teachers, and the final electronic questionnaires found that "Working with Students and Co-teachers" was necessary from both co-teachers in order to share instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom.

Adam explained how working with a co-teacher lightened the load when he stated,

It's always good to have someone in the room with you. Uh, it always lightens the load and that's not the point of a co teacher. I recognize that. However, having that person in the room that is able to know the students just as well as I, I do, both the IEP students or students with disabilities in the room or even the regular ed teachers… Sorry students

When discussing co-teaching, Gary indicated that the students "They're not sure what I'm supposed to be doing […] [and] it seems there's some sort of not comfort level with the students early on." Gary indicated that he shared actions with his co-teacher. Gary stated, "I guess the students come in, their 10th graders, so they've experienced the co time teaching model." Gary continued "[t]hey've been inside or at least a lot of them […] I I mean, they've been in co-taught situation." Gary finished, "[s]o sometimes at the beginning of the year they seem very apprehensive, especially when I present the material."

Gary went further to indicate that the students "[a]bout halfway through the first nine weeks, they're very comfortable with it, and they'll start treating us like they have questions equally." By both co-teachers being active in the classroom, students became comfortable with two teachers in the room. Co-teachers' actions help them respond to parents, students, and each other to build relationships.

Connecting with the Students

The first subtheme identified under action, or "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension," was connecting with the students. All twelve participants discussed connecting with their co-teachers or students. Participants' answers were coded for the ontological term "to connect." The ontological term "to connect" means "inter-subjectivity and inter-corporeality or being with others through digital or disembodied (as well as corporeal) connections" (Creely, 2018). The data coded 167 instances of the "to connect" ontological description. As all of the mentions of connecting revolved around connecting with co-teachers or students, therefore the subtheme of connecting with peers and students was developed. The descriptive term "connecting with the students" was developed from Adam's discussion of connecting with his co-teacher and their connecting with students. This description allows one to realize how a co-teacher realizes the connection they or their co-teacher has with their students. It is the metacognition of the experience of how they connect with each other and students. Furthermore, as connecting can be interpreted as an action, and it was coded less than to act, it was appropriate to deem it a subtheme of co-teacher's actions, or "alleviating apprehension," within the co-taught Classroom. Adam stated, "Sometimes the struggles that their students have, that maybe they don't obviously publicly put on display, but that working with the co teacher knowing how he knows the students." Co-teachers referenced connecting or a synonym of the ontological description as one

of the ways they shared instructional responsibility. Elizabeth and Terry noted the importance of both co-teachers connecting. Terry said, "You need to work with other teachers regardless of whether or not you're in the classroom as a [special education]teacher or the regular ed teacher." Elizabeth stated, "You learn a lot personally about someone when you co-teach with them, you learn the things that you love and admire about them, and you learn about the things that you don't love and admire about." Dean asserted, "I do feel like it's good for the students to see the teachers able to cooperate where they rotate, where one teacher can explain something one day, another teacher explains something another day." Co-teachers connecting with each other, and their students was crucial to the participants' experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. Elizabeth shared a story of how her co-teacher understood what the students needed to understand a mathematical concept. Elizabeth stated,

> We were teaching about radicals one day, and she said something that I had never heard before, like when you're teaching radicals, Umm, when you're teaching simplifying radicals, they have to be able to breakdown numbers into their prime factorization.So like it has to break down into prime numbers like 12 would break down as three and four, four breaks down to two and two, so to get 12, it's 2 * 2 * 3, right? If you're multiplying prime numbers, […] you know, you circle the pairs, so there would be a pair of twos and a single three. And the person I was coaching with said something that made the students laugh and I picked up on it, she said, you know, circle your couple like the couple was the 22S. And then this guy, this three, this is the single Pringle. He stays on the inside and for whatever reason, the students loved hearing the phrase single Pringle. And you know, I wouldn't have heard that if I would have been teaching by myself. And like the students that they remembered that. And I remembered that.

The connections the teachers experienced affected their belief systems by influencing how they viewed their co-teacher and their students. The change in a co-teacher's view of their co-teacher or students changed their behaviors towards them therefore their sociocultural environments.

Relationships: "They Know You Care"

The second subtheme identified under "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension" was relationships with co-teachers and students described as Relationships: "They Know You Care." Many teachers described experiencing relationships with their co-teachers as vital to sharing instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom. All participants mentioned the term relationship or a synonym suggested by Atlas.ti, such as relation, relations, or trust, a total of 112 times. The paragraphs that were coded with the ontological description "to act" contained the idea of relationships the most often. Within the paragraphs coded for the ontological description "to act" the word "relationship" or a synonym, appeared 25 times. Since, the paragraphs coded with the description to act contained the word, or a variant, the most of all the ontological descriptions, the subtheme was placed in a theme that was categorized by the ontological description. Relationships "They Know You Care" was developed from Adam's discussion of relating with his co-teacher and their respective relationships with students when they share instructional responsibility. Adam, when discussing the students, said, "[i] t's as hokey as it comes, but the idea of people don't care what you know, until they know that you care." Zeke stated, "because we kind of built that relationship off it doesn't really matter who's teaching." Gary noted that he and his co-teacher have "got a really close relationship as far as we text each other constantly, they're definitely times we get together at the start of units where we go, hey, this is what we did last year." Adam said,

I'll call him up and say, hey, dude, do you wanna go get something to eat? Something

like that. Sometimes if I ever get a chance, you know, things like that, that's how. That's

how it's affected that relationship from me and of him.

Adam and Zeke emphasized the importance of building relationships with their co-teacher. Also, Irene mentioned a profound relationship with her co-teacher. Irene stated, "My co-taught relationship and student relationship is just like being a parent to my step-daughters; I keep my conversations with their dad private and away from them." Lisa noted that relationships with co-teachers are important regardless of co-teachers attitudes towards each other. Lisa stated, "it's important that you work at the relationship in in getting along with one another […] even if you may not necessarily like each other personally, you can work together professionally." Mindy made a similar comment when she said, "sometimes you don't always see eye to eye […] and you know you have to kind of work around that and be professional about it as well. "

Adam, Zeke, Irene, and Mindy all noted that the relationship inside the classroom was crucial to successful co-teaching. Mindy noted that relationships with students were crucial to share instructional responsibilities "I think it's been really positive for our, for our students because they get to whichever teacher that they're more drawn to build the relationship with tends to be the teacher they gravitate to, to ask questions." Zeke described building relationships with students as "help the students […] Actively learn and trying to build that relationship in the classroom as a teacher, as the other teachers teaching." Zeke noted that both co-teachers needed to connect with the students to share instructional responsibility successfully. Zeke was unique in that he noted the importance of his role as a coach to help overcome the stigma of being a special education co-teacher. Zeke wrote,

I have heard many times throughout my career that I am just a "helper teacher" or "you're not even a real teacher." Students need to see both teachers actively lead instruction so that there is no disparity between the roles of each teacher. I try to talk and get to know my students outside of school. I want to know their interests to help build trust with them so that they are comfortable asking me questions. That is why I help coach sports. I get to know the students outside of the classroom to help build relationships that are not just educational.

Zeke's role as a coach was reflected throughout his reports. Zeke noted that coaching was important to overcome the stigma of being a special education teacher. Zeke noted, "throughout the school day, you know, most teachers have their own lives outside the class, the classroom, and […] it's kind of a team effort." Zeke continued by emphasizing the importance of the team aspect, "I think it's one person's kind of willing to do it [but the] other persons like […] [o]h well, I'm busy […] I can't do it[,] then that's gonna affect the ability to kind of plan and co-teach together." Teachers' relationships with each other and their students were critical to their experience of sharing instructional responsibility. The relationships the teachers experienced affected their personal belief systems by changing how they experienced their co-teachers and students. The new understanding of their students and co-teachers affected how they acted towards them and therefore their sociocultural environments.

The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher

During the second stage of Creely's (2018) four-stage method, the second theme identified was being a co-teacher led co-teachers to "Need to Be Respected as a Teacher," and the two subthemes that emerged were "Focusing on What is Important to Teach and How" and "In the Middle of It": Co-teaching Preparation. All twelve participants discussed being a co-

teacher. The data coded 219 instances of the "to be" ontological description. Teachers' experience of being, or awareness of the body as an instinctive state of worldly being in space, and its links to one's role and function, affected their sharing of instructional responsibilities with their co-teacher. Several participants noted that being seen as a teacher allowed them to function better in the co-taught classroom. As the overwhelming majority of the mentions of being took place or revolved their duties as a co-teacher and the need to be respected as one. Therefore, the theme, or essence, of being a co-teacher led to the descriptive theme of "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher." Gary wrote to his amalgamated co-teacher asking to vary roles in an effort to be seen as a full teacher. Gary wrote, "especially if the students are not used to two teachers in the classroom. I do believe that even though we do plan together, maybe there should be more trust or willingness to reverse our perceived roles in the class and maybe allow me to introduce new concepts to the entire class at times."

Betty, a regular education teacher, discussed how she and her co-teacher both presented themselves as teachers. Betty noted, "she was teaching the instruction, and I was in the classroom getting to watch the students as they were doing the moving part." Irene made a similar comment "If I'm up there teaching, she walked around. If she's up there teaching, then I can walk around, and I can see kind of what's going on because I know it's ours." However, Dean noted the issues that not focusing on what is important to teach and co-planning led him to feel as though he was not viewed as a teacher. Dean wrote in his letter to his amalgamated co-teacher,

However, it is difficult for the students to view me as an equal teacher in the room because you do tend to treat me as a glorified paraprofessional more often than not. We

also rarely plan lessons together other than the topic we will cover. We don't really use teaching strategies or methods that would be best suited for our students.

Dean noted his co-teacher's overall attitude as being a major issue but both lack of planning or focusing on what to teach and how were hinderances to him being seen as a teacher.

Elizabeth noted that being present was necessary for successfully sharing instructional responsibility. Elizabeth stated, "It should go without saying, but experience has taught me that many do not realize this – showing up is half the battle!" Elizabeth continued, "you are as essential to the equation as I am." Elizabeth finished, "our future students should see us not only working for them but working together and exemplify what it means to be a team!"

Irene noticed a co-teacher's presence in the classroom as crucial when she stated,

And I think it was also good when I was absent one day that in our two co-teaching ones, she was the only teacher in there [,] I think I had a sub, but the sub doesn't know any math so to have her be the only one there, so they have to ask her questions. I feel like that was really good for our co-teaching relationship and for the classroom as well.

