Parental Perceptions of Early Childhood Education Programming for Children With and Without Disabilities

Brittany Greer Herrington
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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN WITH
AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

by

Brittany Greer Herrington

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2014
ABSTRACT

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

by Brittany Greer Herrington

August 2014

This study examined the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children with and without disabilities. Factors explored were severity of disability, parental choice in programming, inclusion, parental satisfaction, type of disability, and availability of programs that take part in early childhood education. Parents with at least one child with a disability and one child without a disability age eight or younger participated in this study by responding to items from a researcher-adapted instrument. Though no findings were statistically significant, conclusions drawn both support the literature and suggest that parents want the same programming for their children, regardless of disability. Implications are described for early childhood education providers, parents, and higher education personnel. Future research concepts, including specific attention to geography, are recommended.
The University of Southern Mississippi

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WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

by

Brittany Greer Herrington

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2014
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family who has offered varying levels of support to me throughout the years that I have spent obtaining my PhD. To my extended family for giving me an open invitation to watch my daughter so that I could write, I am deeply indebted. To my husband and daughter for allowing me to spend evenings at the library, bringing quick meals to me on campus, and going on father-daughter outings to give me time to spend researching and writing, I consider them my number one fans.

Specifically, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather who always encouraged me to continue my education. He supported me in many ways during my college years and was always there for me. Every time I visited my grandfather, he always asked me how things were going with my courses and writing, even in his last days. Unfortunately, he is unable to see me complete my dissertation and receive my PhD, but his memory lives on in me as I think of the supporting words he used to say when I came to bumps in the road. I know that he would be proud of me as he always echoed his praises for me during my every visit with him.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. ii
DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................ iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................................ iv
LIST OF TABLES ..................................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY .................................................................................. 1

   Background
   Theoretical Framework
   Statement of the Problem
   Purpose of the Study
   Limitations and Delimitations
   Definition of Key Terms

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .......................................................................... 16

   Introduction
   Need for Early Childhood Education
   Benefits and Costs of Early Childhood Education
   Early Childhood Education Options
   Disability Guidelines and Laws
   Quality of Early Childhood Education
   Early Childhood Education Options for Children with Disabilities
   Early Childhood Education Selection
   Summary

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ......................................................... 48

   Introduction
   Problem and Purposes Overview
   Research Questions and Hypotheses
   Population and Sample
   Data Collection and Instrumentation
   Data Analysis
   Summary
IV. RESULTS

- Research Questions and Associated Hypotheses
- Analysis of Data
- Summary

V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

- Summary of Study
- Conclusions
- Implications
- Future Research
- Summary

APPENDIXES

REFERENCES
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Participants’ State of Residence.............................................................................62
2. Participants’ Household Size and Average Household Income ............................64
3. Participants’ Type of Profession............................................................................65
4. Age of Children......................................................................................................66
5. Age Children Entered Discussed Early Childhood Education Program.............67
6. Type of Early Childhood Education Program Attended........................................67
7. Type of Early Childhood Education Program Attended........................................68
8. Amount of Time Able to Attend Early Childhood Education Program ..............69
9. Cost Associated with Early Childhood Education Program.................................70
10. Type of Preferred Early Childhood Education Program.....................................70
11. Type of Preferred Early Childhood Education Program....................................71
12. Type of Disability and Age of Diagnosis or Eligibility........................................73
13. Location of Services ............................................................................................74
14. Factors Influencing the Selection of Early Childhood Education Programming For Children Without Disabilities.................................................................76
15. Factors Influencing the Selection of Early Childhood Education Programming For Children With Disabilities............................................................................78
16. Relationship Between Level of Choice and Severity of Disability .....................80
17. Relationship Between Level of Satisfaction and Amount of Time in Inclusive Programming........................................................................................................81
18. Program Availability and Type of Disability........................................................82
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Barriers to success in kindergarten have been cited in the literature (Daily, Burkhauster, & Halle, 2011; Farran, 2011; Tepe, 2012). A variety of early childhood education programs are available for parents to choose among, some accredited by organizations while others are not. The provision of universal early childhood education and high-quality early childhood education programming are both the topics of recent research (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012; Goldsmith & Rees, 2007; Lasser & Fite, 2011). Two research questions and four hypotheses will explore the following topic related to early childhood education: parental selection factors of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities, level of choice in selecting early childhood education programs, severity of disability, parental satisfaction with the chosen program, type of disability, inclusiveness of early childhood education programs, and how available parents feel early childhood education programs are.

Background

As the content taught in kindergarten has become increasingly more academically challenging, teachers are reporting that kindergarten students are not prepared for kindergarten (Daily et al., 2011). First, students entering kindergarten are expected to have higher and higher levels of knowledge upon entry if they are to successfully complete kindergarten. Some students enter kindergarten without the skills necessary to meet the cognitive demands of the curriculum (Farran, 2011). Secondly, a lack of parental involvement and poor parent-to-teacher relationships in the kindergarten year leaves kindergarten students at a disadvantage (Tepe, 2012). Kindergarten teachers reported that almost half of the students enter kindergarten with difficulties. The ability to
follow directions was reported as the largest difficulty. Kindergarten teachers also reported the lack of formal early childhood education experience as a difficulty (Pianta & Cox, 1998). With both parents working outside of the home for most families, many preschool-aged children attend early childhood education programs (Glynn, 2012).

A wide variety of early childhood education program opportunities exists from public to private and school-based to center-based. Some opportunities are religious-affiliated while other are affiliated based on the programming approach that is utilized (Meyer, 2008). Some early childhood education programs are theory-specific in how they are regulated and the practices they use like Montessori or Reggio Emilia schools (Which Curriculum, 2012). Others are accredited by organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for meeting a pre-determined set of high-quality standards (Kuchment, 2007). NAEYC also publishes a checklist for parents to utilize in their search for an early childhood education program. A simple search on the web can also offer families a vast array of other checklists to utilize during the selection process. Some of these checklists are research-based while others are not. Quality, cost, geography, and inclusion are some of the factors associated with the selection of early childhood education programs (Hanson et al., 2000; Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). This current research study will examine both factors previously mentioned as well as other factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities.

Determining the quality of early childhood education programs can be difficult, as the idea of “quality” differs depending on which definition is utilized. The NAEYC and the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) each publish a set of ten
quality standards with which to rate early childhood education programs. Though these two organizations share some of the same quality benchmarks, the definition of quality may also be centered on a single component of programming such as curriculum or teacher-child interactions. In choosing an early childhood education program, some theorists suggest high-quality is synonymous with an academically-rich approach while others suggest that the social/emotional aspect of learning is of higher quality (Jacobson, 2007; Lasser & Fite, 2011). High quality can include academics, social-emotional learning, or any combination of a published set of research-based quality standards.

The concept of high-quality universal early childhood education is a current trending subject. Forty states and the District of Columbia in the U.S. provided at least partially-funded universal early childhood education in 2012-2013 (Barnett et al., 2012). Much debate exists across the nation on how and if universal early childhood education should be offered (Goldsmith & Rees, 2007). One of the main issues with providing universal early childhood education is the cost associated with program quality (Lasser & Fite, 2011). While providing universal early childhood education is an expensive undertaking, much research suggests that the benefits outweigh the cost (Belfield, Nores & Barnett, 2006). A second issue is the limitation of offering a universal program for only children from low-income families (Doggett & Wat, 2010). Families who are in the early childhood program selection process for their preschool-aged children may or may not have the option of choosing a state-funded program.

The geographic areas families live in may not only exclude them from state-funded early childhood education options but may also limit the number of programs available to choose among. Geography may also be a factor in access to high-quality
early childhood education programs (Kern, 2007). Some families of children with disabilities report that their children’s programs are pre-selected for them, and they do not have a choice at all. Other families of children with disabilities state though they do have a choice of programming, their options are limited, and inclusive options are even more limited (Hanson et al., 2000).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 stated that preschool-aged children with disabilities are entitled to receive special education services in the environment that is least restrictive to them. Research examining the types of programming, specifically inclusive programming, that are most beneficial to children with disabilities is controversial. Some approaches to early childhood education, particularly the constructivist view, lend themselves well to an inclusive approach in teaching children with and without disabilities in the same setting (Vakil, Freeman, & Swim, 2003). Parents of children with more severe disabilities do report being satisfied with the inclusive early childhood education programming their children receive (Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, & Shelton, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

Early childhood education programming is contingent upon the philosophy or model upheld by the program’s administration. Many paradigms exist including behavioral, social cognitive, cognitive, and constructivism (McNeeley, 2007). The constructivist viewpoint holds the learner at the center of information, declaring that one develops or “constructs” knowledge by actively linking past experiences and prior knowledge to new information. Constructivists view learning in the social realm with environmental influences a part of past experiences. Contrary to the view of the tabula
rasa or blank slate, reality for one may not be reality for all under the constructivism premise (Knowledge Base, 2013).

Among the leading contributors to constructivism are Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky. Both Vygotsky’s vision and the constructivist approach rely on the zone of proximal development and scaffolding (Gindis, 1999). The zone of proximal development is considered the gap in knowledge between actual development and potential development (Open College, 2013). Bodrova and Leong (2005) further defined Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development as information that children were in the process of constructing utilizing past experiences as opposed to only involving prior knowledge. The zone of proximal development is the targeted area where scaffolding reaches its highest success; as the zone of proximal development is constantly changing, scaffolding must be individualized (Open College, 2013).

Vygotsky’s vision relied on speech and play using cognitive and emotional skills in conjunction with one another in the zone of proximal development (Bodrova & Leong, 2005). Ok Seung Yang (2000) suggested that the most optimal part of a young child’s day to utilize the zone of proximal development was during free play when children had the opportunity to explore and “try out” actively acquiring skills as teachers phase out their assistance during the scaffolding process. Based on Vygotsky’s vision, Ok Seung Yang developed the Verbal Plan and Evaluation (VPE) program which entailed teachers as encouragers and supporters of children during free play. For infants, scaffolding can be used as babies babble, imitate sounds, and bond with others. For toddlers and preschoolers, scaffolding can be used in pretend play as these young children learn how to develop more complex social and play skills. The PRoPELS approach was utilized by
one early childhood education program in scaffolding with children during pretend play (Leong & Bodrova, 2012).

Not only is Vygotsky’s theory considered a constructivist approach, the Reggio Emilia theory is as well, both of which emphasize the sense of societal belonging as it is related to the early childhood classroom (Morrison, 2000). Loris Malaguzzi founded the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy in the 1940s on the basis of the arts, the natural environment, parental involvement, and observation and documentation of children’s work (Jacobson, 2007). Reggio Emilia prides itself in utilizing artists, educators, and parents to collaborate with one another and effectively teach young children through long-term projects (Which Curriculum, 2012). Art work from these projects along with natural elements shape the environment (Jacobson, 2007).

The constructivist view utilized by both Vygotsky and Reggio Emilia is easily embedded in inclusion. Vygotsky viewed children in light of their abilities rather than disabilities and felt that children with disabilities would learn best through inclusion (Gindis, 1999). Likewise, Gilman (2007) stated that the Reggio Emilia approach should be used in inclusive settings because no difference existed between teaching children with and teaching children without disabilities. Based on the foundation of Reggio Emilia, specifically parental involvement and collaboration, the naturalistic approach, scaffolding, and documentation of children’s work, the Reggio Emilia approach is designed for inclusive settings. Much like the Individual Education Plan and Individual Family Service Plan in special education, the Reggio Emilia approach utilizes the Declaration of Intent to document each child’s work (Vakil et al., 2003).
When examining program availability from a constructivist standpoint, research is controversial regarding the type of disability a child has and the successfulness of the child in an inclusive program. Researchers Mills, Cole, and Jenkins (1998) as well as Holahan and Costenbader (2000) found that preschool-aged children with more severe disabilities had greater benefits from self-contained settings while preschool-aged children with less severe disabilities had greater benefits from inclusive settings. On the other hand Rafferty, Piscitelli, and Boettcher (2003) found that preschool-aged children with more severe disabilities had greater benefits from inclusion while no difference in benefits from inclusion was found for preschool-aged children with less severe disabilities.

Constructivism focuses less on the teacher in learning and more on the preschool-aged child and the avenues through which children acquire skills. One particular avenue that distinguishes constructivism from other theories of learning is parental involvement. Parental involvement and parental collaboration are important aspects of this theory of learning and are needed elements contingent on the acquisition of new skills in children (Jacobson, 2007). Parental involvement in the act of selecting an early childhood education program for their children is vital. A theory specifically focusing on parental involvement is Brofenbrenner’s ecological model. In this model, a five-system approach is utilized to define human development (Brofenbrenner, 1997). According to Brofenbrenner (1977), the family is one element of both the microsystem and the mesosystem – two of the five systems within the ecological model. Two issues that inhibit children’s readiness for kindergarten are parenting and the connectedness of the
home-school relationship (Kelly, 2010). Both of these factors are essential components in the human ecology model of development (Wehman, 1998).

As the constructivist view takes into account the prior experiences and social realities a person utilizes in acquiring, perhaps unique, new skills, the idea of parental selection of early childhood education programs can also be viewed from this same constructivist lens. As prior experiences vary from one person to the next person, the skills acquired for each person may be at a different rate, level, or altogether different skills (Knowledge Base, 2013). As families vary by culture, parental education level, household size, income, etc. so may their early childhood education program selection factors (Kuo, 2004; Obi, 2011). While one family selects one early childhood education program, another family may select a different program for its unique alignment to the family; selection factors are “highly personal” (Glenn-Applegate, Pentimonti, & Justice, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children are not a new concept. Much research exists on the factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education for children without disabilities (Ispa, Thornburg, & Venter-Barkley, 1998; Obi, 2011; Ransom, 2012). Fewer research studies have been conducted on the factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education for children with disabilities. The factors from both parents of children with and without disabilities found in the literature include cost, parental elements, teacher elements, operating hours, quality, development, curriculum, safety, acceptance of children with disabilities, type of disability a child has, available
transportation, provision of therapy, daily programming, practical considerations, friends’ recommendations of the program, furnishings and display, and personal care routines (Glenn-Applegate, et al., 2011; Ispa et al., 1998; Obi, 2011; Ransom, 2012). While research on the parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children has been conducted, still not enough is known about the impact of the differences in the selection process for parents of children with and parents of children without disabilities.

Though research concerning the availability of early childhood education programs does exist, most of this research centers on geography as the factor (Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). A few studies regarding children with disabilities discuss limited program availability because of other factors such as acceptance of children with disabilities, professional pre-selection of programming, and the lack of information about available programs (Hanson et al., 2000). This study will delve deeper into parental perceptions on the availability of early childhood education programming and will also explore the availability of inclusive options.

While the proposed research questions regarding inclusion and type of disability are not novel, results of these studies continue to be mixed and contradictory, as evidenced by research by Holahan and Costenbader (2000) and Rafferty et al. (2003). Overall, parents of children with severe disabilities seem satisfied with the early childhood education program their children attend (Seery, Davis, & Johnson, 2000). Most research on the successfulness of children with severe disabilities in early childhood education programs show that less inclusive programming in more beneficial for these children (Mills et al., 1998). This study will extend into further research by seeking to
understand how satisfied parents are with their chosen programming and what the most
preferred programming is for children with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to study the factors influencing the parental
selection of early childhood education programs. The researcher seeks to understand to
what extent, if any, the selection of an early childhood education program for a child with
disabilities differs from the selection of an early childhood education program for a child
without disabilities. The number of early childhood education program options parents
feel they have to choose among is another essential component of this study. Specifically,
the researcher desires to understand how the type of disability a child has influences the
perceived number of available early childhood education options. Researchers also seek
to determine in what manner parents receive information pertaining to the available early
childhood education options. The satisfaction parents feel regarding the chosen option
will also be examined as well as the preferred early childhood education option of parents
if program availability was not an issue. The following research questions and hypotheses
are the focus of this study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Do identified factors influence parental selection of early
childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities?

