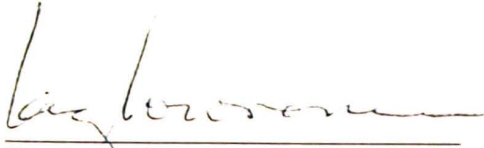


**ATTITUDES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARDS
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

CATHY A. KOLB

To the Graduate Committee:

I am submitting herewith a field study written by Cathy Ashby Kolb entitled "Attitudes Of College Students Towards Persons With Disabilities." I have examined the final copy of this field study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.



Dr. Larry Lowrance
Major Professor

We have read this field study
and recommend its acceptance:


Dr. Moniqueka Gold, Committee Member
Dr. Penelope Masden, Committee, Member

Accepted for the Council:



Parris Watts, H.S.D.

Dean

College of Graduate Studies

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I reflect on the past forty-three years, it is quite amazing to me to believe that a farm girl growing up in rural Kentucky would be completing the requirements for an Education Specialist degree. But then, it is not so difficult to believe. To accomplish these goals in life, one must have had motivation, a thirst for knowledge, and a need to share this knowledge with others.

In my home, there was never any doubt as to the importance of education. My mother and father continuously encouraged me and expected no less than the best because they knew the ability was there. Their love of God, sense of honor and duty, and the desire to teach my sister and me a strong sense of morals and values helped build and mold a character which saw me through so many times of uncertainty and self-doubt.

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I thank all of the aforementioned who have touched my life along the way. There are many others, but the need for brevity demands that I must move on. They will be kept close to my heart until we meet again.

Abstract

This investigative study explored the possible attitudinal changes of college students towards persons with disabilities after participating in a course about disabilities. The Attitudes Towards Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP-O) was administered to these college students, both in a disabilities course and in another unrelated course. Using the .025 and .05 variance, it was determined that there was no significant overall difference between the two classes' attitudes. It is to be noted that there are many variables affecting one's attitudes, which must be considered and controlled for to obtain an accurate measure of this particular kind of research.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Nature and Purpose of the Study

Although our present day society boasts of its progressive ideas of acceptance of cultures and diversities, there still appears to exist the bias toward people with disabilities. Society's perceptions of any group of persons may inhibit their potential to become successful and productive members of our world. Persons with disabilities is one of these groups.

With the advancement of medical technology, more fragile infants are surviving, who in turn, bring with them various levels of cognitive and physical disabilities. More children with disabilities are entering our schools. Who will be responsible—the general educator or the special educator? In order to provide quality education for these persons, attitudes toward persons with disabilities must improve. There must be a meeting of the minds of these two groups. (Cronis & Ellis, 2000).

One of the first attempts at providing an avenue of acceptance for persons with disabilities was the advent of the "normalization principle" in the early 1960s. The intent of this principle was to "make available to all persons with disabilities or other handicaps, patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to or indeed the same as the regular circumstances and ways of life of society" (Smith, 1998).

Although the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) and the most recent legislation, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) were designed to provide students with disabilities access to public education, these laws created in many instances, a more restrictive environment which did not prepare them for the less restrictive environment of society. Public education practices appear to be at fault. Public Law 94-142 requires "best practices" in special education. No one seems to be able to adequately define these best practices; therefore, failures and negative attitudes ensue for our special needs students. Attitudes are formed or changed each time a child leaves the regular classroom to go to the special learning lab or the self-contained comprehensive development classroom (CDC). Where little is expected of these persons, "little" becomes comfortable for them (Stainback & Stainback, 1996).

These persons have great difficulty finding their "niche" in society. Equity in education is advocated for minorities, women and the poor. Yet, society's attitudes toward persons with disabilities do not seem to fit in any of these categories. The mindset appears to be "keep them separate" (Stainback & Stainback, 1996 ; McCollum, 2000). These attitudes have created significant barriers. The rate of unemployment for persons with disabilities is the highest among any population subgroup. There are more high school dropouts and more youths with disabilities arrested than any other groups. These persons appear to also have more low status jobs. Even the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 has not been able to lessen these statistics to

a satisfactory degree. Although this civil rights law generates persons with disabilities their rights, there is still much frustration about the actual enforcement of the law (Smith, 1998).