Gary noted how he experienced a typical lesson where he and his regular education co-teacher team. Gary stated,

We would start the lesson, and I would literally if it's an elective situation, like giving notes, I would give the notes I would lecture, give the notes and then.

Whoever it was, I've done it with all the teachers, the teachers, the Gen Ed. A teacher would then expound on it.

Gary's experience of team teaching led to him perceiving the students recognizing both himself and his co-teachers as equals. Co-teachers experienced sharing of instructional responsibilities through their awareness of their being a co-teacher and that of their co-teachers.

Focusing on What is Important to Teach and How

The first subtheme identified under "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher" was clarified and agreed, or understood, co-teaching roles created by co-teachers "Focusing on what is important to Teach and How". Participants discussed what roles they had as a co-teacher and how they would utilize them to deliver information to their students. When the data was analyzed for the word "role," or a synonym such as function, duty, or position, there were 75 mentions. As role is part of Creely's (2018) description of "to be, instinctive state of worldly being in space, and its links to one's role and function," understood co-teaching roles, a part of co-teachers focusing on what is important to teach and how, is a subtheme developed from "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher." Teachers experienced different roles according to their personal belief systems and sociocultural experiences. Teachers' sociocultural experiences often decreased their experience of sharing co-teaching responsibility. Adam noted that he was "a teacher of content," and his co-teacher's role was to stop him from going "on tangents" (Adam, teams meeting, September 19, 2022). Terry noted his role when he stated, "my job first is the kids that I'm directly responsible for and helping them be successful." Adam discussed how his co-teacher kept him focused on the standards when he stated,

> He does a good job helping me keep the main thing. The main thing as a teacher of content. You know, you always want to go on tangents. Uh, not, not tangents to like that, you know don't matter but tangents about like we wanna go deeper about this topic and he may say well why didn't you do that or why didn't you focus on that not as a negative but just challenging me and so the concept there would be challenging me to keep the main thing the main thing and focusing on what the standards say and what is important for teaching I would say that's how it's affected my experience.

Betty noted during her interview that sometimes, her lessons were not aligned with the standards or proper co-teaching methods when she stated,

It's not aligned. Let me say that it's not aligned with, with what I'm teaching, but because we don't have the time to sit down and go through a whole lesson, I share my lesson plan and here are the documents I'm using. This is what everything looks like, but he doesn't know my whole delivery method. He doesn't know that he could look over the PowerPoint if he chooses to look over it.

Betty noted the frustrations that not focusing on the standards and what is important for teaching the students can lead to ineffective co-teaching. Betty even wrote to her amalgamated co-teacher about the matter. Betty wrote,

First, I believe it is important that you as the co-teacher know the standards being taught. I know this subject is not the only subject you co-teach, however, to support student learning, you must know what students are expected to learn. This will ensure students are prepared for the unit and end-of-year tests. Knowing the standards will also help eliminate discussing content for which students are not needing to know and cut out unnecessary confusion for the students.

However, discussions about what is important for teaching also allowed co-teachers to begin sharing instructional responsibilities. Irene asked her co-teacher to focus on important pedagogical responsibilities to share in the instruction. Irene, referring to her special education co-teacher, discussed what was important for teaching when she stated,

I'd have her. I'd go around and check homework. I have like a little clipboard. I check homework on, or she would. One of us would do that. And then one of us would go over the homework on the board for answers and to answer questions and stuff like that.

Kevin also noted how assigning co-teaching roles, and discussing what to teach and how, helped the co-teachers share instructional responsibility. Kevin said he and his co-teacher decided he would be "[w]orking with the kids that are currently failing and so I'm doing more not just with the SPED kids, but I'm doing them more with the kids that are the lower achievers." Zeke discussed the dangers of not having clearly defined roles or discussions of what to teach,

[T]he Co-teacher just kind of comes in kind of sits in the back of the room, doesn't do anything. How is that effective co-teaching it's not. It's just one person. It's just two people being in a room, a warm body, and a teacher at that point.

Co-teacher Training

The second subtheme identified under "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher" was "Co-teacher Training" All participants discussed co-teaching professional development a total of 29 times. Professional development was most often discussed within the ontological code of "to be." Therefore, a subtheme revolving around co-teaching professional development was developed within the theme "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher." The descriptive term " "Co-teacher Training" was developed from a description of Gary, Irene, and Kevin's experiences of how they were prepared to co-teach. Gary indicated he was not trained and was put "In the Middle of It." Irene indicated she was "half-prepared" by student teaching. Kevin noted that he was fully trained in his teacher preparation course.

Teachers experienced decreased initial willingness to share instructional responsibility when they perceived they had little training about co-teaching in their preparation program. Betty said, "the first time I learned about co-teaching was three years ago when I was in the middle of it." Gary said that "in Mississippi, we didn't," when asked how he received co-teacher

preparation for co-teaching in general. Terry said that, with regard to co-teacher training, any "program that I'm aware of really doesn't."

Elaine and Irene experienced that their teacher preparation programs prepared them for sharing instructional responsibilities. Elaine stated, "[y]ou are co-teaching in a sense because you are teaching with another teacher, you're working with another teacher." Irene stated,

I think the only way that the teacher prep system helped was, I guess when you go through the whole thing, the teacher you work with kind of has to share her information with you. Which is kind of like a co-taught relationship because she's there in the content with you. She's getting the feedback from me, and so you get a glimpse into the world of it.

Irene went on to describe her student teaching experience as "But I think at that point the the teacher I worked with for my teaching program, it's more of a mentorship. And when you're with the teacher and Co-teacher, it's not a mentorship. You're more equals." Irene finished her thought with the statement, "so it's a little different, but it does prepare for it." Irene continued, "I probably say it [student teaching] half prepares you for having conversations about your lessons and what you're thinking and kind of how to get the other teacher involved." Elaine and Irene believed that their student teaching experience, while not direct instruction on co-teaching pedagogical methodology, was similar enough to actual co-teaching that it prepared them for the co-taught classroom.

Kevin experienced a professional development program during his tenure as a special education co-teacher that he believed was critical for sharing instructional responsibilities. Kevin stated,

Most of the preparation they gave was what we see each time each year here in Major

City Metro County School district, where they have the co-teachers show with the way it

should look. They showed us all the different models of Co-teaching. They showed us

what it shouldn't look like, and then they put you in the classroom, and then you get to

experience. For you got to experience it. In my case, you got to experience the negative

attitude of the Gen Ed teacher because they had never had a co-teacher that actually

wanted to take part in teaching. Who just sat in the back and stated they're on their phone

or on their computer. And so, you work to try to change the Gen Ed's teacher's mindset

of what a co-teacher was supposed to be, and so, their preparation was good.

The more positive experiences co-teachers had of a teacher preparation program, or

professional development, their experience of sharing instructional responsibility increased. The

co-teachers training, or professional development experiences also affected their personal belief

systems and sociocultural environments.

Meeting the Needs of Students

The third theme identified during the second stage of Creely's (2018) four-stage method

was "Co-Equal Co-teachers believe they have the Capability to Better Meet the Needs of

Students," and the two subthemes that emerged were inaction of a co-teacher and desire to co-

plan. All participants mentioned the term "equal," or a synonym, a total of 127 times. Nine

participants expressly mentioned the term "equal" a total of twenty times as a part of their

experience. Nine participants also used the term "parity" a total of eleven to describe their

experience of co-teaching. Thus, this study uses the combined meaning of the two words,

"equality," as a descriptor of the co-teacher's experiences. Since connecting with peers and

students fits better as a subtheme of "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension" and the terms

equality and parity were expressed directly by more participants when discussing their co-teachers, the theme of "Meeting the Needs of Students" was developed. The descriptive term, "better capabilities of meeting the needs of those students," came from Adam's interview when he discussed teacher parity. Many teachers that experienced increased parity also had increased experiences of sharing instructional responsibility. Adam said, "Most importantly, the more parity there is in a co-taught classroom, the better for the students."

Adam stated, both co-teachers are "[b]etter together in terms of better instruction, better knowledge of students, better capabilities of meeting the needs of those students." Dean indicated that equality was necessary so that "[t]he students will respect a second teacher when they appear to know what they're talking about and know what they're doing in the classroom." Over time the students become accustomed to two teachers in the classroom, and both can share instructional responsibilities.

Adam, Elizabeth, and Kevin all emphasized the importance of parity. Kevin wrote, "[p]arity, equality in status–in the eyes of our students–is what matters" (Kevin, final questionnaire, October 21, 2022). Elizabeth wrote,

> A partnership implies equality - not only in teaching the material and tutoring students, but also in the day-to-day housekeeping items that must be taken care of as well such as taking attendance, formulating groups and/or seating charts, grading papers, recording grades and most importantly - communicating with the students' parents/guardians.

However, teachers that experienced decreased parity experienced decreased experiences of sharing instructional responsibility. Kevin wrote, "if a teacher views me as less than, then the students will, as well, and that is unacceptable." Interestingly, Kevin has observed special education co-teachers not taking an active role in the co-taught classroom. Kevin was a general

education co-teacher in a duo where he observed such an occurrence. Kevin wrote, "I've seen several who simply 'keep data' (i.e. remain on their computers at a desk somewhere in the room but do nothing to help the students.)"

"I Don't Like When They": Conflicts between Co-teachers

The subtheme under "Co-Equal Co-teachers believe they have the Capability to Better Meet the Needs of Students" is "'I Don't Like When They': Conflicts between Co-teachers." Although inaction is the opposite of action, as it hinders equality between co-teachers, it developed as more of subtheme for that theme than the action or actions found in the "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension" theme. Eleven participants directly noted the disparity they experienced between themselves and their co-teacher due to inaction. There were seventeen separate examples of co-teachers sitting and being inactive during the co-taught class. One major limitation co-teachers' observed were one co-teacher not taking an active part in the classroom. Lisa related her experience of special education co-teachers being constrained by paperwork. Lisa said general education teachers often tell her "the co-teacher will just sit on the computer or stand in the corner of the room, and they really don't do anything. Similarly, Kevin admitted he sometimes engages in "one teach/one sit on your computer (something I find myself guilty of at times now, since I have a co-teacher who wants to do all the instruction, but I do get caught up on some of my all-too-often-late-SpEd-paperwork)." Adam wrote, "I know that you may sit in the back of the room during a typical classroom day and have your head buried in your laptop."

Kevin noted that special education co-teachers that coach often do not share co-teaching responsibilities. Kevin wrote, "I was the lead teacher, and the head football coach was my co-teacher – he primarily watched Hudl and prepared for the upcoming games (a prime example of

why numerous Gen. Ed. teachers may have a low view of SpEd co-teachers." Elizabeth also

noted the differences between general and special education teachers when she said,

> [S]he has to be in a meeting, or I have to be in a meeting, and so we don't get as long to
>
> plan because with co-teaching one of the teachers the special Ed and so, of course, they
>
> have a caseload where they have to work on the IEP's, meet with parents, do addendums,
>
> all the kind of paperwork stuff.