H1: There is a difference between the factors influencing parental selection of
early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the factors
influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children
without disabilities.
H2: There is a relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs and the severity of the children’s disability.

Research Question 2: Do identified factors correspond to parental satisfaction with early childhood education programs for children with disabilities?

H3: There is a relationship between the inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and parental satisfaction with the chosen early childhood education programs for their children.

H4: There is a relationship between the types of disabilities children have and the early childhood education programs that parents feel are available for their children.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations that may affect the internal validity of the study include testing and the differential selection of subjects. Though the process of selecting an early childhood education program is not a test, one limitation of this study is testing as a possible threat to internal validity for participants depending on how many times they have been through the process of selecting an early childhood education program. Birth order may change the factors that influence parental selection of early childhood education programs as parents gain knowledge and are less novice in the early childhood program selection process after finishing this process with the first born. Parents may be participating in this study using perceptions from their first born, second born, somewhere in the middle born,
or last born child. The factors that influence parental selection of early childhood education programs may differ on birth order alone.

Another threat to internal validity is the differential selection of subjects. Parents participating in this study were not completely randomly selected. Participants were informed about this study via a parenting group e-mail list. The parents who responded and chose to participate in this study may not equally represent all demographics, geographic regions, and/or philosophies.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations that may affect the external validity and/or generalizability of this study include participant selection, participant eligibility, memory over time, and out-of-date information. Due to the networking organization used to contact and provide information to potential participants, other possible participants who may have also been included in the study were excluded via dissemination methods. In order to be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to have at least one child with a disability and one child without a disability. Though this stipulation was put in place to help control for personal preferences, it limited the participant eligibility.

Due to the unlikely nature of many participants having both a child with a disability and a child without a disability currently enrolled in early childhood education programs, parents of children who were eight years of age or younger were eligible to participate. Participants may have had a harder time remembering information for their children who were not currently enrolled in early childhood education programs. Information obtained for children closer to eight years of age may be out-of-date when compared to that of children currently enrolled in education programs.
Definition of Key Terms

*Child* – a person who is 18 years of age or younger.

*Disability* – One of the 13 categories as defined by IDEA 2004 or as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

*Early childhood education* – learning and development that take place between birth and the point in which a child enters the school system (Laws.com, 2013).

*Early childhood education program* – any setting where preschool-aged children have access to learning and/or therapy including daycares, private or public preschools, preschools exclusively for children with disabilities, and home settings.

*Group child care* – care of children in a person’s home including both licensed and unlicensed programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

*Home care* – this type of early childhood education program includes both group child care and care by relatives in the home (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

*Inclusion* - As stated by Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm (2011), the definition of inclusion was “the placement (from part time to full time) of students with disabilities in the general education classroom” (p. 31).

*Infant* – a child who is approximately 1 year old or younger.

*Preschool-aged child* – a child who is 6 years of age or younger and has not yet entered Kindergarten

*Preschooler* – a child who is approximately 4-6 years old and has not entered Kindergarten.
Private preschool – a preschool or daycare that is not associated with a school system; private preschools may or may not be religiously-affiliated (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Regular early childhood program – at least half of the children do not have disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Residential facility – in-patient facility where students both live and receive educational supports (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Self-contained public school setting – a separate class operating inside a public school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Separate class – more than half of the children have disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Separate school – a school designed specifically for students with disabilities; separate schools can be private or public (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Student – a recipient of learning in the context of an education program including both early childhood education programs and K-12 school.

Toddler – a child who is approximately 1-3 years old.

Summary

The previous section has discussed the barriers to success in kindergarten that quality early childhood education programs could alleviate. High-quality programming and universal early childhood education as mentioned in the literature have also been examined. Factors found in the literature associated with the parental selection of early childhood education have been listed. A few of these factors – quality, cost, geography, and inclusion – as related to the availability of early childhood education for all
preschool-aged children have been explained. The social constructivist view of Vygotsky and the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education are the theoretical framework for this study. Inclusion as related to this framework as well as the controversial research findings of its benefit in early childhood education for children with more severe disabilities has been explored.

In addition to controversial research findings, the lack of research on the selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities was given as a problem for which this research study intends to provide possible solutions. The purpose of this study is defined with two research questions and four hypotheses that examine the parental selection factors of early childhood education program for their children with and without disabilities, the disabilities the children have, inclusion, and parental perceptions of these early childhood education programs. The limitations, delimitations, and list of key terms with definitions have also been included in this section.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in early childhood education, specifically whether or not it should be provided universally, the quality of current options, and to what extent children with disabilities participate in early childhood education (Barnett & Frede, 2010; Doggett & Wat, 2010; Scott & McWilliam, 2002). The following literature review discusses the parental selection of early childhood education programs both for children with and without disabilities. First, the need for early childhood education is examined in light of school readiness and K-12 performance. The academic, social, and monetary benefits as well as cost as a factor in providing universal early childhood education is also included in this literature review. Secondly, the early childhood education options for children with and without disabilities are presented. These opportunities include regular early childhood education programs, special education programs, and in-home options. Thirdly, early childhood education and inclusion are concentrated on as mandated through both Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Components of high-quality programming are shared. The similarities and differences of the Lev Vygotsky, Reggio Emilia, and Maria Montessori theories as they relate to early childhood education, high-quality programming, and inclusive options are addressed. Research regarding the environment most beneficial for different types of disabilities is reviewed. Next, the availability and knowledge parents hold regarding early childhood education options is revealed along with parental views
on inclusive practices for children with disabilities. The literature review ends with a discussion on the factors that influence the parental selection of early childhood education programs. These factors include cost, parental and teacher elements, quality, developmental growth, curriculum, safety, geography and transportation, limited program availability, acceptance of children with disabilities and available therapy, and operating hours.

Need for Early Childhood Education

Approximately 70% of Americans agree on the necessity of early childhood education (Edelman, 2013). Over the past few years, kindergarten has been becoming more and more demanding. Skills previously addressed in first grade are now expected to be mastered during the kindergarten year (Daily et al., 2011). Direct instruction has become the primary teaching method. As kindergarten teachers “struggle” to provide instruction that meets the new demand, little time is left for child-directed activities or center-based learning. The inability to self-regulate has been greatly linked to special education placement, and researchers suggested teaching self-regulation skills in early childhood education in order to avoid special education placements in the latter years (Farran, 2011). Problems associated with self-regulation are associated with unsuccessful grade-level performance. Kindergarten teachers reported that over half of the children entering kindergarten lack the skills necessary for a successful year (Tepe, 2012). Chien et al. (2010) suggested that in order to ready children for school entry, more quality instructional time is needed in early childhood education programs.
Benefits and Costs of Early Childhood Education

Advocates of universal early childhood education agree that providing programming to preschool-aged children would be costly, but they argued that withholding high-quality early childhood education opportunities would cost more in the future (Lasser & Fite, 2011). Monies spent in early childhood would mean fewer monies spent in childhood and adulthood (Edelman, 2013). While there are both benefits and costs to providing early childhood education programs, the costs are mostly financial in nature. Children participating in early childhood education programs can expect to benefit academically, socially, and monetarily.

Benefits of Early Childhood Education

There are academic, social, and monetary benefits associated with provision of early childhood education programs (Lasser & Fite, 2011). As children are taught pre-academic and social skills in early childhood education, they benefit academically and socially later in life (Bracey & Stellar, 2003). Children who participate in early childhood education are able to acquire the knowledge needed to successfully complete more years of school and, in turn, benefit monetarily with higher paying jobs (Edelman, 2013). The Chicago Child-Parent Center Program utilized parental involvement and home visits as a part of its program. Children who were enrolled in this early childhood education program had higher graduation rates, fewer grade-level retentions, and lower crime rates (Bracey & Stellar, 2003). This monetary benefit brings about social benefits in adulthood as higher wages equal less of a need for welfare (Lasser & Fite, 2011).

Academic benefits. Barnett and Frede (2010) advocated for high-quality universal early childhood education for all three and four-year-olds stating that the participation in
high-quality early education programs has shown to progress children from the thirtieth to the seventieth percentile on standardized assessments upon entry to kindergarten. High-quality early childhood education has been reported to prepare children for the upcoming school years by increasing academic skills, thereby reducing grade-level detention. High-quality early childhood education programs allows for fewer children who will need special education placements in the future (Edelman, 2013). The U.S. could expect to see an increase in high school and college graduation rates (Lasser & Fite, 2011). Teacher-child interactions were a large part of the early childhood programming children in the 1972 Abecedarian Project received. Children who were a part of this program completed more schooling, had a higher rate of college enrolment, and had better reading skills than children who were not a part of this early childhood education program (Bracey & Stellar, 2003).

*Social benefits.* In addition to academic success, early childhood education is said to provide opportunities for social and emotional learning. Kindergarten teachers report the social and emotional skills that children enter kindergarten with predict engagement in classroom routines and learning, relationships with others, and ability to self-regulate (Hughes, 2010). Furthermore, appropriate social and emotional behavior learning was suggested to reduce criminal activity in later years (Edelman, 2013). Children who participated in early childhood education programs stayed married longer than those who did not participate in these programs (Belfield et al., 2006). Many of these social benefits are linked to potential monetary benefits.

*Monetary benefits.* Academic and social benefits, in turn, would allow for higher wages in adulthood and decrease the need for social welfare (Edelman, 2001; Lasser &
Fite, 2011). Children who participated in early childhood education programs owned more homes than those who did not participate in these programs. For example, for every one dollar that was invested to the children in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project in the 1960s, there has been an almost thirteen dollar return (Bracey & Stellar, 2003). Early childhood education programs that would lower the rate of future special education placements were considered to be cost-effective (Belfield et al., 2006).

Costs of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is a costly endeavor. In order to be considered effective, an early childhood education program not only demands high standards but also needs proper funding (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). Early childhood education programs that are of higher quality are of higher cost. The average cost per child per year was $7,000 for Head Start, $9,200 for the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, and $13,900 for the Abecedarian Project (Bracey & Stellar, 2003). Providing high-quality universal early childhood education would be a costly endeavor, but many researchers agreed that monies spent in early childhood would spare even heftier expenses in later schools years and adulthood (Belfield et al., 2006).

In order to offset these financial costs, some programs choose to operate on a part-day schedule. Though families may need full-day care for their children, there was no direct evidence that suggested a full-day early childhood education program is more beneficial for learning and success than a part-day program (Duncan, Ludwig, & Magnuson, 2007). Full-day early childhood education programs offered an extended day for children to be present, but full-day programs also included more rest time,
toilet/diaper time, and meal time suggesting that full-day programs do not offer that many more learning opportunities than part-day programs (Chien et al., 2010).

Early Childhood Education Options

Parents have an array of early childhood education programs to choose among including Head Start, in-home options, Reggio Emilia programs, Montessori programs, religious-based programs, and other private options (Meyer, 2008). In-home options include both relative and “sitter” options (Ceglowski, Logue, Ullrich, & Gilbert, 2009). Reggio Emilia and Montessori are based on theoretical frameworks (Which Curriculum, 2012). Private options may be religious-based or may be locally owned (Meyer, 2008). The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 stated that Head Start and Early Head Start serve as early childhood education for children from low-income families.

Among the parents seeking early childhood education programs for their children are parents of children with disabilities. The Individualized Education Plan included the following options as possible regular early childhood program placements for preschool-aged children with disabilities: Headstart, private centers, inclusive classrooms, public school classrooms, and child development centers. Special education program placements included classrooms, separate schools, and residential facilities. For preschool-aged children with disabilities who did not attend regular or special education placements, services could be received in the home (Deiner, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and NAEYC’s joint position statement on early childhood education inclusion states that children with disabilities should have
access to, participate in, and be provided supports in the early childhood education environment (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Disability Guidelines and Law

The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, a federal law, required states to provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to children who qualify for special education services (Wright & Wright, 2009). The continuum of placement options ranged from fully inclusive classrooms to home-based services (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Though IDEIA of 2004 required all states to provide services to preschool children with disabilities in the environment that is the least restrictive to them, it does not specify what educational opportunities are to be employed.

In order to be eligible for special education services, children qualified in one of two ways: (a) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or (b) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. Section 504 (1973), a federal statute, protected people with disabilities from discrimination in the areas of participation, services, and program benefits by organizations and employers that receive federal funding. Schools were among the entities included in the list of organizations. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 defined a disability as “the existence of an identified physical condition that substantially limits a major life activity.”

The IDEIA of 2004 also required school districts and early intervention lead agencies to provide special education services to children with developmental delays or disabilities. Eligibility under Part B of IDEIA for children ages three to 21 was listed by thirteen separate categories of disabilities: autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance,
hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, and speech or language impairment.

Eligibility under Part C of IDEIA for children from birth to age two was defined as a developmental delay in one or more of the following developmental areas: cognitive, physical, communication, adaptive, or social or emotional development. Part C stated that appropriate assessments must be utilized in order to determine the developmental delay of children. Eligibility under Part C further allowed children to qualify for services with a diagnosed physical and/or mental condition. IDEIA authorized one agency from each state to receive the allocated money and hold the position of lead agency for Part C through an application process. IDEIA (2004) required each state (lead agency) to provide special education services for children from birth to age two as stated above, but gave each state autonomy in the determination of provisions for services. States have the option of including children who are at-risk for disabilities but do not exhibit a developmental delay at the time of evaluation as eligible for Part C services. States also have the option of allowing children to be eligible for services through the clinical opinion of evaluators (Wright & Wright, 2009).

Beginning in 1986, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated a free, appropriate public education to children with qualifying disabilities beginning at birth (Wright & Wright, n.d.). For some children who qualified for special education services, the least restrictive environment could mean inclusion while for others it could mean a separate school or classroom. Documentation had to be provided that explained the reasoning for not placing a child with disabilities in a setting
with children without disabilities (Wright & Wright, 2009). Each local educational agency decides which opportunity is best for each child on an individual basis under IDEIA of 2004.

Quality of Early Childhood Education

There are pros and cons associated with each early childhood education option, and the quality of teaching and services provided in each option can vary widely. Not all early childhood education programs provide the same opportunities and produce the same results (Hughes, 2010). It has been suggested that what comprises high-quality early childhood education for typically-developing children is not the same for children with disabilities (Scott & McWilliam, 2002). Most early childhood education opportunities are reported to be of average quality, with private early childhood education programs found to be of lower quality than public programs (Barnett & Frede, 2010). Head Start programs were of better quality than other early childhood education programs (Barnett & Frede, 2010; Kern, 2007). Head Start, early childhood special education programs at public schools, and therapeutic centers provided the most optimal care and programming for children with disabilities (Ceglowski et al., 2009). But what constitutes “quality?” Each of these studies based their analyses on a different set of factors upon which to determine if a program was a “quality” program or not. These factors are the inputs that comprise an early childhood education program and include a review of the ways in which quality is defined in the literature, adherence to professional standards and accreditation status, adherence to a theoretical framework, and inclusive programming for preschool-aged children with disabilities.
Quality Defined

One way of defining quality is through the lens of early childhood education directors and research professionals. Parental involvement is one way directors of early childhood education programs feel that parents select one program over another and is a factor that contributes to a high-quality early childhood education program (Enrollment Building Ideas, 2012; First 5 California, 2005). Teacher-child ratios, the education and training of teachers, the caring nature of teachers, and teacher-child interactions are vital aspects for parents to consider in the selection of a high-quality early childhood education program (Enrollment Building Ideas, 2012; First 5 California, 2005). Safety and furnishings and display were factors that contribute to high quality early childhood education programs (First 5 California, 2005).