A more expedient avenue to improve these persons' quality of life is to begin at the college level in restructuring teacher education programs. Some universities require only one special education course of its teacher education candidates (APSU Course Catalog, 2000). Teacher education programs cannot continue to segregate their programs from special education programs. The two departments must conceptually merge and find common ground on which to educate our future teachers. When these roles of "specialist" and "generalist" are blended to reflect similar certification and training, then the quality of life for persons with disabilities will improve, as well as the quality of the classrooms, providing all members the means of becoming productive members of a diverse society (McCollum, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Generally, college students without disabilities tend to view persons with disabilities in a negative perspective according to Fichten, Bourden, Amsel & Fox (1987). In order for persons with disabilities to experience success in society, they must be viewed in a positive manner. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not prospective teachers' attitudes change after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude changes in any other college course.

Importance of the Problem

Increasing prospective teachers' knowledge of special needs students is essential to improving their teaching/instructional techniques in the classroom. Findings of this study will encourage prospective teachers to recognize the importance of special needs instructional course to enhance success of these students in the classroom.

Relationship of the Study to the Problem

The importance of this study was to determine the need to educate society's future teachers/leaders concerning special needs students. Knowledge and understanding typically lend themselves to improvement of relationships among people. Participants of this study were surveyed at the beginning and end of the course to reveal any change in attitudes toward special needs students and attitude change in another unrelated college course. The Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons: Form O (ATDP) was used to survey these attitudes.

Research Questions

- 1) Do prospective teachers' attitudes indeed change? If so, to what degree?
- 2) Does the age of the participants influence the attitude change? If so, to what degree?
- 3) Does the level of experience with disabled people affect attitude change? If so, to what degree?

Statement of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested was there will be a positive change in prospective teachers' attitudes after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude changes in any other college course.

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was there will be no statistical differences in prospective teachers' attitudes after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude changes in any other college course.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study to ensure understanding of the problem to be studied.

Specialist: Teachers who individualize and design education programs for special needs children or persons.

Generalist: An instructor in the regular education classroom.

Attitude: A feeling or emotion toward a fact or state.

Negative attitudes: Attitudes against students with disabilities.

Positive attitudes: Attitudes supporting students with disabilities.

Special Needs Students: Any student requiring specialized teaching/training in order to be successful in school. This specialized training may be for a short period of time or life.

Persons With Disabilities: This term may be used interchangeably with special needs or special education students.

Handicap: A handicap is any condition that limits the quality of and achievement of a person's goals in life.

Disability: This term is used in more recent research studies to replace the term "handicap".

Stigma: This term is used in more recent research studies to replace the term "handicap".

Limitations of the Study

There were several aspects of this study which were unique. Of the participating professors, one was female and one was male. The female professor instructed the special education courses and the one male professor instructed the computer courses. These courses were offered at different times of the day with the special education course offerings in the mornings and computer course offerings in the afternoon. To date, all participating professors were fairly new to this university having less than two years experience collectively. This study was limited to a specific geographical area (mid-south) with a small student population. The type of instructional techniques may have been a contributing factor to limitations as the special education professors used videotapes for instruction (videotapes depicting varying degrees of persons with disabilities) while the education professor used computer technology. A possible threat to the internal validity of this study was the nature of the design procedure.

Administering a pretest may have had an effect on the posttest (testing; pretest sensitization).

In summary, replication of this study addressed the factors (variables) gender, time, geographical area, type of instruction and years of experience at the university level.

Preview

To reach the goal of this study, it was proposed a study of pre/post attitudes of college students participating in a special needs course and pre/post attitudes of college students participating in an unrelated course be conducted. When the findings were compiled, recommendations were made as to how these special needs courses might be improved to reflect positive attitude changes toward special needs students and persons with disabilities.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While tolerance, diversity, and acceptance are much touted in present day society, there appears to have been few studies done showing improvements in attitude changes (positively) toward persons with disabilities (Donaldson, 1980; Li & Moore, 1998).

There seem to be some prevalent common factors in lessening negative or stereotypic attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Equal status, contact with these persons in a structured setting, role playing and allowance of staring (sanctioned) appear to be effective techniques in changing attitudes from negative to positive (to some degree). Planned experiences with the disabled persons executing the presentations appear to have some value in modifying attitudes (Beattie, Anderson, & Antonak, 1997; Donaldson, 1988; Fichten, Bourden, Amsel, & Fox, 1987; Makas, 1988).

