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PASTORAL ATTITUDES TOWARD INDIVIDUALS  
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Bobby Arlan Howard

May 2010

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

PASTORAL ATTITUDES TOWARD INDIVIDUALS  
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Bobby Arlan Howard

Read and Approved by:

  
Brian C. Richardson (Chairperson)

  
Dennis E. Williams

Date May 14, 2010

To my wife, Kim, who is a wonderful partner in life, and to our two girls, McKenzie and Cameron, whom I love with all my heart. Most importantly, to my Savior, Jesus Christ, Who constantly proves Himself loving and faithful.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADTP	Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
MAS	Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities

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## PREFACE

I am extremely grateful to God for the opportunity to work through the task of dissertation completion. The task would have been impossible without the help and support of many people. Dr. Brian Richardson, my dissertation supervisor, and Dr. Dennis Williams, my second reader, have offered invaluable encouragement, insights, and support throughout the process. Dr. Mark Simpson, Dr. Brad Wagner, and Dr. Michael Anthony also made invaluable contributions to my education and have significantly impacted the work that I am presenting in this dissertation.

Throughout my educational endeavors, my wife has provided loving support and prayer. Our children have patiently supported me during the long hours of studying and writing. My parents have encouraged me and have given me unwavering love and support as well. Many friends and other family members have been instrumental in our lives and in my educational pursuits, and without their support I could not have attained the goal of completing the doctoral degree requirements.

My colleagues in the Ed.D. cohort have challenged me to a greater level of excellence in education. In particular, Dr. Keith Sharp has persistently stood behind me and encouraged me to complete this phase in my educational pursuits.

I am also very grateful to God for the desire He has placed in my heart to lead others in an effort to reach out to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in order to encourage them to participate fully in a church community, serving God with the gifts and talents He has so graciously given. I am blessed to be the parent

of a child with Down Syndrome and to partner with many others to assure that the unreached individuals with developmental disabilities not only have physical access to churches, but also have access that is not hindered by negative attitudes.

Bobby A. Howard

Charleston, South Carolina

May 2010

## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH CONCERN

Individuals with developmental disabilities have faced difficulties in life for thousands of years. In a historical evaluation of archaeological evidence, Scheerenberger highlights examples from the time period of 10,000 to 6,000 B.C., when individuals with epilepsy and mental illness were treated for demon possession by boring small circular holes in their skulls to allow the evil spirits plaguing them to escape (Scheerenberger 1983, 4). Some individuals use biblical history as an example to illustrate these difficulties by referring to the teaching that any individual with a blemish could not offer sacrifices in order that the sanctuary of God might not be profaned (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 54). These blemished individuals included those who were blind, deaf, lame, hunched back or a dwarf (Lev 21:16-24). Issues regarding individuals with developmental disabilities have been evident for centuries in which individuals with developmental disabilities have experienced ridicule, neglect, and even death because of their limitations.

German physician Johann Christian Reil described the trend in treatment of individuals with developmental disabilities in 1803 as follows:

We lock these unfortunate creatures in lunatic cells, as if they were criminals. We keep them in chains in forlorn jails, near the roosts of owls in hidden recesses above the gates of towns, or in the damp cellars of reformatories where no sympathetic human being can ever bestow them a friendly glance, and we let them rot in their own filth. Their fetters scrape the flesh from their bones, and their wan, hollow faces search for the grave that their wailing and our ignominy conceals from them. (Blatt and Kaplan 1974, 52)

Moving into the early part of the twentieth century, those with disabilities fell victim to the eugenics movements influenced by the work of the prominent geneticist, Charles B. Davenport. In his major work, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, Davenport writes:

It is a reproach to our intelligence that we as a people, proud in other respects of our control of nature, should have to support about half a million insane, feeble-minded, epileptic, blind, and deaf, 80,000 prisoners and 100,000 paupers at a cost of over 100 million dollars per year. (Davenport 1911, 4)

Included in Davenport's plan is the concept that the state becomes the responsible entity for eliminating or at least minimizing the propagation of the mentally incompetent (Davenport 1911, 4). Prior to World War II, the concept of euthanizing mentally handicapped children was perpetuated by psychiatrist, Foster Kennedy, who advocated killing mentally retarded children in an article in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* (Kennedy 1942, 141). He also held that it was morbid for parents to express love to mentally handicapped children and those parents were in need of psychiatric treatment (Kennedy 1942, 141). The years during World War II proved to be a continued time of discouragement and destruction for individuals with developmental disabilities as Germany used the phrase *Lebensunwertes Leben*, life unworthy of life, as a guiding principle that resulted in the extermination of hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities (Wolfensberger 1981, 2).

These and countless other examples have provided the background that has shaped attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities in the modern era. Assessment and measuring of attitudinal barriers that hinder the involvement of individuals with developmental disabilities in society has been a focus for rehabilitation and mental health professionals since the 1960s (Roush and Klockars 1988, 25). Variations of these attitudinal barriers prevail even in the Christian community and have

given rise to the need for evaluating the manner in which attitudinal barriers toward individuals with developmental disabilities may impact the behaviors of pastors as they strive to lead their churches to reach out to all people (Carter 2007, 6).

### **Introduction to the Research Problem**

As mistreatment of individuals with developmental disabilities was increasingly viewed as an injustice, the civil rights movements began to aid in shaping more positive attitudes of individuals whether they were victims of discrimination resulting from skin color, disability, gender, etc. In recent years, the United States has specifically adopted legislation that protects individuals with developmental disabilities from many types of discrimination (Block 2002, 60-68, Eiesland 1998, 53-56). In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law and many entities were thereby forced to consider ways to accommodate those previously excluded from participation (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). Facilities were to be made handicapped accessible (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title III). It became illegal to discriminate based solely on one's special disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title I). Schools became intensely involved in providing special education for individuals in what the law described as the least restrictive environment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II). Transportation for those with developmental disabilities became available (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II). With all of the positive things that the law brought about, there was one missing component that remains a very significant weakness in the provisions for those with developmental disabilities.

Laws began to guide various provisions for individuals but laws are not

sufficient in and of themselves to shape attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities. A gap was also provided for religious entities concerning their legal relationship with individuals with developmental disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Sec. 12187). In order to avoid the risk of being entangled in issues of separation of church and state, the government made religious entities exempt from almost all of the Americans with Disabilities Act mandates. Churches were not forced to make facility changes to accommodate those with physical disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title III). They were also not forced to consider ways they could minister to individuals with developmental disabilities. As a result, a major portion of the individuals with developmental disabilities and their families are not involved in a church community and therefore they are missing one of the most significant opportunities in life – that of spiritual involvement, service, and growth (Carter 2007, 6-7). In 2004, the United States Census Bureau reported 51.2 million non-institutionalized people with some level of disability living in the United States (Steinmetz 2004). The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention reports that an estimated 95% of the population with disabilities is outside of the church. These individuals and their families would likely make up one of the largest unreached people groups in America (North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 2007).

A primary focus for the church is to apply the Great Commission to every area of life and ministry. God has designed this task to be accomplished under the headship of Jesus Christ as pastors of local churches lead their congregations in submission to and service for God. In the commission by Jesus for His followers to reach and disciple the

world, this would have included all people, even those with developmental disabilities and their families.

Exploratory research has documented an interest in full participation in the Christian community from individuals with developmental disabilities and their families (Shogren and Rye 2005, 29-53). Zhang and Rusch offer support for interest in spiritual and religious involvement regardless of whether the subject is an individual with developmental disabilities from birth, one who acquired the disability later in life, or the family of the individual with a developmental disability (Zhang and Rusch 2005, 83-98). Research based on a national study involving more than 11,200 youth who had various types of developmental disabilities highlights that although many students desire involvement in religious activities, less than one-half actually participate in a faith community on a regular basis (Wagner, Cadwallader, and Marder 2003, 36).

Barriers stand in the way of full participation by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in church communities. The barriers not only impede individual involvement but also hinder churches from fulfilling the Great Commission as it relates to reaching and discipling individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Among the barriers are architectural or building design problems. Many churches focus their attention on these architectural barriers because the remedies are more easily addressed (Haythorn 2003, 344). Another type of barrier that some churches readily recognize is that of communication. Large print Bibles and other reading materials as well as worship interpreted in sign language for the hearing impaired are examples of steps a church may have taken to address these barriers (Carter 2007, 13).

The National Organization on Disability presented research in 2002 which emphasized a religious organization “participation gap” between individuals with disabilities and those without disabilities. The research found that 47% of Americans with disabilities attend some type of religious services at least monthly as compared to 65% of those without disabilities (National Organization on Disability 2002).

Interpretation of the data led National Organization on Disabilities researches to conclude that “many congregations work hard to be hospitable and welcoming, but the barriers which exclude children and adults with disabilities from full participation may not be easily understood or identified. Certainly, it is easier to add ramps, pew cuts, accessible parking places, and restrooms than to remove the barriers of limiting attitudes and stereotypical thinking” (National Organization on Disabilities 2002).

A more difficult barrier to overcome is that of attitudinal barriers. Pastors and others in the congregations may not have transcended the attitude barriers that are often deeply rooted and subtle. The prejudices and fears that support the attitude barriers are difficult for individuals to overcome and may result in negative reactions toward those with developmental disabilities (Carter 2007, 10). Pastors may impact vision and direction for the church in which they lead, but if attitude barriers persist among pastors, then their churches may be significantly limited in their efforts to reach individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

A plethora of attitude measurement scales have been developed since the early 1960s which primarily focus on attitudes pertaining to the integration of students with developmental disabilities into the public school setting (Antonak and Livneh 2000, 211-13). Makas highlights in her annotated bibliography that attitude scales were used among

various populations over the 1975 to 1981 time frame (Makas 1981). Included in those listed people evaluated were disabled persons, family members of disabled persons, educational professionals, employers, medical professionals, law enforcement officers, social workers, childcare workers, and the general public. A search through the approximately 1,000 citations indicates that none of these resources focus on the attitudes of pastors nor do they address the involvement of those with developmental disabilities in a faith community (Makas 1981).

Pastoral attitudes have been evaluated in some instances, but these are generally unrelated to individuals with developmental disabilities. For example, Pastoral attitudes toward disciplining children were recently reported in an article in *Pastoral Psychology* (Vaaler et al. 2008, 535). Researchers have also included pastoral attitude measures in studies related to job satisfaction (Hoge, Shields, and Griffin 1995, 204-08). In this study, the attitude measures were in regards to the vocation rather than any specific people groups within the community or the congregation. Although pastoral attitudes have been measured in various contexts, the measurement of attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities is rarely if ever addressed in the research setting.

One researcher investigated church involvement of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families at a church in the Midwest (Farrington 2000, 67-70). This study was a qualitative project utilizing interviews and observations over time. Included in this research were church staff and leaders as well as the individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The researcher discovered that when considering how individuals with developmental disabilities are involved in the church or

at least how they would like to be involved that every response in some manner related to barriers and facilitators to inclusion. Two notable issues are presented in Farrington's research that are applicable here. First, attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities are identified as both barriers and facilitators to including these individuals in church ministries. Second, pastoral attitudes are determined to be a significant factor in how a faith community is actively involved in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities (Farrington 2000, 237). The current research was intended to offer additional insights by quantifying attitude scores among pastors in order to evaluate correlations between the attitudes, awareness of disability population, previous life experiences with persons with developmental disabilities, formal and informal education experience and actual levels of special needs ministry in the local churches.

Considering the pastoral role to lead the church congregation in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission, it is important to understand how the attitude of the pastor toward individuals with developmental disabilities may facilitate or stand as a barrier to special needs ministry. Quantitative measurement of attitudes can provide a means of determining the significance of the attitudes. When correlated with previous experience and education, this data provides a means of strengthening positive attitudes and breaking down negative attitudes through specific training and experiences for pastors in the future. With this goal accomplished, many doors may be opened for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to become actively involved in a faith community. Most importantly, minimizing or eliminating negative attitude barriers may provide opportunities for many people to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitude measurement score of senior pastors as it relates to awareness of special needs populations, levels of special education ministries in the churches, previous life experiences with persons with developmental disabilities, and the pastor's training through formal and informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities. Attitude measurement scores among pastors are rare, yet they can provide insights into possible ways to break down barriers that inhibit individuals with developmental disabilities and their families from becoming involved in a faith community. This research was intended to offer support for the manner in which positive attitudes have facilitated involvement in special education ministry. Through the research process, effective seminary, college, and Southern Baptist sponsored training opportunities may be enhanced by applying the knowledge learned from the research findings. Curriculum changes, applied ministry projects and personal challenges to pastors regarding attitude changes can possibly result in many individuals having an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as personal savior and for believers to grow in their faith within the context of a church community.

### **Research Questions**

The three questions that guided the research for this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the pastor's attitude measurement score on The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where he is serving?
2. What, if any, relationship exists between the selected variables (previous or current life experiences with an individual with developmental disabilities, training through formal or informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities, and the accuracy of his perception of special needs population in his geographical county) and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where the pastor is serving?

3. In what ways do selected variables (previous or current life experiences with an individual with developmental disabilities, training through formal or informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities, and the accuracy of his perception of special needs population in his geographical county) influence the pastor's attitude measurement score on The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities?

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study did not explore the pastoral attitudes and experiences or special education ministries at churches outside of the membership of the South Carolina Baptist Convention who are also members of the Southern Baptist Convention. Pastoral attitudes, life and educational experiences, and characteristics of current special education ministry were limited to the self-report of paid full-time and part-time church pastors and not the general church membership as a whole. Attitude measurement is subjective and admittedly included the possibility of altered reports resulting from knowledge that personal attitudes were being measured. An online anonymous survey format was used to minimize the possibility faulty reports.

The special education ministry characteristics were limited to ministries designed specifically for individuals age 5 through 20 who are qualified for special accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. The United States census data was used as a reliable resource for population of individuals with developmental disabilities. The data as presented by the Census Bureau provided population counts for individuals between the ages of 5 and 20 who met specific criteria for developmental disabilities.

### **Terminology**

The following definition and terms are presented to provide clarification as to how they were used in this research.

*Attitude.* In summarizing the main components of over thirty definitions of the term attitude, Rao highlights the consistent concept that attitudes are “emotion-laden mindsets that serve as a more or less hidden motivator for behavior” (Rao 2004, 192). In spite of various definitions, a common characteristic is to understand attitudes as constructs that are based on affective, cognitive and behavioral variables (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 166). This multidimensional definition is consistent with early descriptions of attitudes as “an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations” (Triandis 1971, 2). For the purposes of the current special education ministry research, attitudes will be defined as a “multidimensional concept involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral components which manifests itself through actual responses toward individuals with developmental disabilities” (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 166-67).

*Americans with Disabilities Act.* This is the public law signed by President George H.W. Bush in July 1990 which has as its primary purpose the role of legally prohibiting discrimination of an individual based on disability (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). Disability is generally defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Sec. 12102). The law addresses issues of employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications. Religious entities are exempted from much of these mandates, but this law provides an acceptable definition of disability (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Sec. 12187). It also guides architectural guidelines for new church construction (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Sec. 12183). This law is pertinent to this research in that it is a comprehensive and national

guide that highlights minimal expectations regarding the prohibition of discrimination against individuals with developmental disabilities.

*Churches of the South Carolina Baptist State Convention.* South Carolina includes 43 local Baptist associations with 2,100 churches (South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008 Annual, 260). Pastors of South Carolina Southern Baptist churches have been chosen for the research population in part due to the diverse population of this state which may undergird the validity and applicability of the research findings. The population of South Carolina is 4,011,809, making it the twenty-fourth largest state in the United States of America (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). South Carolina includes 2 United States Air Force Bases, a United States Army Base, a United States Marine Corp Base, a United States Coast Guard Station, and a United States Naval Weapons Station Facility with transient populations involved in the military. Colleges in South Carolina offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs including two medical schools located within this region of the country. Among the churches in South Carolina are large city churches, including the oldest Baptist church in the southern United States, First Baptist Church, Charleston, SC. There are also rural churches in outlying areas. These characteristics support the concept that this region is diverse in population and has a significant number of Southern Baptist churches ministering among the people of South Carolina.

*Formal courses of instruction of the pastor.* Any academic class that included course content related to special education or working with individuals with developmental disabilities in which the pastor has received academic credit hours will be included in this classification. Some researchers have discovered that a more favorable

attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities can be documented when an individual has experienced academic courses of instruction that increased knowledge and awareness of issues involved in inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in society (Kobe and Mulick 1995, 1-2; Rapada 2007, 17, 20; Tada 2003, 41). An important variable in this research was the academic history of the pastors responding to the survey.

*Individuals with developmental disabilities.* A recent amendment to the Americans with Disabilities Act is supportive of the concept that it is difficult to define exactly who is considered “a person with a disability” (ADA Amendments Act of 2008). The amended legal proceeding opens with repeated examples of how the intent of Congress was to enact a law that would eliminate discrimination against individuals based on disability, but that even the Supreme Court cases have misunderstood the intent and definition of disability (ADA Amendments Act of 2008). The purpose then of this amendment was to clarify the definition of who meets the criteria of a person with a disability. In summary, developmental disability is a label given to a diverse group of individuals who experience significant difficulties in one or more major life activities. These include but are not limited to mobility, self-care, language, learning and independent living (Carter 2007, 2). For the purpose of this research, the definition of an individual with developmental disabilities was a person who experiences a long-lasting sensory, physical, mental or self-care disability and/or a person who reports difficulty going outside of the home or working at a job or business because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). The disabilities considered for the research comprehensively include any disability that

entitles an individual to protection against discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990.

*Informal courses of instruction of the pastor.* Exposure to care giving insights and skills for ministering to individuals with various disabilities can be beneficial to pastoral performance (Mills 2002, 8). There may be value in formal and informal courses of instruction. An important element of the current research was to distinguish between formal and informal course experience and observe for the impact on attitude measures. For the purpose of this research, informal courses of instruction was any non-credit course work which has the purpose of teaching the pastor about any aspect of special needs ministry in the local church setting. It included, but was not limited to, any course offered by any school, denominational agency, or social/government agency.

*Life experiences of the pastor.* This concept included any previous or current contact with any individual with developmental disabilities. Researchers have proposed that when an individual has contact with a family member or close friend who experiences a developmental disability, they are more likely to have a better understanding of the issue and a more positive attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities (Carter 2007, 63-68). In research examining the effects of experience with children with various disabilities on their peers, Gottlieb and Budoff report that experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities may actually reinforce negative attitudes (Gottlieb and Budoff 1973, 17). Another possible finding based on research is that life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities seem to have no significant impact on attitude measures (Hagan, Powell, and Adams 1983, 837). The variable of current and previous life experiences with individuals with

developmental disabilities provided valuable insights for the research.

*Senior pastor.* For the purposes of this research, senior pastor included the paid or volunteer, full-time or part-time primary or lead pastor of a Southern Baptist Church, South Carolina Baptist Convention.

*Special education ministry.* Ministries of any type may have various degrees of uniqueness. Special education ministries are typically designed to minister to and with individuals with developmental disabilities. Rapada lists a primary mission of a special needs ministry should be to assist individuals with developmental disabilities to “develop their full spiritual, emotional, cognitive and physical potential, while at the same time reach out to parents and siblings who would like to become part of a church” (Rapada 2007, 1). Special education ministry includes a degree of intentionality and is aimed at meeting needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families (Verbal 2004, 14-15). For the purpose of this research, special education ministry included intentional church-based Christian ministries designed to enhance and encourage spiritual growth of individuals with developmental disabilities. The special education ministry is understood to occur within the context of unique physical, mental, and/or emotional disabilities.

### **Research Assumptions**

The following assumptions undergird this research proposal:

1. Special education ministry is complex and involves a multitude of individual, church and societal independent and dependent variables. It is assumed that some of these variables can be evaluated using empirical research methodology.
2. Attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities may be a barrier to or facilitator of special education ministry.

3. Pastoral leadership involves the capacity and biblical mandate of directing a fellowship of believers in the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. This leadership capacity includes directing their church in reaching out to all people, including those with developmental disabilities and their families.
4. The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities is a reliable and validated instrument that is useful in assessing the attitudes of pastors toward individuals with developmental disabilities.
5. Pastors, in an anonymous online survey format, will provide accurate responses concerning awareness of special needs populations, formal and informal courses of instruction they have attended, previous and/or current life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities and attitude responses to the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities.
6. Previous and/or current life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities, formal and informal coursework related to special education, and accurate awareness of the surrounding special needs population may have an impact on a pastor's involvement and leadership in the area of special education ministry.

### **Procedural Overview**

The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities survey instrument was administered to all participating pastors of Southern Baptist Churches in the South Carolina Baptist Convention who had published church and/or personal email addresses in the 2008 South Carolina Baptist Convention annual report. The instrument was administered using an online survey format and provided data regarding the pastor's attitude scale toward individuals with developmental disabilities. Basic demographic information was also gathered in order to validate participation and to provide data pertinent to the research questions.