The differences in responsibility were only one of the issues that might cause inaction or

conflict in the co-taught classroom. Irene noticed the physical limitations of her co-teacher sitting

at her desk. Irene said, "I've had to have a conversation with her about that." Irene continued by

stating she had to ask her co-teacher "to kind of limit sitting in my chair […] but instead of

maybe sitting down in my chair and working on something to move around the classroom." Irene

went on to write a letter to her amalgamated co-teacher that reinforced her irritation at her co-

teachers inaction,

> Because I want you to be a part of this classroom as much as I am, there are a few things
>
> that tend to get under my skin. The number one thing that bothers me is sitting down and
>
> not interacting with the students. I want you to walk around and see what students are
>
> struggling with and to create bonds with the students. If you do sit down, because I know
>
> that will happen, please do not sit at my desk.

Elaine wrote a complaint about how they should not have disagreements in front of the

students. Elaine wrote, "You are always very vocal about your opinions which is nice, but

sometimes can come off as being a bit offensive especially when students overhear the

conversations we have." Elaine continued, "My request is when we have different opinions we

discuss those matters when students are not present."

Elizabeth anticipated conflict in her letter to her amalgamated co-teacher. Elizabeth wrote,

But we must also be comfortable with conflict. We must talk through the uncomfortable things that will surely arise. You have my word that I will listen and will try my best not to take things personally but will try to keep in mind that you have our students' best interests at heart.

Co-teachers' experiences with conflicts between each other often decreased their experience of sharing instructional responsibility. The co-teacher's experience of conflicts also affected their personal belief systems. Elizabeth described experiencing a personal belief system based on anticipation of a conflict with her co-teacher. Furthermore, when conflicts occur, they allow co-teachers to influence each other's behaviors, changing how they interact with the students. The change in behavior that may result from conflict results in a change in the experience of the sociocultural environment. Inaction was coded the most often with Bios during the coding process.

Bios. Creely (2018) explains that through the bios lens, one sees people as constrained by their biological limits. Biological limits played a key role in co-teachers' experiences with sharing instructional responsibilities. Irene experienced her co-teacher as a "warm body" in the classroom. Also, Zeke and Kevin had either been or experienced being a "warm body" in the co-taught classroom. Although there are physical limitations, time, space, and IEPs, taking space without contributing to the class was seen as a form of bios from the participants. Lisa, Kevin, Irene, and Zeke also believed that to "sit" and not attend to students was another way a co-teacher, typically the special education co-teacher, exhibited bios. Unfortunately, again, when co-teachers observed and perceived unsuccessful sharing of instructional responsibility in their

sociocultural environment, it began a negative feedback loop, decreasing their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. Not only was inaction coded most often for bios, but it also formed the basis of a theme.

Co-Planning

The fourth theme identified during the second stage of Creely's (2018) four-stage method was "Co-Planning." The two subthemes that emerged were Advantages to Co-planning and Challenges to Co-planning. All twelve participants discussed the importance of planning with their co-teacher. The data revealed the word "planning," or its variants, was mentioned 96 times by the participants. All the participants indicated that was necessary that co-teachers make an effort to co-plan if they wish to share instructional responsibility. This study will use the term co-planning to indicate co-teaching planning.

Advantages to Co-Planning

Terry noted the importance of co-planning with his co-teacher on his sociocultural environment when he wrote,

> Communication of both roles and expectations are key to any good process. I believe one of the most overlooked steps in the lead-resource setup is lack of time spent BEFORE any of the parties involved become a part of the learning environment. As every school year has begun, I have seen a lack of total collaborative work between the key parties involved: the lead teacher, the resource teacher, and those also in the special education departments. The hierarchical structures and the general understanding by ALL involved, even before including the students and parents, may be part of the issue.

Terry marked planning as a necessary component to understand the hierarchy, or sociocultural environment, before even entering the classroom with students. Terry also noted

the importance of planning and working together, and his personal belief system, when he wrote in his letter to his amalgamated co-teacher,

> The resource/SPED teacher in the room has to act as a hub or axle on a bicycle wheel, while there are numerous spokes that are vital to the performance, but never fully understand what the other components to delivering quality service to the student are. That is why I believe pull all those involved before the students come to start the year is a simple, but vital change to the whole process that needs to happen. LISTENING to each other to begin and then working collaboratively in order to have all on the same pages, understanding each other's expectations in this process, then respecting each other enough to make sure each does what is needed to provide the best learning environment on the front line called the classroom for each student involved–not just those that are technically in a SPED program, but every student.

Kevin noticed his limited knowledge of a subject and would ask his general education co-teacher to help him understand the subject during co-planning sessions. Kevin stated,

> The way we bounced ideas off of each other is if I didn't understand something, I would ask the gen ed teacher my question because I figured if I had a question […] a student is bound to have the same question, they're just not asking.

Dean noted that co-planning helped co-teachers overcome limitations. Dean stated,

> Of attributes of collaborative planning, I would say that the positive attributes would be being able to get on the same page beforehand, so when you talk to your teacher at a time, it helps in making sure that when the class starts, you both know what's expected.

Adam emphasized the importance of co-planning on parity when he wrote,"I would like to co-plan with you […]the kids need to see us on the same page as much as possible."

Gary was insistent with his co-teacher in his letter to his amalgamated co-teacher. Gary wrote,

> I would recommend going forward that we meet during pre-planning, look over the IEPs, determine the best strategy to approach teaching that particular class, and decide who has which roles in the class and how those roles and responsibilities change. Once the year begins, I would recommend weekly meetings to discuss what is working and what is not working and which adjustments need to be made, at least until we are able to get in a groove and on the same page.

Elaine, Zeke, and Elizabeth also experienced successful co-planning sessions. The experiences co-teachers had with co-planning often increased their experience of sharing instructional responsibility. Elaine stated,

> We share responsibilities, you know, for example, at my school we have we use canvas. And. So that's like our online website essentially for students. So, for example, when we were sharing responsibilities, one person would put stuff in canvas for the week, the other person would get the digital files that we needed to present in class. We basically had a checklist. You know, those are just some examples of what we split up, but we had a checklist every week. Umm. And we would just divvy it out like you do this, you do this, and we tried to keep it equal. You know, and then we would from there, you know, we would decide how we were gonna split up the lesson. Like, who is teaching what you know? I'm teaching the first half. They're teaching the second half, and so on and so forth.

The co-teachers' experience of their desire to co-plan also affected sociocultural environments. Zeke discussed his planning process and how it was affected by his socio-cultural environment, and the time constraints of being a high school co-teacher. Zeke stated,

We regularly meet at the weekly PLC with one another and then we would also.

Sit down and kind of say, well, here's what the game plan is for the week.

What's kind of discuss how you know this is what I'm doing for my my Gen Ed classes.

How do you think we should kind of change it up for some for our Co-taught classes and

I think. Both of us kind of say, well, I don't think they can kind of do this.

Let's try to modify it a little bit to kind of see what we can do to effectively better

teach those kids in our Co taught classes. We also meet outside before

school, after the classes, and during our seventh period planning. So we

try to maximize as much time as we can to.

Challenges to Co-Planning

Despite his answer, Zeke experienced the difficulty of finding time to co-plan. Later in the interview, when asked what a negative aspect of co-planning was, Zeke stated, "[f]inding time, I think it's the biggest thing." Irene noted in her answer for her final questionnaire, "[t]he thing I value the most is having another perspective on lessons and methods." Irene continued, "I wish we had more time to plan together because then that would put us on the same page and wavelength better."

Betty noted that time constraints could be overcome through strategic, targeted, discussions. Betty wrote,

I think it is important we keep the lines of communication open between us. We have

little time to discuss and reflect together, but I think it is important we continuously

reflect on our lessons, provide each other with feedback and our observations of what is

happening in the classroom, and discuss student progress. I know when I am providing

direct instruction, I sometimes do not see the same things I notice when I am the "non-

active" teacher. Sharing our observations can help us to improve our co-teaching

practices, but more importantly, it can help ensure no student struggles or misconceptions

go unattended.

Betty not only discussed her limited time to plan with her co-teacher, but she also explained that

it was necessary to help focus on what needs to be taught as well as gives her an opportunity to

know what her co-teacher knows about the students.

Kevin experienced difficulty co-planning due to a lack of faith in his abilities. Kevin

wrote, "My line excuse has always been the same if you won't share the class…won't let me

teach…why should I help plan or grade…both are portions I have found help to make me a

better teacher, but my ego cannot get beyond your lack of faith in my ability." Finding time to

plan, or difficulty finding time to plan, was a concern of all twelve participants. The participants

experienced that the elements that made up their sociocultural environment affected their ability

to co-plan, and therefore influence each other's self systems and thus teacher belief systems.

Those elements are the other co-teacher's belief system, responsibilities, and time constraints of

being a co-teacher. Co-planning was coded the most often with logos during the coding process.

Logos. Through the logos lens, one sees that people wish to overcome the limitations

placed on them by their biological limits, society, and other constraints. Attempts to overcome

physical limits played a key role in co-teachers' experiences sharing instructional responsibilities.

Zeke noted he and his co-teacher would "sit down and kind of say, well, here's what the game

plan is for the week." Gary and his co-teacher "make an effort to plan." Betty said she would like

to co-plan "[o]nce a week." Elaine, Irene, and Kevin also noted that wanting to co-plan was a

form of logos. The co-teachers felt that co-planning allowed them to put the general and special

education students first. When co-teachers observed and perceived the successful sharing of

instructional responsibility in their sociocultural environment, a positive feedback loop began,

increasing their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities.

Outlier Data and Findings

There is one outlier in this study. The outlier is the demographic and political response,

Kevin, the special education co-teacher, noted in his letter to his amalgamated co-teacher. The

outlier did not fit in with any of the themes that had developed from the phenomenological

reduction process. It varied from any other theme to such a significant degree, it was best placed

as an outlier. This outlier was not noted by any other participant. The outlier was of note because

of the importance it had to the participant that experienced the outlier.