Course instructors who are concerned in communicating positive attitudes about persons who are disabled tend to include group discussions which are carefully guarded, structured and intent on the presentation of facts rather than emotions and opinions (Donaldson, 1988; Stoval & Sedlacek, 1983). In order for nondisabled persons to exhibit positive attitudes toward disabled persons, a chain of communication must be established. Makas (1988) cites misunderstandings, best intentions and patronizing as factors causing tension. Three sample groups were recruited to respond to an *Issues in Disability Scale*

(IDS). This Likert-type measurement tool assessed attitudes toward disabled persons in various social and professional settings. The disabled persons group responded to the scale to reflect the most positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities. The remaining two nondisabled groups responded honestly and then answered in the manner they felt disabled persons would want them to answer. The results seemed to indicate the vast perception differences between disabled and nondisabled persons. Disabled persons resent "good intentions" and special treatment. These results indicate to disabled persons they must become an integral part of educating the nondisabled in providing positive attitudes.

Not only must society come to terms in the acceptance issue of persons with disabilities, but also persons with disabilities themselves must recognize their disabilities, as well as, accept them. There are many variables affecting the acceptance of a person with disabilities. Li & Moore (1998) examined the acceptance of disabilities and its correlates. Three demographic variables were found to have a significant correlation with the acceptance of disability—age, marital status and income. Those participants of the studies who were younger and those who were married had better adjustments to disabilities. It was interesting to note, Caucasians were less likely to accept disabilities as compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

Today's media tends to dramatize or sensationalize persons with disabilities in social settings. This further creates a "stigma" regarding disabled persons. Schneider & Anderson (1980) further state an apparent hierarchical structure in place for the ranking of attitudes towards disability groups. Physically

disabled persons were most accepted, with sensory handicaps second and brain injured persons third. The mentally retarded and the mentally ill were the least accepted in a combined group of ex-convicts and alcoholics.

This "stigma" of fear of rejection and situations of the unknown lends support to the studies of Donaldson (1980) that persons with disabilities must achieve equal status with nondisabled persons in order for positive attitudes to be exhibited. Also, disabilities which seem to be difficult to explain are the ones of which society has the most negative attitudes toward.

In further research, Schneider and Anderson (1980) discovered several factors affecting attitudes. These factors include:

- a weak industrialized culture
- evident prejudices towards ethnic and racial groups
- the person making judgments
- gender of the persons with males reacting more negatively
- amount of contact with the disability (more contact, more positive attitude)
- strong personalities reflect negative attitudes toward disabled
- occupational groups rank physical disabilities more negatively
(These occupations place more emphasis on physique with airline stewardesses(flight attendants) placing the highest emphasis to typists placing the least emphasis.)

While the above factors appear consistently in the research, one must always consider the amount of information available to society at the time. Informed persons tend to change their attitudes about particular subjects as they become more knowledgeable on that subject. Society seems to fear what it does not understand.

This premise, however, does not appear to hold true in Wilson and McCrary's study (1996) of music educators' attitudes toward students with disabilities. Graduate music education students were given a 7-week course in how to teach music to special needs students. In the pretest assessment, the participants exhibited high scores in their comfort and willingness to work with special students, but did not feel they had adequate skills in doing so. The posttest scores revealed lower scores in comfort and willingness, but increased levels of capabilities. A possible reason for the lowered willingness and comfort scores may well be due to the fact of the time and effort that may be required in working with students with disabilities.

The hierarchical ranking of specific disabilities reported in Schneider and Anderson's study (1980) lends credence to this study as well, citing those students with multiple and/or emotional disabilities as groups these educators would be less inclined to accept into their classrooms. It should be noted that this study was conducted with a very small sample ($n=18$ music educators) and that further studies with larger samples should be conducted for corroboration of the findings.

For students with disabilities to be accepted in any social situation, the teachers are the key players. They must exemplify acceptance in their instruction and inclusion of disabled students in their classroom.

In using an acceptance rating scale and an intervention program with kindergartners, it was found that children's' acceptance of individuals with disabilities increased when they were exposed to a part of an intervention program and children experiencing the entire intervention program exhibited even greater gains positively (Favazza, Phillipsen & Kumar, 2000).

Positive teacher attitudes are crucial in addressing the mandates of Public Law 94-142 (P.L. 94-142). Historically, research has indicated that negative attitudes are commonplace among regular educators in regards to the disabled. Daily and Halpin (1981) show a significant change in attitudes toward the disabled in their study of fifty-two special education and non-special education majors. Pre and posttest attitudes were measured with the ATDP. Instructional techniques included the use of videotapes depicting handicapped children. Interestingly enough, the use of the videotapes was more effective with the non-special education majors, whereas, the presentation of material (lecture) increased positive attitude changes with the special education majors. The implications for developing and improving teacher-training programs suggest the use of videotapes of handicapped children to be included as an instructional technique for positively modifying attitudes toward disabled persons (1981).