Once the attitude scale scores were calculated and demographic data was collected, a variety of statistical measures, including but not limited to multiple regression coefficient statistical measurement, was used to analyze relationships that may exist between the pastoral attitudes, their awareness of the numbers of individuals with

developmental disabilities in their county, their educational courses of instruction, their life experience with individuals with developmental disabilities, and the levels of special education ministries in the churches where they pastor.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENT LITERATURE

A comprehensive literature review for this research is divided into four sections. In the first section, the researcher will examine the biblical and theological background concerning individuals with developmental disabilities. The second section will overview the historical concepts of special needs ministry. The third section will examine the educational concepts related to special needs ministry within the local church, including attitudes that either impede or facilitate intentional special education ministry. A final section in this chapter will offer a synopsis of the manner in which the precedent literature impacts the research design.

#### **Biblical Implications for Special Needs Ministry**

Robert Perske has been an influential advocate, author, pastor, and journalist who has specialized in the areas of pastoral care and religious education for persons with developmental disabilities for over fifty years. In a 1965 conference, he clearly advocated the concept that the foundational framework for effective ministry with individuals with developmental disabilities was an adequate theological view of disabilities (Perske 1965, 36). Throughout the past three to four decades, experts have alluded to this same idea of accurate theology as a starting point for pastors and church congregations as they seek ways to include individuals with developmental disabilities in the life and ministry of the church (Block 2002, 84; Webb-Mitchell 1994, 51;

Wolfensberger 2001, 85). An adequate theological view must begin with an accurate understanding of God's Word as it applies to disabilities. Understanding will provide empathy and empathy will in turn facilitate acceptance and more effective ministry with those with disabilities (Mills 2002, 85-86). Modern secular and medical research has avoided any inclination toward a biblical worldview and has dehumanized those with developmental disabilities by defining human beings as only people with proper brain function (Singer 2006, 17-18). Writing for Joni and Friends International Disability Center, McReynolds stresses that the most effective means to provide truth regarding the nature of humanity and to discover the complexities of disabilities is to understand and promote accurate interpretation of Christian doctrines as taught in the Bible (McReynolds 2008, A\_Knowledge\_Tradition.pdf).

### **Disability and the Image of God**

A foundational matter in considering the issue of developmental disabilities and church ministry is to explore the biblical doctrine concerning the image of God in mankind. In the Old Testament, there are three distinct passages that explicitly mention the image of God in mankind. Each of the references are in the book of Genesis and will be examined in this section.

The first passage in which the image of God is addressed is Genesis 1:26-27.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (New American Standard Bible)

In Hebrew, the word *tselem* (צֶלֶם) is translated as "image," and the word *demuth* (דְּמוּת) is translated as "likeness" in the Genesis 1:26-27 passage (Baker 1994, 5). In Genesis 5:1-

3, the author writes:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. (NASB)

In this passage in chapter 5, mankind is said to have been created in the דְמוּת (*demūth*) of God without including the word “image.” It also indicates that Adam fathered a son named Seth who was in Adam’s דְמוּת (*demūth*) and according to his תְּצֵלֶם (*tselem*) (Baker 1994, 14-15). Here the use of “image” and “likeness” is noted, but in the reverse order from the Genesis 1:26-27 passage. Genesis 9:6 is the third passage in Genesis in which the image of God is mentioned. The context of the verse is the condemnation of murder because all of mankind is created in the image of God. The verse reads: Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man (NASB). In this verse only the word תְּצֵלֶם (*tselem*) is used (Baker 1994, 24). An important task in determining the biblical meaning of the image of God is to determine the relationship of the words image and likeness in the context of these three passages in Genesis.

The word תְּצֵלֶם (*tselem*) is a noun used 16 times in the Old Testament. Five of these occurrences refer to man in the image of God. The remaining eleven times this word is used it refers to a figure or idol in a representational fashion (Baker 1994, 2358). The term stems from a root word that indicates the image is a shadow or an imprecise representation of the real person or inanimate object (Vine 1981, 81). It is used in the Old Testament to describe statues, idols, and even portraits. The Hebrew concept expressed by this term is that there is an unspecified correlation between man’s nature and the nature of God (Matthews 1996, 167). The Genesis passages fail to give exact

descriptions of the image of God in man, but they do affirm that all human beings are uniquely created in God's image unlike any other created being or things. As creatures made in God's image, the early recipients of the Hebrew writings would have understood that God had created mankind to not only be like Him but also to represent Him (Grudem 1994, 442-43).

The word דְמוּת (*demūth*) is translated as “likeness” and has the meaning of one thing or person resembling another. It is a word with a more abstract meaning that generally signifies a visual resemblance (Davidson 1995, 150). As with the term צֶלֶם (*tselem*), the specific details of the resemblance are not presented in the Bible text. The truth that all of mankind is a representation of God and is like God in certain aspects is clearly presented in these passages (Hoekema 1986, 13).

Historically, the church has differentiated between image and likeness and has thereby proposed views of the image of God based on this dualistic nature presented in the creation account. Matthews emphasizes the differentiation of the terms for many centuries was likely due to the erroneous translation of Genesis 1:26-27 in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate where the conjunction “and” was inserted between the expressions “in our image” and “according to our likeness” (Matthews 1996, 164). General usage of the words *tselem* (צֶלֶם) and *demūth* (דְמוּת) in the Old Testament points to a conclusion that the terms are used interchangeably and are expressions of the same concept. In defense of the view that the words image and likeness are synonyms expressing one concept, Hoekema points to the lack of the conjunction “and” between the phrases in Genesis 1:26, the fact that only the word “image” is used in Genesis 1:27, and the fact that only the word “likeness” is used in Genesis 5:1 (Hoekema 1986, 13).

Centuries of debate regarding the exact meaning of the “image of God” is evident through literature review. Theologians attempt to discern and articulate the answer to the question: what is the scope and description of that which God bore on mankind and in what ways does the image of God remain in all human beings after the fall to sin? It is important to consider the accurate understanding of the concept of the image of God when one is searching for correlations between attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities and ministry involving these individuals (Grudem 1994, 449-50; Sherlock 1996, 172-73).

**Substantive view of the image of God.** A historically predominant view has been the substantive view which rests firmly on a metaphysical understanding of the image of God being spiritual capacity within mankind to reflect the character and attributes of God (Yong 2007, 172). The central thesis of the substantive view is to understand that the image of God is the spiritual or immaterial being within the physical body of man (Erikson 1985, 499). The concept of a differentiation between image and likeness has provided a basis for this view. Since the early days of Irenaeus, some theologians have held the view that the image of God is simply the human’s spiritual capacity to reason while the likeness of God is the ability to physically exhibit spiritual attributes which correspond with the attributes of God (Irenaeus 1992, 34-36; Hoekema 1986, 33-34). The bifurcation in terminology then progressed to an understanding that the likeness of God was completely lost when mankind sinned, yet the image of God has persisted in all human beings (Matthews 1996, 164).

Anderson proposes that the primary feature of the image of God according to the substantive view is the human intellect (Anderson 1982, 225). This concept has been

perpetuated by two unique characteristics. First, Christian doctrine presents Jesus Christ as the divine exemplification of wisdom in the New Testament which points toward intellect (Yong 2007, 172). Jesus is the perfect image of God and it is in the act of justification that the unbeliever is “renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col 1:15, 3:10 New King James Version). Second, historical Christian views have been influenced by Aristotelian doctrine which focuses on the ability of human beings to reason and to hold rational thoughts (Anderson 1982, 225).

The underlying Aristotelian influence and requiring all mankind to possess intellect or the ability to reason has influenced some individuals to reject the substantive view of the image of God because it appears to allow for the idea that some individuals with developmental disabilities are not fully human because of their limitations (Pyne 1999, 70; Yong 2007, 172). The concept that man’s humanity and value stems from the presence of God’s image in all human beings and not in the degree of the reasoning capacity or physical capabilities serves as the basis for Joni Eareckson Tada’s viewpoint regarding disabilities. She writes:

And where does this [human] value come from? Simply because God created you. His creative act gave life a protection of His divine favor that could not be sold. We are precious masterpieces because a Master made us. And though sin marred the image, God’s intrinsic value in life did not change. That means that every person born or afflicted with a marring condition still has intrinsic worth. (Tada 1995, 58)

Other scholars reject the sufficiency of the substantive view due to its faulty foundation whereby the terms image and likeness are not understood to be synonymous and used interchangeably in the Genesis passages (Hoekema 1986, 35). Ware also warns that many traditionally held this substantive view based on speculation about the differences between man and animals without a strong understanding and focus on the texts of the Bible (Ware 2002, 16).

The substantive view with an understanding of the two-fold image and likeness of God in mankind held firm until the days of John Calvin when he proposed that the image and likeness of God should be viewed as a single concept that radiates out to the entire human being, including the physical body (Hoekema 1986, 42). Calvin proposes that “man is endowed with a single excellence, for God formed him in his own image and likeness, in which we see a bright refulgence of God’s glory” (Calvin 1958, 58-59). In the original creation of man, God’s image was manifested in the knowledge, righteousness, holiness, and physical body of man, but sin resulted in an irreparable destruction of every aspect of the image of God in man (Calvin 1921, 172). With a Reformed theology influence, the substantive view takes new shape and proposes that all aspects of human beings are being delivered from the marred image of God through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matthews 1996, 165; 2 Cor 3:18). The process of reinstating the perfect image of God begins at the time of salvation but is ultimately realized in the resurrection (Rom 8:29, 1 Cor 15:49). This understanding of the substantive view is more accommodating of the full humanity of individuals with developmental disabilities who may not reach full adult intellectual capacity. It is then in the resurrected body that all human beings, regardless of ability or disability in the earthly life, will exemplify the image of God once again according to this view (Matthews 1996, 165).

**Functional view of the image of God.** A second primary view of the identity of the image of God in man is the functional view. The primary thesis of the functional view is that of responsibility and is directly focused on the words of God from Genesis 1:26 that highlight His desire that mankind should exercise dominion over the created order (Erickson 1985, 508; Yong 2007, 165). Scholars attribute the foundations of this

view to the idea that God intended for mankind to be viewed as his royal regent on the earth, displaying his image and ruling the earth under his appointment (Ware 2002, 16). Towns and Groff evaluate the functional view in its strictest sense as one in which human capacity is bound up in one's responsibility to exercise dominion, leaving open then the possibility that those with developmental disabilities may not be considered fully human because of their limitations (Towns and Groff 1972, 39). A more acceptable application of this functional view, according to Towns and Groff, would be to consider that no individual from birth is recognized as totally responsible for exercising dominion but rather progresses into various degrees of responsibility over time. The same concept should apply to all human beings, regardless of level of abilities, and should thereby communicate value and dignity to all individuals (Towns and Groff 1972, 39).

The functional view has been considered by many scholars and has been both accepted and denied as the basis for understanding the image of God in mankind. Calvin rejects the idea that "there is any probability in the opinion which places the similitude of God in the dominion committed to man" (Calvin 1921, 117). Erickson argues that the expressions "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" and "let them have dominion" appear to be two distinct concepts thereby supporting his rejection of the functional view. By rejecting the functional view Erickson does not deny the validity of the responsibility of mankind having dominion over the earth, but he points out that having dominion is more of a result of the image of God in man rather than a characteristic of the essence of having that image (Erickson 1985, 512).

In support for the functional view, Block emphasizes that  
within the biblical literary context and the ancient Near Eastern cultural context, 'imageness' had more to do with the role played by man than with an ontological

quality about man. As the image of God, man is divinely authorized to serve as his representative (not representation) and charged to function as his deputy. (Block 2001, 8)

Great value should be placed on accurate interpretation and application of the biblical texts concerning the functional aspects of the image of God. In the context of the Genesis passages, one cannot deny the role of dominion commanded by God, but to consider dominion alone as the essence of the image of God would render a much too narrow and an insufficient view of the meaning and implications of all human beings being created in the image of God (Grudem 1994, 443; Ware 2002, 16).

**Relational view of the image of God.** A final notable view of the image of God in mankind is based on the work of neoorthodox theologians such as Karl Barth. It is the relational view and is not based on who man is nor what he can do, but rather it is based on man's ability to be involved in relationships with God, others, and the world (Barth 1960, 183-86). Human ability to stand in an "I-Thou" partnership with others and with God is viewed as exemplifying the image of God within all people (Matthews 1996, 166). In support for this view, some theologians propose that an exegetical analysis of Genesis 1:26-27 indicates that the plurality of the Godhead highlighted in the phrase "let Us make man in Our image" is manifested by God creating man and woman. It is in this context of plurality of the Godhead that man and woman is created, indicating God's intent to manifest his image in the social and relationship capacity of mankind (Barth 1960, 184). An important feature of this view as explained by Ware is that God's image is reflected in man's relation to one another as well as to God (Ware 2002, 15).

Relational capacity may in part be based on the uniqueness of mankind as beings created in God's image, but some scholars report that this relational view falls short of a

complete and sufficient explanation of the image of God in man. There are other relational beings such as demons and Satan as well as human beings who have no expressed interest in living in a relationship with God, but to hold the relational view as an all sufficient explanation of the image of God would potentially require one to believe that Satan, demons, and God-haters are also image bearers of God (Erickson 1985, 511; Hoekema 1986, 52). In support of the validity of the relational view, Hammett proposes that in the arena of disability considerations, one cannot reject this view based on the idea that an individual with disabilities cannot relate to God. He states that “only God knows what is absolutely necessary for a relationship with him; only God knows how he deals with the spirits of the retarded, children, those with Alzheimer’s, and those with other disabilities. We may affirm that each person has the capacity for a relationship with God because we believe God has the capacity to reach every human spirit” (Hammett 2007, 387). In a variation of the relational view and acknowledging the validity of man’s capacity for relationships, Matthews holds that just as dominion over the earth is a result of the image of God in man, so the capacity for relationships is a consequence of the image of God and not the content of image in mankind (Matthews 1996, 166).

**Summary of the image of God.** Literature review reveals evidence that there is no consensus concerning the nature of the image of God in mankind. Views may be categorized into the three concepts that have been presented above. The truth that God’s image is present in all human beings is an evident reality based on Scripture, but the exact meaning of the image remains a mystery (Erickson 1985, 512; Ware 2002, 15). Grudem argues that attempting to a focus on the various views of the image of God is based on a search for an understanding of the image that is far too narrow and specific in

relation to God's original intent (Grudem 1994, 443). A general holistic understanding of the image of God that involves some characteristics from each of the views presented above is presented by Hoekema in his summary statement that

the image of God describes not just something that man has, but something man is. It means that human beings both mirror and represent God. Thus, there is a sense in which the image includes the physical body. The image of God includes both a structural and a functional aspect (sometimes called the broader and narrower image), though we must remember that in the biblical view structure is secondary, while function is primary. The image must be seen in man's threefold relationship: toward God, toward others, and toward nature. (Hoekema 1986, 95)

The implications for acknowledging the reality that the image of God is in all human beings are valuable for those involved in ministry with individuals with developmental disabilities. Individuals created in the image of God are deserving of dignity and value regardless of the level of one's abilities. The truth concerning mankind's dignity and value has been instrumental in the rejection of attitudes that result in the mistreatment and neglect of individuals who are elderly, unborn, and those who have developmental disabilities (Pyne 1999, 88; Sherlock 1996, 174).

### **Disability and Prohibitions for the Priestly Role**

Leviticus 21 includes one of the key passages in the Old Testament concerning individuals with developmental disabilities and has been a source of confusion as evidenced by the various interpretations of the verses in this precedent literature review.

The text of the passage found in Leviticus 21:17-23 reads as follows:

No man of your descendents in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or a scab, or is a eunuch. No man of the descendents of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer

the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the alter, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them. (New King James Version)

This passage provides a comprehensive statement concerning any defect that would prevent one from serving as priest. Not only does the list in the Leviticus passage prohibit people from priestly duties if they have a temporary issue such as a broken bone or a scab on the skin, but it also provides for a life-long prohibition for people with permanent disabilities such as dwarfism, hunchback, blindness, or those who are lame (Lev 21:18-20). The only apparent reason for the priestly restriction from the text is that God desires that His sanctuary not be profaned by these individuals (Lev 21:23). The text is problematic for some with disabilities and has been the subject of authors who attempt to discern the exegetical truth from the Leviticus passage concerning this restrictive mandate from God.

Literature review reveals various conclusions for understanding the restrictive language in this text. Minority views have included superficial explanations without deep investigation into the Bible passage. One such view proposes that the reason for the restriction was that the priest who made sacrifices was to be representative or more like all of the people. This view neglects the concept that the “unblemished” priest would then not have been representative of those with disabilities or any other minor defects. It does hold that the priest who had no “blemish” would have generally represented the majority of the population (Wink 1993, 71-82).

Another minority view is based on a Jewish understanding of disabilities being the result of the sins of an individual or their parents (Farrington 2000, 47; Grant 1998, 80-81). According to this view, with clear and outward evidence of sin in a person’s life

in the form of a disability, there was obvious broken fellowship with God which would render a person unacceptable for service as a priest (Farrington 2000, 45). This minority view based on disabilities resulting strictly from sins fails to consider the overall teachings of the Bible and appears to be based on traditional and cultural understandings rather than on an accurate understanding of the text.

Accurate and thorough exegesis of this Bible passage can provide the most reliable understanding of the meaning of the passage and can thereby clarify and educate individuals concerned about stigmas and attitudinal barriers toward persons with developmental disabilities as they relate to these priestly exclusions.

Rooker emphasizes the manner in which this passage states that individuals with the listed disabilities were not deemed unclean or unable to participate in making offerings or receiving bread from the alter, but rather these individuals were simply excluded from fulfilling the priestly role of offering sacrifices (Rooker 2000, 276). The twelve disabilities listed in this passage may simply be representative of a vast number of those that would render an individual restricted from service (Rooker 2000, 276). Evidence of a representative list lies in the rabbinic teachings in Mishnah Bekorot 7:1-7 where the twelve disabilities were expanded to 142. The Mishnah text expresses the understanding that the original twelve disabilities provided general guidelines that included any characteristics that resulted in a disproportionate appearance (Neusner 1991, 803). Ancient rabbis held that God so desired perfection among the sacrificial animals and the priests that even a man with eyes, ears, or lips that were too large or small and disproportionate for head size would be disqualified by the Levitical mandate. Included in the rabbinic list of excluded conditions were physical attributes such as missing teeth

which would make one “unsightly,” differing eye colors, breasts that were too large, a rounded belly, and a weak immune system that resulted in “falling sick too frequently” (Neusner 1991, 800-03). A clear understanding of the term “blemish” from the text can aid in a better exegetical understanding of the passage.

In Leviticus 21:17, the Hebrew word מִיָּם (*mûm*) is translated as blemish. Generally in the Old Testament, an individual or animal with no literal, figurative or moral abnormalities was said to have no מִיָּם (*mûm*) or “no defect” (Baker 1994, 2329). The exegetical and contextual evidence in Leviticus 21 highlights God’s clear standard for perfection and biblical wholeness concerning the priests and the sacrifices (Rooker 2000, 276). It can be said that the main teaching goal of this passage is neither to offer support for discrimination against those with developmental disabilities nor to exhibit negative attitudes toward these blemished individuals, but rather it is to highlight God’s standard of perfection in the role of the priest and the sacrifices which includes a prophetic glimpse of the future priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ (Hartley 1992, 349-50). With a comprehensive examination of the Bible, it is understandable to see how Jesus Christ ultimately embodied this priestly standard as described in Hebrews 7:26 as the priest who was “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens” (New American Standard Bible).

Multiple examples in Old Testament texts support God’s view of love, compassion, and nondiscrimination against those with developmental disabilities. In Leviticus 19:14, the writer is emphasizing holy living in a Hebrew community when he includes the guideline that “you shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD” (NASB). God also

provided warnings in the form of a curse for anyone who “misleads a blind person on the road” (Deut 27:18 NASB).

### **Disability Narratives in the New Testament**

Literature review reveals how the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as described in the Gospels can provide insights into the biblical understanding regarding God’s view of those with developmental disabilities. One key concept is that of Jesus’ ministry to those with disabilities. Matthew 9:1-34 includes Jesus displaying compassion and healing five individuals who had some type of disability or illness and restoring life to a young girl. Another example of Jesus’ ministry to an individual with a disability is highlighted in Mark 7:31-37 where Jesus restores hearing and clear speech to a man in the region of Galilee.

A second major concept that may be clarified from New Testament teaching is that of the relationship between sin and disabilities. Minority views which propose some of the disability narratives in the New Testament tend to marginalize and devalue individuals with developmental disabilities may be opposed by an accurate exegetical understanding of those disability narratives. Review of the literature points toward a clear understanding of Jesus Christ expressing concern and compassion for those with developmental disabilities.

**Jesus’ ministry to those with developmental disabilities.** In a careful analysis of the gospel accounts, Block highlights 13 occasions when Jesus Christ healed individuals with developmental disabilities (Block 2002, 106). Although Block is attempting to interpret the texts in the Bible in such a way to support her proposed theology of access for individuals with disabilities, her identification of the texts and the

primacy of Jesus provide a launching point into the literature review concerning Jesus and his apparent concern for those with developmental disabilities (Block 2002, 107).

