

Classroom Climate: Perceptions of Students with High Incidence Disabilities

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Background
Classroom Climate <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students' school-related outcomes(e.g. academic achievement, self-esteem, motivation, behavior) have been shown to be associated with aspects of classroom climate (e.g., Bryant, et al., 1994; Cheng, 1994).<i>Classroom climate</i> refers to the tone, emotions, and attitude that students and teachers experience within the classroom environment. A positive climate will feel warm, supportive, and welcoming while a negative climate will feel hostile, chaotic, and disorganized.Research has shown that classrooms that were assessed to be emotionally supportive had fewer conduct problems (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011), and students have higher academic performance in classrooms rated as emotionally supportive (Cornelius-White, 2007).
Students' Perceptions <ul style="list-style-type: none">The way in which students' perceive their environment has been shown to be associated with the various learning and psychosocial outcomes (e.g., Cheng, 1994) but the majority of studies have focused on teacher or observer ratings.There has not been an updated review of student perceptions of their classroom climate since Klingner and Vaughn (1999), and this work focused on all students with disabilities.Students with high-incidence disabilities are at greater risk for poor adjustment and negative schooling outcomes; there is evidence a positive teacher-student relationship within the classroom may help protect these students from those negative factors (Toste, Bloom, & Heath, 2014).
Research Objectives
<p>The purpose of the current synthesis was to analyze the perceptions of classroom climate for students with learning disabilities and/or behavioral disorders (LD/BD) in grades K-12. We update previous work and extend by including teacher-student relationship as an important indicator of classroom climate. Specifically our research questions were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">What are the perceptions of K-12 students with learning disabilities and/or behavioral disorders of their classroom climate?What factors influence students' perceptions of classroom climate? For example:<ol style="list-style-type: none">Do these perceptions differ between settings (e.g., inclusion, resource room, residential)?Do these perceptions differ between disabilities?Are students' perceptions of the classroom climate associated with school-related outcomes?
Method
Inclusion Criteria <ol style="list-style-type: none">The study focused on classroom climate, defined as instructional learning formats, student-teacher relationship, attitudes in the classroom, behavior management, and student input.Measures of classroom climate were completed by students.Participants were students enrolled in kindergarten to 12th grade. Participants were students with LD and/or BD. Studies with additional participants were included if at least 50% of the sample were identified with LD/BD or if the data for these students were disaggregated.The study was published in English
Data Collection and Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">Search was conducted of studies published in peer-reviewed journals at any time up to August 2016.A combination of the descriptors ("learning dis* OR learning diff* OR learning problems OR emotion* dis* OR emotion* diff* OR behav* dis* OR behav* problem* OR ebd OR edbd OR reading disabili* OR reading difficult*) AND (classroom climate OR classroom environment OR emotional climate OR social climate OR social environment OR (student N2 (perception* OR feeling* OR attitude*)) OR ((student N2 teacher) AND relation*)) was used to systematically locate articles.References were reviewed from the initial set of articles to identify additional articles.Titles and abstracts were reviewed for eligibility, and 30 studies met inclusion criteria.Studies were coded for participant characteristics, research design, climate constructs, qualitative results, and effect sizes if applicable.All studies were double-coded by two coders.