In an updated version of Daily and Halpin's 1981 study, Beattie, Anderson, and Antovak (1997) surveyed college students from an introductory special

education course to determine if viewing videotapes of persons with disabilities depicting them in a positive light would improve attitudes toward these persons. Further assessments were measured towards professors having a visible physical disability while instructing these introductory courses. Results seemed to indicate that the combination of viewing videotapes along with a professor who has a disability supported more favorable attitudes towards persons with disabilities by prospective teachers. Unfortunately, there was insufficient evidence to support the willingness of these future teachers to be accepting of those students with disabilities if they were placed in their classrooms.

Fichten, Bourden, Amsel, and Fox (1987) determined that lack of knowledge, anxiety and current social behavior tended to present difficulties for disabled persons entering college and participating in social situations. Several measurement scales were administered in these two studies involving 330 volunteers. The Social Situations Questionnaire (SSQ), the College Interaction Self-Efficacy Scale (CISES) and Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) Form O were the surveys administered. The results seemed to indicate that nondisabled students have much more self-efficacy expectations of disabled persons. It was further noted that college personnel and professors should encourage interaction in social situations and have positive expectations for those students.

Summary

As one of every seven people in the United States copes with a disabling condition affecting life activities, the nation must address the issues of awareness

of personal and societal adjustments to disabilities. People with disabilities must achieve acceptance and be integrated into society to become productive members (Li & Moore, 1998).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 (EHA), the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1997 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990), have all served to significantly better the educational opportunities of persons with disabilities. These legislative acts have broken down the barriers of physical access, employment and education, but there remains much to be done. The most difficult tasks lay ahead—the task of dissolving the barriers of perception and acceptance of persons with disabilities in the society of the future.

Higher institutions of learning cannot continue to segregate teacher education programs from special education programs. The two philosophies must conceptually merge; find common ground on which to educate our future teachers. When the goal of public school education demands meeting the individual needs of all persons, then there will be no need for studies on attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

As indicated in the review of the literature, there is evidence to support the study of attitude change toward persons with disabilities. Many factors appear to be instrumental in changing the attitudes of nondisabled persons. Positive attitude changes using the Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale were evident in the introductory special education college course.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

There were approximately 60 participants in this study. The 60 participants yielded a sample size of approximately 54 subjects. Volunteers from two education classes, Special Education 3000 and Education 3040, offered at a university engaged in this study. This was a small southern university represented by various ethnic backgrounds to include Hispanic, African American, Caucasian, and Asian. A range of ages were considered from the typical college age student (age 18-21) to the current trend of the non-traditional student (s) pursuing a second career after previous retirement from a first career. All participants of this study were informed of the nature of this research and of the safeguards of anonymity addressed in the Informed Consent Document.

Materials

The Attitudes Towards Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP), developed by Yuker and Block in 1960 and revised in 1986, was administered using Form O, as it is the shortest version of the measurement instrument. A pre and post assessment survey of this scale was offered to volunteers from these classes at the beginning of the Spring 2001 semester (January) as well as at the end of this Spring 2001 semester in May.

A short demographic questionnaire was given to gather information concerning age, gender, race, level of education, and prior experience with persons or children who have disabilities and any teaching experience(s) in a

school system. The nature of the two courses and knowledge (or lack thereof) gained concerning persons with disabilities acted as the treatment per se in determining attitude changes.

Subjects voluntarily completed the Informed Consent and the demographic questionnaire, after which the ATDP was administered. Instructors (professors) of these classes were requested to not be present during the pre and post assessments. Professors of these classes were contacted to obtain permission for their classes to participate in this study. To eliminate bias or attitude change, the preassessment scales were given before the course syllabus/requirements were given to students enrolled in these classes.

Description of Instrument

The Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (Shaw & Wright, 1967; Yunker, Block, & Campbell, 1960; 1986) strives to measure attitudes toward disabled persons. The intent of the statements in this scale is to determine whether disabled persons are regarded as having equal status in society along with nondisabled persons. An item analysis was conducted for item selection. Participants responded to a six-point Likert scale to include: (+3) I agree very much, (+2) I agree pretty much, (+1) I agree a little for indications of positive attitudes and (-3) I disagree very much, (-2) I disagree pretty much, (-1) I disagree a little for indications of negative attitudes. High scores on this measurement scale indicate favorable attitudes toward persons with disabilities. Low scores indicate negative attitudes.