Jesus Christ lived and ministered on earth during the first century when the Roman culture did not provide a favorable environment for those with developmental disabilities. This unfavorable environment can be noted by the virtually inhumane social construct in the first century when persons with developmental disabilities experienced pain and frustration as they were limited to begging as a means of obtaining basic essentials of life (Byzek 2000, 25). In this context, the gospel writers repeatedly highlight the compassion of Jesus as He offers restoration of body and spirit to many individuals as a means of proving the truthfulness of His claims regarding His deity (Stein 1992, 40). The Gospel of Luke clearly portrays Jesus as one who openly accepts those whom society most often rejected. Among these rejected individuals were individuals with developmental disabilities as well as others devalued by society such as women, the poor, Samaritans, Gentiles, and sinners (McReynolds and Bundy 2008, 13).

Jesus goes beyond the societal acts of discrimination and actually presents a ministry of inclusion for those with developmental disabilities (Block 2002, 107). He had a goal of preaching the gospel to all people and offering salvation to all who believe and in context, most of the gospel healing narratives have a primary Christological purpose (Stein 1992, 179). The revealing of Christological truths is evident in a story of Jesus healing a man who was paralyzed (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26). Requiring assistance from some friends to physically get to Jesus, the paralyzed man was forgiven of his sins as a result of his faith in Jesus (Matt 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20). The gift of forgiveness was freely given in the man's paralyzed state (Blomberg 1992, 153;

Byzek 2000, 23). Jesus demonstrated His gospel message was not preached discriminatorily based on physical abilities (Block 2002, 107). It was not until a conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees that Jesus also healed the man physically in order to prove to them that “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Luke 5:24a NASB). Grant highlights this and other healing narratives as passages that portray the moral and physical imperfections of those with disabilities which may result in limited access and acceptance by society in general, but she acknowledges that these realities are not the primary goal of these passages. The ultimate goal of these passages is to “convey the Christological claim of Jesus’ divine authority on earth” (Grant 1998, 77).

**Disability and sin.** In reflecting on human disability and involvement in a faith community, one of the most comprehensive passages one can evaluate is that of John 9:1-33 (Black 1996, 64). A unique characteristic communicated in the passage is that an individual with blindness from birth is at the heart of a debate concerning theodicy (Borchert 1996, 312; Dodd 1976, 186). Exegesis and accurate interpretation of the John 9 passage further informs the role of one’s attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities in shaping behaviors.

The passage seeks to understand the role of sin in the life of an individual as it relates to the special needs of themselves or their children. The disciples of Jesus discovered the presence of a man who had been blind from his birth, so they questioned Jesus Christ as to who had sinned to bring about this disability, the man or his parents. The Jewish concept of sin of a parent impacting the physical life of their child is rooted in the Old Testament when in Exodus 20:5, God says that He is a jealous God and those who fail to acknowledge Him as the only God will experience the “iniquity of the fathers

on their children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” (NASB). It is also a concept drawn from Exodus 34:6-7 (Black 1996, 65) where the Bible quotes God as saying,

The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations. (NASB)

Kostenberger highlights the fact that the disciples’ statement concerning the possibility that disability and suffering may result from sin was certainly within the common contemporary rabbinic views (Kostenberger 2004, 280). There may be instances in the life of an individual where disabilities may be the direct result of some sinful activities, but in the case of the blind man in John 9, Jesus addresses his individual circumstances and not the contemporary rabbinic teachings as a whole (Dodd 1976, 187).

The question at hand concerns Jesus’ response in verse 3 when he declares that sin was not the cause of this man’s blindness but instead it was “so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (NASB). Views concerning the John 9 passage include those from some disability advocates who reportedly struggle with an understanding that God may have created a person to suffer through years of blindness for no other reason than to be an object lesson for this occasion (Black 1996, 66). Block highlights the concept that if taken out of context, the passage could serve to further marginalize persons with developmental disabilities, but it appears that exegetically the verse is focusing on Christology and the grace and mercy of a loving God who is compassionate toward those who are not whole, which is literally all of mankind (Block 2002, 111-12). The majority view and the one held by the author of this dissertation is that exegetically, the passage is pointing to a unique situation where God chose to display mercy and healing to one who

had a physical need. This miracle literally points to Jesus' power over the physical world and symbolically focuses on the grace of God extended to all of mankind as a people of imperfections (Borchert 1996, 312-13).

From Old Testament days through the days of the New Testament and up through the modern era, people have struggled with the concept of whether special needs in the life of a child is the result of sin, especially sin on the part of the parents (Bolduc 2001, 10-11). The issue surrounds the concept of theodicy and whether God brings physical suffering to one in order to punish another. In the early days of human history, God emphasized personal responsibility for one's sins rather than corporate or family responsibility. The development of the idea of personal responsibility can be noted in passages such as Deuteronomy 24:16 (Merrill 1994, 322-23). The notion of personal responsibility for one's transgressions is further developed in later biblical periods. Bible passages such as Jeremiah 31:29-30 and Ezekiel 18:20 indicate a strong variance in the concept that the sins of a parent may result in punishing disability in the life of their children (Kostenberger 2004, 281). The focus of these passages in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel highlight individual responsibility for personal sins and propose that children are not being punished for the sins of their parents.

### **Theological Implications for Special Needs Ministry**

Literature review reveals various attempts by scholars to grasp meaning within a life of disabilities by uniting theology with the unique sociopolitical concerns of individuals experiencing developmental disabilities. Some are based on a Christian worldview which provides a basis for understanding the sanctity of human life. Others counter the biblical views by presenting a secular humanistic approach which stems from

a premise of atheism and points to views in which individuals with developmental disabilities are devalued. Between these two poles of opposite views are a liberation theology movement with characteristic expressions within the subculture of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Concern for the poor and marginalized in society may offer positive aspects of some views, but Webster points out that many of these theological approaches are based on faulty hermeneutics and denial of “God’s definitive self-disclosure in biblical revelation” (Webster 1984, 637).

Discovering theological implications based on a biblical worldview is relevant for this current research due to the fact that attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities must be examined within an accurate biblical theological context in order to be most beneficial for the research purpose.

A view that perpetuates the devaluing and mistreatment of individuals with developmental disabilities is that of Singer in which he holds that an individual’s degree of personhood is based on ability to do tasks and to reason (Singer 2006, 17-18). Singer’s role as a leader in the area of bioethics at Princeton University has provided a platform by which secular humanism can flourish among those who deny the value of a Christian worldview concerning the sanctity of human life (Mohler 2005, [commentary\\_read.php?cdate=2005-10-13](#)). Singer’s non-Christian viewpoint denies the sanctity of human life except in cases where the life may exhibit aspirations, decisions, relationships, and various physical activities. Among individuals who are incapable of these types of characteristics, little to no value is ascribed to them by those who hold to these minority and subjective views (Moreland and Geisler 1990, 69). The result is a devaluing of individuals with developmental disabilities and the willingness to hold that

some animals with a higher degree of physical capabilities possess greater value than those individuals with disabilities (Singer 2006, 60). Secular humanistic assertions stem from an atheistic viewpoint in which the divine Creator and the immortality of the soul are denied. The resulting views then are detrimental to the process of changing attitudinal barriers which stand in the way of special needs ministry involvement (Pierce 2008, 23-24). The only means by which the advancement of secular views can be altered and individuals with developmental disabilities may be valued in society is to promote an emphasis on the biblical teaching regarding the image of God in all people (Koop and Schaeffer 1983, 129).

Writing from the perspective of an individual with a life long disability Nancy Eiesland proposes a theology of disability that can be categorized as a liberation theology (Eiesland 1994, 20). Her proposal is built around the framework of two primary agendas. One being the access of all individuals to participate fully in the life of a local church and the other being the church's role in discovering ways it can be involved in the life of individuals with developmental disabilities (Eiesland 1994, 21-23). Accomplishing this two-way agenda has been the goal of writers and researchers in the area of special needs ministry although the methodology used to reach this goal involves questionable exegesis of primary Bible passages (Webster 1984, 635-36).

An example of a technique used in the scope of liberating theologies is the application of alternative interpretations of biblical passages as compared to traditional and exegetically accurate understanding of the passages. A key goal in liberation theology as it relates to individuals with developmental disabilities is to deemphasize any biblical teaching that may regard wholeness and perfection as God's standard in order to

avoid the possibility of marginalizing those with developmental disabilities. In conjunction with this de-emphasis on wholeness, one should emphasize any passage that highlights charitable actions toward all individuals in order to foster inclusion for those with developmental disabilities (Eiesland 1994, 72). A significant critique of Eiesland's methodology is highlighted in Lewis' book in which she acknowledges that liberation theology from a disability viewpoint has historically been credited with a very "troubled relationship" with the Bible as a source of theology (Lewis 2007, 15). Biblical interpretation in the context of liberation theology has been one with significant warnings for many years from some authors (Webster 1984, 637).

A primary application of theological truths to social concerns such as attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities does not require one to abandon accurate biblical exegesis and application of the biblical truths (Moore 2007, [The\\_Christian\\_and\\_the\\_Social\\_Order.pdf](#)). Nelson affirms that a proper understanding of the fact that man was created by God and in His image will lead to a deep appreciation for the value of all human life which includes individuals with developmental disabilities (Nelson 2007, 263-64). A biblical worldview provides the foundation upon which dignity and the sanctity of all human life may be recognized in all people. Intrinsic value is applicable regardless of race, socioeconomic status, disabilities or spiritual condition according to James 3:9 (Hoekema 1986, 98). In the context of the abortion debate, Moore offers theological principles which he states will transfer to any issue regarding the singular uniqueness and value of every human being. He writes, "Questions such as those raised in the abortion debate have prompted evangelical theology to affirm – with the witness of biblical revelation – that the *imago Dei* is not merely functional, but is an

ontological reality inherent in every being that is human” (Moore 2003, 43). In order to substantiate the importance of facilitating positive attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities, it is important to understand and apply the concepts of a Christian worldview which acknowledges intrinsic worth and value in all people regardless of ability levels (Pyne 1999, 68-70).

### **Historical Implications for Special Needs Ministry**

From the days of the early church period, secular and Christian leaders have impacted views of disability issues and the treatment of those with developmental disabilities. These historical leaders have shaped attitudes that continue to impact positive and negative experiences of those with developmental disabilities as they seek to be involved in society in general and a faith community in particular. Through a review of literature related to disabilities, one can discover the manner in which these leaders have impacted their specific time period as well the current era.

### **Historical Leaders Involved with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

Following the early church period, evidence points toward some degree of benevolent actions and attitudes from some fourth and fifth century monastic orders as they established Christian hospice care and care for the “feeble-minded” (Nelson 1983, 21-22). These early care centers were active in caring for the sick and those with disabilities, but not without some negative results. There was consistent work done in the area of healing which perpetuated the thought that individuals with developmental disabilities were sick and in need of healing (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 62-63). Efforts focused more on healing or segregating these individuals rather than on assimilating them

into their society. Scheerenberger also highlights how those with developmental disabilities were marginalized and devalued as evidenced by the example of a German hospice tower called the “Idiot’s Cage” in Hamburg where individuals with developmental disabilities were confined away from society (Scheerenberger 1983, 33).

To the detriment of people with various disabilities, early history also points to stories of ridicule and mistreatment during the early Roman era and into the Middle Ages of Europe. History records that during the papacy of Pope Leo X in 1513-21, individuals with developmental disabilities were used as entertainment at the table of prominent leaders such as Pope Leo X (Smalley 2002, 104). Extravagant dinners included entertainment described in the following manner:

Buffoons and jesters were nearly always to be found at his table where the guests were encouraged to laugh at their antics and at the cruel jokes which were played on them – as when, for instance, some half-witted, hungry dwarf was seen guzzling a plate of carrion covered in a strong sauce under the impression that he was being privileged to consume the finest fare. (Scheerenberger 1983, 34)

Interestingly, this same Pope is noted to have had compassion and concern for a gentleman named Erasmus who suffered from some type of physical birth defect. Pope Leo X penned a letter of support to Ammonius in the papal court requesting that Erasmus be allowed to maintain his leadership role in the religious context in spite of his physical birth defect (Erasmus 1904, 460-63).

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the Protestant Reformation ushered in new dimensions of attitudes and ministry related to those with developmental disabilities. Literature review reveals that much of this change was negative with Webb-Mitchell assessing it as a time when “the plight of persons who were disabled may have reached one of its lowest periods” (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 64). Theologically, the Reformation was a period when personal responsibility was emphasized and those who were unable to

display a significant degree of self-sufficiency were devalued (MacMillan 1982, 11). The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also was a period of time characterized by unprecedented social needs resulting from poverty, famine, Black Death plague, class divisions and generalized corruption (Nelson 1983, 27).

Martin Luther, a primary Christian leader during the Protestant Reformation period, fostered a questionable attitude toward people with disabilities. Miles reports that although Luther aided people with disabilities at times, he had an inconsistent view of the nature of disabilities. He often questioned the degree of personhood of those who appeared to be “congenital fools” (Miles 2001, 15-19, 30-32). With reported conversations in which Luther suggested the possibility of those with mental handicaps being demon-possessed, it is more understandable how the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries can be identified as a low point in the history of special needs ministry (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 65). Luther’s unsettled views were not unusual for his day in that others within the Catholic Church held to the view that obvious mental disabilities that did not improve with medications could be ruled as demon-possession (Scheerenberger 1983, 32).

Throughout Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, literature points to a waxing and waning effort among Christians to help those with developmental disabilities primarily through the establishment of institutional care. The vastness of the problem was likely too overwhelming for the church to manage as in previous times and the secular society and government began to play a prominent role in care for those with developmental disabilities (Sigerist 1977, 392). Some Christian work continued in the area of segregated care for those with developmental disabilities as is evidenced by the

founding of care centers such as a Quaker retreat center near the end of the eighteenth century in England (Lane 2001, 103). Facilities for the care of individuals with developmental disabilities were founded on Christian principles and held views that these patients had value and should be treated as such (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 67). Care took on new concepts such as allowing individuals with disabilities to wear their own clothes rather than institutional attire, the leaders guided behavior using positive reinforcement, and gardening and animal therapy was implemented in enclosed courtyard settings (McCulloch 1986, 19).

Since the founding of America, care and treatment of those with developmental disabilities has varied greatly. The range of attitudes toward these individuals has spanned from murder to Christian nurture. Some historical reports indicate that individuals with developmental disabilities were viewed by some as being demon possessed or witches resulting in beatings and murder (Porter 1988, 15). On the other hand, the governmental leaders in Massachusetts in 1641 provide a history of establishing guidelines and codes of conduct in which individuals with developmental disabilities were cared for in the context of Christian charity (Scheerenberger 1983, 92).

Following these early days of American history, the state has been the primary provider of services for those with developmental disabilities. Socioeconomic limitations resulted in less involvement from families and churches and more involvement of government (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 70). Secular influence guided by government and healthcare leaders resulted in ongoing marginalization and devaluing of persons with developmental disabilities. The reputation of institutional models of care has been blemished by persistent reports of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse over the past

200 years (Vitello and Soskin 1985, 24). Mistreatment was no doubt influenced by and possibly served as an extension of the devaluing and genocide of people with disabilities during the Holocaust led by Germany in the early to mid twentieth century (Russell 1998, 19). Individuals with developmental disabilities began to cry out for assistance as many individuals and their families desired to move from institutional models to more acceptable home living (Block 2002, 55-56).

By the 1960s, a more deliberate disability movement became visible on the American forefront as individuals with developmental disabilities and their families demanded a place in mainstream life. Early efforts to establish a means by which individuals with developmental disabilities could have access to all aspects of society are generally based on legal mandates established by the government of the United States which intentionally exclude church involvement in the process or the mandates (Block 2002, 56-70). Carlton McDaniel, a leading consultant in special needs ministries for the Southern Baptist Convention, shares that for Baptists “one problem we have is that the church doesn’t have a history of special needs ministry” (Heading 2008, 9). The virtual absence of special needs ministries is emphasized by Webb-Mitchell when he states,

A scandal is occurring in American society. An injustice is being perpetuated in the church that few know is occurring and even fewer can respond to, because there is no language to talk about it. The scandalous injustice concerns the spiritual abuse of people with disabilities. Those who are guilty of carrying out the injustice, knowingly or unknowingly, are society in general and the church in particular. (Webb-Mitchell 1996, 47)

Historical disability movements have played a major role in opening doors for the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities into mainstream society, but a comprehensive review of literature reveals that the Christian church has not consistently opened these welcoming doors of inclusion (Carter 2007, 8, 16-17, 25). Some churches

may exhibit an intentional effort to exclude individuals with developmental disabilities, but Pierce relates this neglect in ministry to a simple lack of awareness and training that may be altered with intentional efforts by church leaders (Pierce 2008, 11).

Interesting data gleaned from the precedent literature review involves the role of leadership in shaping the views and actions involving individuals with developmental disabilities. The views and actions resulting from various leaders have varied between positive and negative. From the previous review, it can be noted that Pope Leo X played a role in public treatment and views of those with disabilities in the early 16th century (Scheerenberger 1983, 34; Smalley 2002, 104). Then later in the same century, Martin Luther was not only instrumental in the foundations of the Protestant Reformation, but he also publically debated and expressed views regarding those with developmental disabilities in such a way that these people were potentially marginalized and devalued (Miles 2001, 15-19). Hitler's views concerning those with disabilities were a pervasive influence in the mistreatment and extermination of many individuals during the mid twentieth century (Wolfensberger 1981, 2). The shaping of the American disabilities movement in the 1960s came in part as a result of the leadership of President John F. Kennedy and his attitudes toward those with developmental disabilities. Kennedy had a sister who had been institutionalized due to mental retardation. His views and those of his family were instrumental in the establishment of the "President's Council for Mental Retardation" in 1961 and the "President's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped" in 1962 (Block 2002, 60-61). With these examples evident in the literature review, an interesting concept arises concerning pastoral attitudes in local churches and their impact on involvement in special needs ministry. If a pastor is leading

the local church toward fulfilling the Great Commission and reaching all people with the Gospel and then discipling them in the faith, then historical reviews indicate that the pastor's attitudes toward these individuals will potentially impact that effort either positively or negatively.

### **Relationship between Disability Laws and Special Needs Ministries**

Literature reviews reveal the history of how some legal issues have been instrumental in guiding churches in the area of disabilities. Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act mandates public access standards for facilities (ADA 1990, Title III). This statute does not apply to churches because of an exclusion clause in Section 12187: "The provisions of this subchapter shall not apply to religious organizations or entities controlled by religious organizations, including places of worship" (ADA 1990, Sec. 12187). Three important issues arise from this statute as it relates to the current research. First, the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for accessibility to all public facilities have completely exempted churches from having to follow any of the proposed guidelines. The constitutionality has been questioned in court and has been ruled consistently in favor of churches being exempt from the ADA mandates (*Posner v. Central Synagogue* 1993). In the example of *Posner v. Central Synagogue*, the court highlights the goal of the religious organization exemption in the Americans with Disabilities Act is directly related to the lawmakers desire to avoid violating the Free Exercise and Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Therefore, from a national viewpoint churches are completely exempt from ADA standards. Secondly, although the federal ADA excludes churches regarding facility guidelines, the law allows for state and local municipalities to institute more rigid

safety and accessibility guidelines which may apply to all new construction, including church buildings (ADA 1990, Subchapter IV). Many churches therefore are obligated under some state and local safety standards to at least have handicapped accessible facilities in order to meet building codes. These vary from location to location and the scope of this literature review would not permit the evaluation of the multitude of individual guidelines. Finally, there are issues of architectural barriers in older facilities that may have some impact on the research results for this study in that some churches may have little or no special needs activities in part because of existing facilities that are not accessible for those with certain disabilities. According to the ADA mandates, state and local municipalities may not only hold churches to higher standards for new construction, but may also mandate that renovations and alterations to existing buildings would require that the entire building meet handicapped accessible and safety codes (ADA 1990, Subchapter IV).

### **Educational Implications for Special Needs Ministry**

The literature review in this section will examine proposed models for church-based special needs ministry. A scarcity of literature concerning the topic of special needs ministry is evident, but understanding the participation gap between persons with and without developmental disabilities who are involved in church ministries will highlight the significant need for more research and writing in this area (Carter 2007, 6-8). This section will also focus on attitude measurement of persons involved in special needs ministry.

### **Special Needs Ministry Models**

Similar to current trends in secular education, churches generally follow one of

two models for special needs ministry. One model involves total inclusion into the life and ministries of the local church (Bolduc 2001, 23; Haythorn 2003, 344). A second model is total segregation into a special needs classroom setting which is specifically designed to meet the needs of the individuals within that classroom (Rapada 2007, 13-14).

Total inclusion is a unique effort to include the individuals with developmental disabilities in the ministries of the church where anyone else of their age group or life circumstances may be involved. Haythorn highlights total inclusion as a type of ministry model that goes far beyond simple structural accommodations and presses toward a ministry where the “worship, education, and mission practices in ways that engage the gifts of all” (Haythorn 2003, 345). For some, intentional special needs ministry is built on the foundation of Christ-like charitable hospitality (Carter 2007, 29). Pohl describes total inclusion as a model where Christian friendships are facilitated and are characterized by a contradiction to “contemporary messages about who is valuable and good to be with and who can give life to others” (Pohl 1999, 10).