Kevin noted that his co-teacher identified him by his demographic characteristics. Kevin

was unique in that he noted how his being identified by his characteristics and political

persuasion affected his opportunities to share instructional responsibilities in the co-taught

classroom. Kevin wrote,

Perhaps, it's your youth, perhaps the entitlement of your political/minority status, or how

you've felt about mine, some notion that a SIS gendered WASP male would be your co-

teacher, and that translated to a feeling that since I was the visitor of your classroom, I

was interloping. You were always extremely organized, and I was grateful, for I, like the

students knew what "we" (you) were going to teach that week based on your plans, but

you didn't share the responsibility of planning with me, and perhaps, that is why you

failed to trust me to teach…to lead class with you. We were supposed to be co-teachers, team teaching…working and leading together.

This notation of demographic characteristics and political persuasion may be why Kevin's experience was primarily focused on the idea of equality between co-teachers.

Research Question Responses

This hermeneutical phenomenological study was guided by one central research question and two sub-research questions. The research questions sought to describe s co-teaching team members' experiences of shared instructional responsibility. The four themes identified during data analysis: (a) Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension," (b) "the need to be respected as a teacher," (c) Meeting the Needs of Students," and (d) "Co-planning," support participants' responses to each of the research questions below.

Central Research Question

How do secondary education co-teachers describe their experience of sharing instructional responsibility? Co-teachers described their experience with sharing instructional responsibility as a fluctuating process that revolved around their personal beliefs and their sociocultural environment. The four primary themes, or essences, which answered this question were (a) teachers sensing alleviated apprehension, (b) we both need to be respected as a teacher, (c) meeting the needs of students, and (d) co-planning. The themes emerged from co-teachers' experiences with sharing instructional responsibilities, aligning with their personal beliefs and experience of their sociocultural environment.

Irene experienced increased sharing of instructional responsibility when she took actions that shared responsibility with her co-teacher; the actions alleviated her apprehension. She also experienced overcoming challenges with sharing instructional responsibility by both teachers

acting as teachers. Irene said, "we go over homework thing and do an example, and then she does an example and go back and forth; it builds a better relationship with us and the kids realize that we're both equals." Irene's experience of sharing instructional responsibility had increased by the middle of the semester because Irene had acted and incorporated her co-teacher into the instruction. However, before Irene had the opportunity to be a special education co-teacher, she was aware of the need to define roles in order to act and be seen as a co-teacher. However, she did not discuss them with her co-teaching partner. Irene noted,

> Before I became a special education teacher, my perception of a co-taught teacher was not of a co-being relationship but that of just a second teacher in the room helping just his/her students and taking some data points. After being in the special education world and in a different county, I feel our co-teaching relationships are just that, where both teachers are seen as teachers and not just a warm body.

Kevin also experienced alleviated apprehension by sharing instructional responsibility with his co-teacher, but he also experienced challenges with sharing instructional responsibility due to a lack of being or presence. Kevin said, "I think the positive benefit of helping grade is I get to know the kids a little bit better in their abilities better, not just my kids, but all the kids." Kevin continued, "that is something that I'm starting to do with one of my Co teachers now." However, before Kevin had the opportunity to work with his current general education teacher, he was aware of the need to be respected as a teacher. However, he did not discuss them with his co-teaching partner. Kevin wrote, "I never had a voice […] I've been little more than a bouncer for the room, associated with discipline and 'You're not keeping up with your assignments'." Kevin continued, "[h]ow can I help?" (See the student's eye roll in response) […] [s]o, I feared

your absences, for I would need to lead students, but was treated with all the respect reserved for a substitute."

Betty shared a similar experience with alleviating apprehension by sharing instructional responsibility. Betty stated, "sharing that responsibility of the instruction it was just a huge positive [...] it allowed me to see it from a different aspect because in my other classes, I was a front modeling it, trying to look and see." Betty expressed taking action to achieve parity. Her experience with parity increased her experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. Betty mentioned, "this allowed me to see it from a different perspective. And you know, just ensure that the students were getting what they needed." However, like Irene and Kevin, Betty experienced challenges with sharing instructional responsibility due to a lack of focusing on what is important to teach students and how, a subtheme of the need to be respected as a teacher. Betty stated, "in my class for the most part is really more me teaching and the co-teacher is just kind of supporting both the students that are supposed to be getting their services."

Synthesis

For co-teachers, there is a vivid sense of action or an alleviated apprehension concerning their experiences and conceptualizations of sharing instructional responsibilities. 'Alleviated Apprehension" is a term coined to express the transitional sense, from stress to ease, of acting in a physical, sociocultural space between what was known and constructed in consciousness as a teacher's belief system and what affects their experience of becoming or being seen as a teacher within the temporal frame when sharing instructional responsibility. Transparent strategic negotiations and adjustments in their professional lives between these two spheres are evident, communicated through exchanges in interviews, letters to amalgamated co-teachers, and final

electronic questionnaires. The relationships they form are, for them, an essential substratum in experience and an appropriate tactic for sustaining connections.

The ability to connect both life worlds, the physical classroom and the psychological world of the co-teacher, appears to drive sharing of instructional responsibility, creating another meaningful space that bestrides the two as a new phenomenon in their consciousness which is built on the essences of the teachers sensing alleviated apprehension within the co-taught classroom, being seen and respected as a teacher and equality between co-teachers which leads to a personal belief that co-equal co-teachers believe they have the capability to better meet the needs of students. Co-teachers seem to be motivated by their wish to sustain their equitable roles in the co-taught classroom as pedagogues, in order to best serve the students. At the same time, co-teachers are avouching for the professional connections established in co-planning, including the uncertainty of their ability to share instruction equally juxtaposed with the inevitability of having to take care of assigned roles, such as data collection and writing IEPs.

Sub-Question One: How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe their sociocultural experiences of co-teaching?

How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe their sociocultural experiences of co-teaching? This sub-question seeks to understand the experiences of a co-teaching team member as they negotiate the educational space. Two primary themes, (a) the Experience of a " Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension," (b) "The Need to be Respected as a Teacher," and three subthemes, (c) Connecting with the students, (d) Relationships: "They know you care," and (e) focusing on what is important to teach and how emerged during data analysis. The aforementioned themes and subthemes provided support for sub-question one. Co-teachers in this study describe experiences of their sociocultural experience of co-teaching as

experiencing alleviated apprehension, needing to be respected as a teacher, and that they

experienced connections, relationships, and learned from each other what to focus on in the

classroom. See Table 3 for themes, and subthemes in relation to sub-research question one. Table

3 and table 4 are modeled on Lewin et al.'s (2018) summary of qualitative findings table.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes in Relation to Sub-Research Question One

Theme	Subthemes	Quotation
Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension (Informs CRQ and SQ1)		"So sometimes at the beginning of the year they seem very apprehensive, especially when I present the material.…[a]bout halfway through the first nine weeks, they're very comfortable with it, and they'll start treating us like they have questions equally.
	Connecting with the Students	"Sometimes the struggles that their students have, that maybe they don't obviously publicly put on display, but that working with the co teacher knowing how he knows the students, being familiar with those IEPs helps me to know the students and helps me."
	Relationships: They Know You Care	"It's as hokey as it comes, but the idea of people don't care what you know, until they know that you care." "However, it is difficult for the students to view me as an equal teacher in the room because you do tend to treat me as a glorified paraprofessional more often than not."
The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher (Informs CRQ and SQ1)	Focusing on What is Important to Teach and How	"I know this subject is not the only subject you co-teach, however, to support student learning, you must know what students are expected to learn."

Sociocultural experiences revolved around co-teachers' awareness, also known as the

theme of being a co-teacher or "the need to be respected as a teacher," of their connections, relationships, and focus of what is being taught in the co-taught classroom. The more co-teachers took action to connect and build relationships with each other and their students, the more they experienced a positive sociocultural environment. The more positive sociocultural environment co-teachers created, the more their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities increased. Mindy stated, "[w]e were trying to do a project a couple of weeks ago where the students had to, well, they started on their senior project and they have to write an annotated bibliography, and I was a little bit more knowledgeable about the technical side of noodle tools." Mindy continued, "[s]o I got to walk them through the exact steps that they needed to do through noodle tools […] and she walked them through exactly what they needed for the project itself so that they got to see us both in that role of teaching." Mindy finished by stating, "[a]nd the students seem to be a little more open to asking me for help than they had in the past when they saw that I was the one that knew kind of what to do with the database."

Dean stated, "We would swap for teaching responsibilities where every other day a different teacher would be at the board explaining and the students." Like Mu and Dean, Elizabeth and Elaine also took action to connect and build relationships with each other and their students, and they experienced a positive sociocultural environment. Elizabeth wrote, "[w]hen a routine is established, and both co-teachers work together as teammates, great things happen in the classroom and students become more successful!" Elaine stated,

> the person I was co-teaching with said something that made the students laugh, and I
> picked up on it; she said, you know, circle your couple like the couple was the 22S. And
> then this guy, this three, this is the single Pringle. He stays on the inside, and for
> whatever reason, the students loved hearing the phrase single, Pringle. Umm. And you

know, I wouldn't have heard that if I would have been teaching by myself.

Sub-Question Two: How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe the experience of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-teaching?

How do secondary school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe the experience of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-teaching? This sub-question seeks to understand the experiences of a co-teaching team member as they negotiate the educational space. Two primary themes (a) "Co-Equal Co-teachers have the Capability to Meet the Needs of Students," (b) "Co-Planning," and one subtheme, (c) "I don't like when they": Conflicts between co-teachers, emerged during data analysis. The aforementioned themes and subthemes provided support for sub question two. Co-teachers in this study describe experiences of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-teaching as working together to meet the needs of their students, experiencing conflicts with their co-teacher, and realizing co-planning is necessary to overcome challenges in the co-taught classroom. See table 4 for the themes, and subthemes in relation to sub-research question two.

Table 4

Themes, and Subthemes in Relation to Sub-Research Question Two

Theme	Subthemes	Quotation
Meeting the Needs of Students (Informs CRQ and SQ2)		"[Co-equal co-teachers are] "[b]etter [at] meeting the needs of those students."
	"I Don't Like When They": Conflicts Between Co-Teachers	"The number one thing that bothers me is sitting down and not interacting with the students."
Co-Planning (Informs CRQ and SQ2)		"[We] sit down and kind of say, well, here's what the game plan is for the week."