A second way of defining quality is through the curriculum each program utilizes. Early childhood education programs include both academic and social skills as part of the curriculum (Which Curriculum, 2012). Though researchers agreed that both academic and social skill teaching are components of high-quality early childhood programs, the balance of the two varies from program to program. Farran (2011) suggested that a disconnect exists in the skills that are measured in school readiness assessments (mostly academic) and what kindergarten teachers find as most important upon school entry. Hughes (2010) found that the majority of kindergarten teachers indicated social and emotional skills were more important than academic skills in dictating a successful kindergarten year. Bodrova and Leong (2005) went a step further stating that pretend play should be the activity of priority and not be limited for a focus on traditional academic
skill instruction. Specifically, drama and dress-up activities were preferred by some early childhood education programs over reading and math (Jacobson, 2007).

Professional Standards and Accreditation

Another way of ensuring a standard of practice (and sometimes quality) is through adherence to certain guidelines and standards. Federal and state guidelines require long lists of items for teachers to accomplish each day in efforts to attain high-quality programming. These lengthy requirements have been reported to limit the amount of time for high-quality teacher-child interactions (Chien et al., 2010). Hughes (2010) argued that the quality of early childhood education classrooms went beyond teacher training and was more synonymous with teacher-child interactions. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) developed ten standards that an early childhood education program must meet in order to become a NAEYC accredited program. The ten standards include: relationships, curriculum, teaching, assessment of child progress, health, teachers, families, community relationships, physical environment, and leadership and management. The assessment of and provision of services to children with disabilities were both included as part of one standard – the assessment of child progress (NAEYC, 2008). Early childhood education programs identified as NAEYC accredited were considered to be high-quality programs (Kuchment, 2007; Ransom, 2012).

Barnett and Frede (2010), co-directors of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), suggested that early childhood programs utilize NIEER’s ten benchmarks to assess the quality of the program. These benchmarks included early learning standards, teacher degree, teacher specialized training, assistant teacher degree, teacher in-service, class size, staff-child ratio, screening/referral, meals, and monitoring
(Barnett et al., 2012). Of the 40 states and the District of Columbia that provided state-funded early childhood education in 2011-2012, five state programs met all 10 of these benchmarks (Barnett et al., 2012). Though both NAEYC and NIEER have a similar set of standards for early childhood education programs; neither professional organization dictates a specific theory that should be utilized in programming.

**Theory-based Programs**

Whether following a specific theorist, paradigm, or framework, for some the quality of early childhood education is synonymous with theory (*Which Curriculum*, 2012). The beginning of early childhood education dates back to the 17th century with John Locke’s *tabula rasa* and moves to Johann Pestalozzi’s establishment of early childhood education. Contemporary theorists such as Lev Vygotsky and Maria Montessori were influenced by these early contributors to the field of early childhood education (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2014).

*Vygotsky.* Bodrova and Leong (2005) suggested that in order for early childhood education programs to be considered high-quality, programs should follow Vygotsky’s views specifically in regards to providing opportunities for teacher-child interactions and developmentally appropriate activities. Vygotsky coined the term zone of proximal development and suggested that teachers use scaffolding to instruct preschool children (Gindis, 1999). Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development included skills that children were still developing instead of skills that children have already mastered (Bodrova & Leong, 2005). Vygotsky’s theory (which originated in 1977) proposed that scaffolding is beneficial from birth when infants first begin to mimic communication and bond with others. As toddlers move into pretend play and preschoolers develop more intricate
pretend play skills, the continued use of scaffolding was beneficial to development (Leong & Bodrova, 2012). Vygotsky’s framework relied on speech and play using cognitive and emotional skills in conjunction with one another in the zone of proximal development (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

*Programming utilized in the zone of proximal development.* Ok Seung Yang (2000) proclaimed that the zone of proximal development should be used during free play as children have the opportunity to practice progressing from needing others to regulate to self-regulation. Ok Seung Yang developed the Verbal Plan and Evaluation (VPE) program and suggested that teachers take on the role of encourager and supporter in the safe reality of free play. One early childhood education program developed and utilized an approach called PRoPELS to scaffold pretend play. This acronym stands for the following pretend play elements: plan, roles, props, extended, language, and scenario (Leong & Bodrova, 2012). Researchers found that of free play, individual instruction, group instruction, and scaffolding, children enrolled in early childhood education programming that primarily consisted of free play made less gains towards school readiness. Despite the expectation of instruction through scaffolding producing the most gain towards school readiness, gains made through scaffolding were not significantly different from those individual and group instruction (Chien et al., 2010).

*Reggio Emilia approach.* The Reggio Emilia approach was an art-based approach that centered on long-term projects and parental involvement (*Which Curriculum*, 2012). In the 1940s, Loris Malaguzzi founded the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy and emphasized not only the arts and parental involvement, but also the observation and documentation of children’s work. The environment was a crucial factor to this approach
and included natural elements found in nature and children’s artwork. Many Reggio Emilia programs utilize artists in conjunction with educators in the teaching of preschool-aged children (Jacobson, 2007). The Grant Early Childhood Center in Iowa used a program based on the Reggio Emilia Approach. Prizing Our Natural Differences (POND) shared the same vision as Emilia – everyone should belong – and used the “four core ingredients of the Reggio approach – encouraging collaborative relationships, constructing effective environments, developing project-based curriculums, and documenting learning in multiple ways” (Edmiaston & Fitzgerald, 2000, p.66).

Morrison (2000) reported that preschool teachers looked for a more constructivist approach to instruction inside preschools and turned to the theories of Lev Vygotsky and Reggio Emilia, both of which emphasized a child’s need to belong in society – or for preschool children, the need to belong in the classroom. Children who participated in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project in the 1960s received a constructivist approach in learning as opposed to the direct instruction teaching of other early childhood education programs. When studied at the age of 40, these children earned more money, owned more homes, stayed married longer, received social welfare less, and were arrested less often than children who were not enrolled in an early childhood education programming that used a constructivist approach (Bracey & Stellar, 2003).

Montessori. Though some elements of the Montessori approach like self-direction and learning at one’s own pace were found in the Reggio Emilia approach, many differences between the two existed (Jacobson, 2007). The Montessori approach used hands-on specific teaching methods and materials that were used in the same manner at every accredited Montessori school (Dohrmann, Nishida, Gartner, Lipsky, &
Grimm, 2007). In 1898, Maria Montessori was one of the first special educators that developed instructional practices in academic, life, and social skills for children considered to be unteachable. Montessori believed that in order for effective instruction to take place, the following four components should be addressed in teaching: scope and sequence, curriculum, pacing, and types of learning. The curriculum contained multiple sensory experiences for the scope and sequence of academic, life, and social skill instruction. The individual child and multi-age classrooms were at the heart of the Montessori approach (Which Curriculum, 2012). Pacing was set based on the child’s rate of development and mastery, and each classroom contained three age levels (i.e., 3-year-olds through 6-year-olds) proving that learning can be achieved through peer support and small group instruction (McKenzie & Zascavage, 2012).

Ecological model. In the 1970s, Urie Brofenbrenner introduced a five-system approach to human development. Embedded in developmental psychology, this model of development includes microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Brofenbrenner, 1997). Microsystems are the immediate systems surrounding the person while mesosystems are the major systems. Exosystems are the social systems, and macrosystems are the systems of culture (Wehman, 1998). The chronosystem refers to the system of development of a person over time (Brofenbrenner, 1997). The family falls into both the microsystem and the mesosystem and the school or early childhood education program into the mesosystem. This approach is based on the interactions among systems, focusing on the relationship between the person and his or her changing environments and influences (Brofenbrenner, 1977). An example of these
interactions is an early intervention service provider assisting a family in locating an early childhood education program for their child (Wehman, 1998).

Families have positive views on participating in shared learning experiences with their children. Barnyak (2011) found that when parents are provided education on the importance of at-home learning activities and are given the materials, they will follow through with the activities. A second study found similar results. When paired with the family systems theory, transactional model of development, and social support theory, the ecological model increased the level of parent and family participation in early intervention services (Wehman, 1998). Another study examined parent and teacher perspectives of conjoint behavioral consultation, a type of service delivery following the ecological model. This type of consultation narrows in on the priorities of all caregivers, collaboration, and instruction to all. Results indicated that all participants were satisfied with conjoint behavioral consultation, and parents reported significant gains with the parent-teacher relation. On the other hand, kindergarten and Head Start teachers reported no significant gain in parent-teacher communication or relation (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche & Pope-Edwards, 2006).

**Inclusive Versus Non-inclusive Programs**

The actual physical setting of the early childhood experience is central to both standard-based and theory-based measures of quality in early childhood education. Similarly, others in the environment, both adults and peers, play an important role in each approach to evaluating quality. While inclusive programming is beneficial for both preschool-aged children with and without disabilities, it is more accepting for young children with mild to moderate disabilities to participate in inclusive programming than
for young children with severe disabilities (Demchak & Drinkwater, 1992). Barnett, one of NIEER’s top researchers, found that Head Start (which provides inclusive programming) was of higher quality than other early childhood education program options (Barnett & Frede, 2010).

In examining Vygotsky’s vision, Gindis (1999) stated that Vygotsky viewed a disability from the sociocultural perspective and thought that instruction should occur though inclusive practices. Vygotsky also believed that instruction should be based on the abilities of the child and not the disabilities, and referred to this way of thinking as “inclusion based on positive differentiation” (Gindis, 1999, p.338). Mallory and New (1994) suggested a shift in thinking to a social constructivist view for inclusive preschool practices using the concept of belonging. This view expanded upon Vygotsky’s approach of instructing preschool children with disabilities. Mallory and New’s view used society as the basis and called for preschool teachers to examine how preschool children interpret society and use this interpretation to enhance development. Mallory and New speculated that this examination would help guide teacher instruction in inclusive preschools.

Gilman (2007) proposed using practices from Reggio Emilia’s approach for inclusion because there was no difference in teaching children with or without disabilities. Vakil et al. (2003) suggested that Emilia is already embedded inside inclusive preschools. Practices included in the Emilia approach were communication and collaboration with parents, child-led activities the teacher facilitates to scaffold learning, documentation of the child’s work and development, and using a naturalistic and holistic approach in teaching (Gilman, 2007; Morrison, 2000; Vakil et al., 2003). Emilia’s approach utilized a document called the Declaration of Intent that was much like the
Individualized Education Plan and Individualized Family Service Plan that public schools and agencies used to provide special education services to children with disabilities. The Declaration of Intent also required documentation, parental input, and collaboration from a team in order to successfully provide instruction to children in inclusive preschool practices using the Emilia approach (Vakil et al., 2003).

Maui Montessori, a fully inclusive school in Hawaii, used a Montessorian approach to educate students ages three to 12 with and without disabilities. Low student-teacher ratios along with a team of consultants that both assessed and provided intervention for the students with cerebral palsy, autism, developmental delays, speech and language delays, dyslexia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder made this school a prime choice for inclusive services in Hawaii (Full Inclusion, 2007).

Outcomes of Preschool Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings

Though inputs (components that comprise an early childhood education program) are important in regard to quality and potential benefits, the actual outcomes of children participating in early childhood education programs are equally important. Research shows that type of disability may matter in the benefits of inclusive early childhood education programming. Researchers found that children placed in a fully inclusive early childhood education program displayed language and cognitive gains at a greater progression than normal development (Mills et al., 1998). Kwon, Elicker, and Kontos (2011) researched the effects of two interactive techniques preschool teachers could use with children with disabilities in a classroom setting. Though results indicated the techniques were not properly implemented, the children showed more progressed interaction skills in inclusive settings than in self-contained settings. Greater gains in
social and emotional functioning were found in a study of 66 children with disabilities who were placed in full-time inclusive early childhood education programs rather than part-time early childhood education programs (Holahan & Costenbader, 2000).

One study found that as the number of children with disabilities in an inclusive early childhood classroom increased, the quality of the programming increased as well (Kern, 2007). In another study, a separate group of 66 preschool children with disabilities were placed in either a self-contained classroom specifically for children with disabilities, full-time placement in a classroom for children without disabilities (“full inclusion”), or a combination of the two (“partial inclusion”). This time researchers examined the language and cognitive functioning of the children. Results depicted that children with more severe disabilities benefitted from self-contained and partial inclusion settings more than full inclusion, and children with less severe disabilities benefitted from full inclusion more than self-contained settings and partial inclusion (Mills et al., 1998).

Holahan and Costenbader (2000) conducted a second study with 34 children with disabilities. Results indicated that children who had more severe disabilities experienced no difference in social and emotional functioning regardless of placement in an inclusive or non-inclusive early childhood education program, but children with less severe disabilities showed greater gains in social and emotional functioning when placed in an inclusive rather than a non-inclusive early childhood education program. Contrarily, Rafferty et al. (2003) conducted a study that examined the social and language functioning of 96 preschool children with disabilities. These children were in either a self-contained community-based or an inclusive community-based program. Results signified that children with less severe disabilities performed equally in the language and
social domains regardless of placement, but children with more severe disabilities had higher language and social functioning when placed in an inclusive rather than a self-contained setting. Researchers also noted that children with more severe disabilities had more behavioral problems in the inclusive setting versus a self-contained setting.

Goldsmith and Rees (2007) suggested states that provide funding to early childhood education programs should establish high standards that the programs must meet in order to receive the funding so that parents will have high-quality programs to choose among. Quality can be measured both by inputs to the program and outcomes of the children participating in the program. These inputs and outcomes include parental and teacher involvement, type of curriculum, the use of professional standards, the theory practiced as well as controversial research findings on gains for children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood education programs.

Early Childhood Education Options for Children with Disabilities

Opportunities for early childhood education vary widely depending on the type, availability, and quality of programs available often depending on the abilities or disabilities of each preschool-aged child. Each of these factors alone or in combination with one another is used by many early childhood programs in the determination of program eligibility for the child (Improving Head Start For School Readiness, 2007). These factors among others may prevent preschool-aged children from certain educational opportunities while providing them access to other opportunities. Not all early childhood education programs and classrooms provide the same opportunities (Hughes, 2010).
Parental Preferences for Early Childhood Education Programs for Children with Disabilities

There are several pieces in the literature describing the early childhood education program preferences for parents of children with disabilities. Families of children with disabilities reported preferring relative-care or family-child care over other early childhood education programs, especially families of children with more severe disabilities (Ceglowski et al., 2009; Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). However, other studies have found that when children with disabilities attended an inclusive early childhood education program as an infant and toddler, parents selected an inclusive program for their children as preschoolers. Parents of children with disabilities who did not attend an inclusive early childhood education program as an infant and toddler selected varied types of early childhood programs for their children as preschoolers (Hanson et al., 2000). Parents of both children with and without disabilities reported that they felt the staff of an inclusive university-based preschool was doing well with incorporating inclusive practices in the classroom but were concerned about the staff’s preparation for children with severe disabilities (Seery et al., 2000). However, parents of preschool children with severe disabilities reported a positive perception on inclusive early childhood education programs of their children including the ability of their children to establish friendships and exceeded expectations of the children (Cross et al., 2004; Inclusion in Preschool, 2006). Though not all parents of children with disabilities choose inclusive early childhood education programs, parents reported an overall satisfaction with their chosen early childhood education program.
Barriers to Accessing Quality Early Childhood Education for Children with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 states that children with disabilities must be accepted into early childhood education programs just like any other child would. Due to the necessity of looking beyond the typical quality indicators and making sure children with disabilities will be properly cared for and taught, some researchers argue that it is challenging to locate high-quality early childhood education opportunities for children with disabilities (Scott & McWilliam, 2002). Researchers reported that receiving early childhood education programming may not assist children with disabilities in meeting milestones necessary for kindergarten readiness. Some of the variability in meeting these milestones was due to the inconsistency in early childhood education programming and the selected skills that were the target of the provided interventions (Farran, 2011).