Along the theme of inclusion, literature includes references to the L’Arche communities founded in France in the 1960s. L’Arche communities are set up as places of total inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities without regard to abilities or disabilities. Individuals with a wide range of developmental disabilities live with peers who may or may not have any special needs and are valued for who they are and not what they can or cannot accomplish (Webb-Mitchell 1996, 107-08). The founder of the L’Arche community model of total inclusion highlights these types of living arrangements as places where “joys and pain, crises and peace are interwoven. There are

signs of hope that love is possible, that the world is not condemned to struggle between oppressors and the oppressed, and that class and racial warfare is not inevitable” (Vanier 1995, 110)

One resource for church-based ministries highlights the need for inclusion in all areas of church life for those with developmental disabilities and their families. Inclusive ministries is identified as one of the highest priorities of families who long to be a part of a faith community and the inclusive environment can be facilitated or sabotaged by individual attitudes within the existing community of believers (Bolduc 2001, 27-28). Joni Earickson Tada highlights the importance of eliminating attitude barriers among Christians in order to facilitate a welcoming environment and active participation by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families (Tada 2003, 41). An informal anonymous survey of thirty families was conducted by Bolduc and she discovered that when asking families about the identifiable factors in positive church experiences, 93.5% listed a welcoming attitude. On the other hand, when asking about identifiable factors in negative church experiences, the same group listed no special contact with a pastor or staff member in 53.3% of the cases and a non-accepting attitude was a factor in 40% of the cases (Bolduc 2001, 22).

Positive and negative aspects of inclusion and the success of the inclusion model are said to be directly related to attitudes of those involved in this type of ministry (Breeding, Hood, and Whitworth 2006, 25-26). In support for total inclusion and fostering a sense of community, Berk and Windsor charge that it is not the original disability that serves as the individual’s greatest challenge, but rather it is segregation of students into groups that alters the manner in which they experience their culture (Berk

and Windsor 1995, 83). It is through inclusion and as much participation as possible that a church can meet the social, spiritual, and emotional needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. It is also an environment where these individuals as well as their families and others in the body of Christ can benefit (Breeding, Hood, and Whitworth 2006, 37). The roll of positive leadership attitudes in reaching out to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families is a foundational contribution to the success of inclusion (Gartner and Lipsky 1987, 68).

A key feature to inclusive ministry is communication. The scope of communication would cover that between parents, teachers, and any other leaders or volunteers involved in ministry with the person with developmental disabilities (Rapada 2007, 11-12). A unique connection can be maintained and effective through various types of team or task-force type of approaches (Pierson 2002, 177-80). Inclusive models are not simply based in physical or structural accessibility, but also require leadership that exemplifies an accessible attitude (Haythorn 2003, 345). Through a grounded theory research model, Jacober interviewed students who had some type of developmental disabilities and their parents. The most overwhelming theme concerning their negative experiences in local churches was that of being ignored and overlooked. The complaints were filled with responses highlighting a lack of communication and attitude barriers that brought lasting negative feelings about future involvement in church communities (Jacoer 2007, 71-77). These results highlight the relevance of special needs models of ministry as they relate to the pastoral attitudes within the local church.

Another methodology for special needs ministry is a type of reverse inclusion, self-contained, or separate classroom setting for those with developmental disabilities.

The self-contained model may be viable in some cases such as when an individual who is attending the church has “significant to profound disabilities” (Rapada 2007, 14). Self-contained classroom models focus on ministry accomplished in a segregated classroom setting in which individuals with developmental disabilities are all kept together while leaders and volunteers minister with and to them on a rotating basis. Some writers hold this option as less viable in the twenty-first century as more secular and church-based settings are transitioning more toward the inclusive environment (Breeding, Hood, and Whitworth 2006, 37). The transition toward inclusion can be correlated to the 1997 amended *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* as the language of placing children into the least restrictive environment was clarified and came to the forefront (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997*, sec. 612). The original IDEA law was enacted in 1975 under the title *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, but in 1988, research was leaning toward a more inclusive environment with little or no segregation in order to most effectively provide for the educational needs of children (Affleck et al. 1988, 341).

In an effort to promote a comprehensive ministry for individuals with developmental disabilities, Carter represents a view that focuses on individuality and encourages churches to consider any variety of methods necessary to minister to and with those with developmental disabilities (Carter 2007, 91). A single-focused effort to implement a special needs ministry may have difficulty with the inclusion of some individuals with extremely mild disabilities while at the same time ministering to a child or adult with more profound and complex special needs. The goal for an effective ministry to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families will include a

component similar to the public school system's "Individual Education Plan" for each unique person. Newman proposes the use of a comprehensive "Individual Spiritual Formation Plan" (Newman 2006, 101). In a similar format, Pierson proposes the use of his "Individualized Christian Education Plan" in developing a unique ministry that will meet the specific needs of the individual with developmental disabilities (Pierson 2002, 201-08). Regardless of terminology, a summary of the literature review highlights the labor intensiveness of special education ministry, noting the need for clear vision, compassion for an accessible and inclusive church and a positive attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities among the church and ministry leadership.

### **Attitudes Impacting Involvement With Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

Literature searches regarding attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities reveal a significant concern related to the gap between the inclusion that has been mandated by the law and the actual inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities into all aspects of society (Govig 1989, 3, 7, 13; Antonak and Livneh 2000, 211; Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 166; Carter 2007, 10). Through an assessment of attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities, an organization, school, church or any societal people group can be a step closer to eliminating or at least minimizing the attitudinal barriers that impede full participation of marginalized individuals with developmental disabilities (Antonak and Livneh 2000, 211; Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 166; Tada 2003, 41).

The importance of quantifying attitude measures in order to facilitate change toward inclusion in society in general can be clearly identified in the literature review.

One study describes research conducted in a school setting to consider the impact of peer attitudes on inclusion of special needs students into the regular education classroom. The goal was to use a Jewish and a secular sample population to identify whether the precepts of traditional Judaism had an impact on the students' attitudes (Lifshitz and Glaubman 2002, 409-10). Pertinent to the current research proposal is the concept that in the educational realm, negative attitudes stand as a significant barrier to full inclusion of those with developmental disabilities, even when the law mandates otherwise (Lifshitz and Glaubman 2002, 405). There is a significant degree of importance in understanding the predominant attitudes within a community due to the fact that attitudes affect behavior (Yazbeck, McVilly, and Parmentar 2004, 97). Negative attitudes among the leadership of a church community can stand as a strong barrier to inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities while positive attitudes can facilitate inclusion for these individuals and their families (Carter 2007, 10-12; Tada 2003, 41).

Attitudes toward disabilities is a topic researched in various settings, but Rao highlights that even though attitudinal barriers are widely recognized as the key factor impeding full inclusion of those with developmental disabilities into society, there is a paucity of research concerning attitudinal barriers in her field of student inclusion in higher education (Rao 2004, 191). The scarcity of research in the area of pastoral attitudes is noted by this researcher following a thorough effort in literature review. Little to no previous or current research concerning the impact of pastoral attitudes on inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities into the church community has been identified. Antonak and Livneh highlight the benefits discovering attitude measures because:

Estimation of the predominant attitudes of various populations concerning persons with disabilities, together with study of the interrelations of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, is necessary for suggesting desired ends to policymakers, designing intervention programs to modify attitudes toward persons with disabilities and evaluating professional training programs in counseling, rehabilitation, and special education. (Antonak and Livneh 2000, 211)

As with any other discipline highlighted in the literature review, the scope of special needs ministry and full inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities into the church community is positively or negatively impacted by the attitudes of the primary leaders. The current research study intended to address the area of infrequent assessment in order to affect positive change among churches as they strive for more effective kingdom work.

### **Attitude Measurement Scales**

Attitudes may be defined simply as “a combination of beliefs and feelings that predispose a person to behave a certain way” (Noe 2002, 108). As early as 1971, the assessment of attitudes yielded a multidimensional definition that included the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Triandis 1971, 2). Expression of attitudes is a psychosocial process resulting from a learned behavior that is impacted by previous experiences, knowledge, culture, and other people (Tada 2003, 41). Attitudes may be complex yet the measurement of attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities is important because of the existence of attitudinal barriers that limit the full inclusion of all people into society in general (McCaughey and Strohmer 2005, 90) and church communities in particular.

Over the past 65 years, multiple attitude scales have been created, validated, and used in various areas of research (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 167). The scales may be divided into three categories. One manner in which the scales may be

divided is by content. Some scales measure attitudes in general and others measure attitudes toward a unique referent. A popular general attitude scale was originally written in 1960 and is the *Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale* (Yuker, Block and Campbell 1960, 18-19). Attitudes toward specific disabilities could be assessed using instruments such as the *Attitudes to Deafness Scale* from 1967 (Cowen, Rockway, and Bobrove 1967, 184-85). Another key categorization of attitude measurement scales is whether the scale utilizes a direct or indirect methodology. In direct methods, the respondents are aware of the fact that their attitudes are being measured. In indirect methods, the respondents are unaware and are often involved in some type of observation data collection (Antonak and Livneh 2000, 212-13). A final way to categorize attitude measurement scales is by dimensionality. Early scales used a simple one-dimensional approach to measure generalized attitudes. More current scales are multidimensional and include measurement or assessment in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 167).

Understanding the complexity of attitude measurement and the need for an updated and refined multidimensional scale, Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner sought to develop a self-report instrument that could be used to measure attitudes of individuals toward those with disabilities. Through comprehensive research and testing, these authors developed the *Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward persons With Disabilities* (MAS) in 2007. This particular scale gives careful attention to the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of attitude measurement and utilizes a unique social scenario vignette format to ask respondents to project their own attitudes onto the given situation (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 167-69). The value in asking

respondents to project attitudes onto a situational vignette is that it provides a direct measure using indirect methodology in order to provide more confidence in the accuracy of the results from the respondents (Fichten and Amsel 1988, 25). In this current research, suggestions by experts in the field of attitude measurement scales were utilized by using the MAS to examine the affective, cognitive, and behavioral subscales of attitudes as they related to a range of variables such as previous experiences, knowledge, and awareness (Antonak and Livneh, 2000, 213).

In the area of the affective subscale, authors of the MAS used a circumplex model of affect to determine emotions which would be evaluated on the attitude scale. The circumplex model maps what is generally considered to be the clearest examples of actual emotions along a spectrum from pleasant to unpleasant affective states (Russell and Barrett 1999, 806). The cognitive component of the MAS is based on items from a unidimensional attitude scale which was originally created to assess college student's thoughts regarding interactions with other students with disabilities (Fichten and Amsel 1988, 25). The questions were rephrased to eliminate the specificity to a college environment and were chosen by the authors because the questions clearly distinguished between positive and negative thoughts as well as whether the thoughts were focused on the attention to self versus attention to the individual with developmental disabilities. In the area of the behavior subscale, the authors determined that assessing various possibilities in an objective manner would give the most accurate results in attitude measurement overall. They determined from a combination of previous measurement scales that it is important to include both passive and active avoidance behaviors, escape behaviors, and engaging or approaching behaviors (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner

2007, 169).

Validity and reliability of the MAS has been established and the authors present it as a sound tool for measuring attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 170-72). The MAS is currently being used by the Institute of Human Development in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Northern Arizona University to assess the public attitudes toward and understanding of people with disabilities. They have recently completed the data gathering phase of a research project in which all psychology and education students at the college would complete the survey. Results are anticipated to be available in the Fall, 2009 ([www.nau.edu](http://www.nau.edu) 2009, [Research\\_publicunderstanding.asp](#)). In 2008, Banks used the MAS in a college setting to evaluate differences between two colleges to determine the effectiveness of specific policies of inclusion on student attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities. She reports her choice of the scale was due to the significant research basis for the development of the scale and its reliability (Banks 2008, 11). The results from the analysis of attitudes using the MAS scale have value in the fundamental issues of inclusion and exclusion from a multidimensional approach and provided a reliable instrument for the research.

### **Implications of Literature Review on Research**

Literature review concerning special needs ministry supports the need for and usefulness of the research. Biblical and theological positions support the concept that all individuals are created equal and in the image of God. Each person, regardless of ability, is valued and important to God. There is also biblical support for pastors leading their congregations to follow biblical teachings in the areas of evangelism and discipleship.

This primary mission can be summarized by the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 when Jesus Christ told his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (NASB). The Great Commission mandate is inclusive of all people, including those with developmental disabilities and their families.

Historical evidence points to the multifaceted difficulties individuals with developmental disabilities have faced throughout history. Marginalization and discrimination have been guided by attitudes of society in general. Although attitude scale measurements have provided valuable information in areas such as education and healthcare, there is a lack of significant information regarding pastoral attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities. Attitudes can have either a positive or a negative impact on how people relate to and work with individuals with developmental disabilities. Assessing the attitude scale measurements of pastors can have a positive impact on determining the barriers and facilitators of special needs ministry.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The methodology of this research concern was intended to explore the relationship between special education ministries and pastoral attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities. Results were determined from the data obtained through survey responses related to the research questions which guided this study.

#### **Research Question Synopsis**

Legislative mandates have been instrumental in providing for some degree of accessibility to many areas of society for individuals with developmental disabilities. Political leaders have been reluctant to require that churches meet any of these accessibility guidelines in order to remain faithful to First Amendment stipulations. As a result of this exemption, many barriers for inclusion remain intact for individuals with developmental disabilities participating in church communities. Structural barriers are significant, but according to literature review and previous research, attitudinal barriers are even more significant (Carter 2007, 10-13).

The participation gap between the numbers of persons without disabilities being involved in a church community compared to those who do have some type of disability is a significantly large number (National Organization on Disability 2002). Millions of people are missing the joys of being a part of a church community because of

attitudinal barriers to inclusion (National Organization on Disability 2002; Carter 2007, 6-8). Gottman highlights the tremendous value of a supportive faith community and how isolation is a serious detriment to individuals with disabilities and their families (Gottman 1999, 22). The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between pastor's attitudes, their previous life experiences, their participation in formal and informal courses of instruction, and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where he is serving.

The three questions which guided the research for this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the pastor's attitude measurement score on The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where he is serving?
2. What, if any, relationship exists between the selected variables (previous or current life experiences with an individual with developmental disabilities, training through formal or informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities, and the accuracy of his perception of special needs population in his geographical county) and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where he is serving?
3. In what ways do selected variables (previous or current life experiences with an individual with developmental disabilities, training through formal or informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities, and the accuracy of his perception of special needs population in his geographical county) influence the pastor's attitude measurement score on The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities?

### **Design Overview**

Data was gathered through the administration of the *Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward persons with Disabilities* to senior pastors of Southern Baptist Churches located within the South Carolina Baptist State Convention who have a published church and/or personal email address as reported in the 2008 South Carolina Baptist State Convention Annual Report. An online anonymous survey format using

Survey Monkey was utilized for data collection. The survey included the MAS instrument as well as seven demographic questions related to the research questions.

Following data collection a variety of statistical measures, including descriptive analysis, Spearman's correlation coefficient, Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression coefficient were utilized to analyze the data. This analysis observed for relationships between pastoral attitude measures and multiple variables. The design allowed for the analysis of the manner in which different variables and combination of variables effect attitudes which may serve as a barrier or a facilitator for special needs ministry.

### **Population**

The population for the study was all senior pastors of Southern Baptist Churches in the United States. These include paid and volunteer, full-time, part-time, or bivocational senior pastors. As a matter of clarification, the sample includes the individual who the members of the Southern Baptist Churches would consider their primary or lead pastor. Due to limited accessibility to all pastors in the United States, a nonprobability sampling procedure was utilized and precluded the ability to generalize the findings to the larger population from which the sample was determined.

### **Samples and Delimitations**

The Southern Baptist Convention currently estimates the number of member churches for the denomination to be 42,000 ([www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net) 2009, aboutus). With this large potential population for the proposed research, it became important to choose a sampling procedure that would give a manageable and accessible sample group as well as one in which value for the research results could be assured. A combination of

convenience and purposive sampling was utilized.

The purposive and convenience types of sampling can provide an adequate sample for the population under certain circumstances. Pastors within a geographical location were selected for the purpose of the research. For the research, the senior pastors of Southern Baptist churches in the South Carolina Baptist State Convention with published church and/or personal email addresses have been selected. These email addresses were obtained from the alphabetical listing of churches in the South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008 Annual Report. South Carolina has 2,100 Southern Baptist churches with 1,902 pastors as of the annual church report for 2008 (South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008, 260). There are 1,296 pastors with published email addresses and these served as the sample population for the research.

The unique characteristics and diversity of the South Carolina region justifies it as a purposive sample. There are small and large colleges within this region in addition to a community college system which brings a diverse student population to the state. In a similar fashion, individuals from areas throughout the United States find themselves living, working, attending churches, and involved in general community functions as a result of being brought to this region for United States military service. All branches of the military have facilities located in South Carolina. Churches range from large historic downtown churches to small rural churches. Annual Church Profile data reveals that the churches in the South Carolina Baptist Convention have a range of resident members from 12 in the smaller churches to over 6,400 in the larger city churches (South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008, 217-58). The diversity in the South Carolina region supports the validity of this convenient and purposive sample.

The demographics of the region for this proposed research also supports the appropriateness of the purposive sampling procedure. The counties that make up the state of South Carolina include a 51% female population and 49% male population. The median age for the area is 34 years old (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, [censtats.census.gov/pub/profiles.shtml](http://censtats.census.gov/pub/profiles.shtml)). Concerning the presence of individuals with developmental disabilities, the most recent census reports indicate a significant number of residents who are included among those with disabilities. According to the United States Bureau of the Census, nine percent of the state population between the ages of 5 and 20 years old has a diagnosed disability. This percentage represents approximately 82,500 persons within South Carolina between the ages of 5 and 20 who have some type of diagnosed disability (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, [censtats.census.gov/pub/profiles.shtml](http://censtats.census.gov/pub/profiles.shtml)). The disabilities vary and may include very severe mental and physical disabilities to mild and minimally limiting disabilities or any range of possibilities between these two extremes. This research was not intended to survey and gather data from this diverse population of individuals with and without developmental disabilities. The intent was to gather data from pastors who have the distinct role of church leadership in order to consider the most significant variables which shape the pastors attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities. Tada highlights the role of environment and community as they pertain to attitude development which serves as a primary reason for including pastors from a diverse area of the country an asset to the proposed research (Tada 2003, 41-42). The data is supportive of South Carolina being a representative and diverse region of the nation for determining the relationship between pastoral attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities

and the special needs ministries within their churches.

The research sample was delimited to only senior pastors of Southern Baptist Churches within the South Carolina Baptist State Convention who have an accessible church and/or personal email address published in the South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008 Annual Report. It did not include the attitude measurement scale for other paid or volunteer church staff, nor did it include interim pastors of the churches in the selected area.

### **Limitations of Generalization**

The data gathered from the study will not necessarily generalize to all pastors in the United States or to staff pastors functioning in roles other than senior pastor. Results will also not necessarily generalize to senior pastors of churches outside of those within the South Carolina Baptist Convention of the Southern Baptist Convention nor to those in South Carolina who do not have accessible email contact information published by the state convention.

### **Instrumentation**

The attitude measurement scale chosen for this research is the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS). The MAS instrument was created in 2007 by Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner in response to previous evaluations of older scales that were created prior to current attitude measurement data from the study is psychology and anthropology (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 167). The design of this instrument was based on the recommendations from Antonak and Livneh after their extensive research and evaluation of attitude scales that had been developed over the past 65 years (Findler, Vilchinsky, and

Werner 2007, 167). The three recommendations that the authors of the MAS instrument attempted to meet were a tool that was based on self-report, was multidimensional, and used some type of indirect methodology.

In order to show clear multidimensionality, the authors included each of the three components in separate sections. In the affects subscale, the instrument is designed to map prototypical emotions using bipolar axes. The emotions include anger, calmness, disgust, lethargy, fear, sadness, stress, happiness, sympathy, pity, and helplessness (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 169). The cognitive subscale uses items based on the College Interaction Self-Statement Test which was designed to assess the thoughts of college students concerning their interactions with peers both with and without disabilities (Fichten and Amsel 1988, 24-26). The behavioral subscale includes items that ask the respondent to assess fictional acceptance based on responses to a vignette and how a person in the story may respond to the circumstances. Efforts were made to avoid ambivalent responses that would neither indicate positive nor negative attitudes. The responses are designed to observe for attitudes that lead to approach behaviors, avoidant behaviors or escape behaviors (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 169).

The goal of employing some degree of indirectness was obtained by using a social scenario vignette in which the respondents “project their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors onto the given situation” (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 169). The vignette is a “real-life” scenario concerning the interaction between a character in the scenario and an individual with developmental disabilities regarding physical limitations and confinement to a wheelchair.

The MAS in its initial form was used in a pilot study for the purpose of

screening for repetitive items and those with factor loadings below 0.3 (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 170). Then the revised version was administered along with the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ADTP; Yaker, Block, and Campbell 1960, 18-19). The ADTP has been the most widely used scale in attitude assessment toward individuals with developmental disabilities since it was created in 1960. Although it has been repeatedly affirmed as a useful instrument through validity and reliability testing, it is unidimensional and somewhat outdated (Antonak and Livneh 1988, 134-43). A multifaceted statistical analysis followed the initial administration of the MAS. After evaluation of consistency and reliability using Cronbach's alpha and after the strength of positive and negative factors using the Pearson Correlation methodology, the original 79 items on the MAS was reduced to 34 reliable and validated items for the final version. Following thorough statistical evaluation, the authors present the MAS instrument as one which "offers a reliable multidimensional instrument with sound psychometric properties that have been thoroughly examined and validated" (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 174). A valuable insight for the current research proposal is that the authors highlight multidimensional evaluation as a key for attitude measurement. It has been shown that positive attitudes in only one dimension are not sufficient for facilitating inclusion. "In real-life situations, individuals with disabilities may be able to perceive the incongruence between more deeply rooted thoughts and feelings that do not coincide with overtly positive behaviors" (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 169).