Meeting the Needs of Students

"Co-Equal Co-teachers have the Capability to Meet the Needs of Students" was a theme developed from examining the paragraphs ontologically coded with the codes "To Act" and "To Connect". They are the fundamental blocks of the essences and therefore all occurrences found throughout the data, especially in regard to responses indicating personal beliefs. Personal beliefs are heavily influenced by experience through the self system and triadic reciprocal stimuli (Bandura, 1978). Within these ontologically coded paragraphs, all participants mentioned the term "equal," or a synonym, a total of 127 times. Nine participants expressly mentioned the term "equal" a total of twenty times as a part of their experience. Their personal beliefs revolved around co-teachers' experience of equality between themselves and their co-teaching partners. The co-teachers' belief systems were heavily influenced by their interactions with their co-teaching partner and students. Raised expectations of sharing instructional responsibilities are developed through repeated exposure to favorable triadic reciprocal stimuli. The favorable triadic reciprocal stimuli increased the co-teachers experiences of sharing instructional responsibilities.

Co-Planning

All twelve participants discussed the importance of planning with their co-teacher. Personal beliefs are heavily influenced by experience through the self system and triadic reciprocal stimuli (Bandura, 1978). Making an effort to co-plan was an experience that affected the participants personal beliefs. The data revealed the word "planning", or its variants, was mentioned ninety-six times by the participants in total. This study will use the term co-planning to indicate co-teaching planning. Elizabeth indicated that co-planning was crucial to initiating the favorable triadic reciprocal stimuli. Elizabeth said, "[w]e basically had a checklist. You know, those are just some examples of what we split up, but we had a checklist every week." Zeke had a similar experience with co-planning. Zeke wrote, "the biggest thing I value is the trust that both

my co-teacher and I share." Zeke continued, "[w]e both try to plan together and create lessons that are engaging to all students. We both help modify assignments to help the needs of our students".

"I Don't Like When They": Conflicts Between Co-Teachers

However, lowered expectations of sharing instructional responsibilities are developed through repeated exposure to negative triadic reciprocal stimuli. Eleven participants noted the discrepancy they experienced between themselves and their co-teacher due to inaction or conflict. Seventeen separate examples of co-teachers being inactive during the co-taught class. Adam noted the negative stimuli. Adam wrote, "I know that you may sit in the back of the room during a typical classroom day and have your head buried in your laptop." Adam continues, "often the least of your concerns is what is happening in our co-taught class." Kevin related a story of inaction he took. Kevin stated, "[c]o-teachers who wanted me to do their grading for them […] [a]nd they went to my LEA to try to get me in trouble because I was the head baseball coach and had numerous responsibilities." Kevin finished the story by relating that in this situation, he continued not to take action or try establishing parity through grading. Kevin stated, "My LEA looked him square in the eyes and asked them what he'll grade for you if you wanna write his IEPs for him."

Summary

This chapter illustrated the findings of this hermeneutical phenomenological study regarding co-teachers' experiences with shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The findings reflected the experiences of 12 participants with shared instructional responsibilities and were organized according to three themes, six subthemes, two outliers, one central research question, and two sub-research questions. The four themes that

emerged from data analysis were (a) "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension," (b) "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher," (c) "Meeting the Needs of Students" and (d) Co-Planning Numerous quotes from participants were used to support the above themes. The results from the interviews, letters to an amalgamated co-teacher, and a final electronic questionnaire revealed that teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibility was continuously fluctuating and was informed by their personal beliefs and sociocultural environment. Teachers experienced increased sharing of instructional responsibility through their experiences with positive experiences of actions in the classroom, being a co-teacher, and equality between co-teachers. However, many of those same teachers also experienced decreased sharing of instructional responsibility when they perceived a lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers. Those perceptions decreased the participants' perception of co-teachers' willingness to share instructional responsibility. This study's analysis of co-teachers' shared experiences with shared instructional responsibility uncovered one outlier. One special education co-teacher projected his political and social views onto his co-teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. This chapter includes a discussion of the interpretations of the findings, the implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, the limitations, and delimitations, and recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with an overall summary.

Discussion

This study explored co-teachers' lived experience of sharing instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom. Through the triangulated data sources of interviews, letters to an amalgamated co-teacher, and open-ended electronic questionnaires, the shared experiences of 12 participants were categorized into the following four themes: (a) "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension,"(b) "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher,"(c) "Meeting the Needs of Students," and (d) "Co-Planning." This section discusses the study's findings in relation to the above themes and supports the interpretation of those findings with empirical and theoretical literature along with narrative evidence from the participants. The discussion includes the following subsections: interpretation of findings, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

This section summarizes the thematic findings, followed by an interpretation of those findings. Co-teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibility was in a continuous state of fluctuation and was informed by their personal beliefs and by their sociocultural environment.

Teachers experienced increased sharing of instructional responsibility through their interactions with positive experiences of co-teacher's actions within the co-taught classroom, being a co-teacher, and equality between co-teachers. However, many of those same teachers also experienced decreased sharing of instructional responsibility when they perceived a lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers. Those perceptions decreased the participants' perception of co-teachers' willingness to share instructional responsibility. Bandura's (1977) self system is incorporated into Parajes' (1992) teacher belief framework and subsequently into Kim and Pratt's (2020) variation of the teacher belief framework and guides co-teachers' interactions with each other and their students through the triadic reciprocal perspective of their sociocultural environment. Co-teachers experience with sharing instructional responsibility reflected a fluctuating pattern of increases and declines predicated on their personal beliefs and perceptions of their environment. Previous research (Lindacher, 2020; Rytivaara et al.) posited that SWDs and students without disabilities benefited from the collaboration and combined knowledge of the co-teaching team and described how general education and special education co-teachers negotiated and created an educational co-taught space for themselves and their students.

The central research question asked: How do secondary education co-teachers describe their experience of sharing instructional responsibility? All twelve participants offered particulars that allowed for a transparent understanding of secondary education co-teachers experiences when sharing instructional responsibilities. Although participants expressed some negative experiences, the overall shared experiences that emerged most clearly were those associated with alleviating stress due to co-teachers both experiencing one another taking action in the classroom. Participants expressed the ordinary experiences that actions alleviated

apprehension in the classroom, both co-teachers needed to be seen as a full teacher, co-equal co-teachers were able to meet the needs of the students, and co-planning was the method that allowed them to overcome the limitations of the co-taught classroom. These common experiences represented the four major themes emerging from data analysis, with multiple intermingled sub-themes emerging as well.

Action denoted sharing instructional responsibility with the participants. If participants experienced themselves or partners acting in the co-taught classroom, they viewed it as sharing instruction. The construct of sharing instruction was further supported by co-planning ideas and their focus on what the students needed to know. Focusing on what the students needed to know was a reflexive practice and subtheme under the need to be respected as a teacher, as student needs were learned in the classroom, discussed during co-planning, and then remedied in the classroom.

Beyond action in the classroom, participants' apprehension was alleviated by connecting with each other and their students. The relationships they built inside and outside the classroom allowed both co-teachers to experience being viewed as equals by their students and co-teaching partner. Apprehension was further alleviated by experiencing co-planning and a shared focus in the classroom.

Co-teachers that focused on what was taught and why with one another experienced less apprehension about co-teaching. Focusing on what would happen in the classroom gave them a clear idea of who should be doing what and why. That focus allowed them to be viewed as equals and serve all students to the best of their capabilities.

The participants also noted that when encountering these challenges with their co-teachers as to what both co-teachers should be doing during class, particularly during the instruction

phase, their complaint was mainly focused on inactivity. Inactivity may have been caused by a lack of professional development or ignorance of the other co-teachers' expectations. Some participants noted they had never received any professional development. They did not act out of not knowing what to do in the co-taught classroom. Others did not receive a clinical practice of co-teaching. They had to implement theories that they had never actually performed before. Fortunately, co-planning also alleviated these conflicts, which positively influenced the co-teacher's experiences.

Co-planning was the method co-teachers used to overcome the obstacles they faced in the co-taught classroom. Whether it was to define roles, standards, answer academic questions, or co-teaching models, co-teachers would experience the feeling of sharing instructional responsibilities when they co-planned. Time constraints hindered co-planning, a challenge that the participants noted. All participants were aware of the benefits of co-planning and made a concerted effort to plan with their partners. Interestingly, co-planning posed both a challenge and an opportunity for participants. Finding time to plan with an already packed schedule took a lot of work to accomplish. However, not doing so was more disadvantageous than making sacrifices elsewhere. All participants indicated that the advantages outweighed the loss of time.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The following four primary themes emerged from data analysis: (a) "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension," (b) "The Need to Be Respected as a Teacher," (c) Meeting the Needs of Students, (d) and co-planning. The themes aligned with the theoretical framework of this phenomenological research study. Those themes combined with theory that guided this study and information gained from the participants produced the following interpretations.

Relationships are Key. Co-teachers experienced increased shared instructional responsibilities through connections and relationships they built with each other and their students in the classroom. The triadic self system of each member of the sociocultural environment of the co-taught classroom is affected by each individual relationship. Repeated successful relationships between co-teachers led to a sense of community in the co-taught classroom, which increased their belief that they could share instructional responsibilities. Co-Teachers' connecting, building, and maintaining relationships with each other and the students enhanced the co-teacher's experience of collaboration. An improved collaboration led to an increased experience of sharing instructional responsibilities.

Acting as a Co-Teacher. The Co-teacher's experiences of being, or awareness of the body as an instinctive state of worldly being in space, and its links to one's role and function, affected their sharing of instructional responsibilities with their co-teacher. Teachers' experiences of sharing co-teaching responsibilities increased through their awareness of their co-teaching partners and students. Their performances clarified their roles to their partner and their students. The clearer the roles the co-teachers assume in the co-taught classroom, the more their experience of sharing instructional responsibility increases. The ability to act as a co-teacher could be improved by teacher preparation or professional development. The more positive experiences co-teachers had of a teacher preparation program, or professional development, the more their experience of sharing instructional responsibility increased. As co-teachers' awareness of their roles increased, aided by professional development, their experience of sharing instructional responsibility increased.

Parity. Co-teachers experienced increased sharing of instructional responsibilities by achieving better levels of parity with their co-teaching partner. When they felt as though they

were equal they noted they experienced that they and their co-teaching partner were better able to meet the needs of the students. Both general education and special education teachers experienced a desire for parity. However, the idea of what parity was differed between co-teachers. Co-teachers noted limitations to parity. Typically, the limitation was inaction. Such limitations contributed to decreased co-teachers' belief in their ability to share instructional responsibility.

Co-planning to Co-Teach. The successful co-planning co-teachers performed with their co-teachers also helped them increase their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. During co-planning sessions they were able to focus on what the students needed to be taught to successfully master the standards. Participant reports of postive experience of co-planning often paired with experiences of better relationships with co-teachers and students. Also, co-planning allowed teachers to overcome challenges such as miscommunication, misunderstanding roles, or inaction due to ignorance. The participants experienced that the challenges were outweighed by the advantages presented by co-planning.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The findings of this phenomenological study yielded significant policy and practical implications in relation to co-teachers' sharing instructional responsibility. These recommendations are intended to support co-teachers' overall experience with sharing instructional responsibility. The recommendations involving co-teachers' sharing instructional responsibility are intended for public school teachers, administrators, and public school districts. The subsections below include the implications for policy and implications for practice.