One challenge parents faced was the inability to locate high-quality early childhood programs in rural areas (Ceglowski et al., 2009). Parents reported no knowledge of services as one of the reasons why they do not enroll their children with disabilities in early childhood programs (Obi, 2011). Parents also reported receiving no information on inclusive program options (Hanson et al., 2000). Goldsmith and Rees (2007) suggested that states providing funding to early childhood education programs should collect information about the options and make this information available to parents.

Though families utilize community agencies such as Head Start to obtain a diagnosis for their children, families were unaware of the preschool options for their children with disabilities and relied on informal networks for finding preschools that
would care for children with disabilities (Ceglowski et al., 2009). Families reported they were given few to no early childhood program options (Hanson et al., 2000). Over 50% of parents of children with cerebral palsy reported that they needed assistance securing a “sitter” for their children (Palisano et al., 2010). For parents transitioning children with disabilities from Part C to Part B services, some parents were told which early childhood education option in which their children would be placed.

**Early Childhood Education Selection**

For parents, the process of selecting an early childhood education program has been described as both an exciting and overwhelming task (PBS Parents, 2013). In order to better manage this task, Ransom (2012) suggests that parents break down qualities they want included in an early childhood education program in three lists: 1) what must be included, 2) what should be included, and 3) what may be included. Researchers warned parents searching for early childhood education programs to ensure the program was licensed (Kuchment, 2007). Touring programs was another suggested practice (Enrollment Building Ideas, 2012).

**Factors that Influence Selection of Early Childhood Education for Typical Children**

Some factors that influence the selection of early childhood education programs matter more to some families than others. The program should be of good fit to the family, where family values align with program standards (Enrollment Building Ideas, 2012). Avenues that parents considered when locating high-quality early childhood education programs included whether the program was accredited by an association, where the program fell in a quality rating system, and other quality indicators (Scott & McWilliam, 2002). Ransom (2012) suggested utilizing a parent-friendly checklist such as
NAEYC’s “10 Signs of a Great Preschool.” The factors that influence the selection of early childhood education for typical children found in the literature include cost, parental and teacher elements, quality, developmental growth, curriculum, safety, and other factors.

Cost. Ransom (2012) reported that the cost associated with early childhood education programs was an influential factor in the parental selection of programming. The use of the voucher system in early childhood education has been implemented in some areas to allow parents a greater selection in early childhood education programming for their children than is available in K-12 programming (Meyer, 2008). It has been suggested that states providing funding for preschool programs ensure low income families be the priority. Furthermore, it is suggested that states offer a variety of early childhood education programs allowing parents a choice in program enrollment (Goldsmith & Rees, 2007). On the other hand, Doggett and Wat (2010) argued that many middle class families have a limited number of early childhood education options because they cannot afford high quality options but do not meet the income standards for publicly-funded early childhood education options. The achievement gap between students from the middle class to students from the upper class is just as wide as the gap of students from the low class to the middle class (Barnett & Frede, 2010).

Parental and teacher elements. Aspects relating to parents and families also factor into the parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children. Lien (2008) reported a significant difference in the educational level of parents, employment of parents, and the household income regarding the factors that influenced the selection, satisfaction, and quality of early childhood education programs. Ransom (2012) reported
that aspects relating to teachers in early childhood education programs were an influential factor in the parental selection of programming. Teacher-child interactions, teacher-child ratios, and the education and training of teachers were three of the suggested criteria that parents should look for when deciding on early childhood education enrollment (Kuchment, 2007). The caring nature of teachers is a criteria important to parents (Ispa et al., 1998).

**Quality.** Ispa et al. (1998) stated that the overall quality of the program is an important criteria in the parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children. NAEYC (2008) provided parents with both the ten standards early childhood education programs must meet in order to be considered NAEYC accredited as well as specific items to look for in each standard for each program a parent is choosing among. One parent reported that she felt overwhelmed when she was searching for an early childhood education program for her first child but that utilizing information provided by NAEYC and securing a NAEYC accredited program for her child put her at ease in that she made the correct choice.

**Developmental growth.** The presence of developmentally appropriate activities and materials was a factor that contributed to a high-quality early childhood education program (First 5 California, 2005). Kuchment (2007) suggested that parents look for early childhood education programs that include activities to promote social development in their programming. Ispa et al. (1998) reported that parents felt that activities that promoted social, cognitive, and motor development were important criteria for early childhood education programs to include in their daily routines.
Curriculum. The type of curriculum an early childhood education program utilizes in its programming is a factor that matters to parents (Ransom, 2012). Directors of early childhood education programs feel that the type of curriculum an early childhood education program implements is a factor that parents base their early childhood education program selection upon. Directors specifically noted that certain types of curricula like the Montessori approach were more attractive to parents than other types of curricula (Enrollment Building Ideas, 2012).

Safety. The ability of the program to provide a safe environment for their children was an influential factor in parental selection of early childhood education programs (Ispa et al., 1998; Ransom, 2012). Kuchment (2007) suggested safety as one of the top two factors parents should look for when making an early childhood education selection.

In addition to the above factors, parents reported a few other important selection criteria. Other criteria parents found important in the selection of early childhood education programs were the daily programming, practical considerations, friends’ recommendations of the program, furnishings and display, and personal care routines (Ispa et al., 1998).

Factors Influencing Parental Choice of Early Childhood Education Programs for Children with Disabilities

During the early childhood education program selection process, more difficulty and stress occurred for parents of children with disabilities than parents of children without disabilities (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011). Similarly, Hanson et al., (2000) found that the transition process including the selection of an early childhood education program was a stressful and emotional time for parents of children with disabilities. The
National Center for Learning Disabilities suggested that arriving prepared for the task of early childhood education program selection would make for a less overwhelming selection process (Editorial, 2013). Preparing for the selection process included knowing the basics about early childhood education, understand the vast array of philosophies and associated terms, researching, and utilizing a checklist for high-quality programming. For parents of children with disabilities, the factors that influence their selection of early childhood education program include geography and transportation, limited program availability, acceptance of children with disabilities and available therapy, cost, parental and teacher elements, operating hours, and quality.

*Geography and transportation.* One of the most important factors in early childhood education program selection for children with disabilities was the geographical distance from a family’s home (Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). The number of options available in rural areas has been reported to be very limited (Ceglowski et al., 2009). Families of children with disabilities were found to prefer options that were less than a 30-minute drive (Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). Though Kern (2007) concurred that fewer early childhood options were available to families with children in disabilities living in rural areas, his research found that early childhood programs in rural areas were of higher quality than early childhood programs in other geographic areas. Available transportation was one of the most critical factors in the parental determination of early childhood education enrollment for their children with disabilities (Obi, 2011). In Kern’s study (2007), parents reported that though they felt there were an adequate number of early childhood education options for their children with disabilities, the quality of the options did not meet their standards.
Limited program availability. In addition to how far early childhood education programs are from a family’s home and the provision of transportation to and from the program, another factor in the parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities is limited program availability. Glenn-Applegate et al. (2011) found that 30% of parents felt that the current early childhood program their children with disabilities attended was the only option available to them. Most parents attended one transition meeting where they were given the information regarding their children’s disability rulings and asked for their input regarding the placement of their children with no knowledge of the placement options (Hanson et al., 2000). Families reported randomly finding child care and were satisfied with their current program because they were happy to have found a program for their children at all (Ceglowski et al., 2009). In a study of families transitioning their children with disabilities from Part C (birth – two years) to Part B (three – five years) services, parents reported receiving few inclusive options during transition meeting (Hanson et al., 2000).

Acceptance of children with disabilities and available therapy. The acceptance of children with disabilities was one of the top three factors that influenced parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011). Parents of children with disabilities felt that their children must meet certain milestones, or their children would not be accepted into an early childhood education program, specifically an inclusive program (Hanson et al., 2000). Researchers found that the type of disability a child had limited the early childhood education opportunities available for the parents to choose among. Sometimes parents were unable to select the program they most wanted due to the disability. Sometimes
professionals selected the program for the family due to the disability (Hanson et al., 2000). Scott and McWilliam (2002) suggested that parents select early childhood opportunities that provide therapy and meet the individual needs of the child through ongoing assessment and specialized assistance. The availability of therapy was one of the top three factors that influenced parental selection of early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011).

Cost. Though the research conducted by Glenn-Applegate, et al. (2011) did not result in the inclusion of cost as an influential factor in parents’ selection of early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities, the researchers suggested that future studies should include cost as a factor because the sample contained mostly affluent families. Families reported that early childhood education programs including in-home caregivers charged more for children with disabilities than for typical children (Ceglowski et al., 2009). Contrarily, 82.5% of families of infants and toddlers with moderate to severe disabilities reported they accrued no out-of-pocket expense for care of their children. This finding may be due to the fact that more than half of the families reported choosing in-home care with relatives at or below the cost of other early childhood education options (Niergarth & Winterman, 2010).

Parental and teacher elements. Obi (2011) also found the educational level of parents as a factor associated with the parental decision to enroll their children with disabilities into early childhood education programs. The caring nature of teachers was one of the top three factors that influenced parental selection of early childhood education programing for children with disabilities (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011). For children
with disabilities, Scott and McWilliam (2002) advocate that safety and personal care routines in early childhood education programs are basic needs that must be met.

*Operating hours.* Researchers found that one of the most critical factors in parental determination of early childhood education enrollment for their children with disabilities was whether or not the early childhood education program operated on a full day schedule (Obi, 2011). Parents of children with disabilities had trouble finding early childhood education programs that provided full-day care for their children (Scott & McWilliam, 2002). Many family chose in-home care or were forced to have multiple entity care due to the inability to find full-day early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities (Ceglowski et al., 2009; Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). Two of the reasons researchers found as to why families do not enroll their children with disabilities in early childhood education programs to receive early intervention services were the non-availability of an all-day program and an inconvenient program beginning time (Obi, 2011).

*Quality.* Doggett and Wat (2010) advocated for high-quality early childhood education opportunities for all children regardless of socio-economic status or disability. Regarding early childhood education programs, a difference in definition of high quality existed for typically-developing children versus children with disabilities (Scott & McWilliam, 2002). The quality of the early childhood education program was one of the top criteria parents used to select a program for their infants and toddlers with disabilities (Niergarth & Winterman, 2010).
Summary

A considerable amount of literature has been published on early childhood education. This literature review has discussed early childhood education as it related to both children with and without disabilities. While high-quality universal early childhood education is costly, many benefits to providing these funds in early childhood education as opposed to spending even more in the future on repeated grades, special education placements, welfare, and the criminal justice system were discussed. Specific early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities found were Reggio Emilia programs, Montessori programs, religious-based programs, Headstart, private centers, inclusive classrooms, public school classrooms, child development centers, special education classrooms, separate schools, residential facilities, and in-home options. Emphasis was placed on high-quality programming. Concepts from Lev Vygotsky, Reggio Emilia, and Maria Montessori were found in use in inclusive early childhood education programs across the nation. The research-based studies included in this literature review concluded that the display of gains in social, emotional, language, and cognitive functioning of preschool-aged children with disabilities was contingent on type of disability and environment.

Preschool-aged children with disabilities were eligible to participate in early childhood education including inclusion through Section 504 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Though most parents of preschool-aged children with disabilities held a positive view on the inclusive services their children received in early childhood education programs, these parents felt that regardless of inclusive practices, there were fewer early childhood education options for their children.
with disabilities, and parental knowledge of available options was limited. Many factors influenced the parental selection of early childhood education options including cost, parental and teacher elements, quality, developmental growth, curriculum, safety, geography and transportation, limited program availability, acceptance of children with disabilities and available therapy, and operating hours. The literature review indicated that while some of these factors may be the same for both parents of children with and without disabilities, some of the influential factors may be different.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following section discussed the research design and methodology for this study on the parental selection of early childhood education programs. First, the problem and purposes of the study were briefly examined. A review of the literature found limited and controversial research, especially regarding early childhood education programming and selection for children with disabilities. The purposes reviewed were both aimed at adding to existing literature as well as producing original findings pertaining to early childhood education for children with disabilities.

Secondly, the research questions and hypotheses were stated. These include the following topics: parental selection factors in choosing early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities, level of choice in programs, severity of disabilities, inclusiveness of programs, parental satisfaction with chosen programs, types of disabilities, and parental perceptions of the availability of programs. Thirdly, the population and sample were specified. Random sampling will be utilized to locate eligible participants for this study; to be eligible, parents must have at least one child with a disability and one child without a disability who are eight years of age or under.

Next, the data collection and instrumentation were examined. Data were collected electronically through the Center for Parent Information and Resources’ parent centers in each state. The researcher was given permission to adapt and use The Preschool Selection Questionnaire. The three sections of the adapted instrument – the Early Childhood Education Instrument – are discussed in detail, and examples of items are stated. Lastly,
data analysis is explained. Three of the four hypotheses were analyzed using a Chi-square. The remaining hypothesis was analyzed with a dependent T-test.

Problem and Purposes Overview

Access to early childhood education varies depending on geographic region, family income level, presence of a disability, and early childhood education program policies (Hanson et al., 2000; Kern, 2007; Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). In the quest for the provision of universal early childhood education, high-quality programming is being brought to the forefront now more than ever. Though the elements that comprise high-quality early childhood education programs vary depending on program philosophy, theory, and organization affiliation, many schools of thought share some common high-quality elements (Farran 2011; Hughes, 2010). The literature cites many of these elements as parental selection factors in choosing early childhood education programs for their children. These selection factors include the following: cost, parental elements, teacher elements, quality, development, curriculum, safety, daily programming, practical considerations, friends’ recommendations of the program, furnishings and display, and personal care routines (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011; Ispa et al., 1998; Obi, 2011; Ransom, 2012).

Far fewer studies have been conducted concerning the parental selection factors in choosing early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities. In fact, it has been suggested that the definition of high-quality early childhood education for children with disabilities is different than that for children without disabilities (Scott & McWilliam, 2002). For parents of children with disabilities, the selection factors utilized in choosing early childhood programs for their children included those of parents of
children without disabilities and the following other factors: operating hours, acceptance of children with disabilities, type of disability a child has, available transportation, and provision of therapy (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011; Obi, 2011). One purpose of this research is to determine if a difference exists in the parental selection factors of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities.

Another point of interest was the level of choice parents of children with disabilities have in selecting early childhood education programs. One study found that parents of children with disabilities reported they had few to no options (Hanson et al., 2000). Some studies report that children with more severe disabilities benefit more from early childhood education programs that are less inclusive (Demchak & Drinkwater, 1992; Mills et al., 1998) while other studies report more inclusive programs are more beneficial (Holahan & Costenbader, 2000; Rafferty et al., 2003). Due to the limited literature on parental choice in the selection of early childhood education programs and controversial findings regarding the types of programs most beneficial for each level of disability, a second purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting an early childhood education program based on the severity of their children’s disabilities.