### **Procedures**

The first step in preparation for this research proposal was to contact the

authors of the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities.

Permission to use this instrument was obtained.

The next step was to utilize Survey Monkey to develop a website that could be accessed by participants for data collection. The format for the survey began with an agreement to participate statement in which the pastor was notified of the anonymous nature of the survey and the researcher's commitment to strict confidentiality. The pastor was also informed that his participation is totally voluntary and that he may discontinue participation in the survey at any time. Following the agreement to participate statement, a question concerning the individual's role within the local church was provided in order to assess whether or not they met the inclusion criteria. Once the participant acknowledged that he met the inclusion criteria, definitions of individuals with developmental disabilities was clarified in order to provide for consistency among participants and to provide the pastor information needed to understand and answer the questions in the survey. The content of the MAS instrument as well as pertinent demographic questions was entered in the online survey format. The demographic questions gathered data concerning awareness of the county population between the ages of 5 years and 20 years who have developmental disabilities, the pastor's involvement in formal and informal education opportunities in the past, the pastor's previous life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities, the existence and types of special needs ministry in the church where the pastor serves, the accessibility of the church facilities, and the tenure of the pastor. The demographic data was used to facilitate the answering of the research questions.

Emails were sent to the 1,296 pastors of Southern Baptist churches in the

South Carolina Baptist Convention who had current available email addresses published in the alphabetical listing of churches in the South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008 Annual Report. The email requested the pastor's participation, explained the study, assured the pastors of anonymity, and gave information concerning how to access the online survey as well as a hyperlink to the website.

The online survey was available for the duration of the data collection period. The initial email was sent to all 1,296 email addresses with a deadline for participation two weeks after the date of the initial email. After the initial email, any returned emails due to undeliverable status were followed up by a phone call to the church to confirm the accuracy of the published email address. Corrections were made if errors were discovered and the email was resent to those who did not receive the original email due to undeliverable notification. If the email was undeliverable and no confirmation of correct email address could be obtained, the email address was removed from all future correspondence. General participation was monitored daily and a reminder email was sent six days after the initial email in order to increase the possibility of a higher response rate. Another reminder email followed on day eleven of the initial two-week period. After that initial two weeks of data collection, if a minimum response rate of 20% had not been reached, then an extension of another two-week period would have been implemented. During the second two-week period two reminder emails would have been sent to all potential participants on days six and ten requesting that they consider participating if not already completed and thanking them if they have completed the survey. The closing date for the data collection was at the end of the initial two-week period since a 20% response return rate was achieved or it would have ended at the end

of the second two-week data collection period. Time frame for data collection, anticipated response rate and suggestions for follow-up reminders were determined based on previous research from experts in the area of online survey methodology (Hamilton 2003, [supersurvey\\_white\\_paper\\_response\\_rates.pdf](#); Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 207; Selm and Jankowski 2006, 449).

The data was analyzed using various statistical methods, including but not limited to, multiple regression coefficient in order to facilitate the answering of the research questions. Results were included in this dissertation and also will be included in an expanded abstract that will be sent to all pastors of Southern Baptist churches in the South Carolina Baptist Convention who have current available email addresses published in the alphabetical listing of churches in the South Carolina Baptist Convention 2008 Annual Report.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to explore the potential relationships between attitude measurement scores, awareness of special needs populations, levels of special needs ministry, previous life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities, and the impact of formal and informal educational courses of instruction among pastors in Southern Baptist churches. The goal was to discover some of the factors that stand as barriers to intentional special needs ministry and some of the factors that are facilitators of intentional special needs ministry. The resulting information is potentially beneficial for the future of special needs ministries in Southern Baptist churches and in any Christian faith community which focuses on the mission Jesus gave in the Great Commission.

The first primary section for this chapter details the data compilation procedures used in the research. The second section presents the findings from the demographic and sample data. The following sections provide details of the statistical data analysis as it relates to the three research questions. A final section serves as an evaluation of the research design including strengths and weaknesses that were evident following the completion of the study.

#### **Compilation Protocol**

The data for the study was gathered by utilizing an online survey tool which

included the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities for assessing degree of positive or negative attitudes on the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive levels. The online survey also included demographic and background questions necessary to facilitate the answering of the research questions. Survey Monkey was the vendor chosen to provide the structural framework for the online survey. Using the online format eliminated the need for manual data entry of the survey results into the statistical analysis programs and aided in assuring accuracy of the findings.

The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities is a copyrighted instrument which assesses the degree of negative and positive attitudes of individuals as they relate to people with disabilities. Written permission was granted by the developers for the use of the instrument in this current research. Permission was granted for this specific research study only, and it may not be used in additional research studies without the express written permission of the copyright holders.

The online survey was developed using a template available through Survey Monkey. In compliance with The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary risk assessment and informed consent guide, the opening portion of the online survey included the medium risk informed consent statement and required that the pastor check the response indicating their willingness to participate prior to moving forward in the survey. The research protocols required that the sample population be the senior pastor of a Southern Baptist church in the state of South Carolina. The second question in the online survey asked the respondent about their role in the church in order for the researcher to assess compliance with the inclusion criteria. One independent variable in the study involves the pastor's awareness of the population of children with

developmental disabilities within the county in which their church is located. The pastor was asked to select the county where their church was located and then they were given the actual population of individuals within that county who are between the ages of 5 and 20 as reported by the most recent U.S. Census report. The definition of an individual with developmental disabilities according to the Census Bureau was provided for the pastor and then he was asked to select his best estimate of the percentage of the population who met the criteria for being disabled. The choices for this response ranged from 1 to 100 percent in whole numbers.

In the next question the pastor was asked to choose a response which described his previous life experiences and exposure to individuals with developmental disabilities. The range of responses was from none to close or frequent contact with categories of minimal, infrequent, and moderate between the two polar choices. To provide for consistency in the responses, a parenthetical description was included for each choice. The following two questions assessed the previous formal and informal courses of instruction in which the pastor had been enrolled. These questions provided choices of none, minimal, moderate, and significant with parenthetical descriptions offered for each choice in order to eliminate potential ambiguity in the responses. The possibility existed that some of the responding pastors had served a minimal length of time at a church and may not have had an opportunity to influence the church toward including ministry to individuals with developmental disabilities as a vital component of overall church ministries. Another factor that may have impacted the existence of ministries for individuals with developmental disabilities would have been the accessibility of the church facilities. Due to the importance of these two factors, two demographic questions

were included in the survey to assess for pastoral tenure and handicapped accessibility.

Upon completion of the data collection over a two week period, the responses were coded into numeric values. Responses which were more favorable to individuals with developmental disabilities were coded as lower values beginning with the number one and ranging up to a five based on the number of choices in the demographic question.

When assessing the accuracy of the pastor's estimation of the population of individuals with developmental disabilities in his county, it was noted that 11 of the 273 respondents had estimated the exact percentage number. This represents 4% of the respondents being exactly accurate. The range individuals ages 5 to 20 among the counties represented by the respondents was 7% to 18% with thirty-three of the forty-six counties represented by the respondents falling in the range of 8% to 10%. It was understandable that very few pastors would estimate the exact percentage of individuals within their county who had developmental disabilities which resulted in the researcher assigning a value for accurate awareness of the population with disabilities to include any estimate that was +/- 2 % of the reported population. This selected range was based on the fact that the overwhelmingly large majority of the counties population percentages fell within the range of 8% to 10%. Any response that was over or under the actual population by three percent or greater was coded as inaccurate awareness of the population with disabilities.

The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities includes positive and negative responses which required reverse coding of some responses in order to accurately determine the attitude score for each respondent on the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral domains. The MAS responses are on a five-point

Likert scale with the higher numbers indicating a more negative response toward individuals with developmental disabilities. From the emotional domain, responses 13, 14, and 15 were reverse coded. From the cognitive domain, responses 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 were reverse coded. From the behavioral domain, responses 28 and 34 were reverse coded. Avoiding data entry error was an important concern. Data was imported directly from the Survey Monkey results into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Formulas using the IF function in Excel were utilized for reverse coding in order to avoid manual data entry errors. A comparison formula was also used to ensure that the data was consistent with the imported values from Survey monkey.

Data was organized in Microsoft Excel and then imported into SPSS for statistical analysis. In research question one, the self-reported level of special needs ministry in the church where the pastor serves as the primary leader of the congregation was the dependent variable and the MAS scores were the independent variable. In the remaining research questions, dependent variables were the attitude scores as determined from the MAS and the levels of special needs ministry. Independent variables included self-reported level of previous life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities and previous courses of instruction related to special education of special needs ministry in the formal and informal settings. A final independent variable was the accuracy of the pastor's estimate of the percentage of the population between the ages of 5 and 20 in his geographical location who has developmental disabilities according to the U.S. Census Bureau definition.

Descriptive analysis in SPSS provided a means of determining accurate basic information such as means, medians, and standard deviations. Crosstabulations also

provided chi-square analysis to assess for significance in the area of the categorical demographic type of data. When analyzing data for similarities or relationships, Spearman's rho rank correlation coefficient was used based on the categories of data received from the survey. In some cases, regression statistical analysis was used to evaluate strength and direction of the relationships. In SPSS, this regression methodology involved the use of linear and multivariate analysis. The statistical tests included ANOVA, MANOVA, and t-test statistical analysis.

### **Demographic and Sample Data**

A listing of available email addresses for pastors was obtained through the Annual Church Profile for Southern Baptist churches in the state of South Carolina. These were compiled from the South Carolina Baptist State Convention Annual Report for the year 2008. This version was utilized because it was the most recent published version at the time of the data collection. A total of 1,296 email addresses were entered into an address file. An email was sent to all of these addresses on January 4, 2010. The email explained the research being conducted and requested the pastor's participation. The email also included a link to the Survey Monkey anonymous online survey. A total of 170 emails were returned to sender as invalid. Twelve addresses were determined to have been returned due to misspelling in the email user name or internet service provider. These twelve were immediately corrected in the address file and resent to the pastors. In compliance with the planned protocol, phone calls were placed over the next 24 hours to the remaining 158 pastors or churches as determined by the available phone numbers in the Annual Church Profile. Eighteen churches reported via email response or phone call follow-up that they currently had no pastor serving at the church. Sixty-seven churches

or pastors gave updated email contact information and the initial email was then forwarded to those pastors according to the updated addresses. The resulting number of potential participants was 1,187. Figure 1 summarizes the sample size determination.

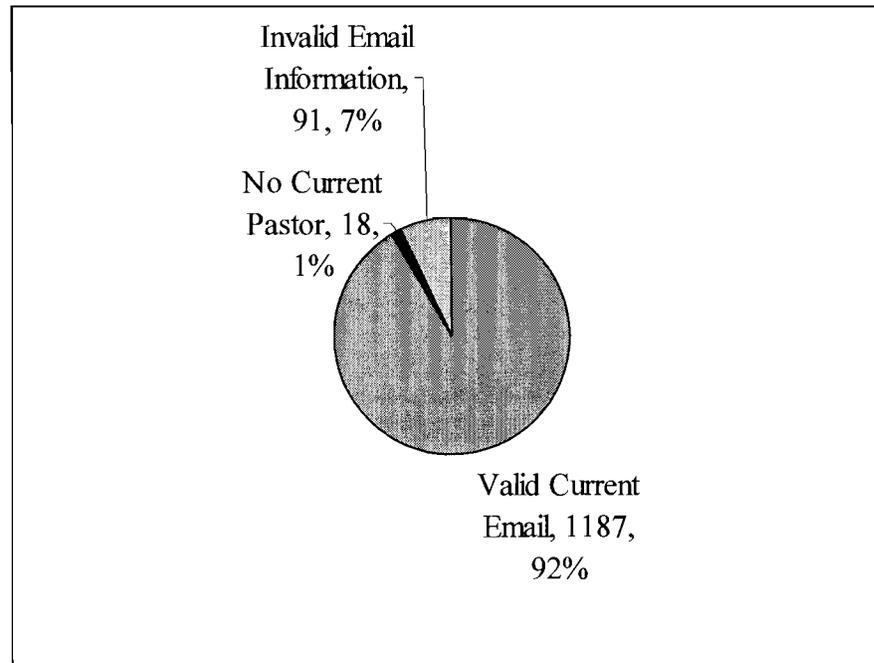


Figure 1. Categories for sample size determination

Follow-up emails reminding pastors to take an opportunity to assist with the research were sent to the 1,187 valid email addresses on January 10, 2010 which was six days after the initial email. A final reminder was sent on January 15, 2010 as outlined by the planned procedure for data collection. Survey collection ended on January 18, 2010 after a two-week period. Of the 1,187 links to the online survey sent to pastors, 408 accessed the online survey and began to answer the questions, but not all were completed. The 408 pastors represent 34.4% of the total potential respondents. The surveys were evaluated for usability for the current research, and it was determined that 8 surveys were

accessed by pastors who indicated they did not agree to participate in the research data collection. These were withheld for that reason. Another 127 surveys were rejected due to incomplete data. Any demographic question or MAS response that was left blank resulted in the determination that the entire survey response was not usable. The remaining 273 responses or 66.9% of the total surveys were determined to be valid for the current study. This represents 23% of the total sample population of 1,187. Figure 2 illustrates the categories of respondents.

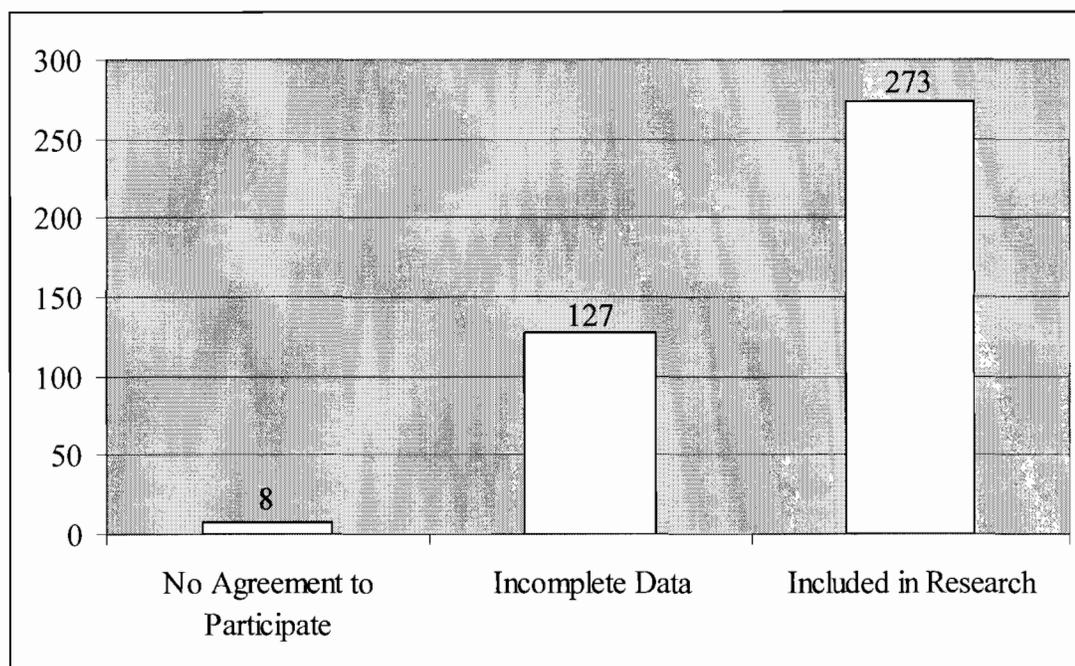


Figure 2. Classification of surveys received

The next demographic question asked the pastors to report the county within South Carolina where their church was geographically located. There are 46 counties in South Carolina and valid survey responses used for the current study were completed by pastors representing 37 of the 46 counties. South Carolina includes the regions of the

Upstate, Midlands, Pee Dee, and Lowcountry. A comparison of the population in each region to the number of pastors included in the study indicates there was a balanced representation across the four regions (Figure 3). A wide spread representation aids in supporting the concept that the study results may be generalized to the population of pastors of Southern Baptist churches in South Carolina.

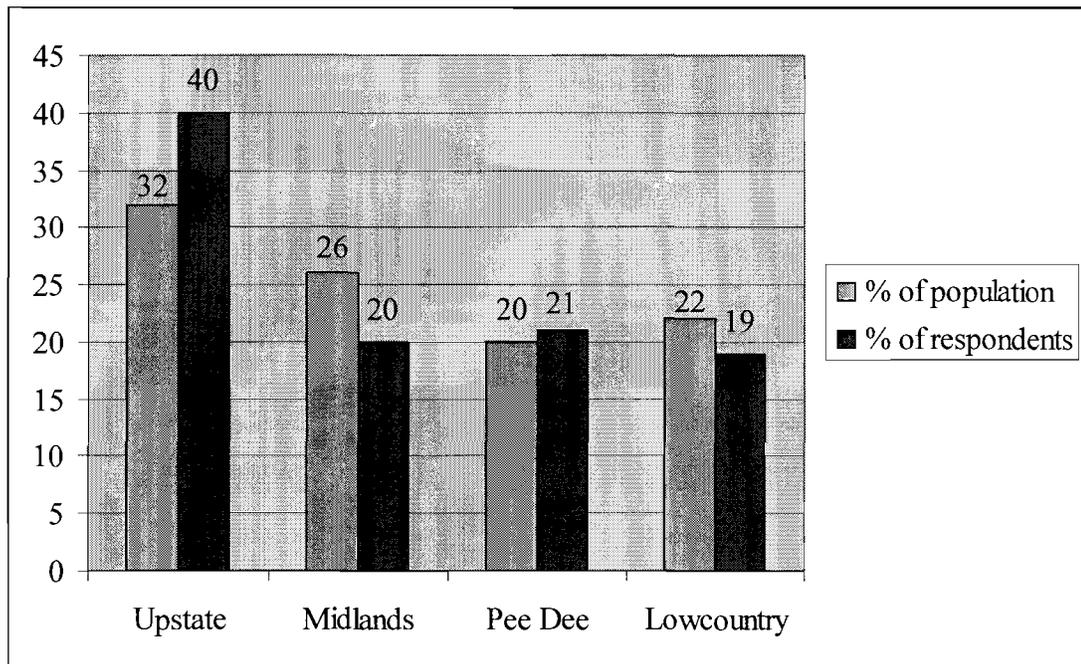


Figure 3. Percentage of respondents compared to percentage of population by regions

Demographic data also included a question concerning the tenure of the pastor at the church where he was serving at the time of answering the survey questions. No plans were made to include the tenure as a variable in the statistical analysis of the data, but there was the intention of including length of influence as a pastor at the current church as one component to consider when evaluating the pastors leadership in the area

of starting and maintaining ministries such as a special needs ministry. An overwhelmingly large number of respondents who had been at their church for less than two years may have led to concerns regarding the data and results from the analysis. Among the responding pastors included in the study, 66 reported a tenure of zero to two years, 71 reported a tenure of three to five years, 66 reported a tenure of six to ten years, and 70 reported a tenure of eleven or more years (Figure 4).

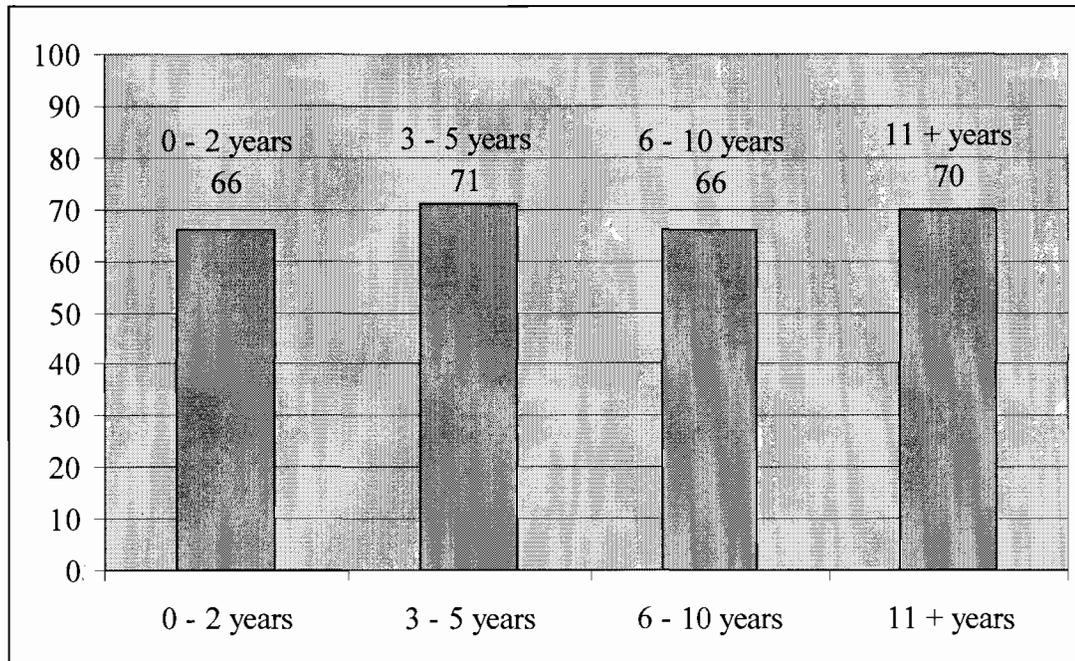


Figure 4. Pastoral tenure of respondents

Another important demographic factor was to assess the handicapped accessibility of the churches represented by the pastors included in the study. Precedent literature review included information concerning the exempt status related to the American's with Disabilities Act for existing church facilities (ADA 1990, Sec. 12187). There may be a possibility that a pastor and church could have a desire to have a special

needs ministry, but the facilities hinder them from realizing their potential in this area. The respondents for the current study reported having 192 churches which were fully handicapped accessible and 81 churches which are not fully handicapped accessible. These totals represent 70% and 30% of the total number respectively. Among the 22 pastors reporting that the churches where they serve have significant and intentional special needs ministry 27% of those also reported not having a fully handicapped accessible church facility.

