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The purpose of this study was to examine the content validity of the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC). An expert panel of 20 special education teachers and five university faculty members provided individual item ratings on a five-point scale regarding wording and content, along with comments. Item and comment analysis indicated that the wording and content of several items were not aligned with current practice or IDEIA. Suggestions for revision of the instrument are offered.

Inclusive education has been at the forefront of special education for nearly 30 years yet continues to be a topic of controversy. A call has taken place over the past few years to move the special education service delivery model towards eliminating segregated classrooms in favor of inclusive classrooms (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008; Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, & Thomson, 2014; Nishimura & Busse, in press; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010). With this shift however, teachers may feel unprepared and resistant to take on new roles and responsibilities in addition to their current responsibilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Nishimura, 2012; Valle & Connor, 2011).

The literature is clear; general and special education teachers are key players in the implementation of inclusive education and their attitudes play a considerable role in educational reform. Furthermore, teacher attitudes are critical to creating inclusive classrooms as oftentimes students model the attitudes and behaviors of adults (Horrocks, et al., 2008; Lindsay, et al., 2014). In order to achieve successful inclusion, teachers must have a firm philosophical understanding of inclusive practices as well as the ability to implement appropriate supports and strategies.

Throughout the literature, general education teachers have been found to have a tendency to demonstrate a negative attitude towards inclusion if they perceive that they are not being supported or do not have the appropriate training to work with students with disabilities (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cosier, & Dempf-Aldrich 2010; deBoer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; McHatton & McCray, 2007; Nishimura, 2012). Teacher attitudes have also been related to variables such as prior experience with inclusive education and class size (deBoer, et al., 2011; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010). Teachers tend to hold negative attitudes towards inclusion with higher class sizes and lack of prior knowledge and experience with inclusive practices. Furthermore, deBoer et al. (2011) concluded that teachers with less years of teaching experience hold more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than teachers who have many years of experience.

Given the current atmosphere of high stakes testing and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, teachers are faced with the increasing challenge to meet the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment (McHatton & McCray, 2007; Nishimura, 2012; Valle & Connor, 2011). The new Common Core Standards require depth of knowledge and teachers are faced with the increasing need to find ways to meet the diverse needs of students. In order for teachers to be successful in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students, a significant shift in teacher training and support needs to take place (deBoer, et al., 2011; Horne & Timmons, 2009; Lindsay, et al., 2014). Additionally, teachers need to reflect upon their own attitudes, expectations,

and educational practices to identify their areas of strengths and needs to ensure that proper support and training are provided to break down the barriers to inclusive education (Causton-Theorharis, et al., 2010; Cook, 2001, Mock & Kauffman, 2002; Shade & Stewart, 2001).

With the increasing trend of eliminating segregated classrooms, there is a concomitant need to research and refine attitudinal measures to ensure that specific attitudes and beliefs towards inclusive practices are identified. Additionally, it is critical to use the attitudinal measures to identify unknown barriers and, through proper training and support, begin to chisel away at the negative attitudes toward inclusion that are pervasive throughout the field.

The Survey of Teacher Attitudes towards Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC; Cochran, 1999) instrument has been widely used throughout the literature to measure teacher attitudes, however a content validation study was not conducted during the construction of the measure. Furthermore, several items on the measure utilize terms that are now outdated and not in compliance with the re-authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). The purpose of this study was to examine the content validity of the STATIC instrument.

Method

Participants

Special education teachers (n = 20) and special education university faculty (n = 5) were recruited from Southern California districts and universities. Of the 20 special education teachers, approximately 73.5% identified their race/ethnicity as European American, 12.8% Asian American, 9.4% Hispanic/Latino American, .9% African American, and 3.4% other ethnic groups. The participants' levels of education ranged from: Bachelor's degree (49.9%) and Master's degree (50.1%). Eight of the teachers had over 10 years of teaching experience. The teaching assignments of the participants were: grades K-6 mild/moderate disabilities classrooms (n = 6), grades 6-8 mild/moderate (n = 4), grades K-6 moderate/severe (n = 3), and grades 9-12 mild/moderate (n = 2). Five special education teachers identified as serving in a resource or learning center setting. (It is important to note that in Southern California, a resource setting, learning center, and special day class are typical designations for special education placements.)