Reliability for the ATDP was conducted with a split-half reliabilities range of .78 to .84. This scale appears to exhibit acceptable content validity as well as significant correlations with other attitude scales. As this scale has been recently revised (1985), it is noteworthy to include the current reliability and validity scores for further support.

The ATDP Form O has very similar reliability and validity scores with a test-retest reliability of .83 and a split-half reliability of .80. It has an alpha reliability of .76 (Yuker & Block, 1985).

Statistical Procedures

As participants completed the pre/post assessment, responses were hand scored and averaged. This quantitative data was used to compare the two groups of students and their attitudes. Analysis of these scores included averages, variances, standard deviations, ranges, maximum and minimum scores and a t-test to determine statistical differences of the groups. This data was presented in tabular form (tables, bar graphs).

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The data of the field study were analyzed using an F test to be certain the assumption of variance was met and no violations of test ethics were committed. In each hypothesis, the .025, .05 level of significance was used to determine significant differences. The Attitudes Towards Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) developed by Yuker and Block in 1960 and revised in 1986 was administered using Form O, as it is the shortest version of the measurement instrument. The pre and post assessment survey of this scale was administered to volunteers from the Special Education 3000 and Education 3040 Spring 2001 semester at the aforementioned university. The presurvey was administered in January, while the post survey was administered in May. A t test was used to determine the significance of change, if any, in attitudes concerning the four hypotheses.

Hypothesis One: There will be no attitude change in prospective teachers after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude changes in any other college course.

The critical t at the .05 level of significance was 1.684. The calculated t was 0.238, 0.232, 0.325, 0.271, and 0.360 to reflect upon age, level of education, acquaintance with a disabled person, a relative with a disability, and previous college courses concerning persons with disabilities respectively. As all calculated t values were less than the critical t, the null hypothesis fails to be

rejected. The difference of the means was close enough to each other that one could say they were the same. There was no significant change in attitude from one group to the other (see table 1).

Table 1
Overall Attitude Change

Factors	Critical t-value	Calculated t-value
age	1.684	0.238
level of education		0.232
acquaintance		0.325
relative		0.271
previous college course		0.36

Hypothesis Two: There will be no difference in attitude change of prospective teachers after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude changes in any other college course due to the influence of the age of the participants.

As there were three age groups analyzed in this particular hypothesis, an ANOVA test was utilized. The critical F value at the .05 level of significance was

3.23. The calculated value was 4.677. Although, overall there was no significant difference due to age, there were certain statements of the survey where greater differences were found in age group four as opposed to age groups two and three. (These differences will be discussed in the summary/conclusions.) The null hypothesis fails to be rejected for Hypothesis Two (see table 2).

Table 2
Attitude Changes - Age Factor

Sample Group Age	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
2	16	-0.25	0.856	fcv = 3.23	4.677
3	20	-0.5	1.147		
4	4	1.5	2.38		

Hypothesis Three: There will be no difference in the attitude of change of prospective teachers after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to used in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude changes in any other college course in regards to the level of experience with disabled persons (education level and prior knowledge).

The critical F value was 3.18. The calculated value was 0.732. The null hypothesis fails to be rejected because the calculated F value was less then the critical F value. However, certain statements on the survey did reveal differences as will be discussed in a later section (see table 3).

Table 3
Level of Experience - Education Factor

Sample Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
1	0	0	0	fcv = 3.18	0.732
2	6	-0.5	2.51		
3	21	0.571	1.567		
4	22	0.227	2.091		

Table 3b
Level of Experience - Prior Knowledge Factor

Sample Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
No	10	1.1	1.853	fcv = 4.03	2.308
Yes	39	0.077	1.911		

Hypothesis Four: There will be no attitude change in prospective teachers after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude change in any other college course with an influence of previous classes concerning persons with disabilities.

The critical F value was 4.03. The calculated F value was 0.401. As there was no significant change in attitude concerning the influence of previous classes, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected at the .05 level of significance (see table 4).