### **Research Question 1 – The Relationship between the MAS and the Levels of Intentional Special Needs Ministry**

In this section the analysis of the data is presented as it relates to research question one. The question asks: What is the relationship between the pastor's attitude measurement scores on The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where he is serving? Literature review pointed to the idea that positive and negative attitudes and actions from leaders correlated to facilitating and hindering factors which impact personal involvement in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities (Pierce 2008, 11). The intention of question one was to observe for any relationships between the pastor's attitudes scores as they relate to the ministries for individuals with developmental disabilities in the church where he provides pastoral leadership.

#### **Analysis of MAS Scores and Levels of Special Needs Ministry**

The 273 pastors included in the study responded to the MAS vignette and answered questions concerning the likelihood that a person who was unexpectedly left alone with an individual with developmental disabilities would experience certain

emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. A summary of the responses is included in Appendix 4 in order to highlight some of the similarities and differences in the responses to the indirect measure of attitudes based on the provided vignette.

The pastors included in the study had a mean MAS score  $m = 2.58$  with a standard deviation of  $sd = 0.54$ . The scores closer to one represent a more favorable attitude toward individuals with disabilities and scores closer to five are indicative of a more negative attitude toward individuals with disabilities. A benefit of using the MAS was the multidimensional domains in which the pastors responded to the context of the vignette in the areas of emotions, cognitions, and behavior each separately on the survey. It provides the opportunity to examine the components separately and as a whole. The respondents had a mean MAS emotional sub-category score  $m = 2.78$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.67$ , a mean MAS cognitive sub-category score  $m = 2.58$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.71$ , and a mean MAS behavioral sub-category score  $m = 2.22$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.72$ .

The prototypical elements in the emotional domain were intended to map the pastor's attitudinal emotions toward individuals with developmental disabilities on two bipolar axes. One area ranged from pleasant to unpleasant emotions and the other ranged from activation or deactivation (Russell and Barrett 1999, 811). The cognitive subset was intended to examine the pastor's attitudes in the area of thought processes as they relate to social interactions with individuals with developmental disabilities. The cognitive sub-category included whether thoughts were positive or negative as well as whether they are more focused on self or the other person (Fitchem and Amsel 1988, 28). The behavioral sub-category included responses that would examine the pastor's

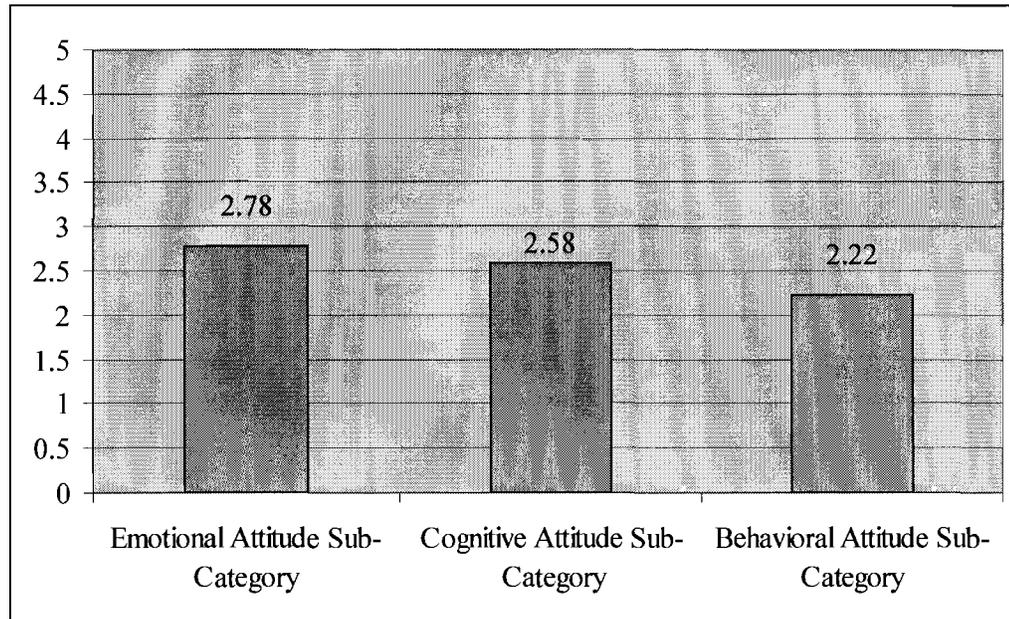


Figure 5. Mean attitude scores in the three sub-categories

attitudinal behaviors in the areas of approaching, avoiding, and escaping the social interaction with the individual with developmental disabilities (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 71).

Pearson product - moment correlation coefficient statistical analysis was used to observe for internal correlation of the sub-categories in order to observe for a strong core of multidimensionality in the overall attitude scores of the pastors. The strongest correlation was determined to be between the behaviors and emotions ( $r= 0.60, p<.001$ ), followed by behaviors and cognitions ( $r= 0.40, p<.001$ ), and cognitions and emotions ( $r=0.29, p<.001$ ). These findings are consistent with those of the authors of the instrument when validity and reliability were assessed (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 73). The pastors included in the study revealed the most negative attitudes toward an individual with developmental disabilities in the emotional dimension and the most

positive attitudes toward these individuals on the behavioral dimension.

Respondents were asked to categorize the special needs ministries which were currently occurring in the churches where they provide leadership as the pastor. In order to provide for consistency in measurement, the pastors were given three choices ranging from no intentional ministry efforts to significant intentional special needs ministry with ongoing paid and/or volunteer staff and current participants. A middle choice of moderate ministry was also provided to indicate that there may be some involvement in the church from individuals with developmental disabilities but the church had no specific and intentional ministries established for those individuals. The pastors in the study included 137 having no intentional ministries followed by 114 reported as having some involvement from individuals with developmental disabilities even though the church offered no intentional efforts at having any type of special needs ministry. The remaining 22 pastors reported having significant intentional ministries in place. Figure 6 provides a chart highlighting the level of ministries.

### **Statistical Analysis of Data for Research Question 1**

A descriptive analysis of the data revealed the pattern of pastors having the most favorable attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities in the behavioral domain was consistent across each of the three levels of special needs ministry. The more positive attitudes in the behavioral domain were followed by the cognitive domain and then last, which is indicative of the most negative attitudes was in the emotional domain. Figure 7 summarizes this similarity among the groups of pastors.

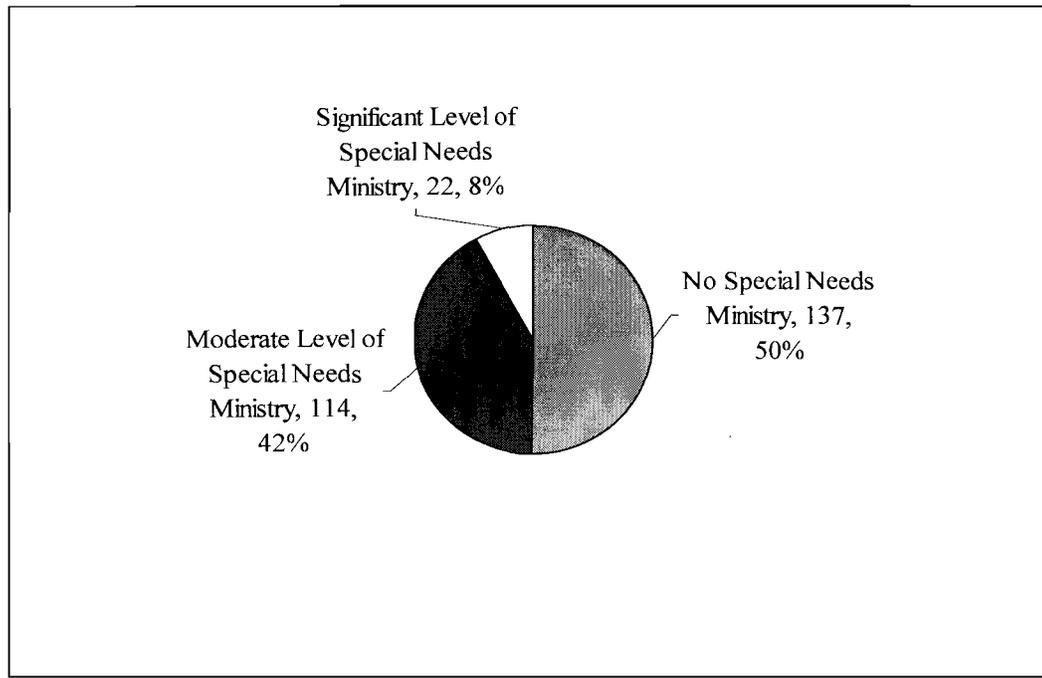


Figure 6. Special needs ministries for the sample population

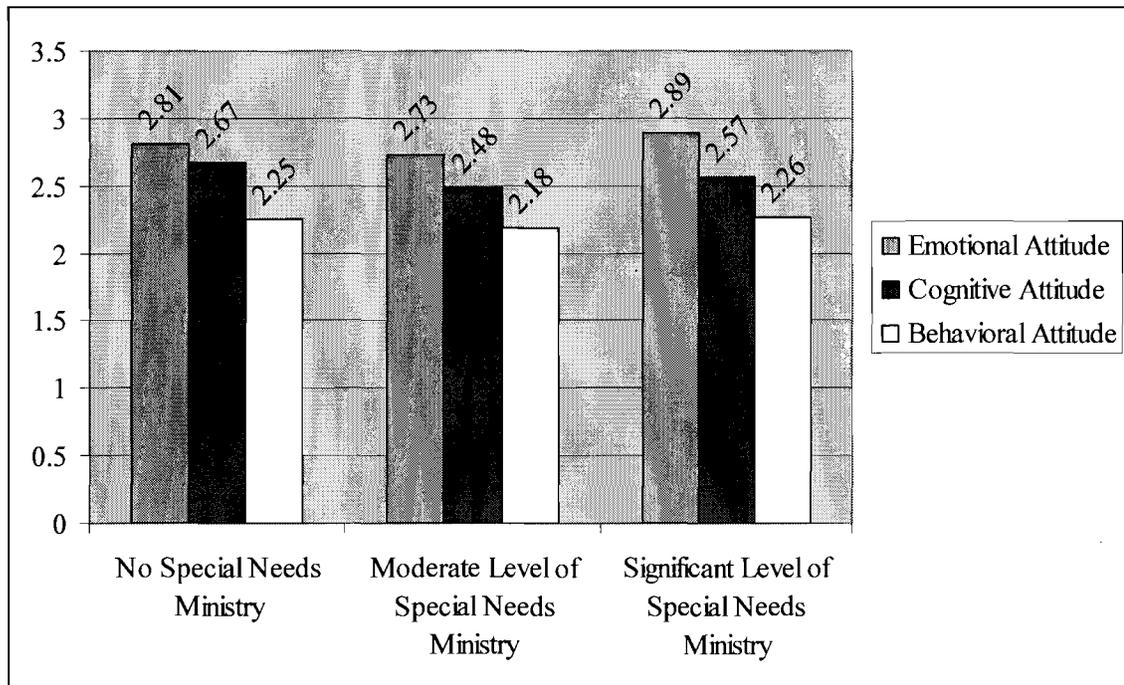


Figure 7. Comparison of MAS scores to special needs ministry levels

The data set for research question one consisted of measured multidimensional attitude scores and levels of special needs ministries. Spearman's correlation coefficient statistical analysis was utilized to observe for correlation between the two variables. The Pearson correlation for MAS score to special needs ministry returned a value of  $r = 0.12$  with a statistical significance of 0.04. These values indicate a weak positive statistically significant correlation between the variables. The multidimensional nature of the MAS allows for further examination concerning the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral sub-categories. The emotional category returned a value of  $r = 0.02$  with significance at 0.73. The cognitive category returned a value of  $r = 0.13$  with significance at 0.03. The behavior category returned a value of  $r = 0.10$  with significance at 0.08. The cognitive domain indicates a weak positive relationship, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. The cognitive or intellectual attitude score represents the strongest correlation between level of special needs ministries and pastor's attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities as compared to the emotional or behavior attitude assessments.

In addition to using statistical measures which observe for similarities, a Kruskal-Wallis Test was also used to confirm the findings from the Pearson correlation. Kruskal-Wallis Test is a non-parametric version of ANOVA which is designed for measuring variable differences when there is unequal distribution among the variables as well as when the independent variable has more than two levels and the dependent variable is ordinal (Howell 2004, 479). These criteria fit perfectly with data set which included the MAS scores and the self-reported levels of special needs ministries in the churches. The overall MAS scores revealed a weak correlation with result values of  $\chi^2 = 2.93$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.23$ . The emotional category result was determined to be statistically

insignificant with result values of  $\chi^2 = 1.32$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.52$ . The cognitive result indicated a significantly more positive relationship, but also fell below the level for statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 5.70$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ). The behavioral category result also indicated a lack of statistical significance between the attitude score and level of special needs ministry ( $\chi^2 = 0.78$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.67$ ). The Kruskal-Wallis test affirmed the Pearson correlation findings which support the concept that no strong statistically significant positive correlation exists based on the data, but the most significant among the three variables of attitude scores was the cognitive domain.

Another test based on a crosstabulation in SPSS was performed to assess for trends between the two variables. A consulted professor of behavioral science research methodologies recommended the assessment of the levels of special needs ministries among groupings of the pastors based on the overall MAS scores. The decision as made to categorize the pastors into two groups, one consisting of those scoring below the mean MAS score and one consisting of those scoring above the mean MAS score. Mathematical calculations revealed the mean MAS score to be  $m = 2.58$ , with 131 pastors scoring below the mean ( $n = 131$ ) and 142 pastors scoring above the mean ( $n = 142$ ). The linear-by-linear trend test, a test primarily for ordinal data, then revealed a weak but slightly positive linear relationship with higher levels of special needs ministry being found among the pastors with more positive attitude scores ( $\chi^2 = 3.74$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ).

Considering the weak but slightly positive evidence of correlation between the MAS scores of the pastors and the levels of special needs ministries, another line of statistical analysis was to examine the correlations among groups of the pastors based on the demographic data collected in the survey. Using multivariate analysis, the researcher

observed for trends among groups of pastors based on the demographical data received. Single variables as well as pairs and sets of three were examined for trends in which a positive or negative correlation may exist. This supported the intentions of thorough analysis of the data for research questions one.

The first area of observing for trend among subgroupings of the pastors was in the area of their accuracy of awareness of the population of people ages 5 to 20 in their county with developmental disabilities. Multivariate analysis revealed a slightly more significant correlation between MAS scores and levels of special needs ministry when the pastors had estimated a higher than actual population of individuals with developmental disabilities in the geographical area near their church. Pastors were asked to provide their best estimate of the number of children ages 5 to 20 who met the criteria for an individual with developmental disabilities within the county where their church was located. Pastors general accuracy of awareness didn't have any statistical correlation significance, but when comparing those who estimated a larger than accurate population to those who underestimated the population, a significant difference was noted. As with the pastors who estimated the population correctly, no correlation was statistically evident in the group who underestimated the population. The pastor's who estimated a larger than actual population of individuals with developmental disabilities had a moderate statistically significant correlation between the variables of MAS scores and levels of special needs ministries. Table 4 highlights the differences between the groups and the statistical measures.

Another variable that reveals a higher level of correlation among the pastors was those who have experienced some level of formal courses of study related to

Table 1. Comparison of MAS scores and levels of special needs ministries between pastors based on special needs population estimates

		<b>Pastors who overestimated the special needs population</b>	<b>Pastors who underestimated the special needs population</b>
		Levels of Special Needs Ministry	Levels of Special Needs Ministry
Total MAS Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.25 0.03 76	0.07 0.48 120
Emotional Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.14 0.23 76	0.12 0.18 120
Cognitive Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.25 0.03 76	0.10 0.30 120
Behavioral Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.10 0.41 76	0.14 0.13 120

individuals with special needs. This may range from minimal to significant amounts of formal education in the special needs subject area, but when compared to those who reported having experienced no formal courses of instruction, the difference was significant. The Spearman's correlation coefficient between levels of special needs ministry and total MAS scores for pastors who had taken some level of formal courses of instruction was  $r = 0.35$  with a significance level of  $p = 0.001$ , which indicates a statistical significance. Among pastors who reported never having been enrolled in a formal course of instruction which included training in the area of special needs, the

Spearman's correlation coefficient between levels of special needs ministry and total MAS scores was  $r = 0.02$  with a significance level of  $p = 0.77$ , which indicates a lack of statistical significance. Table 2 highlights the differences between the two groups of pastors in each of the multidimensional attitude score categories.

Table 2. Comparison of MAS scores and levels of special needs ministries between pastors based on formal courses of instruction

		<b>Pastors who had taken formal courses of instruction related to the special needs population</b>	<b>Pastors who had not taken formal courses of instruction related to the special needs population</b>
		Levels of Special Needs Ministry	Levels of Special Needs Ministry
Total MAS Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.35 0.00 83	0.02 0.77 190
Emotional Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.12 0.29 83	0.03 0.69 190
Cognitive Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.42 0.00 83	0.01 0.85 190
Behavioral Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.06 0.61 83	0.02 0.81 190

There are two remaining noteworthy areas of correlation between the MAS scores and levels of special needs ministry when considering single demographic variable

sub-groups among the respondents. These two demographic variables are in the areas of informal courses of instruction and tenure of the pastor. Among the respondents, 115 pastors reported having taken some informal courses of instruction which included teaching content in the area of special education. Although no inference can be made as to whether they took the courses and had a responding increase in attitude score or whether they took the courses because they already had a more positive attitude regarding individuals with developmental disabilities, it can be noted from the statistical analysis that there is a higher level of correlation between the variables when pastors have been involved in informal education ( $r = 0.25, p = 0.01$ ). A weak positive statistically significant relationship can be noted. The second single element considers the tenure of the pastor. Spearman's correlation coefficient for the variables of MAS scores and levels of special needs ministries is  $r = 0.20$  and significance level is 0.02 among respondents who have served as pastor of their current church for more than five years ( $n = 136$ ). The weak positive correlation is noted to be statistically significant among this sub-group.

Multivariate analysis revealed that among some respondent subgroups a more significant level of correlation could be determined between the MAS scores and levels of special needs ministry. The variables were those who had a high estimation of the surrounding population of individuals with developmental disabilities, those with previous formal courses of instruction, those with previous informal courses of instruction and those with pastoral tenure of greater than 5 years at their current place of service. In order to acknowledge and make consideration for the possibility that some respondents may meet more than one of the variable characteristics, Spearman's correlation coefficient statistical analysis was used to assess the relationship between

MAS scores and levels of special needs ministry while factoring in all possible combinations of the variables among the respondents. Two sets of three variables and four sets of two variables resulted in the most significant correlations. Among the total number of respondents of 273, the numbers of pastors in the subgroups were significantly less and caution will be used in making inferences about the whole population based on these findings. There are trends that are noteworthy and can offer valuable information for the purposes of the current research study. The tables summarizing the Spearman's coefficient values for the six groups are included in Appendix 5. The first group included pastors who had a population estimate higher than the actual population of individuals ages 5 to 20 with disabilities living in their county, had taken a higher level of formal courses of instruction than other respondents, and had served at their current church greater than five years. The correlation between MAS scores and special needs ministries was significantly high in this group ( $r = 0.60$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $n = 17$ ), but the number of respondents which met the criteria was only 17. The next most significant combination was pastors who had enrolled in both formal and informal courses of instruction and who had been serving at their church for greater than five years. Spearman's correlation values for overall MAS scores as correlated to special needs ministries was  $r = 0.43$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $n = 33$ .

There were three sets of dual variables which also yielded more statistically significant results. The first was pastors who a higher level of both formal and informal courses of instruction than other respondents. Spearman's correlation values for overall MAS scores as correlated to special needs ministries was  $r = 0.33$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $n = 68$ . The second group was pastors with a higher level of informal courses of instruction than other

respondents and who had served at their current church greater than five years.