Study	N	Grade/Age	Disability groups	Assessment measure	Climate Construct
Quantitative Studies					
Hansen & Boody (1998)	37 LD, 165 TD	Grades 6-8	Estimated 80% of the group selected were LD, 10% BD, 10% ID	Classroom Environment Scale Real form-innovation	Involvement, teacher support, task orientation, competition, order and organization, rule clarity, teacher control, innovation
Murray & Greenberg (2001)	40 LD, 18 ED	Grades 5-6; mean age 11.5	LD and/or BD	People in my life	Relationships with teachers and general climate
Smith, Adelman, Nelson, Taylor & Phares (1987)	57 LD, 51 ED, 80 TD	Mean ages 13.3 LD, 14.3 ED, 13.2 TD	LD/BD in public school, LD/BD in university based laboratory school program	Attitude and Affect Measures & Perceived Control and School Scale Classroom Working Alliance Inventory and School Life Questionnaire	Attitude toward school, control, and goal satisfaction, perceived control
Toste, Bloom & Heath (2014)	50 LD/BD, 72 TD	Grades 3-6; mean age 10.82 LD/BD 10.61 TD	LD and/or BD		Bond, task/goal, attitudes toward school, learning, teachers, and peers
Trickett, Leone, Fink & Braaten (1993)	34 EBD, 24 TD	Ages 10-21	EBD	Classroom Environment Scale	Involvement, teacher support, task orientation, rule clarity, teacher control, affiliation, order, and organization
Vervoort, Doumen & Verschuren (2014)	82 EBD	Grade: Kindergarten; mean age 8.75	EBD	CARTS, and FAS	Student teacher relationship, school liking
Qualitative Studies					
Abelson & Geoffrey (1984)	291 LD	Grades 6-12	LD	Researcher created measure	Perception of the resource room
Capern & Hammond (2014)	12 EDB, 12 GT	Grades 8-9	EBD, GT	Student-Teacher Relationship Survey - Student Version	Teacher relationship
Chmillar (2009)	5 LD	Grades 5-6; mean age = 11.4 years	LD	Researcher created measure-interview	Exploring students experience of inclusion
Crowley (2010)	6 BD	Mean ages 14.9-17.7	BD	Researcher created measure-interview	Teacher attitudes
Fulk & Smith (1995)	19 LD, 2 BD, 2 LD/BD, 75 TD	Grades 1-6	LD, BD, LD/BD, GE	Researcher created measure	Assessment of adaptations
Gerber & Popp (1999)	70 SE, 53 TD	Grades 2-12	85% with LD, BD, Mild ID, Orthopedic, TBI, Speech, OHI	Researcher created measures	Opinions of collaborative classrooms
Harriss, Barlow & Moli (2008)	5 EBD	Mean age = 10.75	EBD	Semi-structured interview	Perceptions of placement
Jenkins & Heinen (1989)	101 pull out 236 w/aide 349 TD	Grades 2, 4, 5	LD	Researcher created measure	Program preference
Khamis (2009)	113 LD	Grades 6-12; mean age: 14.44	LD	Classroom environment scale	Classroom environment, social support, companionship, teacher assistance, group learning, physical environment
Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen & Forgan (1998)	16 LD, 16 TD	Grades 4-6	LD	Students' Views of Inclusion Interview (researcher created interview measure) Researcher created measure	Preference for pull out or inclusion environment
Korting, deBettencourt & Braziel (2005)	46 LD, 410 TD	Grades 9-10	LD		Preferences for success in school and Algebra
Larrivee, Semmel & Gerber (1997)	30-102 LD/ID/EBD 5-17 students from 6 schools	Grades 3-12	LD, mild to moderate ID and EBD	Researcher created measures	Climate and feelings towards the inclusive classroom
Lloyd (1995)	40 LD/BD	Grades k-12	LD/BD	Structured interviews	Traits students find helpful or bothersome
McHatton, Shaunessey-Dedrick, Farmer, Ray & Bessette (2014)	12 LD/EBD, 71 TD, 49 GT	Grades 6-8	LD, EBD	Drawing prompt not named	Perception of classroom environment
Nelson & Johnsen (1975)	20 ED	Ages 6-14	ED	Questionnaire not named	Opinions of students in a residential center
Owens & Konkol (2004)	6 EBD	Ages 14-17	EBD	Researcher created measure	Perception of transitioning to traditional high school setting from a residential setting
Padeliadu & Zigmond (1996)	150 LD	Grades 1-6	LD in 3 placements (self contained, resource room, inclusion)	Researcher created measure	Perceptions of special education placement
Pham & Murray (2016)	228 LD, ASD, EBD, OHI	Grades 9-12, mean age 16.24	73% LD, 8% ASD 7%, EBD; 5% OHI; 4% ID; 4% multiple disabilities	Inventory of Teacher-Student Relationships	Teacher relationship
Pugach & Wesson (1995)	9 LD, 9 TD	Grade 5	LD	Researcher created measure	Student perceptions of collaborative team teaching
Ritter, Michel & Irby (1999)	5 LD	Grades 5-6	LD	Interview not named	Student feelings and perceptions about being present in the regular classroom
Spencer & Boon (2006)	4 LD	Grades 9-10	LD	Researcher created measures	Effective and ineffective learning experiences
Vaughn & Bos (1987)	20 LD, 116 TD	Grade 1-6	LD	Researcher created measure	Knowledge and perception of the resource room
Vaughn & Bos (1987)	20 LD, 116 TD	Grade 1-6	LD	Researcher created measure	Knowledge and perception of the resource room
Vaughn, Schumm, Klingner & Saumell (1995)	20 LD, 20 ELL, 55 TD	Grade 6-12	LD, ELL, Low, average, and high achieving students	Students' perceptions of textbook adaptations interview	Student opinions about activities that supplement or replace textbooks