Table 4
Attitude Change - Previous Classes Factor

Sample Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical F- Value	Calculated F- Value
No	31	0.419	1.803	fcv = 4.03	0.401
Yes	18	0.055	2.155		

Hypothesis Four(b): There will be no attitude change in prospective teachers after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude change in any other college course concerning those participants who had relatives with a disability.

The critical F value was 4.03. The calculated F value was 2.64. The null hypothesis fails to be rejected, as the F values were less than the critical value. There was no significant difference concerning attitude changes having relatives with a disability (see table 4b). As was stated earlier, there was a significant difference in particular statements of the survey. This will be elaborated on in the summary/conclusions.

Table 4b
Attitude Change - Relative Factor

Sample Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical F- Value	Calculated F- Value
No	22	0.773	1.875	fcv = 4.03	2.64
Yes	27	-0.111	1.908		

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not prospective teachers' attitudes change after participating in a college course providing information about and techniques to use in educating special needs students as opposed to attitude change in any other college course. A pre and post study was administered to determine if age, level of experience, education, acquaintances with disabled persons or having relatives with disabilities influenced these participants' attitudes. Although the focus of this study found no overall significant differences in the tested hypotheses, there were six questions from the survey, which did reveal significant differences when certain comparisons were made.

When examining hypothesis two (that there would be no differences in attitude change after participating in an introductory college course in special education compared to attitude changes that might result after participating in any other college course), on statement five (Disabled people are the same as anyone else.), a significant result was found when comparing group two (students aged 18-21) and group three (students aged 22-32) with group four (students aged 33-42). In age group four, the subjects moved in a statistically significant way from disagreeing with this statement to agreeing with this statement. It appears that these older students seemed to develop more insight

into how alike students with disabilities are in comparison with their nondisabled peers (see table 5).

Table 5
Hypothesis Two - Statement Five

Age Group	n	Mean Difference	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
2	16	-0.25	3.23	4.677
3	20	-0.5		
4	4	1.5		

When looking again at hypothesis two, for statement fifteen (Disabled people tend to keep to themselves much of the time.), a significant result was found. Group two (students aged 18-21) did show a significant change in attitude from first believing on the pretest that persons with disabilities tended to stay to themselves, but after being in the special education class, they thought they did not. For the older two groups, they first believed that disabled persons did not tend to stay to themselves, but showed a significant change in attitude in that they agreed they tended to stay to themselves as indicated in the post survey (see table 6).

Table 6
Hypothesis Two - Statement Fifteen

Age Group	n	Mean Difference	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
2	16	-0.687	3.23	3.81
3	20	0.45		
4	4	0.75		

When taking a closer view of hypothesis three (that there will be no difference in attitude change among subjects coded for level of experience-education) when they responded to statement two (Physically disabled persons are just as intelligent as nondisabled ones.), group two (the college sophomores) showed a statistically significant change in their responses from pre to post survey, first agreeing with this statement, then after taking the special education course, disagreeing with it. The other two groups (group three-juniors, group four-seniors) did not show a significant change in responding. This means that the less experience the college student had educationally, the more negatively the special education course influenced them. They seemed to think after this course that physically disabled persons were not as intelligent. This is cause for concern for those who might teach the course (see table 7).

Table 7
Hypothesis Three – Statement Two

Education Experience Group	n	Mean Difference	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
2	6	-1.833	3.18	3.63
3	21	-0.762		
4	22	-0.136		

When reviewing data from hypothesis three (that there will be no differences in attitude change among subjects coded for any direct experiences with persons with disabilities) on statement four (Most disabled people feel sorry for themselves.), group one (subjects with no experience with persons with disabilities) showed a significant change and after being in the special education class, no longer felt as strongly about persons with disabilities feeling sorry for themselves. Those with some experiences already (group two) did not have their views changed by this class (see table 8).

Table 8
Hypothesis Three – Statement Four

Personal Experience Group	n	Mean Difference	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
No	10	-0.8	4.03	5.47
Yes	39	0.31		

Inspection of data regarding hypothesis three (that there will be no differences in attitude change among subjects coded for any direct experiences with persons with disabilities) statement eleven (Disabled people are as happy as nondisabled people.), group one, the no experience group, changed from agreeing that persons with disabilities were as happy as nondisabled ones to disagreeing with this statement. The group with experience showed no change at all when taking this special education introductory course. The more this group learned about persons with disabilities, it seems the more they realized how aware of their circumstances persons with disabilities might be and how dissatisfied they may become (see table 9).