Five university faculty members also served on the expert panel. All five faculty members identified as tenured or tenure-track faculty in special education at various universities in Southern California. Four of the faculty members held a Ph.D. in Education with an emphasis in Special Education and one faculty member held an Ed.D. in

Education. The expert panel provided expertise and feedback with regards to the wording of each item and its content.

Procedure

Approval was obtained from the University Institutional Review Board before the study commenced. Permission was obtained from the author of the STATIC instrument prior to the distribution of the content validation survey. The survey was administered individually via email and follow-up with individual phone conferences for clarification purposes. A participant's survey was deemed to be satisfactory if at least 90% of the items were completed. All of the surveys met that criterion.

Measure

The Scale of Teacher's Attitudes towards Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC; Cochran, 1999) consists of 20 items that were designed to measure a teacher's attitude towards students with special needs in the general education classroom. The response format is a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," with five reverse coded items. According to the author of the STATIC, the sum score of the 20 items is indicative of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (Cochran, 1998). Higher scores indicate positive attitudes, whereas lower scores indicate negative attitudes towards inclusion. There are no specific cut off scores.

The original validation study of the STATIC instrument included 516 general and special education teachers. Specific details on the demographics and numbers of general and special education teachers were not provided. The internal consistency estimate for the total scale was high, with an alpha level of .89. Cochran (1998) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of the STATIC instrument and identified and named four factors for the scale: Factor 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education; Factor 2: Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education; Factor 3: Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education; and Factor 4: Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for each factor. Factor one evidenced a reliability coefficient of .87, Factor two .83, Factor three .57, and Factor four .62. Factor one and two were found to have good internal consistency. The internal consistencies for factor three and four were low (Mertens, 2010). A content validation however, was not conducted during the initial psychometric validation of the instrument.

As a follow up to the original psychometric validation, this study focused on a content validation survey to examine the validity of the individual items on the STATIC instrument. The survey consisted of individual ratings of

the original 20 items of the STATIC instrument. The participants were asked to rate each item on two separate criteria: (a) the clarity of the item's wording, and (b) whether the item captured the content of the instrument's purpose. The response format was a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Additionally, participants were asked to comment or provide suggestions for improvement for each of the 20 items. The results of the content validation survey ratings are displayed in Table 1.

Results

The results were analyzed in two ways. First, the mean item ratings and variation were examined to determine whether the panel deemed both the content and wording to be adequate. Items with ratings of four (Agree) or above were considered to be potentially adequate. Next, the item ratings with larger standard deviations and ranges were examined. Those with standard deviations above one and ranges above two were targeted for possible changes to the wording or for exclusion. The rationale behind these criteria was that those items with low means and larger variation in ratings led to disparities among the panel and, as such, may be in need of changes or elimination (see table items with an asterisk). Second, comments from the expert panel were evaluated to ascertain specific perceptions regarding each item.

Regarding content, two items were rated below 'Agree.' The lowest rating (3.73) was on item 1: 'I am confident in my ability to teach children with special needs' and the highest rating (4.87) was on item 17: 'I don't mind making special physical arrangements in my room to meet the needs of students with special needs.' Seven items evidenced considerable variability with standard deviations above one and ranges of four and five.

Regarding wording, nine items received mean ratings below 'Agree.' The lowest rating (2.87) was on item 13: 'It is difficult for children with special needs to make strides in academic achievement in the regular education classroom' and the highest rating (4.87) was on item 14: 'Self-esteem of children with special needs is increased when included in the regular education classroom.' Fourteen items evidenced considerable variability with standard deviations above one and ranges of four and five.

The next aspect of the analysis involved comments regarding the items. The most common comment was that the term 'general education' should be used rather than 'regular education' to reflect current terminology. Several comments were directed toward the clarity of the wording of the items. For example, the participants' comments indicated that items 1, 4, and 8 were in need of clarification. The comments indicated that terms such as "confident," "anxious" and "moderately" should be defined within the context of the questions. Specifically, the

participants noted that these were abstract terms which impacted their ability to clearly identify with the question and to accurately rate their attitude towards the item. Other comments related to wording were that the term 'special' regarding training and classroom arrangement (items 16 and 17) contained a negative connotation and could be perceived to have an impact on respondents' answers.