Implications for Policy

This research study has multiple policy implications for public school districts. This study found that co-teachers improved experiences of sharing instructional responsibility through their connections and defined relationships with others but experienced a decrease because of restrictive roles, lack of professional development, and physical limitations. Therefore, school districts need to adopt strategies that provide co-teachers with opportunities to increase their sharing of instructional responsibility through their connections, and defined relationships provide teachers with logos strategies to reduce restrictive roles and physical limitations.

Co-teachers should be encouraged to be co-equals in instructional responsibility, and neither teacher perceives the other as the subordinate or primary teacher in the co-taught classroom (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). School districts should develop performance measures that provide frequent feedback to teachers sharing instructional responsibilities. Such measures can provide co-teachers positive feedback about their performance in the classroom and inform their teacher belief system. Furthermore, supportive feedback from school districts may also increase their sharing of instructional responsibilities.

School districts should also focus on professional development to increase sharing of instructional responsibilities. A case study was conducted in which researchers measured the effectiveness of in-service co-teachers before and after professional development sessions that highlighted co-teaching best practices (Farclas, 2018). Districts should provide professional development opportunities based on co-teachers' needs if they struggle with sharing instructional responsibility. The sociocultural environment affects the co-teachers' self systems and collective agencies or dyads (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978; Guise et al., 2017). Such professional developments may increase their ability to share instructional responsibilities through a triadic

reciprocal perspective perceiving articulate co-teaching outside, or possibly inside through observation, its sociocultural environment.

These professional development opportunities pave the way for creating professional learning communities that are committed connections and defined relationships with others. Previous research regarding in-service teachers and co-teaching denoted that they feel as though they need more professional development regarding co-teaching (Basckin et al., 2021; Farclas, 2018; Takala et al., 2020). School districts should offer professional development opportunities throughout the school year to encourage co-teachers to share academic responsibilities.

This research study found that every teacher experienced a decreased experience of sharing instructional responsibilities because of restrictive roles, lack of professional development, and physical limitations. There is no shortage of reasons for teachers engaged in co-teaching not to share instructional responsibilities (Meadows & Canigula, 2018; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Therefore, school districts need to provide logos strategies, such as co-planning, to increase experiences of sharing instructional responsibility. Districts should ensure that the co-teachers have planning time together so they can prepare for upcoming classes. Strogilos et al. (2016) found that many co-teachers had more co-planning time weekly than they were able. School districts can also provide co-teachers with days out of the classroom to help them find time to co-plan.

Implications for Practice

The research study provided practical implications for teachers and administrators. This study found that co-teachers improved experiences of sharing instructional responsibility through their connections and relationships with others but experienced a decrease because of restrictive roles, lack of professional development, and physical limitations. Co-teachers want to share

instructional responsibility with their co-teaching partner. However, co-teachers with reduced experiences of sharing instructional responsibility may view themselves as ineffective because of their triadic reciprocal perspective perceiving restrictive roles, lack of professional development, and physical limitations predicated on perceptions of their sociocultural environment. The practical implications aim to promote measures to increase sharing of instructional responsibilities in the classroom and reduce the debilitating effects of restrictive roles, lack of professional development, and physical limitations.

The first practical implication is to encourage teachers to utilize their co-planning time. This study found that teachers who co-planned regularly with their co-teaching partners had an increased experience of sharing instructional responsibility. Strogilos et al. (2016) found that co-teachers believed they needed almost two hours a week to adequately co-plan their co-taught classes. Casserly and Padden (2018) found that co-teaching needed to be supported by thorough co-planning. The sociocultural environment affects the co-teachers' self systems and collective agencies or dyads (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978; Guise et al., 2017). Co-teachers have an opportunity to leverage their collective agency before they are placed in the sociocultural environment of the co-taught classroom. Proper co-planning, an example of logos, which the co-teachers valued, helped increase the co-teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibility. co-teachers co-planning regularly and effectively may increase their ability to share instructional responsibilities.

A second practical implication is that co-teachers should build relationships with other teachers. Kokko et al. (2021) suggested that the main benefit of the co-teaching relationship is one's ability to share one's experiences and feelings with their partner. Relationship building may increase sharing of instructional responsibilities through connections. Co-teachers spoke

about their relationships with their co-teachers as a positive experience that gave them confidence in their ability to share instructional responsibility. These relationships provided a dyad where teachers offered their partner words of support and practical pedagogical advice. This reassurance increased their ability to share instructional responsibility.

Another practical implication is that co-teachers should observe another co-teaching team they believe shares instructional responsibility successfully. Such observations may increase their ability to share instructional responsibilities through a triadic reciprocal perspective perceiving articulate co-teaching in its sociocultural environment. Co-teachers' mentioned they had co-teaching relationships with partners that shared instructional responsibilities and partners that did not throughout their co-teaching career. Observing a successful pair sharing instructional responsibility could mitigate the challenge of a pair not sharing responsibility due to a lack of observation in the actual classroom.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This phenomenological study explored co-teachers' lived experience with sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. This section presents the theoretical and empirical implications of the study. Twelve participants described their experience with sharing instructional responsibilities as a fluctuating process informed by their personal beliefs and perceptions of their sociocultural environment. The theoretical and empirical implications are mentioned in the subsections below.

Theoretical

The theoretical framework of this phenomenological research study was the sociocultural theoretical framework, as developed by Vygotsky (1978), and extended in recent co-teaching literature (Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019). Also, Howlett and Nguyen's (2020) teacher belief

theory, developed by Parajes (1992) and adapted for co-teaching research by Kim and Pratt (2020), which is supported by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, was a concurrent theoretical framework of this study. This study focuses on the co-teacher's experience of distributing instructional responsibility, and the researcher examines the phenomenon through Guise et al.'s (2017) lens. This study also extends Kim and Pratt's (2020) version of the teacher belief framework to understand a co-teacher's beliefs regarding sharing instructional responsibility. The findings of this study support previous research on co-teaching collaboration and confirm the application of the sociocultural lens to co-teachers in the co-taught classroom.

The study found that teachers' experiences with sharing instructional responsibility aligned with the teacher belief theory, developed by Parajes (1992) and adapted for co-teaching research by Kim and Pratt (2020). Specifically, teachers' beliefs fluctuated based on social interactions between co-teachers and their internal reasoning. The co-teachers' belief systems were influenced by their interactions with their co-teaching partner and students. Teacher beliefs reflect Bandura's (1978) self system developed through repeated success or exposure to favorable triadic reciprocal stimuli. Raised expectations of sharing instructional responsibilities are developed through repeated success or exposure to favorable triadic reciprocal stimuli.

Teachers experienced a sense of sharing instructional responsibility when co-planning. These findings could be analyzed through the teacher beliefs framework lens, reflecting Bandura's (1978) self system. The development of collective agency, or a dyad, will affect both individuals and their respective self systems and teacher beliefs (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978; Parajes, 1992; Kim & Pratt, 2020). Co-planning increased dyads' experiences of sharing instructional responsibilities. Previous studies (Albahusain, 2022; Kim & Pratt, 2020)

corroborated the importance of co-planning for the development of positive experiences of co-teaching.

Teachers experience a sense of lack of accomplishment when they experience restrictive roles or physical limitations. These findings can be analyzed through the teacher beliefs framework lens, a reflection of Bandura's (1978) self system. The negative development of collective agency, or a dyad, will affect both individuals and their respective self systems and teacher beliefs (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978; Kim & Pratt, 2020; Parajes, 1992). Restrictive roles or physical limitations decrease dyads' experiences of sharing instructional responsibilities. Previous studies (Perlado Lamo de Espinosa et al., 2020; Strogilos et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2020) corroborated the deleterious effects of restrictive roles or physical limitations on the development of positive experiences of co-teaching.

The study validated the application of Guise et al.'s (2017) lens to examine the phenomenon of co-teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibility. Co-teachers experiences revolved around observing other co-teachers and students in the co-taught classroom without consequence. The co-teachers' experiences confirmed Guise et al.'s (2017) understanding of social constructivism, along with Adams's (2006) assertion that knowledge is co-constructed by all parties in the classroom, justifies Vygotsky's (1978) theory as a relevant theory for this study.

If co-teachers observed and perceived the successful sharing of instructional responsibility in their sociocultural environment, a positive feedback loop began, increasing their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. Conversely, if co-teachers observed and perceived unsuccessful sharing of instructional responsibility in their sociocultural environment,

it began a negative feedback loop, decreasing their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities.

Co-teachers experienced an increased encounter of sharing instructional responsibility when they felt they were connected or had a strong relationship with their co-teaching partner. These findings can be analyzed through the sociocultural theoretical framework lens (Guise et al., 2017; Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019). Both parties co-construct the knowledge, affecting their triadic reciprocal stimuli to their self-system (Adams, 2006; Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978). Guise et al. (2017) indicated that co-teachers are placed in the same sociocultural environment for a protracted amount of time and actively construct identities in relation to the setting. Since co-teachers that had solid relationships or felt connected had an increased experience of sharing instructional responsibility, they observed and perceived successful sharing of instructional responsibility in their sociocultural environment; therefore, they had a positive feedback loop, increasing their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. Previous studies (Kokko et al., 2021; Pesonen et al., 2021; Rytivaara et al., 2019) corroborated the importance of connections and relationships for developing positive experiences of co-teaching.

Co-teachers experienced a decreased experience of sharing instructional responsibility when they felt they were physically limited or had restrictive roles with their co-teaching partner. These findings can be analyzed through the sociocultural theoretical framework lens (Guise et al., 2017; Schmulian & Coetzee, 2019). Both parties co-construct the knowledge, affecting their triadic reciprocal stimuli to their self-system (Adams, 2006; Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1978). Guise et al. (2017) indicated that co-teachers are placed in the same sociocultural environment for a protracted amount of time and actively construct identities concerning the setting. Since co-teachers that felt physically limited or had restrictive roles had a decreased experience of sharing

instructional responsibility, they observed and perceived unsuccessful sharing of instructional responsibility in their sociocultural environment; therefore, they had a negative feedback loop, decreasing their experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. Previous studies (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Gavish, 2017; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020) corroborated the deleterious effects of co-teachers being physically limited or having restrictive roles on the development of positive experiences of co-teaching.