Spearman's correlation values for overall MAS scores as correlated to special needs ministries was  $r = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ,  $n = 51$ . The third set of two variables included pastors who had a higher level of formal courses of instruction than other respondents and who had served at their current church greater than five years. Spearman's correlation values for overall MAS scores as correlated to special needs ministries was  $r = 0.49$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ,  $n = 43$ .

For the purposes of the current research, statistical analysis has revealed weak but statistically significant relationship between overall MAS scores and levels of special needs ministry. A benefit of using a multidimensional attitude scale is that it allows the researcher the opportunity to consider detailed aspects of the attitude measures and this along with pertinent demographic data can reveal helpful information in an effort to develop resources and suggestions that may lead a church and its pastor to be more effective in reaching individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

### **Research Question 2 – The Relationship between the Levels of Intentional Special Needs Ministry and Selected Variables**

In this section, the data will be presented as it relates to research question two. The question specifically asks what, if any, relationship exists between the selected variables (previous or current life experiences with an individual with developmental disabilities, training through formal or informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities, and the accuracy of his perception of special needs population in his geographical county) and the level of intentional special education ministry in the church where he is serving? Precedent literature highlighted the lack of intentional special needs ministry in local churches. Among Baptist churches, Carlton McDaniel, a

leading Southern Baptist denominational consultant for special needs ministries was quoted as emphasizing that among Baptist churches “one problem we have is that the church doesn’t have a history of special needs ministry” (Heading 2008, 9). The literature also indicated the importance of the leader or pastor in a congregation having a vision for the importance of reaching out to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in order to narrow or even eliminate the participation gap related to this unique population (Carter 2007, 6-8). The intention of research question two was to potentially identify variables that would help predict the likelihood of intentional special needs ministries in order to help educators and denominational leaders identify areas for further and ongoing attention.

The data for the second research question was initially separated and analyzed individually for each of the four variables under consideration as they related to the self-reported levels of special needs ministries in the churches led by the respondents. There were three levels of special needs ministries described in the demographic section of the survey and pastors identified which of these levels most accurately resembled the special needs ministries in their church. Among the respondents, 137 churches were reported as having no intentional special needs ministry, 114 reported having some involvement from individuals with developmental disabilities, but no intentional ministries for them were provided, and 22 churches were reported as having a significant level of intentional special needs ministry. The totals represent 50%, 42%, and 8% of the total respondents respectively. The summary of levels of ministry was represented in Figure 6 earlier in this chapter. The first demographic variable considered in research question two includes accuracy of awareness of the population of children ages 5 to 20 who live in the same

geographical county where the church is located. Included in this variable is also whether the pastor underestimated or overestimated the population of individuals with developmental disabilities. A second variable includes previous level of life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities. The final two factors include the level of formal and informal courses of instruction in the area of special education. The levels of special needs ministries were evaluated as they relate to the demographic variables.

### **Accuracy of Awareness**

Respondents were provided the census data for individuals between the ages of 5 and 20 in their county and definition of individuals with developmental disabilities and asked to estimate the percentage of the population in the county in which their church was located. There were 77 respondents, representing 28% of the total, who were accurate +/- 2% the actual percentage of the population age 5 to 20 who met the criteria for having developmental disabilities. The remaining 196 pastors, or 72%, were inaccurate in their estimate. Of those who were inaccurate, 76 pastors overestimated and 120 pastors underestimated the population percentage. The respondents were divided into three groups, pastors with accurate awareness of the population, pastors with inaccurate underestimates, and those with inaccurate overestimates. Figure 8 summarizes the subcategories in a bar chart format.

Regression statistical analysis allowed for an evaluation of the independent variable of awareness of the population as a predictor for the level of special needs ministries in the churches. Analysis revealed that this variable alone has a multiple correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.12$  with a significance level of  $p = 0.85$ . The three awareness of population categories produced an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.00 ( $F = 1.60$ ,  $p = 0.20$ )

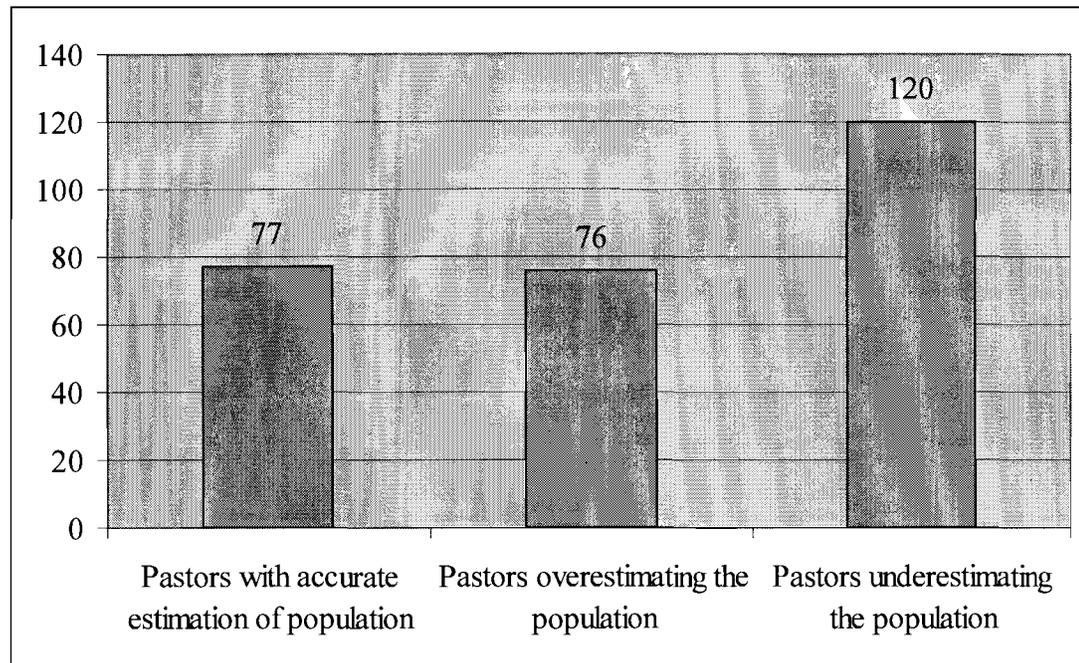


Figure 8. Estimation of the of population who have disabilities

for predicting levels of special needs ministry. Pastors in the category of overestimating the population had the highest significant regression coefficient with values of  $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $t = 1.35$ ,  $p = 0.17$ . It appears that accuracy of awareness only accounts for 12% of the variation in special needs ministry among the respondents. Awareness of the population is not a statistically significant predictor of increased levels of special needs ministries in the churches represented by the respondents.

### **Life Experience with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

Precedent literature review revealed some historical occasions when leaders had made significant improvements in services for those with developmental disabilities and how a variable in some of those instances had been personal experience with individuals with various types of disabilities (Block 2002, 60-61). Some may assume

that a pastor who had personal experience with disabilities may have an increased tendency to lead a congregation to begin and sustain a ministry focused on special needs. In order to further investigate the relationship between special needs ministry and life experiences, regression analysis was completed based on the ministry levels being a dependent variable and life experiences being a potential predictor for the ministry. Figure 9 highlights the reported levels of experience the respondents had with individuals with developmental disabilities.

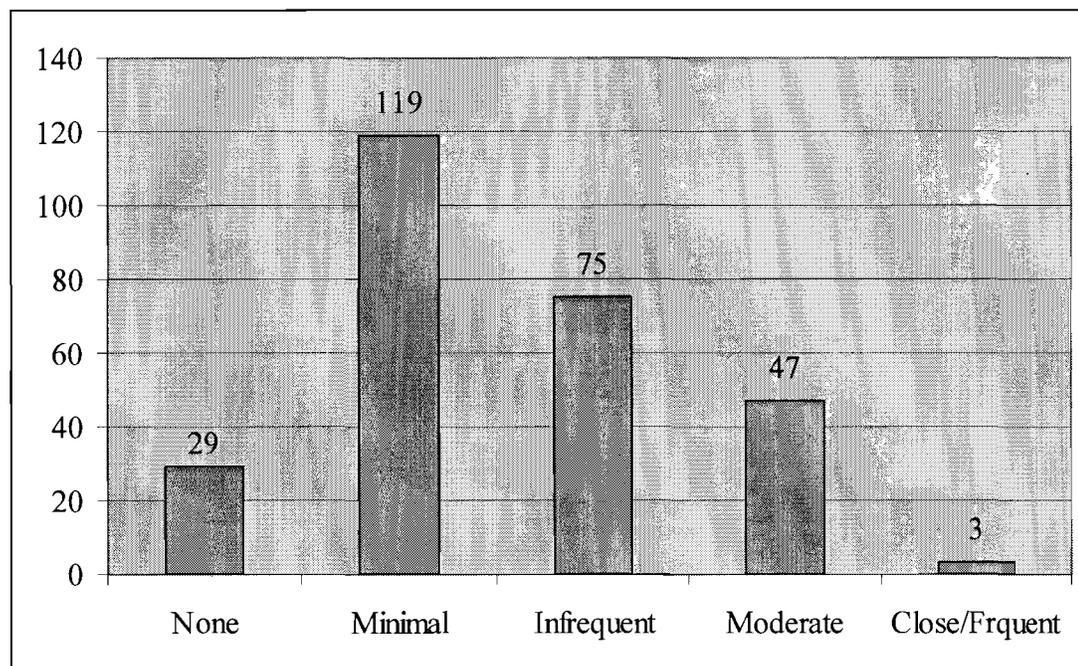


Figure 9. Number of respondents reporting life experience levels in each of the five categories

Regression analysis reveals a statistically significant negative relationship between levels of special needs ministry and life experience levels. The R square value and F ratio indicates 10% of the variability in special needs ministry levels is impacted by

life experience. The multiple correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.31$  with a significance level of  $p = 0.00$  is indicative of a statistically significant negative relationship between special needs ministry levels and life experience. A crosstabulation table is provided in Table 3 which highlights the numbers of respondents in the special needs ministry levels in conjunction with the experience levels. An analysis of levels of life experience as a predictor for increased levels of special needs ministry produced an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.83 ( $F = 7.18, p = 0.000$ ). It appears from the analysis that increased levels of experience with individuals with developmental disabilities does not correlate to greater levels of special needs ministry.

Table 3. Crosstabulation frequency data for special needs ministry and pastoral life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities

		EXPERIENCE					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
	Count	0	1	3	12	6	22
	% within SP NEEDS MIN LEVEL 1 (Significant)	.0%	4.5%	13.6%	54.5%	27.3%	100.0%
	Count	0	12	29	58	15	114
	% within SP NEEDS MIN LEVEL 2 (Moderate)	.0%	10.5%	25.4%	50.9%	13.2%	100.0%
	Count	3	34	43	49	8	137
	% within SP NEEDS MIN LEVEL 3 (None)	2.2%	24.8%	31.4%	35.8%	5.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	47	75	119	29	273
	% within SP NEEDS MIN	1.1%	17.2%	27.5%	43.6%	10.6%	100.0%

### Levels of Formal Course of Instruction

There were 20 of the 273 respondents who reported they had either a major or minor in undergraduate studies which was directly related to special education. This represents 7.4% of the sample population. Sixty-three of the respondents, representing 23.1% reported having taken a minimal number of college courses of instruction which included special education training. The remaining 190 pastors reported having never enrolled in a formal course of instruction which included special education training.

Figure 10 provides a visual chart of the levels of formal courses of instruction as reported by the respondents. Regression statistical analysis was utilized to evaluate the predictive relationship between involvement in formal courses of instruction and the levels of special needs ministry in the churches represented by the responding pastors.

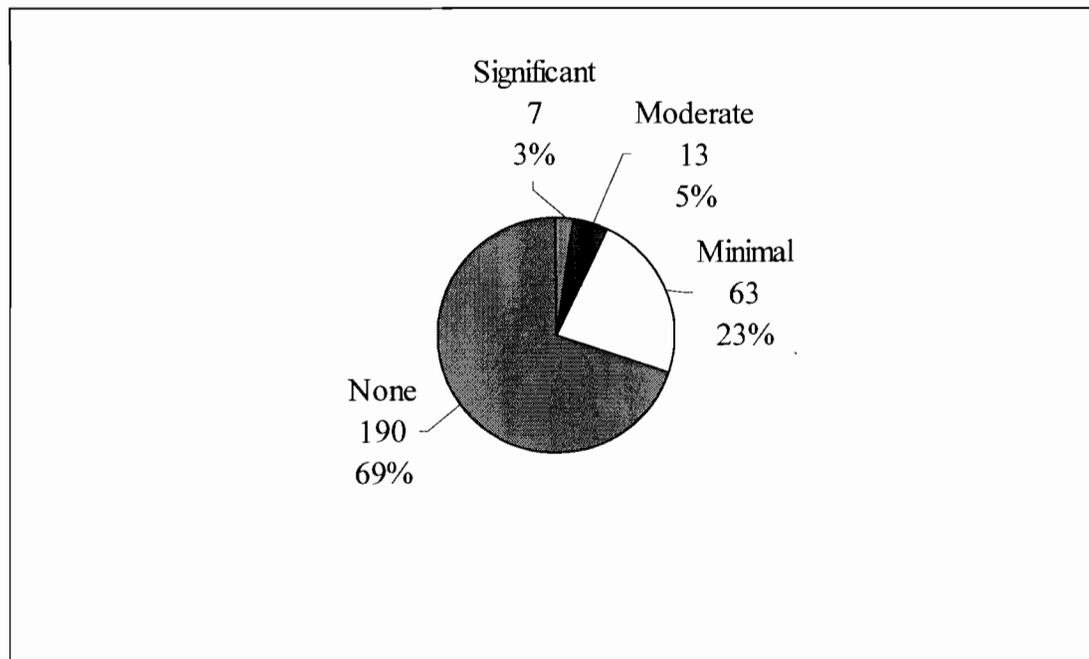


Figure 10. Levels of formal courses of instruction among the respondents

The various levels of formal education produces an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.016 ( $F = 1.44$ ,  $p = 0.23$ ) for predicting levels of special needs ministry. The values indicate that 13% of the variation in levels of special needs ministry being related to formal courses of instruction. The multiple regression models reveal that increased levels of formal courses of instruction are not necessarily noted with increased levels of special needs ministry. The distribution of the sample likely effects this finding, but the over regression models point to a positive but minimal predictive relationship between the special needs ministry levels and formal education.

### **Levels of Informal Course of Instruction**

Respondents provided a self-reported level of previous enrollment in informal courses of instruction based on the descriptive explanations on the online survey. There were 3 respondents, representing 1.1%, who had a significant level of informal coursework. Following were 20 (7.3%) respondents reporting a moderate number of informal courses taken, 92 (33.7%) reporting a minimal level of informal courses and 158 (57%) reporting no previous informal courses of instruction. Figure 11 highlights the comparison of the levels of informal courses of instruction. Regression statistical analysis provided a means to evaluate the predictive properties of the pastor's enrollment in informal courses of instruction as an indicator of levels of special needs ministry.

The various levels of informal education produces and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.03 ( $F = 3.42$ ,  $p = 0.34$ ) for predicting levels of special needs ministry. The  $R$  value reveals a 16% influence of informal courses of instruction on the variation in levels of special needs ministry. The multiple regression analysis is indicative of a statistically significant but weak predictive relationship between the levels of special needs ministry and the pastor's

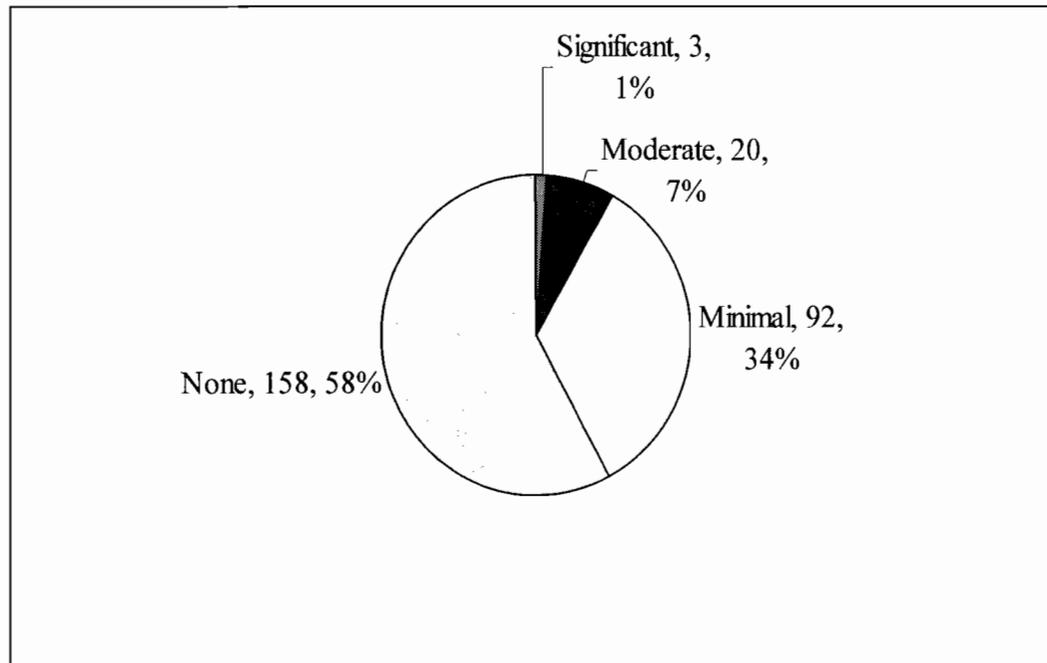


Figure 11. Levels of informal courses of instruction among the respondents

previous involvement in informal courses of instruction. The relationship may be established as slightly significant, but the analysis is unable to discover if the pastor respondents may have enrolled in increased levels of informal education because of already having a special needs ministry or if there is a possibility that special needs ministries were started as a result of the informal training courses.

### **Combinations of Variables**

There is a realistic understanding that not every respondent would have been included in only one category of the preceding variables. Inferences important for the current study could be discovered among the responses of the pastors who may have been included in a set of two, three, or four of the variables as they provide a predictive relationship to special needs ministries. Multiple regression statistical analysis

provided the methodology to examine sets of variables to determine the most valuable combinations in predicting levels of special needs ministry. Forced entry and stepwise models were analyzed with all four variables included in the calculations.

In the regression statistics model summary, the correlation of the R square and the adjusted R square reveals that the data results provide an adequate representation of the sample population. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.105 indicates the level of independence among the variables is adequate to assume one variable is not significantly impacted by the other variables. SPSS regression analysis using the stepwise method analyzed through all variables and combinations of variables to discover the ones which had the most significant predictive relationship for levels of special needs ministry.

The combinations of variables with the most significant predictive influence on special needs ministry each contained the level of life experience of the pastor as it relates to individuals with developmental disabilities. In combination with one another, a more positive influence of life experience accompanied by education emerges. All models created by the statistical analysis included the experience variable. Following this variable was informal education then formal education and finally accuracy of awareness of the population with disabilities. In these combinations, the multiple correlation coefficients range from  $r = 0.35$  to  $r = 0.36$  with a significance level of  $p = 0.00$ . When combining all levels of experience with higher levels of informal education the analysis reveals values of  $F = 5.96$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Combining increased life experiences with people with disabilities along with formal and informal educational background, the analysis revealed values of  $F = 5.33$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . The next most significant model included life experiences, accurate awareness, and increased levels of informal education. This

combination of variables had values of  $F=4.75$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . The indicators reveal a statistically significant predictive relationship for special needs ministry most often when pastors have life experiences with individuals with disabilities and informal education.

### **Research Question 3 – The Relationship between The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities and Selected Variables**

In this section, the data will be presented as it relates to research question three. The questions asks: in what ways do selected variables (previous or current life experiences with an individual with developmental disabilities, training through formal or informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities, and the accuracy of his perception of special needs population in his geographical county) influence the pastor's attitude measurement scores on The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities? A common theme throughout much of the precedent literature review highlighted the evidence that attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities may serve as barriers or facilitators to inclusion in various societal contexts. A paucity of research and writing was discovered when considering the impact of pastoral attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities. The current study was chosen in order to contribute information regarding not only levels of pastoral attitudes in the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral domains, but also to evaluate the relationships between some common variables and the attitude scores. The intent was to discover some patterns among the variables which may aid in predicting more positive attitudes which in turn may open doors for relationships between individuals with developmental disabilities and their families and the local church. The ultimate goal is to reach the individuals and their families with the gospel message and to provide

opportunities for ministry and fellowship within the context of a Christian community.

The variables of accuracy of awareness of the surrounding population age 5 to 20 who have developmental disabilities, life experiences with individuals who have developmental disabilities, and previous enrollment in formal and informal courses of instruction related to special education will each be analyzed separately and in combinations as they may relate to the emotional, cognitive, and behavior domains of attitudes.

### **Accuracy of Awareness**

Figure 7 summarized the levels of accuracy of awareness of the population with developmental disabilities according to estimated percentages by the respondents. The pastors included in the study had a mean MAS score  $m = 2.58$  with a standard deviation of  $sd = 0.54$ . The respondents had a mean MAS emotional attitude score  $m = 2.78$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.67$ , a mean MAS cognitive attitude score  $m = 2.58$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.71$ , and a mean MAS behavioral attitude score  $m = 2.22$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.72$ . Scores closer to one represent a more positive attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities and scores closer to five are indicative of a more negative attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities.