Table 9
Hypothesis Three - Statement Eleven

Personal Experience Group	n	Mean Difference	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
No	10	-1.3	4.03	4.187
Yes	39	-0.025		

Lastly, on hypothesis three (that there will be no difference in attitude change among subjects coded for any direct experience with persons with disabilities) statement twenty (Disabled people are often grouchy.), group one with no prior experience changed from agreeing that persons with disabilities were grouchy to disagreeing with this statement and group two, those with prior experience changed from disagreeing with this statement to agreeing with it. The researcher is perplexed by those changes with the assumptions of this study, that other random factors should occur equally with both groups, why the experienced group began (as a group) to feel that these persons felt more grouchy is simply an unexplained anomaly. One might see that persons with no experience could improve their attitude, but that this special education class could have such an inverse effect with these two groups is unexplainable at this time (see table 10).

Table 10
Hypothesis Three - Statement Twenty

Personal Experience Group	n	Mean Difference	Critical F-Value	Calculated F-Value
No	10	0.6	4.03	7.055
Yes	39	-0.67		

Conclusions

Overall means from the entire pre and post survey in the special education and the control group course showed no significant differences between the two classes. This was a twenty-statement survey and when all scores were taken into consideration, there were no differences found in attitude improvement by those taking the special education course. The instrument ATDP-O was not useful when total means were used in seeing the effect of attitude changes that might have taken place, on any of the four hypotheses. However, on an item-by-item analysis of these twenty statements across the subjects in both classes, seven significant changes in attitudes were noted. While it is important to remember that statistical analysis used showed significant results, these are not causal. It cannot be assumed that this special education class caused these changes, but they clearly happened when this was the only variable looked at that was different between the two groups.

Older students (above age 32) seemed to gain more insight into how alike students with disabilities are. Younger students (18-21) started out thinking that

disabled persons kept to themselves, but came to think they did not. Students less experienced in college (sophomores) seemed to grow to think that persons with physical disabilities were not as intelligent as others. Subjects with no experience with disabilities began to feel that disabled people felt less sorry for themselves than they did when the class began. Nonexperienced subjects came to see persons with disabilities as more unhappy than they previously viewed them. Oddly it was found that subjects with no experience began to see persons with disabilities as less grouchy and subjects with experience gravitated to see persons with disabilities as more grouchy after taking this special education class.

It lastly was of interest to note that the inexperienced subjects began to see after their special education class that disabled persons were less grouchy and more unhappy than they saw them in the beginning. This leads one to speculate what variables could have caused this inconsistency in these two responses of the same group. It also is perplexing to note the inverse relationship between experienced and nonexperienced subjects as they saw grouchiness in disabled persons.

Recommendations

As attitudes tend to change continuously and are at times refined to fit the philosophy of individuals, it would seem necessary to assess the courses offered to prospective teachers. Is one special education course over one semester of time enough to change an attitude that has taken twenty years to develop in one

semester? Perhaps this might explain why several of the differences found in some of the survey statements continued to be found in hypothesis three (prior knowledge). More study should be addressed to these variables and possibly if these incongruent findings hold up in future studies, changes should be made in the teaching of the introductory special education course, taking this into account.

To determine if these attitudes remain constant, a longitudinal study might be conducted to follow these future teachers through the first three to five years of their teaching career. It is in the classroom where the true experience will begin and the attitudes will form or change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed Consent Document

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

You are being asked to participate in the following research study. As you read this document, the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of your participation in this study will be explained. This form is intended to provide you with information about the study. You may ask the researchers listed below about this study or you may call the Office of Grants and Sponsored Research, Box 4517, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN 37044, (931) 221-7881, with questions about the rights of research participants.

1. TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY

ATTITUDES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARD PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Cathy A. Kolb (graduate student, Education Department)
Dr. Larry Lowrance (faculty supervisor)

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes toward people with disabilities.

In addition, this study is also being conducted for the degree completion of the investigator's Ed.S program. This data may be published or presented in summary form.

4. PROCEDURES FOR THIS RESEARCH

You will be asked to complete two questionnaires: an "Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale" and a demographic information sheet. The scale will reveal information concerning your attitudes towards persons with disabilities. The demographic sheet will generate information in regards to age, gender, etc. Upon completing these questionnaires, please return them to the packets and then, finally to the investigator. These questionnaires should be completed in approximately 15-20 minutes. A follow-up questionnaire will be administered in May 2001. Data gathered from this research

will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and when published, will not reveal the identity of any participant.