The researcher was also interested in exploring how satisfied parents are with the early childhood education program they selected for their children. In previous studies, parents report satisfaction with the current early childhood program their children with disabilities attend (Cross et al., 2004; Inclusion in Preschool, 2006). Specifically, the researcher wanted to investigate if the inclusiveness of the program plays a role in parental satisfaction of the selected program. A third purpose of this research is to
analyze the relationship between the inclusiveness of the program and parental satisfaction of the program for their children with disabilities.

The amount of availability parents feel exists of early childhood education programs for the children with disabilities was another curiosity for the researcher. This interest is similar to the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs. The availability of programs also involves whether or not the presence of a disability excludes children in enrolling in certain early childhood education programs (Ceglowski et al., 2009). The last purpose of this study is to investigate if there is a relationship between the types of disabilities children have and parental perception of the availability of early childhood education programs.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Do identified factors influence parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities?

H1: There is a difference between the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities.

H2: There is a relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs and the severity of the children’s disability.

Research Question 2: Do identified factors correspond to parental satisfaction with early childhood education programs for children with disabilities?

H3: There is a relationship between the inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and parental
satisfaction with the chosen early childhood education programs for their children.

H₄: There is a relationship between the types of disabilities children have and the early childhood education programs that parents feel are available to their children.

Population and Sample

The population for which the research questions were addressed and hypotheses tested was parents of young children with disabilities. Specifically, this population of parents was limited to parents who had at least one child with disabilities and one child without disabilities, both eight years of age or younger at the time of research commencement. A representative sample from this population was obtained via the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR). Parent centers across the nation were contacted and information regarding this study was disseminated to potential parent participants. The method utilized was voluntary sampling as the researcher had no control over which parents responded and participated in the research. The unit of analysis for the sample was one parent.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The data collection methodology employed in this national study of parent participants was electronic survey. A panel of experts consisting of two parents of children with disabilities, one early intervention service provider, and one professor of early intervention reviewed the instrument and made suggestions for revision. The researcher carefully considered all suggestions and made appropriate revisions to the instrument. After obtaining IRB approval (Appendix A), the researcher completed a pilot
study in order to gain proper reliability measures on the revised instrument. The researcher recruited parents of both children with and without disabilities who are at least eight years of age or younger to complete the instrument survey. A total of sixteen parents participated in the pilot study. Reliability was 0.949 for the scale of 20 factors associated with parental choice in selecting early childhood education programs for children without disabilities. Reliability was 0.874 for the scale of 20 factors associated with parental choice in selecting early childhood education program for children with disabilities.

After obtaining reliability measures, the researcher contacted the director of the Mississippi Parenting Training and Information Network, who in turn contacted the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR) director. An email about research participation was sent to each parent center, nationwide, from the CPIR. This e-mail briefly described the study and requested that the e-mail be disseminated to potential parent participants via e-mail, organization websites, and/or social media (i.e., Facebook). The disseminated information contained a link to Survey Monkey where the instrument could be found for those parents who chose to participate in the study. This information also advised parents that in order to participate, they must have at least one child with disabilities and one child without disabilities, both eight years of age or younger.

The first item on survey monkey asked participants to respond “yes” or “no” to the following question: “Do you currently have at least one child with a disability and one child without a disability who are both eight years of age or younger? For this study, a “disability” includes a diagnosis, having an IEP or IFSP, or receiving special education services.” For those participants who responded “no” to this questions, a message
appeared on the screen informing them that they were ineligible to participate in this study and thanked them for their interest and time. For those participants who responded “yes” to this question, they proceeded to the informed consent section. Only those participants who checked the designated box indicating that they read the informed consent and agreed to voluntarily participate in this study were allowed to proceed to the actual questionnaire items.

*Early Childhood Education Instrument*

The Early Childhood Education Instrument (Appendix B) was developed by adapting The Preschool Selection Questionnaire – an instrument utilized in a previous study (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011; Glenn-Applegate, 2012). Author permission was granted to make revisions to the instrument (Appendix C). The Early Childhood Education Instrument has three sections. The first section contains information about family demographics from the participant perspective. Items in this section were developed using information from the United States Census Bureau and the United States Department of Labor. Examples include the following: “what state do you live in?”, “what is your household income?”, and “what is your household size?”.

The second section contained information about each participant’s child who is without disabilities. The items pertaining to early childhood education program types were developed based on the least restrictive environment (LRE) options for preschool-aged children with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Though this section is meant to be answered about children without disabilities, the same early childhood education program types were used for both children with and children without disabilities so that responses could be compared. The initial item about early childhood education program types reads
“what type of early childhood education program did you choose for this child?” For children without disabilities the response choices were “regular early childhood program, separate class, or home” as well as a write-in response. For children with disabilities, the responses choices were “regular early childhood program, separate class, separate school, residential facility, or home” as well as a write-in response. The two additional response choices were for children with disabilities only because children without disabilities are unable to attend those two types of early childhood education programs. The items pertaining to participant variance of choice in choosing early childhood education programs, participant rating of early childhood education selection features, resources used to select an early childhood education program, and payment for the program were taken from the Preschool Selection Questionnaire (Glenn-Applegate et al, 2011; Glenn-Applegate, 2012).

The researcher was interested in investigating the following two variables that are measured in Section 2: parental selection factors in choosing early childhood education programs and level of choice parents have in choosing early childhood education programs. The researcher used the set of 20 likert-scale items to measure the parental selection factors in choosing early childhood education programs; the same 20 items are utilized for both children with (in Section 3) and without disabilities. Examples of these 20 selection factors include the following: “if the hours were convenient for my schedule,” “if the early childhood education program seemed safe,” and “if the location was convenient to my home or work.” The researcher used the following item to measure the level of choice parents have in choosing early childhood education programs: “when you were choosing an early childhood education program for your child, did you
have….complete choice, some choice, or no choice?” This item examining the level of choice was asked for both children with (in Section 3) and without disabilities.

Measures for the open-ended item of the early childhood education selection features showed high inter-rater reliability (K = .90, p < .001). The assessment of the coding process for this item’s responses was completed with Cohen’s Kappa. The coding system was deemed reliable with the intercoder reliability at K = .82, p < .001. A separate coding system was utilized for the item regarding resources participants used to select an early childhood education program. Of the 53 different responses to this open-ended item, two coders agreed on the coding of 50 of the responses (94%). This coding system had a high degree of reliability at .993 (F(52) = 281.71, p < .001).

The researcher adapted the item regarding program payment from the Preschool Selection Questionnaire to include another response choice. The item now reads “how much do you pay for your child’s early childhood education program….no cost, less than other children my child’s age, equal to children my child’s age, or more than other children my child’s age?” The last response choice was added due to parents in other studies reporting that they paid more for their child’s early childhood education program than parents of other children (Ceglowski et al., 2009; Niergarth & Winterman, 2010). Items pertaining to the level of satisfaction parents feel with their chosen early childhood education program and the availability of early childhood education options were developed due to literature that prompted this study’s research questions (Ceglowski et al., 2009; Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011; Hanson et al., 2000; Ispa et al., 1998; Kern, 2007).
The third section contained information about each participant’s child who has a disability. Many of these items are identical to those in the second section pertaining to children without disabilities. In this third section, the researcher included items about the type of disability, severity of disability, and inclusive programming due to controversial information in the literature regarding the most optimal early childhood education program opportunities based on the type and severity of the child’s disability (Holahan & Costenbader, 2000; Mills et al., 1998; Rafferty et al., 2003; Kwon et al., 2011). The researcher also included items regarding receipt of services for children with disabilities based on information from the literature (Scott & McWilliam, 2002; Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011).

The researcher was interested in investigating the following variables that are measured in Section 3: severity of the child’s disability, inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education program, level of satisfaction parents feel with their chosen early childhood program, types of disabilities children have, and parental feeling of availability of early childhood education programs. In order to measure the severity of the child’s disability, parent participants were asked to rate the level of their children’s disabilities as either “speech only, mild, moderate, severe, or profound.” The item that measures the variable of inclusiveness states, “how often is your child including in programming with children without disabilities….regular early childhood classroom 100% of the time, regular early childhood classroom at least 80% of the time, regular early childhood classroom 40-79% of the time, or regular early childhood classroom 0-39% of the time?”

The level of satisfaction variable was measured by the following item: “what is your level of satisfaction with your chosen early childhood education program….not
satisfied, a little satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or very satisfied?” In order to determine the types of disabilities children have, the researcher provided parental participants 13 responses to choose among as well as an additional write-in response. These responses choices are based on the definition the researcher used in defining “disability” for the purposes of this study. Depending on the variance of responses, the researcher may combine some of the responses together into broader categories. To measure the availability of early childhood education programs from the parents’ perspective, the researcher included the following item for parental response: “how would you rate the availability of early childhood education programs for your child….no availability, a little availability, some availability, or much availability?”

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted a dependent t-test in order to analyze the data for the first hypothesis in order to determine whether or not a difference existed in parental selection factors of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities versus parental selection factors of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities. For the three other hypotheses, the researcher utilized a Chi-square to analyze the data. The second hypothesis examines the relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting an early childhood education program and the severity of the child’s disability. A Chi-square was employed to analyze data for this hypothesis. The third and fourth hypotheses pertain to children with disabilities only. The third hypothesis measures the relationship between the inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education program and the level of satisfaction parents feel with the chosen early childhood education program. A Chi-square was employed to analyze this hypothesis.
The fourth hypothesis measures the relationship between the types of disabilities that children have and the early childhood education programs parents feel are available to their children. A Chi-square was employed to analyze this hypothesis.

Summary

This section discussed the reasoning of what types of data were collected, who was eligible to submit data, how the data were collected, the instrument used to collect the data, and how the data was analyzed. The lack of information found in the literature pertaining to the selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities has been discussed as the primary reason for conducting the study. In addition to this lack of information, the controversial nature of the present literature as well as the interest in examining both early childhood education selection factors for children with and without disabilities have been reviewed as the problem and purposes of the study. Choice, satisfaction, availability, types and severity of disabilities, and inclusion combined with the selection factors of early childhood education programs have been specified as the key components of the research questions and hypotheses.

The details regarding the sample and data collection have been reviewed and include parents as the participants who were contacted nationally through the CPIR to complete an electronic questionnaire. The sections of the Early Childhood Education Instrument have been explored with specific notations given to adaptations made from a previously used instrument and item examples. Data analyses have been investigated to include three tests using Chi-square and one use of the dependent T-test.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of parents regarding the early childhood education programming for their children with and without disabilities. Due to the limited amount of literature on parental selection factors of early childhood education program for children with disabilities, the researcher explored these factors for parents of both children with and without disabilities. Though few studies have examined the level of choice of early childhood education programming parents of children with disabilities have, results indicated that these parents have little to no choice. The researcher further examined the level of choice by investigating the relationship between it and the severity of children’s disabilities. Previous research revealed a differing in results regarding the utilization of inclusion in early childhood education programming for children with disabilities. In this study, the researcher specifically considered parental satisfaction of their children’s early childhood education programming in relation to inclusion. The majority of the literature states that few early childhood education options are available for children with disabilities, specifically in more rural areas. The researcher examined this topic deeper to better understand the parental perception of early childhood education availability including the connection between the perceived availability and the type of disabilities children have.

Research Questions and Associated Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Do identified factors influence parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities?
H₁: There is a difference between the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities.

H₂: There is a relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs and the severity of the children’s disability.

Research Question 2: Do identified factors correspond to parental satisfaction with early childhood education programs for children with disabilities?

H₃: There is a relationship between the inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and parental satisfaction with the chosen early childhood education programs for their children.

H₄: There is a relationship between the types of disabilities children have and the early childhood education programs that parents feel are available to their children.

Analysis of Data

The following section contains information regarding the study’s data analysis. This section began with demographic data collected from the sample. This section also included information about the participants’ children with and without disabilities as related to their early childhood education programming. Lastly, the section ended with the analysis of data for each of the four hypotheses. This data analysis included one dependent t-test and three Chi-squares.
Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 44 parents across the nation met eligibility requirements and were included in the study. These participants were all parents of both children with and without disabilities who were eight years of age or younger at the time of participation. Parent participants completed an electronic survey responding to demographic items, items about their children without disabilities, and items about their children with disabilities. Of the parent participants, 38 (86.4%) were female, and 5 (11.4%) were male. One person did not disclose gender. For ethnicity, 1 (2.3%) person identified as Black, 4 (9.1%) participants identified themselves as Hispanic, and 38 (86.4%) identified themselves as Caucasian. Twenty states were represented in the study. The following table contains information regarding the number and percentage of participants from each of the 20 states.

Table 1

Participants’ State of Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
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<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington (state)</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked their household size and average household income. The majority of participants reported a household size of four or five people. The average household income most reported by participants was between $25,000-$49,000 and
$75,000-$99,999. Table 2 contains information about participants’ household size and income.

Table 2

*Participants’ Household Size and Average Household Income*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size/Income</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>14</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-$24,999</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-$49,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$74,999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
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<td>15.9</td>
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<td>$125,000-$149,999</td>
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<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-$174,999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$175,000-$199,999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 and up</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants also responded to the type of profession they held. Participants in the education field and stay-at-home parents made up about half of the sample with an equal number of participants in each category. Table 3 contains information regarding the numbers and percentages of participants in each profession category.

Table 3

*Participants’ Type of Profession*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession Category</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay-at-Home Parent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to respond to questions about their children with and without disabilities. The majority of the children both with and without disabilities were on the older end of the eight years or younger age cut-off. Table 4 contains information
regarding the numbers and percentages of children both with and without disabilities whose parents participated in the study.

Table 4

*Age of Children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-23 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifty-nine percent of the participants reported that their children without disabilities attended more than one early childhood education program in the first five years of life. Sixty-eight percent of the participants reported that their children with disabilities attended more than one early childhood education program in the first five years of life. Parents were asked to choose one early childhood program their children attended on which to respond to the items pertaining to early childhood education programs. As indicated in Table 5, the majority of children without disabilities entered the discussed early childhood program at age three. The majority of children with
disabilities entered the discussed early childhood program at age three or less than 12 months.

Table 5

*Age Children Entered Discussed Early Childhood Education Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-23 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants next responded to questions about the early childhood education programs. The first set of questions asked parents about the type of early childhood education program their children attended. Table 6 indicates that most parents reported that their children attended a regular early childhood education program, regardless of disability.

Table 6

*Type of Early Childhood Education Program Attended*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>35 79.5</td>
<td>15 34.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate Class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home (with parent)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the four types of regular early childhood education, most children attended a child care, regardless of disability as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7

*Type of Early Childhood Education Program Attended*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group child care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent participants then responded to items regarding the number of days each week and hours each day their children attended their early childhood education program. Approximately half of the children were able to attend their early childhood education program five days each week, regardless of disability. Almost 30% of children were able to their early childhood education program three hours per day, regardless of disability. Another 25% of children without disabilities were able to attend their early childhood education program four hours per day.

Table 8

*Amount of Time Able to Attend Early Childhood Education Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Days per Week</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours per Day</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants provided information regarding the cost associated with their early childhood education program. Seventy-five percent of parents paid equal to that of other children for their children without disabilities while only 36% of parents paid equal to that of other children for their children with disabilities.

Table 9

*Cost Associated with Early Childhood Education Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n   %</td>
<td></td>
<td>n   %</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cost</td>
<td>10  22.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>19  43.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than others</td>
<td>1   2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal to others</td>
<td>33  75</td>
<td></td>
<td>16  36.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than others</td>
<td>0   0</td>
<td></td>
<td>4   9.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants’ final responses were regarding their preferred type of early childhood education program. Parents of both children with and without disabilities preferred
regular early childhood education program more than other early childhood education programs.