Empirical

Most literature concerning co-teachers' attitudes toward co-teaching focuses on their overall attitude toward co-teaching (Bešić et al., 2017; Carty & Farrell, 2018; Kirkpatrick et al., 2020; Rytivaara et al., 2019). However, the body of literature does not focus on co-teaching team members' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility. There exists a gap regarding the experiences of a co-teaching team member sharing content responsibility as they negotiate the educational space with their partner, the nature of the collaborative relationship shared by the teachers, how they interact with their students, and how teachers experience their class's social environment and its influence on their experience. The findings of this study have empirical implications that contribute to the limited amount of literature on co-teachers' experience with sharing instructional responsibility and corroborate the current literature on discussing co-teachers' attitudes towards co-teaching.

This study found that co-teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibilities suffered, or a form of bios, because of a perceived lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers. These findings support the conclusions of recent literature that corroborated the deleterious effects of co-teachers' perceived lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers on the development of positive experiences of co-teaching. (Carty & Farrell, 2018;

Gavish, 2017; King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020). Every teacher in this research study experienced a perceived lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers. Studies on collaboration suggest that many co-teachers experienced decreased collaboration with each other (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016) because of a lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Farclas, 2018). Co-teachers experienced a lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers due to a lack of co-planning time. Literature indicates that many co-teachers reported that they needed more co-planning time weekly than they had available (Strogilos et al., 2016). Participants in this study experienced the feeling that the lack of co-planning time was detrimental to their ability to effectively share instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom.

This study found that co-teachers' experience with sharing instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom aligned with the similar experiences of other studies' co-teachers collaborating in the co-taught classroom. A recent study reported co-teachers experienced decreased belief that collaboration was occurring between each other (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). The co-teachers' lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers led to the decreased belief in collaboration (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Farclas, 2018). This study revealed that some special education co-teachers experienced, bios or, decreased sharing of instructional responsibilities when their general education co-teaching partner would not share responsibility with them. The decreased sharing of responsibility led to co-teachers feeling the need to be respected as a teacher. Furthermore, this study indicated that lack of understood roles led to co-teachers experiencing decreased sharing of instructional responsibility with their partner. These findings support current literature regarding

co-teacher collaboration and the reality some co-teachers face teaching in the co-taught classroom (Gavish, 2017; Stefanidis et al., 2019). Gavish (2017) noted that the lack of clearly defined roles led to the special education teacher being superfluous in the co-taught classroom. The superfluous nature of the special education co-teacher may have led students to not ask them for help (Gavish, 2017). Similarly, participants noted that when students did not believe the co-teachers were sharing instructional responsibility, they did not ask the special education co-teacher for help. The participants perceived that, often, a lack of clearly defined roles caused an experience of not sharing instructional responsibility in the co-taught classroom.

Participants were insistent that both teachers being viewed as equals by the students was vital for sharing instructional responsibility. The theme "The as a Co-Teacher" was developed from the participants multiple indications of the importance that both teachers be seen as co-equal teachers in the classroom. These findings support current literature, which reveals that some students avoid asking the special education teacher for help due to a possible stigma (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Casserly & Padden, 2018; Hackett et al., 2021), and many co-teachers try to overcome the challenge by appearing as equals in front of their students (Carty & Farrell, 2018; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Participants that reported both teachers were viewed as equals shared responses that indicated that most students would ask both teachers for help throughout the co-taught class period. This led to an alleviation of apprehension and a belief by co-teachers that they could meet the needs of the students.

Limitations and Delimitations

All studies contain limitations and delimitations (Peoples, 2021). Limitations are uncontrollable influences that impact a research study, and there are several limitations present in this study. This study was geographically limited because it focused on one school in North

Georgia. Another limitation was that the study had a small sample size of 12 participants, which may not be generalizable to a larger population of teachers in K-12 education. One of the limitations of this study is that the recipients of co-teaching services, SWDs, and students without disabilities in the co-taught classroom were not included in this study. Furthermore, time was a limiting factor. The time period participants had to write their amalgamated letters and answer their open-ended survey may have been affected by their duties as a teacher. Another limitation is the nature of hermeneutical phenomenological research. Hermeneutical phenomenological research is hard to replicate by the nature of the data being sorted by the researcher according to their experience. Giorgi (2010) stated, "if the sense of a personal attitude is advocated rather than an interpersonal or intersubjective one, and if exactly what the original researcher did is not reported --- and often even if it is, it may be so unique as not to be able to be duplicated --- then the performance of a replication will not be possible." Thus, due to the personal nature of hermeneutical phenomenology the research is hard to be replicate.

Delimitations are exclusionary and exclusionary decisions, I controlled, that establish the boundaries of a study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Several necessary delimitations limited the scope and defined the boundaries of my study. This study focused on co-teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. I used purposeful criterion sampling when selecting participants. Participants had to be 18 or older, teach in grades six through twelve, be full-time certified public school teacher in Georgia, and have at least one full year of co-teaching experience. Participants needed to be full-time certified teachers to ensure they met the age criteria. Any person holding a valid teaching certificate in Georgia must be 18 or older. The delimitations were necessary as they were related to my research questions. In order to answer the research questions the participants needed to meet the purposeful criterion standards.

It was necessary for my study to be qualitative to understand the meaning co-teachers' attributed to their experiences of sharing instructional responsibility and how they constructed meaning from their experiences. A quantitative study would not have provided a detailed understanding of their experience and its meaning because it was not easily measured. A phenomenological design was appropriate for the purpose of my study because I focused on how teachers experienced what they experienced in relation to a shared phenomenon. I employed the qualitative research method because investigating and explaining participants' lived experiences cannot be revealed through quantitative research. Multiple qualitative designs were considered for this study. Grounded theory was considered for this study, but the research does not focus on a process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnographic research was considered for this study, but the focus of the study is not the conduct and communications of co-teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus of the study is the phenomenon of co-teaching team members sharing instructional responsibilities. A transcendental approach would not have allowed me to co-construct meaning with participants and recall my presuppositions

Recommendations for Future Research

This hermeneutical phenomenological research study sought to gain a deeper understanding of co-teachers' lived experience of sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. The participants in this study consisted of 12 teachers who taught in-person instruction in one high school from the same public school district in North Georgia. Future research should include more schools, multiple school districts, and a wider geographical area and should incorporate additional teachers from numerous grade levels throughout K-12 education to determine if co-teachers' lived experience of sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom is consistent with the findings of this study. It would be of note if other

studies noted that teachers experienced "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension" or less stress when both co-teachers acted in the classroom.

In order to observe the aforementioned phenomenon, in addition to the interviews, letters to amalgamated co-teachers, and the final electronic questionnaires used to acquire data in this study, future research should include classroom observations, journaling, and focus groups. The observations could be of co-teaching pairs that self-identify as sharing instructional responsibility. Since co-teachers' beliefs are affected by their sociocultural environment, it would be interesting to observe co-teachers teaching in their classroom. It would be noteworthy to research if one can observe alleviation or not as an observer. Such observations, triangulated with journaling, focus groups, or other forms of data collection, may offer insight into co-teachers' experiences of sharing instructional responsibility. Journals of the individual co-teachers, that comprise such a pair, may present further richer experience data. Focus groups may be warranted because all pairs participating would have identified as those that share co-teaching responsibility.

Since all participants in this study experienced various levels of parity which affected their overall experience of sharing instructional responsibilities, more research is needed on co-teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibility in a physical setting to understand the role of a school's sociocultural environment on co-teachers' perceptions of sharing instructional responsibilities. These proposed studies may reveal further the experience of other conflicts between co-teachers not noted in this study. They may also reveal different overall themes and experiences that co-teachers experience when they share instructional responsibility if they are observed in the classroom. Qualitative studies sharing instructional responsibilities, teacher belief systems, and sociocultural environments in various school districts may allow researchers

to focus on teacher perceptions of their educational settings to determine if a pattern of shared experiences emerges among teachers from different school districts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe co-teachers' experiences regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools. The theoretical frameworks of this study were Kim and Pratt's (2020) version of the teacher belief framework and Guise et al.'s (2017) interpretation of social constructivism within the sociocultural framework which were used to answer one central research question and two sub-research questions. Individual teacher interviews, letters to an amalgamated co-teacher, and a final electronic questionnaire were used to answer the research questions. Twelve high school teachers from one school in one district were purposefully selected to participate in this research study. They described their shared experiences with sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom.

The findings of this study produced three themes and six sub-themes during data analysis. Data analysis and synthesis followed the methods outlined by Creely (2018). The primary themes, or essences, were "Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension," "The Need to be Respected as a Teacher," "Meeting the Needs of Students," and "Co-Planning The subthemes were "Connecting with Students," "Relationships: 'They Know You Care,'" "Focusing on What is Important to Teach and How," "Co-teacher Training," "'I Don't Like When They': Conflicts Between Co-Teachers," "Advantages of Co-planning," and "Challenges to Co-planning."

This study found that teachers' experience of sharing instructional responsibility was in a continuous state of fluctuation and was informed by their personal beliefs and sociocultural environment Teachers experienced increased sharing of instructional responsibility through their

experiences with positive experiences of actions within the co-taught classroom, being a co-teacher, and equality between co-teachers. However, many of those same teachers also experienced decreased sharing of instructional responsibility when they perceived a lack of co-taught oriented roles, co-teaching professional development, and equality between co-teachers. Those perceptions decreased the participants' perception of co-teachers' willingness to share instructional responsibility.

Despite the co-teachers experiences of sharing instructional responsibilities, all teachers in this study experienced various levels of parity which affected their overall experience of sharing instructional responsibilities. The findings and implications of this study suggest that public school districts should embrace professional development policies that promote relationships between co-teachers, connections between students and co-teachers, professional development, and equality between co-teachers to increase co-teachers sharing of instructional responsibilities.

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Appendix A

Qualifying Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions and send your answers to ████████████ if you

wish to participate in the study.

     1. How many years of experience do you have using the co-teach model?

     2. Have you shared content teaching responsibilities with your co-teaching partner.

     3. What content area do you teach?

     4. What grade level do you teach?

     5. How many hours a week do you plan with your co-teacher?

     6. Are you a general education or special education teacher?

Appendix B

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 1, 2022

Stuart Brady
Ellen Ziegler

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1241 A Phenomenological Study of the Shared Responsibility
Experiences of Secondary Co-teachers

Dear Stuart Brady, Ellen Ziegler,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance
with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin
your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no
further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which
human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive,
diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public
behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the
human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an
IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of

continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C
Site Approval

█████████COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Stuart Paul Brady Name: _____

CCSD Employee: YES ✔ NO ☐ If NO, list employer: _____

Position or Grade: IRR Teacher _____ School: ███████████

Doctoral Candidate Research Title:
_____

Reason for doing this research:

_____ University/College: _____
on: Dissertation ____ Journal/Conference: N/A

Doctoral   Liberty University Graduate Study/ Level:
Publication/ Presentation:
N/A

_____

Other (please specify):

Include with this request:

A tetter from your supervising professor on college or university letterhead indicating support for your research and his/her confirmation of data collection validity. You may include IRB approvals as applicable.