Table 1.
Content Analysis Results for the STATIC

		Content			Wording	
	Item	Mean	SD	Range (min-max)	Mean	SD
1.	I am confident in my ability to teach children with special needs	3.73	1.39	4.00	4.00	1.41
2.	I have been adequately trained to meet the needs of children with disabilities.	4.33	.90	2.00	4.00	1.73
3.	I become easily frustrated when teaching students with special needs.	4.00	.85	2.00	3.60	1.59
4.	I become anxious when I learn that a student with special needs will be in my classroom.	4.60	.63	2.00	3.60	2.03
5.	Although children differ intellectually, physically, and psychologically, I believe that all children can learn in most environments.	4.13	1.77	5.00	4.00	1.60
6.	I believe that academic progress is possible in children with special needs.	4.67	.49	1.00	4.73	.46
7.	I believe that children with special needs should be placed in special education classes.	4.20	.77	2.00	3.40	2.03
8.	I am comfortable teaching a child that is moderately physically disabled.	4.13	1.41	5.00	4.13	1.36
9.	I have problems teaching a student with cognitive deficits.	4.27	.70	2.00	3.23	1.98
10.	I can adequately handle students with mild to moderate behavioral problems.	4.47	.74	2.00	4.40	1.12
11.	Students with special needs learn social skills that are modeled by regular education students.	4.47	.833	2.00	4.23	.88
12.	Students with special needs have higher academic achievements when included in the regular education classroom.	3.93	1.61	4.000	3.60	1.45
13.	It is difficult for children with special needs to make strides in academic achievement in the regular education classroom.	4.14	1.41	5.00	2.87	1.88
14.	Self-esteem of children with special needs is increased when included in the regular education classroom.	4.80	.56	2.00	4.87	.35
15.	Students with special needs in the regular education classroom hinder the academic progress of the regular education student.	4.73	.70	2.00	3.93	1.70
16.	Special in-service training in teaching special needs students should be required for all regular education teachers.	4.33	.90	2.00	4.73	.59

17.	I don't mind making special physical arrangement in my room to meet the needs of students with special needs.	4.87	.35	1.00	4.73	.46
18.	Adaptive materials and equipment are easily acquired for meeting the needs of students with special needs.	4.14	1.19	4.00	3.13	2.03
19.	My principal is supportive in making needed accommodations for teaching children with special needs.	4.40	1.40	5.00	4.13	1.68
20.	Students with special needs should be included in regular education classrooms.	4.80	.56	2.00	4.73	.70

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this content validation study indicated that the content of the STATIC instrument is in need of revision to reflect current theory, practice and legislation. Our analysis indicated that several items are in need of rewording and some may warrant elimination. The factor structure of the STATIC also is in need of validation (Nishimura & Busse, in press) to better reflect current practice and theory.

There are obvious strengths and limitations in our study. One strength is the use of an external sample to examine the content of the STATIC instrument. Content validity is essential to determine if the items on an instrument adequately measure the domain of interest. Another strength is that, along with experts in the field, we included practitioners in the content validation, which may serve to enhance social validity.

The limitations include a selected sample derived solely from Southern California. Therefore the results may not generalize beyond the geographic and current practice idiosyncrasies of California. Another limitation is that comments from the participants were solicited in an open-ended fashion. It may have strengthened the study by 'requiring' comment on each item. Participants commented on 19/20 items and the largest number was only four comments on a given item. Therefore, our comment analysis was limited.

The field of special education is in flux. Throughout the country, states and districts grapple with issues of inclusion, which somewhat mirrors response to intervention models as allowed under current IDEIA guidelines. As we progress toward an inclusive model of education there exists a need to advance our knowledge base regarding teacher attitudes to better inform and educate the field. The results of this study speak to the need to provide measures that capture the current state of the field and to advance our understanding of teacher attitudes toward inclusion to enhance the lives of the children we serve. With revision, the STATIC may serve part of that purpose.

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