Table 10

*Type of Preferred Early Childhood Education Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate Class</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of regular early childhood education program options, parents preferred child care over the other programs, regardless of disability. Parents also preferred the child care option over the self-contained public school program for the separate class option, regardless of disability.

Table 11

*Type of Preferred Early Childhood Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Without Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents also responded to items specifically regarding their children with disabilities. The majority of respondents reported that their children were classified as having either multiple disabilities (31.8%) or autism (22.7%). The majority of parents also reported that their children with disabilities were either diagnosed or eligible to receive services at less than 12 months of age (18%). Table 12 contains information regarding the type of disability and the age of disability diagnosis or service eligibility.
Table 12

*Type of Disability and Age of Diagnosis or Eligibility*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability/Age</th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/Blind</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmentally Delayed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic Impairment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12 months</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-23 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Kindergarten Entry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents also responded to two items about the services their children received in early childhood education programming. A little over half of the respondents (54.5%) stated that the early childhood education program provided services to their children with disabilities. An additional 18.2% of respondents stated that though the early childhood education did not provide services to their children with disabilities, the program did allow other service providers to come on its campus to provide services. About one quarter of respondents (22.7%) stated that the early childhood education program did not provide nor allow services to be provided on its campus. Most parents reported that their children with disabilities received services at their early childhood education programming. Table 13 contains information about the location of services for children with disabilities.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>With Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At program</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a clinic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No services</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of Analyzed Hypotheses

This section contains information regarding the research questions and analyses of the hypotheses this study addressed.
Research Question 1: Do identified factors influence parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities?

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference between the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities.

Parents responded to a set of twenty items that asked them to rate each item by level of importance in selecting an early childhood education program for their children. Parents responded twice to this same set of twenty items – first for their children without disabilities and second for their children with disabilities. The mean for parent responses for children without disabilities was 3.33, and the mean for parent responses for children with disabilities was 3.33. Reliability existed for each set of factors. For the set of factors parents responded to for their children without disabilities, Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.813. For the set of factors parents responded to for their children with disabilities, Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.879. A t-test was run on these two sets of factors. According to the results of the this analysis, there was not a significant difference, \( t(30)=0.044, p=0.965 \), between parental rating of the importance of factors in selecting an early childhood education program for their children without disabilities and the parental rating of the importance of factors in selecting an early childhood education program for their children with disabilities.

However, individually, two of these twenty factors were significant as to the difference in degree parents placed upon each factor for their children without disabilities versus for their children with disabilities in selecting early childhood education programs.
There was a significant difference between parental responses for their children without disabilities (mean=3.44) and parental responses for their children with disabilities (mean=3.85) in the number of children in each classroom or the child-to-adult ratio, \( t(26)=1.727, p=0.013 \). The second difference existed between parental responses for their children without disabilities (mean=3.12) and parental responses for their children with disabilities (mean=3.69) in the program’s ability to serve children with disabilities, \( t(25)=2.763, p=0.011 \). Table 14 contains information regarding the rating of each factor by parents of children without disabilities.

Table 14

*Factors Influencing the Selection of Early Childhood Education Programming For Children Without Disabilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Not Aware of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>( % )</td>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>( % )</td>
<td>( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Diversity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match of Values</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Program</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Teachers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-to-Adult Ratio</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning New Things</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Wages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve Disabilities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most parent participants, regardless of disability, rated each factor as either extremely important or important. Table 15 contains information regarding the rating of each factor by parents of children with disabilities.
Table 15

Factors Influencing the Selection of Early Childhood Education Programming For Children With Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Not Aware of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Diversity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match of Values</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Program</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Teachers</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-to-Adult Ratio</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning New Things</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Wages</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve Disabilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Hours</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness &amp; Upkeep</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Feeling</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusted Personnel</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Location</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Pricing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs and the severity of the children’s disability.

Parents responded to an item asking about their level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs with either complete choice, some choice, or no choice. Parents also responded to an item asking them to rate the severity of the children’s disabilities as mild, moderate, severe, or profound. A Pearson chi-square was calculated on these two independent variables. Results were not significant $X^2(N=42, df=6)=6.999, p=0.321$. One parent classified his or her child as having a child with a profound disability. This parent reported having no choice in the selection of an early childhood education program. Half as many parents ($n=9$) reported having no choice than those ($n=18$) that reported having complete choice in the selection of early childhood education programming for their children with disabilities. Table 16 contains the numbers and percentages of participants that display the relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs and the severity of their children’s disabilities.
Table 16

*Relationship Between Level of Choice and Severity of Disability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity of Disability</th>
<th>Level of Choice</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: Do identified factors correspond to parental satisfaction with early childhood education programs for children with disabilities?

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between the inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and parental satisfaction with the chosen early childhood education programs for their children.

Parents responded to an item regarding the frequency of their children’s placement in early childhood education programming with children without disabilities as either 100% of the time, 80% of the time, 40-79% of the time, or less than 40% of the time. Parents also responded to an item regarding their satisfaction with their chosen early childhood education program for their children as not satisfied, a little satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or very satisfied. A Pearson chi-square was run on these two independent variables. Results were not significant $X^2(N=40, df=9)=16.059, p=0.060$. Of the eight participants who reported their children with disabilities spending 40% or less time in the regular early childhood education classroom, one of these participants
reported not being satisfied with the early childhood education program. This participant was the only participant who reported not being satisfied with the early childhood education program for his or her child with disabilities. For parents reporting to be very satisfied with their early childhood education programming, the largest percentage of parents (55.6%) reported that their children participated in regular early childhood education programming 100% of the time. Table 17 contains the number of percentages of participants regarding the relationship between amount of time children were in inclusive programming and the parental level of satisfaction with their early childhood education programs.

Table 17

*Relationship Between Level of Satisfaction and Amount of Time in Inclusive Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Inclusion</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 40% of time</td>
<td>n 1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-79% of time</td>
<td>n 5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% of time</td>
<td>n 2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% of time</td>
<td>n 10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between the types of disabilities children have and the early childhood education programs that parents feel are available to their children.

Parents responded to an item categorizing the types of disabilities their children had. Parents also responded to an item asking them rate the availability of early
childhood education programs for their children as either none available, few available, some available, or many available. A Pearson chi-square was calculated on these two independent variables. Results were not significant $X^2(\text{N}=38, \text{df}=18)=16.556, p=0.554$.

Of the thirteen disability categories, parents classified their children in seven of these categories. The categories of autism ($n=10$) and multiple disabilities ($n=14$) had the most parent responses. Over 70% of participants who rated the availability of early childhood education programs as few available had children with either autism or multiple disabilities. Three participants rated early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities as many available; three participants also reported no available early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities. The majority of participants rated early childhood education programming for their children with disabilities as few or some available. Table 18 contains the numbers and percentages of participants classifying their children into one of thirteen eligibility categories as well as the rating of the availability of early childhood education programs.

**Table 18**

*Relationship Between Program Availability and Type of Disability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disability</th>
<th>Program Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Blind</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Delay</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disability</th>
<th>Program Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Disability</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

This chapter presented tables and narratives that summarized the results of this study. Of the four hypotheses, results of these analyses concluded that none were statistically significant. Two factors within the set of twenty factors that parents rated regarding the level of importance in selecting early childhood education programs were individually statistically significant. In Chapter V, the researcher discussed the results in more detail including the limitations of the study and provided implications for further research.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provided a summary of the study – aligning problems found from the key elements in the review of the literature to their associated purposes and hypotheses in this study including influential factors in the parental selection of early childhood education, type and severity of disability, inclusiveness and availability of programming, level of choice parents had in choosing early childhood education programs, and parental satisfaction. Findings were discussed in detail, and conclusions derived from the results of the study are shared. Implications including suggestions for practice for decreasing the child-to-adult ratio, serving children with disabilities in general early childhood education classrooms, and defining high-quality in regards to programming were also given. Finally, areas of potential future research in the field of early childhood education are given including participant variation, including outcomes in the data, and defining early childhood education more specifically in the study.

Summary of the Study

The review of the literature led the researcher to one particular study that examined the factors that influenced the parental selection of early childhood education program. The set of twenty items on the Likert scale and corresponding open-ended questions utilized in this piece of literature were components of the current study’s instrument (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011). The problem this study addressed included both gaps in the literature regarding early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities and the areas of debate found in the literature. These problem areas were included as additional components in the current study’s instrument. This
instrument was disseminated through each state’s Parent Training and Information Center.

A variety of early childhood education programs are available in the U.S. – from part-time to full-time, half-day to full-day, those based on specific models or theories as well as inclusive options (Meyer, 2008). Such an array of programming types allow for further variation among early childhood education programs including those influenced by Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development, Reggio Emilia, and Montessori (Which Curriculum, 2012). Types of early childhood education programs include private and public day care centers, in-home options, Head Start, religious-based centers, and those on public school campuses (Meyer, 2008). A review of the literature found much research existed on the factors influencing parental selection of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities, but little research existed on these influential factors for children with disabilities (Ispa et al., 1998; Obi, 2011; Ransom, 2012).

Factors noted in the literature by parents as influential on their decision to enroll their children in early childhood education programs include cost, parental elements, teacher elements, quality, developmental growth, curriculum, safety, geography and transportation, limited program availability, acceptance of children with disabilities and available therapy, and operating hours (Glenn-Applegate et al., 2011; Ispa et al., 1998; Kuchment, 2007; Ransom, 2012). One purpose of this study was to examine these factors further from the perspective of parents who had both children with and without disabilities. Specifically, the researcher was interested in determining if a difference existed between the factors that influenced parental choice of early childhood education program for their children with disabilities and the factors that influenced parental choice
of early childhood education programs for their children without disabilities. This purpose formed the basis for the study’s first hypothesis.

Twenty factors were included in the study’s instrument. Parent participants rated each factor as to their level of importance when choosing an early childhood education program two separate times – one for their children with disabilities and for the children without disabilities. The statistical results indicated that as a complete set of factors, no significant difference existed between these two groups of children. Independently, two of these factors were statistically significant. These two factors were the number of children in the classroom, or child-to-adult ratio, and the ability of the program to accept and serve children with disabilities. In part, these findings support the literature as many of the factors parented rated as important in the selection of early childhood education programs were the same factors previous studies revealed. These findings in a sense can be said to dispute the literature, as parents are influenced by the same factors in the selection of early childhood education programs for both their children with and without disabilities.

The previously reported literature focusing on outcomes for children with disabilities suggests parents of children with more severe disabilities were not as concerned with the level of inclusiveness of the early childhood education program (Holahan & Costenbader, 2000; Mills et al., 1998; Rafferty et al., 2003). Barriers to accessing high-quality early childhood education programs for children with disabilities were reported to be related to geographical disadvantages and the lack of knowledge about the existing programs (Ceglowski et al., 2009; Scott & McWilliam, 2002). These barriers were sometimes associated with few available early childhood education options
as well as a limited choice or no choice among the available options (Hanson et al., 2000). The discrepancy in these outcomes along with the barriers to accessing early childhood education programs for children with disabilities assisted in the formation of additional purposes for this study and three hypotheses.

The study’s second hypothesis examined the relationship between the level of choice parents have in selecting early childhood education programs and the severity of the child’s disability. Parent participants responded as to the level of choice they had in choosing an early childhood education program for their children as no choice, some choice, or complete choice. Most parents reported having some level of choice in selecting early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities. Parents also rated the severity of their children’s disabilities as mild, moderate, severe, or profound. Only one parent rated his or her child as having a profound disability. Analyzed results signified no significant relationship between level of choice and severity of disability. These findings do not necessarily uphold or contest the literature. Few studies were found on the level of choice parents had in selecting early childhood education programs. The severity of the children’s disabilities in these studies was not included.

The study’s third hypothesis explored the relationship between the level of inclusiveness of the chosen early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the parental satisfaction with the chosen programs. Parent participants also categorized the inclusiveness of their children’s early childhood education program. The four categories included the levels of the least restrictive environment as found on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) ranging from 0-100% inclusive. Parents rated their
satisfaction with their chosen early childhood education programs as not satisfied, a little satisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied. Only one parent reported not being satisfied with his or her early childhood education program. Over 50% of parents that reported being very satisfied with their early childhood education program had their children in 100% inclusive early childhood education programs. The statistical analysis depicted no significant relationship between the inclusiveness of the early childhood education program and the parental satisfaction with the program. These findings both support and contribute additional elements to the literature. Previous research states that parents are satisfied with their early childhood education programs, regardless of the extent of inclusive programming. Of these studies, none specifically examined the relationship between parental satisfaction and inclusive (or non-inclusive) programming.

The study’s fourth hypothesis investigated the relationship between the types of disabilities of children and the early childhood education programs parents feel are available. Each parent participant categorized the type of their child’s disability into one of the 13 categories in which children are deemed eligible for special education services. Of the seven reported eligibility categories, deaf/blind, specific learning disability, and hearing impairment had the fewest responses. Parents also rated the availability of early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities as none available, few available, some available, or many available. Most parents rated the availability of early childhood education programs as few available. Results indicated that no significant relationship existed between type of disability and parental rating of available early childhood education programs. These findings both support and add to the early childhood education literature. Of the studies including early childhood education
availability for children with disabilities, all of them stated that parents felt limited in the availability of early childhood education programs. In these studies, the type of disability the children had was not a contributing variable.

The four hypotheses were components of larger research questions. The first question asked, “Do identified factors influence parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities?” Hypotheses one and two were included under this research question. The second question asked, “Do identified factors correspond to parental satisfaction with early childhood education programs for children with disabilities?” Hypotheses three and four were included under this research question.

Additional information collected from the review of the literature included program quality and the benefits and costs of early childhood education programming. Early childhood education programs have more recently been in the spotlight for program quality – specifically a program’s ability to ready young children for kindergarten entry. The definition of high-quality in early childhood education programs differed in the literature depending on the person providing the response (Hughes, 2010). Components included in high-quality early childhood education programs were preferred curricula and the meeting of standards set forth by early childhood education professional organizations such as NAEYC and NIEER (Kuchment, 2007).

Along with the components that comprise early childhood education programs, or inputs, the outcomes of children served in these programs are also considered a determining factor in the rating of the quality of early childhood education programming. Academic, social, and monetary benefits that were both short and long-term have been
found for children, and later for adults who participated in early childhood education programming as a child (Lasser & Fite, 2011). Costs of providing high-quality universal early childhood education have been cited as a major obstacle to offering such programs (Belfield et al., 2006).

Conclusions

The foundation of this study included two research questions on which the researcher based four hypotheses – two hypotheses for each research question. The first research question asked, “Do identified factors influence parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with and without disabilities?” Though no significant difference was found in the influence of parental selection on early childhood education programs between children without disabilities and children with disabilities in the set of twenty factors, parent participants did rate these factors as influential. The six factors that were ranked as most important regardless of disability were the caring teachers, children’s opportunities to learn new things, cleanliness and upkeep of facility, trusted personnel, safety, and communication. Transportation was the least important factor that influenced parents in choosing early childhood education programs. At least half of the participants rated each of the twenty factors at some level of importance for both children with and without disabilities. This result reveals two important themes for the study. Parents consider the inputs of an early childhood education program as at least part of how they view quality in early childhood education. Secondly, parents seek the same type of quality early childhood education programs for their children, regardless of the type or severity of their children’s disabilities. Most of the factors included at least half the participants rating the importance of each factor as important or extremely
important. This finding contributes additional support to parents as a whole agreeing on the representation of quality in an early childhood education program and that parents desire the same experiences for their children, despite their children’s disabilities. Though no significant difference was found between the set of twenty factors for children with disabilities versus those without disabilities, these factors are in fact important to parents.