LD = learning disabilities, ED = emotional disorder, BD = behavioral disorder, EBD = emotional behavioral disorder, TD = typically developing, ID = intellectual disorder, ASD = autism spectrum disorder, OHI = other health impairments, GT = gifted and talented, CARTS = Child Appraisal and Relationship with Teacher Scale, FAS = Feelings about School

Findings
<p>31 studies investigated the perceptions of students with LD/BD. Studies were both quantitative ($k = 6$) and qualitative ($k = 24$). Total sample of students with LD/BD was approximately ($n = 1,835$)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Effect sizes for students with LD/BD when compared to students without disabilities ranged from -1.27- 1.13 with a mean of ($d = -0.34$) showing that students with LD/BD perceive their classroom climate lower than their peers in general education ($k = 6$)Overarching findings despite environment<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students felt that they were missing material when out of the classroom($k = 3$)Students reported teasing due to resource room attendance or receiving help in classes ($k = 5$)Inclusion<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students felt that they received more help and more time in the resource room ($k = 4$)Students felt more positive about the resource room than other placements ($k = 4$)Resource rooms<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students felt that teachers were there to help them get better grades ($k = 2$)Students enjoyed the resource room placement over other placements ($k= 2$)Residential<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students felt overall positively towards the residential placement ($k = 2$)Students felt that they were able to have better relationships with staff ($k = 3$)Negative<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students felt that peers had negative views of them ($k = 3$)Teachers felt sorry for the students ($k = 2$)Student interviews reported that students felt embarrassed or were teased about receiving help and about where they received this ($k = 4$)Academic outcomes were examined but only 2 studies reported an association with academics, one as a control variable (Vervoort, Doumen, & Verschueren, 2014), and the other to determine appropriate academic placement (Padeliadu & Zigmond, 1996)Findings showed that students with LD perceived their overall classroom climate more positively than students with BD ($k=4$)
Factors that May Influence Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">We considered disability status to be a factor that influenced perception in this study for teacher student relationships, students with LD reported higher levels of positive relationships with teachers than students with EDWe also considered the type of environment as a moderator. One study showed that students tend to prefer the environment that they’re currently in when asked if they prefer the resource room or the inclusive classroom.
Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall students with LD/BD reported that the classroom climate was positive. Students did report lower ratings of classroom climate, than their typically-developing peers. They reported desires for more control in the classroom as well as a strong relationship with the teacher. Students also reported desires for clear expectations and flexibility within the classroom.
Study Limitations
<p>The analysis of student perceptions of classroom climate or environment was not uniform among studies. Many studies used researcher created tools that would measure the constructs of classroom climate differently.</p> <p>It is difficult to compare environments across studies due to the variety of instructional settings (e.g., resource room, inclusion, residential which are not always consistently defined.</p>
Future Research
<p>The synthesis of these study findings provides further evidence to suggest that classroom climate is an important aspect for students.</p> <p>Future studies should look at a standardized measure for students to report their perceptions of classroom climate</p> <p>The majority of studies focused on upper elementary and middle school grades ($k = 16$) as such, future work should explore perceptions of students across schooling years, including the primary grades.</p>