A brief summary of the issues being researched and the type of data collection you are requesting to conduct.

Method of data collection assessment; Number of respondents, etc.

Participant consent forms must be included if data will be collected on individual students, parents and/or staff.

Copy of interview questions, surveys, etc., that will be used.

If student data is analyzed and/or used, a notarized "Release of Educational Records for Research Purposes Confidentiality Statement" will be required.

Stuart Paul Brady   do hereby submit to not hold thounty ███████ School District liable for any findings, or commentary involved in this research. I understand that without the express written permission of the ounty School Board of Education, I am not authorized to conduct any data collection involving district ███████ employees or students and/or any other

Signature: *Stuart Brady* _____ Date: 7/11/2022

Signature of Principal (if applicable) ███████ _____ Date: 7/11/2022

information that is protected by Federal or State Law. Furthermore, a copy of all finding and data collection instruments will be made available to thCounty Board of Education as requested. All research is to be sent to the Research Services Department upon completion of the project.

Signature:

███████ _____

Department of Research Services

Staff Use Only

☑ Permission given   ☐ Permission denied

SpecialConditions:
Send request to the Supervisor, Research Services, Technology & Information Services

Revised 08/2019

Appendix D
Description of Data Collection Methods for Site Approval

8/1/2022 Proposed Ending date: <u>10/1/22</u> Proposed
Starting date:

Online Via Teams Meetings, Email, Google
Classroom Location for Data Collection:

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe co-teachers' experiences
regarding shared instructional responsibility in North Georgia secondary schools.
This purpose aligns witt— Strategic Plan. This research may help ensure "every student can learn, achieve and thrive." Also,
this research may help create "inclusive schools" and promote "belonging, kindness and possibility possibility."

Hypotheses and research questions: (Statement of the problem. How will this study contribute to this field of research?)

The following central research question will guide this study: How do secondary education

co-teachers describe their experience of sharing instructional responsibility? Sub question one: How do secondary
school co-teachers sharing instructional responsibility describe their sociocultural experiences of co-teaching? Sub question
two:

How do secondary school co-teachers
sharing instructional responsibility
describe the experience of incorporating their own personal beliefs and knowledge into co-
teaching?

The problem is the lack of parity between special education teachers and regular education teachers while addressing the needs of students with
disabilities in the least restrictive enviroment This study adds to the existing literature by investigating the experiences of   experiencing parity in the co-taught classroom.

Describe your study and include a summary of your method of data collection and research design (surveys, interviews, and/or test data)

This study will triangulate corroborative evidence from multiple data sources. I will use three data collection methods to achieve triangulation: interviews, letters to participantS amalgamated co-teacher, and openænded questionnaires. First, I will conduct the Microsoft Teams interviews. They will focus on the co-teaching partner's experiences sharing content teaching responsibilities. Participants will then write the letters to their amalgamated co-teacher. The letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher are meant to elicit further sharing of experiences from co-teachers about content teaching responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. The letter is to a fictitious person. Finally, after both the one-on-one interviews have taken place and letters to participants' amalgamated co-teacher have been received, an open-ended questionnaire will be sent out.
The questionnaire will allow the participants to provide rich descriptions of their individual experiences sharing content teaching responsibilities.

Also, the questionnaires will help validate the findings of the interviews, letters to the participants' amalgamated co-teacher, and the study as a whole I have adopted Creely [1] s four-stage method of interpretation for this research. I will use a form of bracketing, coding, and memoing to identify themes and organize information for the data collected. I will synthesize the essences I have discovered through my three forms of data collection and analysis by employing Creely's fourth stage of hermeneutical phenomenological analysis.

Describe your subjects or population of the study (Administrators, Teachers/Certified Personnel, Classified Personnel, Students) Please include the number of expected respondents and how participants were selected for the project. How much time will be required for individual to participate in the study? What will participants be asked to do? How will consent be obtained?

          12-15 Partipants are needed for this study. The following characteristics make an individual eligible to paritipate in this study

Participants must be 18 or older, a full time certified public-school teacher in Georigia in grades 6-12 and teach face-to-face instruction, they must have co-taught a class within the last two school years. Also, they must have shared instruction with thier co-teacher during that time.. If I can determine the assistant principals that supervise special education departments, I will send secondary school special education administrators and their administrative assistants an email introducing myself, presenting my permissions, and asking them to forward the recruitment email to all potential participants

Participants will be asked to field a Microsoft Teams interview, write a letter to a fictitious co-teacher, and complete an open-ended questionairre. Alt three activities may take a participant up to five hours total, over the course of two weeks to a month

I will send qualifying participants an informed consent form. The consent form will address the voluntary nature of the research, the requirements to participate, and the assurance of confidentiality- I will ask them to sign and return the form via docusign

Revised 08/2019

Appendix E
Recruitment Letter

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of co-teaching team members that share instructional responsibilities in north Georgia secondary schools, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, a secondary, meaning middle or high school, special education, or general education teachers that has or currently shares instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an interview, focus group, and complete an open-ended questionnaire. It should take approximately three hours to complete the procedure[s] listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.]

To participate, please complete the attached survey and return it by email or contact me at ██████ ██████████████████████████ .

A consent document is attached to this email The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to [me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Stuart Brady
Doctoral Candidate
████████████████████████████

Appendix F
Consent Letter

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Secondary Education Co-teaching Teams that Share Content Teaching Responsibilities
Principal Investigator: Stuart Brady, MAT, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a secondary, meaning middle or high school, special education, or general education teachers that has or currently shares instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom will be included in the participant group. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of co-teaching team members that share instructional responsibilities in north Georgia secondary schools. The study intends to analyze the experiences of co-teaching team members that share instructional responsibilities for the essences of their experiences.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. I will ask you to take part in a one-on-one interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. Each interview will last between 30-45 minutes.]
2. The second task is a focus group with at least 5 other teachers. The focus group will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. The focus group will last between 40-60 minutes.
3. An open-ended questionnaire will be sent a week after the interviews and focus groups are conducted. The questionnaire will consist of three open-ended questions. They will have a 48-hour time frame to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires that are emailed back will be kept password protected and confidential.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of how different co-teaching models, including sharing content teaching responsibilities, improve student achievement in American high schools and middle schools for stakeholders, administrators, in-service, and pre-service educators.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews and focus groups will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you apart from focus group data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Stuart Brady. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ellen Ziegler, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Legally Authorized Representative Permission

By signing this document, you are agreeing to the person named below participating in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I agree for the person named below to take part in this study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record the person named below as part of their participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

_____
LAR Signature   Date

Appendix G
Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself? What do you like to do when you have free time?

2. In what ways do you feel that your personal beliefs or attitudes about co-teaching have affected the way you deliver instruction in the co-taught classroom? SQ2

3. How has your personal belief system affected the way you share instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? CRQ

4. If you became a teacher through a teacher preparation program, how did your program prepare you for sharing content teaching responsibility with a co-teacher? SQ1

5. Describe how you and your co-teaching partner plan for classes. SQ2

6. Describe the positive attributes of collaborative planning with your co-teacher? SQ2

7. Describe the challenges of collaborative planning with your co-teacher? SQ2

8. How has your sharing content teaching responsibilities affected your experiences as a co-teacher? CRQ

9. How has your sharing content teaching responsibilities affected your experiences with your co-teaching partner? SQ2

10. How has your sharing content teaching responsibilities affected your experiences with the students in your co-taught classes? SQ1

11. Describe how you and your partner decide who will lead instruction in the class. SQ2

12. In what ways do you feel personally and professionally developed as a co-teacher? SQ1

13. In what areas do you and your co-teaching partner's relationship still need further development to ensure both teachers are viewed as teachers by both the students and your colleagues? SQ1, SQ2

14. Please tell me about a time you felt you shared responsibility with your co-teacher. How did that experience affect your experience of sharing content teaching responsibilities?

CRQ, SQ1

Appendix H
Writing Prompt

Please write a letter, that is at least two hundred and fifty words long, to an amalgamation of your co-teacher. By "amalgamation," I mean combine the best and worst aspects of co-teachers you have co-taught with during your career into an amalgamated co-teacher archetype. Please be sure to include the best interactions you and your partners had with the students when sharing content-teaching responsibilities. Also, please include what needed improvement regarding the sharing of content-teaching responsibility. Please write this letter as though it would help your amalgamated co-teacher understand successful methods and what would work for any perceived challenges in the future. Moreover, as this is an amalgamation, do not address the letter to an actual person. A pseudonym is required for your amalgamation. Please note this letter will not be seen by anyone but the researcher. You will complete your letter on a separate Google Document and submit to the Google classroom assignment entitled "Writing Prompt." You should complete this letter within 14 days of opening this document. Writing this letter may take up to 2 hours.

Appendix I
Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions

1. What do you value most about your co-teaching experiences regarding sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? What experience encapsulates what you value most about sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? CRQ

2. What do you value most about parity and your professional relationship while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom, what would you like to add? What experience encapsulates parity and your professional relationship with your co-teacher while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? SQ1

3. What do you value as most important in relation to your perceptions of parity and instructional experiences while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom, what would you like to add? What experience encapsulates your perceptions of parity and instructional experiences while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? SQ2

4. What do you value as the most important in relation to your interactions with your students and your perceptions of parity while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom, what would you like to add? What experience encapsulates your interactions with your students and your perceptions of parity while sharing instructional responsibilities in the co-taught classroom? SQ2

Appendix J

Themes and Subthemes for all Triangulated Data Sources in Relation to the CRQ, SQ1, and SQ2

Theme	Subthemes
Teachers Sense Alleviated Apprehension (Informs CRQ and SQ1)	Connecting with the Students Relationships: "They Know You Care"
The Need to be Respected as a Teacher (Informs CRQ and SQ1)	Focusing on What is Important to Teach and How Co-teacher Training
Meeting the Needs of Students (Informs CRQ and SQ2)	I Don't Like When They": Conflicts Between Co-Teachers
Co-Planning (Informs CRQ and SQ2)	Advantages Challenges