While on the surface, a non-significant finding suggests nothing was found. On the contrary, this study shows that parents are influenced by factors that transcend if their child has a disability or not. In actuality, the conclusion drawn from this insignificance is a significant conclusion. The findings from the study suggest that parents do not want different things for their children with disabilities and are not influenced by different factors. Parents consider factors as influential in choosing early childhood education programs no matter the disability. This conclusion is even more significant for inclusive programs. The results of the ranking of these factors suggest that parents seek the components of a regular early childhood education program. Extending this thought, parents seem to be voicing that they pursue inclusive early childhood education programs. With the exception of the child-to-adult ratio and the ability of the program to serve children with disabilities, each of the other factors was rated as influential by most participants regardless of disability. This conclusion may further be stated as parents wanting the same type of early childhood education programs for their children, but for their children with disabilities, parents prefer programs that will serve their children with disabilities and have a higher child-to-adult ratio. Perhaps the difference here is merely one difference. For children with disabilities, parents want a smaller child-to-adult ratio
so that early childhood programs can attend more individually to children, in turn, better
serving children with disabilities in their programming.

Defining high-quality early childhood education programming was a point of
contention in the literature (Lasser & Fite, 2011; Kuchment, 2007). Another conclusion
taken from the rating of the set of twenty factors as influential is that when given
information about a program, parents seem not to have a problem rating the quality of the
program in regards to their individual needs. Perhaps, the factors that influence the
parental selection of early childhood education programs are not as individualized as one
might think.

Another area of concern in the literature was parents of some children with
disabilities given a limited choice or none at all in the placement of their children with
disabilities in early childhood education programs (Hanson et al., 2000). The researcher
formed an opinion that perhaps parents of children with more severe disabilities were not
given a choice or as many choices in programming while other parents of children with
disabilities were given more choices; therefore, the researcher formed a second
hypothesis as part of this first research question. No significant relationship was found
between the level of choice parents had in selecting early childhood education programs
and the severity of the children’s disability. Of the four ratings parents could choose
from, only one parent participant rated his or her child in the most severe disability
category (profound). Due to the small number of participants, specifically those with
children with more severe disabilities, the results of this hypothesis are inconclusive. A
relationship may exist between the level of choice in early childhood program selection
and the severity of the child’s disability, or another variable may give better reasoning as
to why some parents of children with disabilities have choice in selecting early childhood education programs while others do not. Geography, specifically regarding the availability of early childhood education programs, was another area of contention in the literature (Kern, 2007). Geography is a variable of interest to the researcher concerning its relationship to the level of choice in the parental selection of early childhood education programming.

The second research question that was part of the foundation of this study asked, “Do identified factors correspond to parental satisfaction with early childhood education programs for children with disabilities?” An area of debate in the literature from children with disabilities was the outcomes of these children based on the inclusiveness of their early childhood education programming (Mills et al., 1998; Rafferty et al., 2003). One constant in the literature was the satisfaction of parents with the chosen early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities, regardless of the inclusiveness of the program (Cross et al., 2004; Hanson et al., 2000). The results of this study supported this constant in the literature. No significant difference was found in the level of inclusiveness of an early childhood education program and the parental satisfaction with the chosen program. Parents did respond to an additional item on the instrument regarding inclusion. This item indicated that half of the respondents considered only inclusive programming or placed inclusive programming high on their list of factors used to select an early childhood education program. Results from this item further support evidence from the literature regarding the parental satisfaction of early childhood education programs regardless of inclusive programming.
As mentioned earlier regarding the topic of geography, debate in the literature exists about the amount of early childhood education program parents feel are available to their children (Kern, 2007). Parents of children with disabilities also reported in the literature a lack of knowledge about available early childhood education program and options from which to choose (Hanson et al., 2000). The researcher speculated that perhaps the type of disability a child was categorized as having was in direct relation to the amount of early childhood education programs parents felt were available to them. Results of this study indicated no significant relationship between the type of disability a child had and the early childhood education programs that parents feel are available to their children. The majority of the parent participants rated the availability of early childhood education programs as either few or some available, with almost half of the sample reporting few were available. Due to the small number of participants and the 13 categories parents could choose from as to the type of disability their child had, some disability categories had no responses while other had one or two responses. To the contrary, over 30% of parent participants reported that their children were in the multiple disability category. This wide variance of disability categorization paired with most participants rating the availability of early childhood education programming for their children with disabilities as few to none made it nearly impossible for the results to indicate a significant relationship.

The majority of parents reported few to no available early childhood education programs for their children with disabilities. This finding supports the literature (Ceglowski et al., 2009). Though not part of this analysis, this finding is in contrast of the rating of availability by parents of children without disabilities. Half of these parents
reported many available early childhood education programs for their children without disabilities; about 20% of parents reported few to no available early childhood education programs for their children without disabilities. This finding supports literature on geography limiting early childhood education program availability and also produces additional information to add to the literature concerning the difference in available programs based on disability. The conclusion drawn here is that the presence of a disability seems to be more in direct relation to program availability than the type of disability.

Implications

Though none of the hypotheses were significant in their results as a whole, the first hypothesis found significance in two of the twenty factors parents rated as influential in the selection of early childhood education programming. A difference existed in the level of importance of the child-to-adult ratio as an influential factor in the parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the level of important of the child-to-adult ratio as an influential factor in the parental selection of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities. This significant finding paired with the literature review finding of therapy available for children with disabilities on the early childhood education program’s campus brings an implication for practice. Early childhood education programs should allow and support related service providers such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, etc. to provide therapy on their campuses. Furthermore, by allowing these therapists to provide services inside the classrooms as opposed to a therapy room, the child-to-adult ratio is decreased even if for only a portion of the day. In addition to the decreased child-
to-adult ratio, this incorporates an inclusive model where children with disabilities are served alongside children without disabilities in the general classroom. Inclusive programming was an area of debate in the review of the literature.

A difference also existed in the parental selection of early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and in the parental selection of early childhood education programs for children without disabilities in a second factor. This factor was the ability of the early childhood education program to serve children with disabilities. One implication for this significant finding is for early childhood education programs to provide or locate professional development and/or educational opportunities for teachers and support staff on the topic of including children with disabilities in the classroom. Many states offer free professional development opportunities through their Department of Human Services. This need for knowledge on serving children with disabilities in the general early childhood education classroom may prompt institutions of higher learning to consider adding courses in special education, specifically courses about inclusion in the classroom, to their degree programs.

In the literature, some parents of children with disabilities reported a lack of knowledge of program availability (Hanson et al., 2000). However, this study found no significant relationship between the type of disability a child has and the availability of early childhood education programming. Findings from the current study include the majority of participants reporting that few early childhood education programs are available for children with disabilities. These findings do support information in the literature that parents of children with disabilities feel that few to no early childhood education programs are available for their children. An implication for early childhood
education providers and local businesses is to provide the knowledge of early childhood education opportunities in the community. This information could be provided in a number of ways including social media, television and radio advertisements, flyers, and parent information sessions.

The variety of definitions of high-quality early childhood education programs as well as the possible differences in quality for children with disabilities and for children without disabilities found in the literature was the foundation for much of the data collected. Though no specific findings were associated solely with the quality of early childhood education programs, what constitutes high-quality seems to be an area of contention in the literature. One consistency found in the literature was the utilization of a researched-based or nationally recognized set of standards in order to gauge the quality of an early childhood education program. An implication for early childhood education programs is to choose one of these sets of standards and to utilize the chosen standards to monitor their programs. For programs in need of many improvements to meet the set of standards, choosing one standard to work towards at a time may be the most beneficial. An implication for parents is to also choose a set of standards in which to evaluate a program. When conversing with program directors and/or teachers and touring the facility, it may be beneficial for parents to use a checklist that comprises a set of standards and personal standards or values in order to form an opinion about possibly enrolling children there.

Future Research

Through this study, an array of information was collected on various aspects of early childhood education programming. Two key components in this study include early
childhood education programming as it relates to children with disabilities and the parental perceptions of early childhood education programming. This study was different from previous studies in that it examined the differences and relationships between parental perceptions of early childhood education programming for children with disabilities and parental perceptions for children without disabilities. Future research on the topic of early childhood education could explore other areas of early childhood education program or expand upon one component from this study, investigating it more in depth.

Participants

Future research could include a larger sample size of participants. In this study, the research found it difficult to locate parents who had at least one child with a disability and one child without a disability both eight years of age or younger who were willing to participate in this study. Future studies may find additional areas from which to locate participants such as contacting early intervention programs, Head Start associations, and public school systems within each state. This study collected data nationwide on various components of early childhood education. Future research may include focusing solely on participants from one geographic region or examining differences in participant perceptions from separate geographical regions. All participants in this study were parents, as the focus of this study was based on the parental perceptions of early childhood education programs. In the future, researchers may want to examine the perceptions of other groups of people such as early childhood education teachers and assistants, early childhood education directors and administrators, and therapists in the
early childhood education field. This future research could examine the perceptions of one of these groups of people or compare perceptions across groups.

Inputs vs. Outcomes

Many of the purposes and hypotheses of this study were targeted at the inputs to early childhood education such as factors influencing choice of programs (program components) and program inclusiveness. Though parental satisfaction with the early childhood education program they chose for their child is a product of the program’s inputs and fits well in this study of parental perceptions, no true child outcomes were obtained. Future studies may include child outcomes such as assessment results and kindergarten readiness; these child outcomes may be compared among the different types of early childhood education programming.

Defining Early Childhood Education

Data were collected in this study to examine the type of early childhood education program attended, but items did not generate data describing differences among program philosophies, curriculum used, or other components considered to be part of high-quality early childhood education. Future research may include additional or more in depth items pertaining to these components of early childhood education programs. Due to the differing views found in the literature, specific research on the factors that comprise a high-quality early childhood education program for both children with and without disabilities would make a good foundation for a future study.

For the purposes of this study, any program a child attended before kindergarten entry was considered to be an early childhood education program whether these programs were shortly after birth or in the last months preceding kindergarten entry. Because much
variation occurs in early childhood education programming based on the age of the child alone, future studies may want to more specifically define early childhood education by dividing it into two or three groups (infant, toddler, and preschool). These studies could include examining inputs and outcomes from one of these groups or comparing inputs and outcomes between the groups.

Though any type of research devoted to early childhood education would be beneficial, future research with participant variation, inclusion of child outcomes, and defining early childhood education would be the most beneficial. Including a larger number and varied group of participants would provide more data on early childhood education components. As education is outcome-driven, future studies that include both inputs and outcomes in early childhood education would be better received. Distinguishing among the types of early childhood education programs more definitively as well as attempting to determine more specifically the meaning of a high-quality early childhood education program would add value to early childhood education research in general. With the nation’s current trend in the increase in the number of states that offer some variation of state-funded early childhood education programs, future research in this area is needed.

Summary

Gaps and controversy detected from the review of the literature in early childhood education formed the basis for the purposes of this study. The primary purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of parents regarding their current or recent past experiences with early childhood education programs for their children with and without disabilities. Specifically, to determine whether a difference existed in the factors
influencing parental selection of early childhood education programming for their children with disabilities as opposed to their children without disabilities. Another purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the level of choice in the parental selection of an early childhood education program and the severity of the child’s disability. The researcher also explored the relationship between the inclusiveness of the early childhood education programs for children with disabilities and the parental satisfaction with these chosen programs. The final purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the type of disability a child was categorized as having and the amount of early childhood education programs parents felt were available to them.

From these purposes and hypotheses, the researcher adapted the Project Star: Preschool Collection Questionnaire (Glenn-Applegate, 2012) and collected data in the form of an on-line instrument from 44 participants across the nation. With the exception of two of the twenty factors measured in the first hypothesis, results indicated that none of the hypotheses as a whole were statistically significant. A difference existed between the set of influential factors for children with disabilities versus children without disabilities in the child-to-adult ratio and the ability of a program to serve a child with a disability. The conclusion drawn by the researcher from this finding was that parents desire a smaller child-to-adult ratio so that their children with disabilities may be better served in the classroom. An implication for this conclusion is for early childhood education programs to allow therapists to deliver services to children with disabilities in the classroom. A second implication is for early childhood education programs to seek professional development opportunities about children with disabilities for their staff. For institutions of higher learner, the implication is to include courses about serving children
with disabilities in the general early childhood education classroom in their degree programs.

The researcher concluded that parents want the same types of early childhood education programs for their children, regardless of disability. The researcher also concluded that parents may have a better concept of the definition of high-quality early childhood programming than the research states and that the qualities parents seek in programming may not be as individualized as once thought. One implication the researcher suggested from these conclusions was for early childhood education programs to adopt a set of research-based on nationally recognized standards to utilize as a program monitoring tool.

Further clarity is needed as to the variables or reasoning related to the finding in the literature that some parents of children with disabilities have a choice in the selection of their early childhood education programming while others do not. A suggestion for future research is to explore how geography may or may not be related to this level of choice. The findings from this study support the literature indicating that though most parents are seeking inclusive opportunities for their children with disabilities, the majority of parents are satisfied with their early childhood education programs, regardless of the use of inclusive programming. An area of future research would be to explore the outcomes associated with children with disabilities from varying levels of inclusive early childhood education programming. Lastly, the availability of early childhood education programs may not be related to the type of disability a child has but rather the mere presence of a disability. Increasing public awareness of early childhood education
opportunities may reduce the parental perception that few to no early childhood education programs are available, specifically for children with disabilities.

Though this study did not produce statistically significant results in which to support, dispute, or add to the literature, the statistical insignificance was rather significant in the conclusions and implications drawn from them. The statistically insignificant findings do, in fact, support, dispute, and add to the literature base for early childhood education programming. Continued research would be beneficial to the field of early childhood education as a whole.
APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 21, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (46 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 23101703
PROJECT TITLE: Parental Perceptions of Early Childhood Education Programming for Children With and Without Disabilities
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Brittany Herrington
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 10/25/2013 to 10/24/2014

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board
APPENDIX B
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INSTRUMENT

Instructions

Do you currently have at least one child with a disability* and one child without a disability who both are 8 years of age or younger?

Yes (Please proceed to Section 1.)

No (We thank you for your interest and time, but you are ineligible to complete this survey.)

*For this study, a disability includes a diagnosis, having an IEP or IFSP, or receiving special education services.

Please complete this survey only one time. Some of the questions are very similar as you will answer some of the same questions about your child with disabilities and your child without disabilities. Please answer each section until you have fully completed the survey. You will know you have fully completed it when you reach the screen that thanks you for completing the survey.

Section 1: Demographics

1) What state do you live in?

2) What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male

3) What is your ethnicity?
   a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
   b. Asian or Pacific Islander
   c. Black or African American
   d. Hispanic or Latino
   e. White/Caucasian
   f. Prefer not to answer

4) How many people currently live in your household?
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5
   f. 6
   g. 7 or more
5) What is your approximate average household income?
   a. 0-$24,999
   b. $25,000-$49,999
   c. $50,000-$74,999
   d. $75,000-$99,999
   e. $100,000-$124,999
   f. $124,000-$149,999
   g. $150,000-$174,999
   h. $175,000-$199,999
   i. $200,000 and up
   j. Other: ______________

6) What profession do you hold?
   a. Business
   b. Construction
   c. Education
   d. Healthcare
   e. Maintenance
   f. Military
   g. Production
   h. Protective Services
   i. Office
   j. Sales
   k. I stay at home.
   l. Other: ______________

If you have more than 2 children, please respond to the items in Sections 2 and 3 based on your child without disabilities and your child with disabilities who are closest in age to one another.