5. POTENTIAL RISKS OR BENEFITS TO YOU

Your responses to each statement on these surveys will be kept confidential. No deception or physical harm is intended in this research. Minimal risk of a psychological nature may be incurred from some of the information on this survey. You may, at any time during these assessments, withdraw from participating. All data concerning your responses will be destroyed. By participating in this study, you may be providing helpful insights into society's attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

6. INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

- I have read the above and understand what the study is about, why it is being done, and any benefits or risks involved.
- I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights.
- I agree to participate in this study and understand that by agreeing to participate I have not given up any of my human rights.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time during the study and all data collected from me will be destroyed.
- If I choose to withdraw, that choice will be respected and I will not be penalized or coerced to continue.
- I understand that I will receive a copy of this form.

If I have questions about this study I may call Cathy Kolb (graduate student) at 931) 358-3702 or Dr. Larry Lowrance (faculty supervisor, Education Department) at 931) 221-6153.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

please respond to the following:

Gender: male _____ female _____

Age: Below 18 yrs. _____ 18-21 yrs. _____ 22-32 yrs. _____

33-42 yrs. _____ 43-52 yrs. _____ 53 yrs. + _____

Ethnicity: African American _____ Caucasian _____
 Asian _____ Hispanic _____ Other _____

Level of Education:

Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____

Senior _____ Graduate _____ Other _____

Major: _____

Are you acquainted with anyone who has a disability?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have any relatives who have a disability?

Yes _____ No _____

Have you had any college courses concerning persons with disabilities?

Yes _____ No _____

Appendix B

Attitudes Towards Disabled Persons Scale: Form-O (ATDP)

ATDP-O

Mark each statement in the left margin according to how much you agree or disagree with it. Please mark every one. Write +1, +2, +3; or -1, -2, -3; depending on how you feel in each case

+3	I AGREE VERY MUCH	-1	I DISAGREE A LITTLE
+2	I AGREE PRETTY MUCH	-2	I DISAGREE PRETTY
+1	I AGREE A LITTLE	-3	I DISAGREE VERY

-
- ___1 Parents of disabled children should be less strict than other parents
 - ___2 Physically disabled persons are just as intelligent as nondisabled ones
 - ___3 Disabled people are usually easier to get along with than other people
 - ___4 Most disabled people feel sorry for themselves
 - ___5 Disabled people are the same as anyone else
 - ___6 There should not be special schools for disabled persons
 - ___7 It would be best for disabled persons to live and work in special communities
 - ___8 It is up to the government to take care of disabled persons
 - ___9 Most disabled people worry a great deal
 - ___10 Disabled people should not be expected to meet the same standards as nondisabled people
 - ___11 Disabled people are as happy as nondisabled ones
 - ___12 Severely disabled people are no harder to get along with than those with minor disabilities
 - ___13 It is almost impossible for a disabled person to lead a normal life
 - ___14 You should not expect too much from disabled people

- ___ 15. Disabled people tend to keep to themselves much of the time.
- ___ 16. Disabled people are more easily upset than nondisabled people.
- ___ 17. Disabled persons cannot have a normal social life.
- ___ 18. Most disabled people feel that they are not as good as other people.
- ___ 19. You have to be careful of what you say when you are with disabled people.
- ___ 20. Disabled people are often grouchy.

Appendix C

Demographic Information Document

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please respond to the following:

Gender: male _____ female _____

Age: Below 18 yrs. _____ 18-21 yrs. _____ 22-32 yrs. _____

 33-42 yrs. _____ 43-52 yrs. _____ 53 yrs.+ _____

Ethnicity: African American _____ Caucasian _____

 Asian _____ Hispanic _____ Other _____

Level of Education:

 Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____

 Senior _____ Graduate _____ Other _____

Major: _____

Are you acquainted with anyone who has a disability?

 Yes _____ No _____

Do you have any relatives who have a disability?

 Yes _____ No _____

Have you had any college courses concerning persons with disabilities?

 Yes _____ No _____

VITA

Cathy Jo Ashby Kolb was born in Russellville, Kentucky on December 14, 1957. She graduated with honors from Chandlers Chapel High School in 1975. She attended Western Kentucky University from 1975-1979. She obtained a Master of Arts degree from Austin Peay State University. She is currently finishing an Education Specialist degree in Administration and Supervision from Austin Peay State University and is expected to complete these requirements December of 2001.