Section 2: Child WITHOUT Disabilities

1) How old is your child WITHOUT disabilities?
   a. Less than 12 months
   b. 12-23 months
   c. 2 years
   d. 3 years
   e. 4 years
   f. 5 years
   g. 6 years
   h. 7 years
   i. 8 years

2) Did your child WITHOUT disabilities attend more than one early childhood education program in the first 5 years of his/her life?
   a. Yes
   b. No (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 4).
Please select one early childhood education program to answer the questions about your child WITHOUT disabilities.

3) How old was your child WITHOUT disabilities when he/she began attending this early childhood education program?
   a. Less than 12 months
   b. 12-23 months
   c. 2 years
   d. 3 years
   e. 4 years
   f. 5 years

4) What type of early childhood education program did you choose for your child WITHOUT disabilities?
   a. Regular Early Childhood Program (at least ½ of the children do not have disabilities) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 5 and skip questions 6 and 7.)
   b. Separate Class (more than half of the children have disabilities) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 6 and skip question 7.)
   c. Home (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 7.)
   d. Other: _____________________ (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 8.)

5) What type of Regular Early Childhood Program does/did your child WITHOUT disabilities attend?
   a. Head Start
   b. Child care facility or private preschool
   c. Regular public school classroom
   d. Group child care (in a person’s home)

6) What type of separate class does/did your child WITHOUT disabilities attend?
   a. In child care facilities or preschools
   b. Self-contained public school classroom

7) What type of home setting does/did your child WITHOUT disabilities attend?
   a. With a parent
   b. With a family member
   c. With a sitter
8) **How many days per week was/is your child WITHOUT disabilities able to attend his or her early childhood education program?**
   a. 1  
   b. 2  
   c. 3  
   d. 4  
   e. 5  

9) **How many hours per day was/is your child WITHOUT disabilities able to attend his or her early childhood education program?**
   a. 1  
   b. 2  
   c. 3  
   d. 4  
   e. 5  
   f. 6  
   g. 7  
   h. 8  
   i. 9  
   j. 10  

10) **When you were choosing an early childhood education program for your child WITHOUT disabilities, did you have…?**
   a. COMPLETE choice ("This program was entirely my decision." or "I was not referred by an agency.")  
   b. SOME choice ("I had a list of programs to decide from." or "This was one of 2-3 program options.")  
   c. NO choice ("This program was my only choice." or "My child was placed here by an agency.")(If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 13.)

| Please respond to the statements below by placing the corresponding number in the box that best describes **how important** each factor was to you when you were **selecting** an early childhood education program for your child WITHOUT disabilities. |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| | Not at all important | Less important | Important | Extremely important | I was not aware of this factor. |
| The amount of diversity among other families, children, and teachers |  |
| The match between my values and the program’s values |  |
| If the program was publicly-supported or licensed by a government agency |  |
| If the teachers were caring, |  |
stable, and responded to children’s individual needs

The amount of education the teachers had

The number of children in each classroom or the child-to-adult ratio

The amount of time the teachers spent teaching children new things

If the staff were offered good wages and benefits

The program’s ability to serve children with disabilities

If the hours were convenient for my schedule

If the building and classrooms were clean, appealing, and had a nice look

If I got a good feeling from the program; if it felt right

If the provider was someone I trusted, either personally or through recommendation

If the program seemed safe

If the teachers communicated well with families

If the location was convenient to my home or work

The amount I would have to pay, or if I would have to pay

If the program was at a center/school or in someone’s home

If the program provided transportation

11) **When choosing an early childhood education program for your child WITHOUT disabilities, what were the three most important factors you considered?** These MAY or MAY NOT be listed in the previous question.

a. ________________________________________________________________

b. ________________________________________________________________

c. ________________________________________________________________
12) **What resources did you use to find and select an early childhood education program for your child WITHOUT disabilities?** *(Please check all that apply.)*
   - I talked with family or friends.
   - I did an online search or looked up websites.
   - I already knew this program.
   - I followed an organization’s guidelines (e.g., NAEYC).
   - I asked my pediatrician/doctor.
   - I saw a flyer or public notice.
   - I read about early childhood education programs in a magazine or book.
   - I went to a referral agency.
   - I visited different programs.
   - I talked with a social worker.
   - I’d seen it in my neighborhood.
   - I looked it up in the phonebook.
   - Other: _____________________________

13) **How much did/do you pay for your child WITHOUT disabilities to attend his or her early childhood education program?**
   a. NO cost *(“My child attended/attends free Head Start or other program.”)*
   b. LESS than other children my child’s age *(“I received/receive a subsidy that pays for my part of my child’s care.”)*
   c. EQUAL to children my child’s age *(“My family paid/pays full tuition for my child’s age.”)*
   d. MORE than other children my child’s age *(“I paid/pay more because I have multiple centers and/or sitters for my child.”)*

14) **What was/is your level of satisfaction with your chosen program for your child WITHOUT disabilities?**
   a. Not Satisfied
   b. A Little Satisfied
   c. Somewhat Satisfied
   d. Very Satisfied

15) **How would you rate the availability of early childhood education programs for your child WITHOUT disabilities?**
   a. None Available
   b. Few Available
   c. Some Available
   d. Many Available
16) If you could have chosen/could choose any program at all, what would your preferred program choice be for your child WITHOUT disabilities?
   a. Regular Early Childhood Program *(at least ½ of the children do not have disabilities)* (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 17 and skip questions 18 and 19.)
   b. Separate Class *(more than half of the children have disabilities)* (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 18 and skip question 19.)
   c. Home (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 19.)
   d. Other: _____________________ (If you chose this answer, please proceed to Section 3.)

17) What type of regular early childhood program would be your preference for your child WITHOUT disabilities?
   a. Head Start
   b. Child care facility or private preschool
   c. Regular public school classroom
   d. Group child care (in a person’s home)

18) What type of separate class would be your preference for your child WITHOUT disabilities?
   a. In child care facilities or preschools
   b. Self-contained public school classroom

19) What type of home setting would be your preference for your child WITHOUT disabilities?
   a. With a parent
   b. With a family member
   c. With a sitter

Please complete the remaining items based on your child WITH disabilities.

Section 3: Child WITH Disabilities

1) How old is your child WITH disabilities?
   a. Less than 12 months
   b. 12-23 months
   c. 2 years
   d. 3 years
   e. 4 years
   f. 5 years
   g. 6 years
   h. 7 years
   i. 8 years
2) **What type of disability does your child have?**
   a. Autism
   b. Deaf-blindness
   c. Developmental Delay
   d. Emotional disturbance
   e. Hearing impairment
   f. Intellectual disability
   g. Multiple disabilities
   h. Orthopedic impairment
   i. Other health impairment
   j. Specific learning disability
   k. Traumatic brain injury
   l. Visual impairment
   m. Other: ______________________________

3) **How would you rate the severity of the disability?**
   a. Speech only
   b. Mild
   c. Moderate
   d. Severe
   e. Profound

4) **At what age was your child diagnosed with or eligible to receive services for his or her disability?**
   a. Less than 12 months
   b. 12-23 months
   c. 2 years
   d. 3 years
   e. 4 years
   f. 5 years
   g. After he or she entered kindergarten

5) **Did your child WITH disabilities attend more than one early childhood education program in the first 5 years of his/her life?**
   a. Yes
   b. No (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 7).
Please select one early childhood education program to answer the questions about your child WITH disabilities.

6) How old was your child WITH disabilities when he/she began attending this early childhood education program?
   a. Less than 12 months
   b. 12-23 months
   c. 2 years
   d. 3 years
   e. 4 years
   f. 5 years

7) What type of early childhood education program did you choose for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. Regular Early Childhood Program \( (\text{at least } \frac{1}{2} \text{ of the children do not have disabilities}) \) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 8 and skip questions 9-11.)
   b. Separate Class \( (\text{more than half of the children have disabilities}) \) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 9 and skip questions 10 & 11.)
   c. Separate School \( (\text{schools designed especially for students with disabilities}) \) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 10 and skip question 11.)
   d. Residential Facility \( (\text{in-patient facilities}) \) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 12).
   e. Home (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 11.)
   f. Other: ___________________

8) What type of Regular Early Childhood Program does/did your child WITH disabilities attend?
   a. Head Start
   b. Child care facility or private preschool
   c. Regular public school classroom
   d. Group child care (in a person’s home)

9) What type of separate class does/did your child WITH disabilities attend?
   a. In child care facilities or preschools
   b. Self-contained public school classroom

10) What type of separate school did your child attend?
    a. Private programs
    b. Public programs
11) **What type of home setting does/did your child WITH disabilities attend?**
   a. With a parent
   b. With a family member
   c. With a sitter

12) **How often is your child WITH disabilities included in programming with children without disabilities?**
   a. Regular early childhood program 100% of the time
   b. Regular early childhood program at least 80% of the time
   c. Regular early childhood program 40-79% of the time
   d. Regular early childhood program less than 40% of the time

13) **How many days per week was/is your child WITH disabilities able to attend his or her early childhood education program?**
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5

14) **How many hours per day was/is your child WITH disabilities able to attend his or her early childhood education program?**
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5
   f. 6
   g. 7
   h. 8
   i. 9
   j. 10

15) **Was/is your child able to receive services at the early childhood program your child attended/currently attends?**
   a. Yes. The program provided/provides these services.
   b. Yes. The program allowed/allows service providers to come at any time to deliver services.
   c. No. The program does not offer any services not do they allow service providers to deliver services.

16) **Where did/does your child receive services for his or her disability?**
   a. At his or her early childhood education program
   b. At home
   c. At a clinic
   d. Other: ______________________________
17) **When you were choosing an early childhood education program for your child WITH disabilities, did you have...?**

   a. **COMPLETE choice** ("This program was entirely my decision." or "I was not referred by an agency.")

   b. **SOME choice** ("I had a list of programs to decide from." or "This was one of 2-3 program options.")

   c. **NO choice** ("This program was my only choice." or "My child was placed here by an agency.") (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 21.)

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Please respond to the statements below by placing the corresponding number in the box that best describes **how important** each factor was to you when you were **selecting** an early childhood education program for your child WITH disabilities.

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<tr>
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<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Less important</th>
<th>Important</th>
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<th>I was unaware of this factor.</th>
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<tr>
<td>The amount of diversity among other families, children, and teachers</td>
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<td>The match between my values and the program’s values</td>
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<td>If the program was publicly-supported or licensed by a government agency</td>
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<td>If the teachers were caring, stable, and responded to children’s individual needs</td>
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<td>The number of children in each classroom or the child-to-adult ratio</td>
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<td>The amount of time the teachers spent teaching children new things</td>
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<td>If the staff were offered good wages and benefits</td>
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<td>The program’s ability to serve children with disabilities</td>
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<td>If the hours were convenient for my schedule</td>
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<td>If the building and classrooms were clean, appealing, and had a nice look</td>
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<td>If I got a good feeling from</td>
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</table>
18) When choosing an early childhood education program for your child WITH disabilities, what were the three most important factors you considered? These MAY or MAY NOT be listed in the previous question.

   a. ____________________________________________________________

   b. ____________________________________________________________

   c. ____________________________________________________________

19) What resources did you use to find and select an early childhood education program for your child WITH disabilities? (Please check all that apply.)

   o I talked with family or friends.
   o I did an online search or looked up websites.
   o I already knew this program.
   o I followed an organization’s guidelines (e.g., NAEYC).
   o I asked my pediatrician/doctor.
   o I saw a flyer or public notice.
   o I read about early childhood education programs in a magazine or book.
   o I went to a referral agency.
   o I visited different programs.
   o I talked with a social worker.
   o I’d seen it in my neighborhood.
   o I looked it up in the phonebook.
   o Other: ________________________________
20) To what degree was inclusion a factor in the selection of an early childhood education program for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. I only considered programs that used inclusive practices.
   b. I considered all programs, but the use of inclusive practices was higher on my list of selection factors.
   c. I considered all programs, but the use of inclusive practices was lower on my list of selection factors.
   d. I considered all programs, but the use of inclusive practices was not on my list of selection factors.
   e. I only considered programs that did not use inclusive practices.

21) How much did/do you pay for your child WITH disabilities to attend his or her early childhood education program?
   a. NO cost (“My child attended/attends free Head Start or other program.”)
   b. LESS than other children my child’s age (“I received/receive a subsidy that pays for part of my child’s care.”)
   c. EQUAL to children my child’s age (“My family paid/pays full tuition for my child’s age.”)
   d. MORE than other children my child’s age (“I paid/pay more than other children my child’s age because my child was/is in a younger classroom due to his/her disability.” or “I paid/pay more because I had/have multiple centers and/or sitters for my child.”)

22) What was/is your level of satisfaction with your chosen program for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. Not Satisfied
   b. A Little Satisfied
   c. Somewhat Satisfied
   d. Very Satisfied

23) How would you rate the availability of early childhood education programs for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. None Available
   b. Few Available
   c. Some Available
   d. Many Available
24) If you could have chosen/could choose any program at all, what would your preferred program choice be for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. Regular Early Childhood Program (at least ½ of the children do not have disabilities) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 25 and skip questions 26-28.)
   b. Separate Class (more than half of the children have disabilities) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 26 and skip questions 27 and 28.)
   c. Separate School (schools designed especially for students with disabilities) (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 27 and skip question 28.)
   d. Residential Facility (in-patient facilities) (If you chose this answer, you have completed the questionnaire.)
   e. Home (If you chose this answer, please proceed to question 28.)
   f. Other: _____________________

25) What type of regular early childhood program would be your preference for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. Head Start
   b. Child care facility or private preschool
   c. Regular public school classroom
   d. Group child care (in a person’s home)

26) What type of separate class would be your preference for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. In child care facilities or preschools
   b. Self-contained public school classroom

27) What type of separate school would be your preference?
   a. Private programs
   b. Public programs

28) What type of home setting would be your preference for your child WITH disabilities?
   a. With a parent
   b. With a family member
   c. With a sitter

Thank you completing this questionnaire!
APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENT PERMISSION LETTER

The University of Southern Mississippi Mail - Preschool Selection Questionnaire

Brittany Herrington <brittany.greer@eagles.usm.edu>  
To: Katherine Glenn-Applegate <kaglenna@owu.edu>  
Mon, Jul 8, 2013 at 4:11 PM

Dr. Glenn-Applegate,

I am interested in using your instrument (Preschool Selection Questionnaire) that you recently used in your 2011 study for my dissertation. I would be modifying your instrument with the addition of other items to it. I am specifically interested in Part A of your instrument but will probably use Part B as well. May I have permission to modify and use this instrument?

Thank You!
Brittany

Katherine Glenn-Applegate <kaglenna@owu.edu>  
To: Brittany Herrington <brittany.greer@eagles.usm.edu>  
Mon, Jul 8, 2013 at 5:25 PM

Hi Brittany,

Sorry for the delay. I just had a baby, and he consumes my life right now.

Yes, you may use my Preschool Selection Questionnaire, assuming you cite it appropriately (as I'm sure you would). Let me know if you have questions and I'll do my best to help.

Best,

Katherine

Katherine Glenn-Applegate, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Education

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1400

*et seq.*


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