Initial statistical analysis for determining the relationship between accuracy of awareness and the MAS scores was accomplished by calculating and comparing means across subgroups of the respondents based on their accuracy of awareness category. Figure 12 illustrates the trends among the respondents. Minute variances are noted among the groups. The pastors who overestimated the population of individuals with developmental disabilities tended to have slightly more negative attitude levels compared

to the other two groups, but they tended to have more positive behavioral attitude scores.

Pearson product - moment correlation coefficient was utilized to assess for statistically significant correlation between the accuracy of awareness variable and the MAS scores.

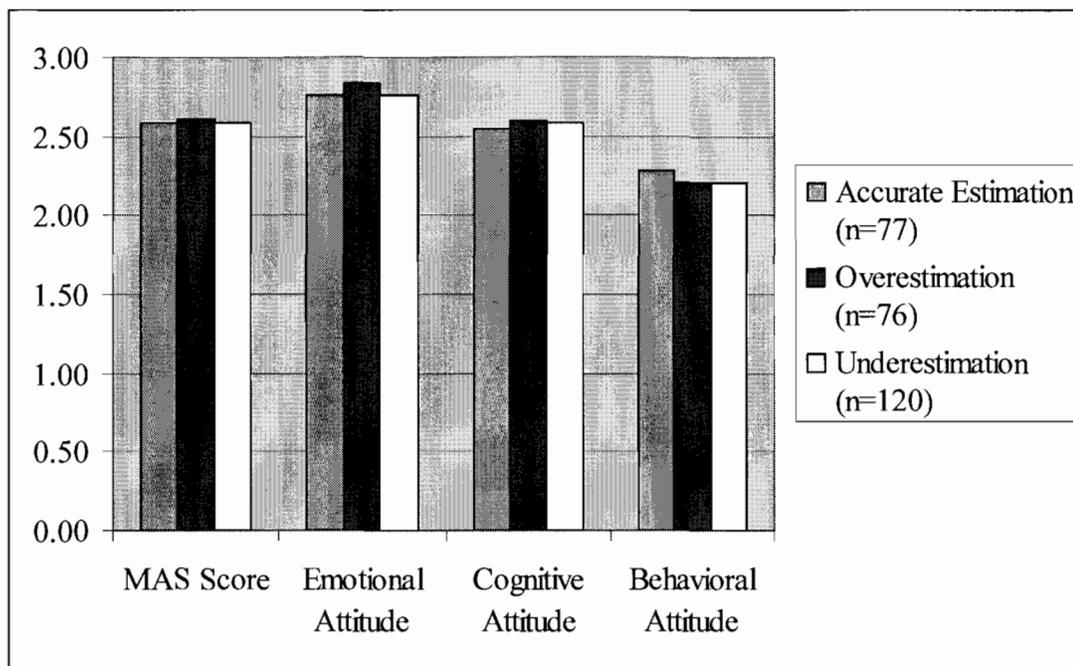


Figure 12. Comparison of attitude scores to population estimation accuracy

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the overall MAS scores and awareness was  $r = 0.05$  with significance level at 0.44. The correlation coefficients for emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitude scores in relation to accuracy of awareness were  $r = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.92$  for the emotional attitude domain,  $r = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.62$  for the cognitive domain, and  $r = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.18$  for the behavioral domain. Descriptive analysis trends are evident, but analysis indicates minimal variation with insignificant statistical correlation.

## Life Experience with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Respondents self-reported a ranked level of experience in life with individuals with developmental disabilities. The levels ranged from close or frequent contact with someone on an almost daily basis to no prior contact with anyone with developmental disabilities. Between these two polar responses were moderate experience, infrequent experience, and minimal acquaintance-type of experience. Figure 13 summarizes the number of respondents in each category. The pastors included in the study had a mean MAS score  $m = 2.58$  with a standard deviation of  $sd = 0.54$ . The respondents had a mean MAS emotional attitude score  $m = 2.78$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.67$ , a mean MAS cognitive attitude score  $m = 2.58$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.71$ , and a mean MAS behavioral attitude score  $m = 2.22$  with a standard deviation  $sd = 0.72$ .

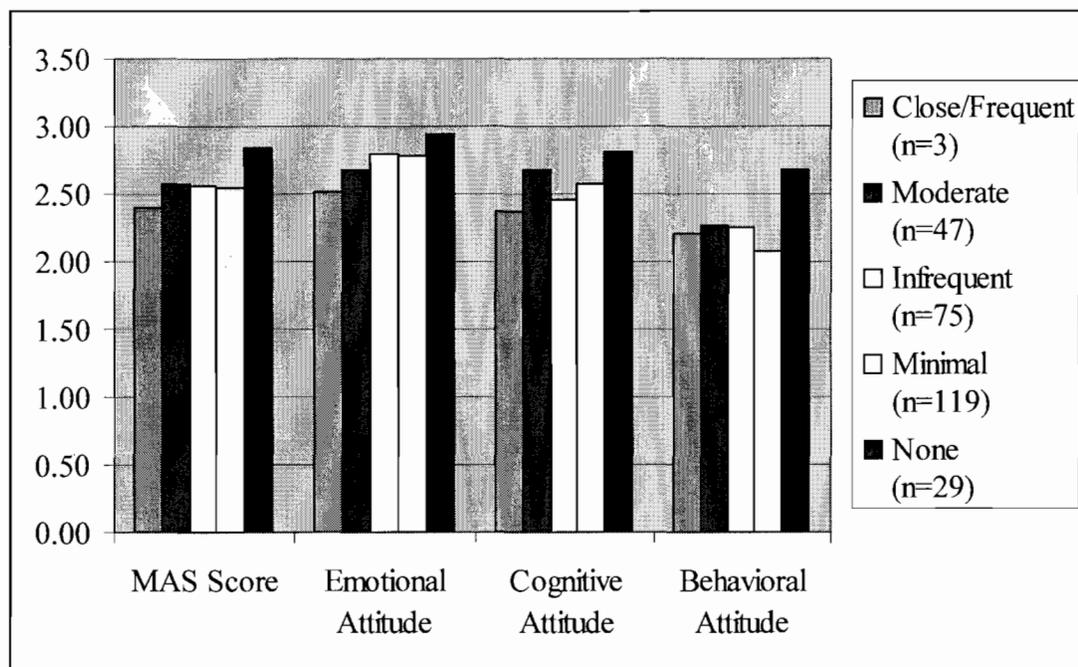


Figure 13. Comparison of attitude scores to levels of life experiences

Descriptive statistical analysis provided a starting point for assessing relationships between the life experiences and the MAS scores. The variation among the central categories was minimal, but more noticeable between the two extreme categories. Table 4 provides a crosstabulation of the population variances. The more positive attitudes are consistently noted in the group with the most experience and the more negative attitudes are consistently noted among those with no experience, however the numbers of respondents in the categories prohibit making overall inferences.

Table 4. Crosstabulation of life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities to MAS scores

	EXPERIENCE LEVEL				
	1	2	3	4	5
Descriptive	Frequent	Moderate	Infrequent	Minimal	None
Count	n=3	n=47	n=75	n=119	n=29
Overall MAS Score	2.37	2.54	2.50	2.48	2.81
Emotional Attitudes	2.52	2.68	2.79	2.78	2.94
Cognitive Attitudes	2.37	2.67	2.45	2.57	2.81
Behavioral Attitudes	2.21	2.27	2.25	2.08	2.67

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the over all MAS scores and life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities was  $r = 0.10$  with significance level at 0.09. The correlation coefficients for emotional, cognitive, and

behavioral attitude scores in relation to accuracy of awareness were  $r = 0.11$ ,  $p = 0.08$  for the emotional attitude domain,  $r = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.61$  for the cognitive domain, and  $r = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.09$  for the behavioral domain. Positive correlation may be noted, but a level of statistical significance is not reached.

Statistical analysis decision tree and a statistics professor both suggested the possibility of grouping the respondents in the experience category to create an indicator variable with pastors who either do or do not have some degree of life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities. Following this method of distribution, it may be noted that respondents with life experiences was  $n = 194$  compared to only  $n = 29$  for those with no experience. The Pearson correlation coefficient statistical analysis for the reformatted variable did indicate a positive statistical correlation between over all MAS scores and life experience ( $r = 0.18$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). In the behavioral attitude domain the correlation coefficient for the reformatted distribution was  $r = 0.22$  with  $p = 0.00$ , also indicating a statistically significant correlation. This pattern did not hold true with the emotional domain ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.17$ ) nor in the cognitive domain ( $r = 0.11$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ), neither of which reach a level of statistical significance.

### **Levels of Formal Course of Instruction**

Respondents identified their past experiences regarding levels of the number of formal courses of instruction in which they have been enrolled. Figure 10 earlier in this chapter illustrates the numbers of respondents in each of the categories. The more significant level of formal education included having enough courses in the area of special education to get an undergraduate or graduate degree in that subject area. The lowest level was to never have enrolled in a formal course of instruction which included teaching in the area

of special education. Between these two divergent responses was a level in which enough courses were taken to qualify the respondent for a minor in a subject related to special education and a level indicating minimal formal courses in this area. Figure 14 illustrates the variability of the MAS scores as they relate to the respondent's level self-reported formal courses of instruction. A summary of the descriptive statistics related to the MAS scores and the formal courses of instruction are presented in Table 11.

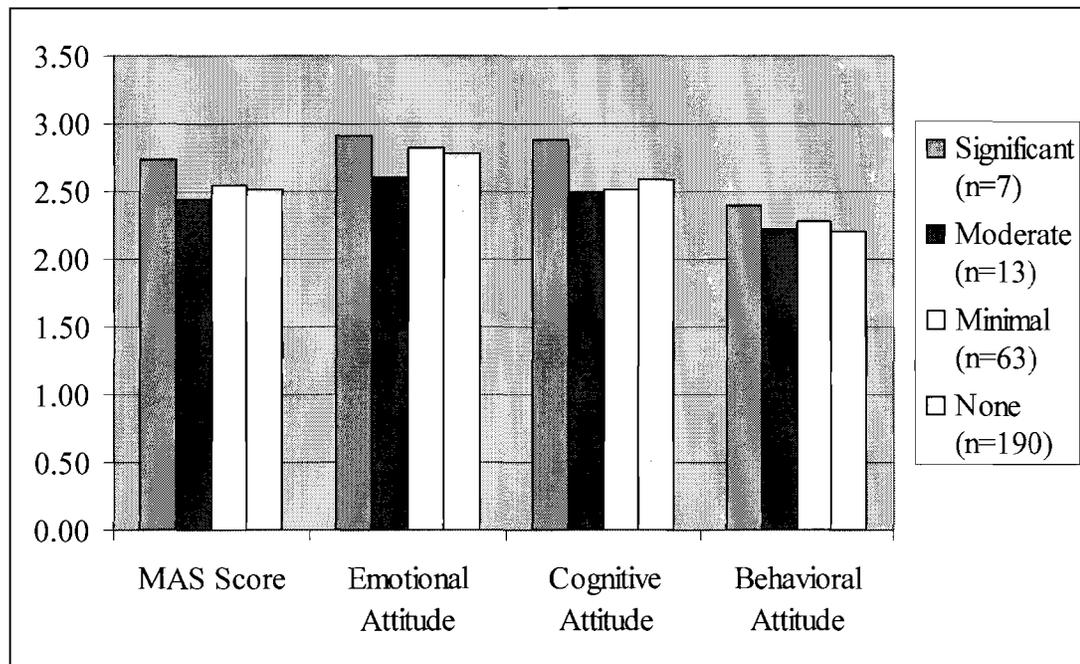


Figure 14. Comparison of attitude scores to levels of formal courses

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the over all MAS scores and levels of formal courses of instruction related to special education was  $r = 0.02$  with significance level at 0.69. The correlation coefficients for emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitude scores in relation to formal courses of instruction related to special education were  $r = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.50$  for the emotional attitude domain,  $r = 0.06$ ,  $p = 0.37$  for

the cognitive domain, and  $r = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.56$  for the behavioral domain. The variation in attitude scores cannot be attributed to formal courses of instruction related to special education alone according to the values from the statistical analysis.

Table 5. Crosstabulation of formal courses of instruction related to MAS scores

	FORMAL COURSES OF INSTRUCTION			
	1	2	3	4
Descriptive	Significant	Moderate	Minimal	None
Count	n=7	n=13	n=63	n=190
Overall MAS Score	2.73	2.44	2.54	2.52
Emotional Attitudes	2.91	2.61	2.82	2.78
Cognitive Attitudes	2.88	2.48	2.52	2.59
Behavioral Attitudes	2.39	2.22	2.28	2.20

Other statistical methods were used to confirm the Pearson correlation coefficient results. The Spearman rho analysis is similar to Pearson's coefficient but is not effected by the differences in ordinal and interval data in assessing correlation. The values were slightly different from those discovered in the Pearson correlation analysis, but in a minimal manner and there was no evidence of statistical significance. The test of homogeneity significance value of 0.635 from the two-factor ANOVA indicates that the small degree of variance in the standard deviations of the MAS scores is due to random variation and not directly correlated with the levels of formal courses of instruction.

### **Levels of Informal Course of Instruction**

Respondents were asked to self-report their previous experience in the area of informal courses of instruction related to special education or working with individuals with developmental disabilities. Figure 11 earlier in this chapter illustrates the frequency of the levels of instruction reported by the respondents. The range of responses was from significant, indicating regular training one to two times per year, to none, indicating no previous instruction in the informal setting. The two responses between significant and none were moderate and minimal and were directly related to numbers of courses in which the pastor had been enrolled. Table 6 includes summary descriptive data to highlight the MAS scores among the respondents when sorted into groups based on enrollment in informal courses of instruction. In order to better illustrate the levels of the MAS scores among the informal instructions category, Figure 15 presents the information in a column graph format.

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the over all MAS scores and levels of informal courses of instruction related to special education was  $r = 0.04$  with significance level at 0.51. The correlation coefficients for emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitude scores in relation to informal courses of instruction related to special education were  $r = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.19$  for the emotional attitude domain,  $r = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.43$  for the cognitive domain, and  $r = 0.07$ ,  $p = 0.28$  for the behavioral domain. From the correlation statistic values, it appears that informal education alone has no statistical significance to attitude scores. Consideration was taken for the outliers in the data created by the three respondents with a significant level of informal courses of study. When performing correlation statistical analysis on the three remaining categories of respondents or when creating indicator

Table 6. Crosstabulation of informal courses of instruction related to MAS scores

	INFORMAL COURSES OF INSTRUCTION			
	1	2	3	4
Descriptive	Significant	Moderate	Minimal	None
Count	n=3	n=20	n=63	n=158
Overall MAS Score	3.01	2.54	2.52	2.52
Emotional Attitudes	3.35	2.98	2.74	2.76
Cognitive Attitudes	2.67	2.46	2.55	2.61
Behavioral Attitudes	3.00	2.19	2.26	2.19

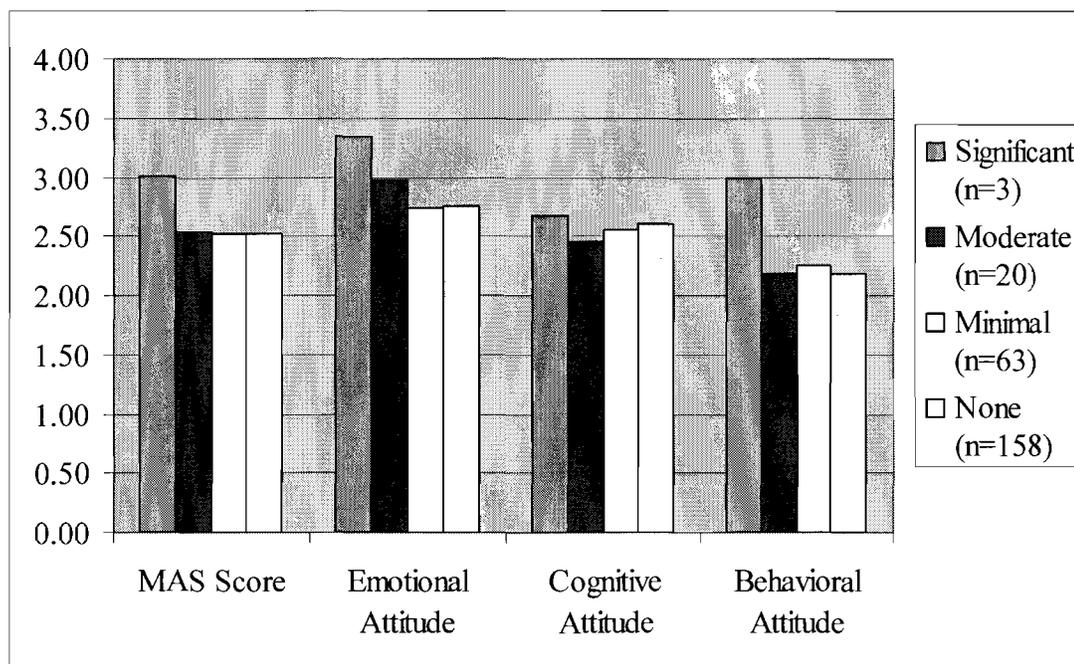


Figure 15. Comparison of attitude scores to levels of informal courses of instruction related to special education

variables by grouping the respondents, the results remain that there appears to be no statistically significant relationship between the MAS scores and informal courses of study.

### **Combinations of Variables**

Research question three may have been impacted by the possibility that some of the respondents would have been identified in some combinations of variables. In order to assess for the potential sets of two, three, and four variables, multiple regression statistical analysis was utilized to determine which combinations of variables were the most significant in predicting more positive attitude scores.

The variables of accuracy of awareness of the population ages 5 to 20 in the geographical county in which the respondents church is located, life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities and reported involvement in formal and informal courses of instruction related to special education were each entered into the multiple regression analysis using SPSS software. When considering the best predictors of an overall positive MAS score, the correlation of the R square and the adjusted R square reveals that the data results provide an adequate representation of the sample population. SPSS regression analysis using the stepwise method analyzed through all variables and combinations of variables to discover the ones which had the most significant predictive relationship for levels of special needs ministry.

The combinations of variables with the most significant predictive influence on MAS attitude each contained the level of life experience of the pastor as it relates to individuals with developmental disabilities. All models created by the statistical analysis

included the experience variable. Following this variable was informal education then formal education and finally accuracy of awareness of the population with disabilities. This is the identical order of the variables as they offered predictive influence in special needs ministry levels. In these combinations, the multiple correlation coefficients range from  $r = 0.19$  to  $r = 0.20$  with a significance level of  $p = 0.00$ . When combining all levels of experience with higher levels of informal education the analysis reveals values of  $F = 8.69$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Combining increased life experiences with people with disabilities along with informal educational background, the analysis revealed values of  $F = 4.84$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . The next most significant model included life experiences, formal education, and increased levels of informal education. This combination of variables had values of  $F = 2.06$ ,  $p = 0.04$ . The indicators reveal a statistically significant predictive relationship for MAS scores most often when pastors have life experiences with individuals with disabilities and informal education.

The same models of variables were also considered in relation to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitude domains. The emotional attitude domain is also more impacted by models which include increased levels of informal education in the area of special education with individuals with developmental disabilities followed by life experiences with people with disabilities. F-ratio value of 1.875 with significance level of 0.30 is indicated when the model includes respondents who had the combination of both informal training and life experiences. The relative higher value of informal training is also supported in the multiple regression coefficient table which indicated a standardized beta value of 0.93 with significance of 0.12. None of the four variables reach a level of statistical significance for being a high predictor of emotional attitudes,

significant impact.

The cognitive attitude domain was more influenced by life experiences and informal courses of instruction. The models of combinations which included these two variables had a greater degree of predictability of cognitive attitudes than any other single variables. The standardized beta value of 0.78 with a significance level of 0.31. These levels fall short of statistical significance, but provide some relative value in considering ways to impact cognitive attitude scores.

The behavioral attitude domain consistently had the overall more positive attitude scores among the respondents. Multiple regression statistical analysis highlights that informal courses of instruction and life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities in combination provide the best predictor of behavioral attitude score. Standardized beta coefficient value of 0.10 with significance level at 0.30 is indicated by the statistical analysis. The F-ratio improves with models which include informal courses of instruction and the values peak with the combination of life experiences and informal training. The ratio value for the combination of variables is 1.190 with a significance level of 0.28. The values for this combination of variables do not reach the level of statistical significance.

### **Evaluation of the Research Design**

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the relationship between pastoral attitudes and special needs ministries in local churches and to consider some variables which may either positively or negatively impact the attitudes or special needs ministries. The study utilized an online survey methodology and was sent via email hyperlink to pastors of Southern Baptist churches in South Carolina. The following section will

provide a reflective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the research methodology utilized in this study.

### **Weaknesses of the Research Methodology**

The discussion of weaknesses of the methodology will focus on three primary areas identified by the researcher which may offer beneficial insights for any one wishing to replicate this research in the future.

### **The Nature of Attitude Development**

Precedent literature review included information regarding the difficulty in defining attitudes and how there may be even a greater degree of difficulty in measuring them. Noe gave a simplistic definition as attitudes are “a combination of beliefs and feelings that predispose a person to behave a certain way” (Noe 2002, 108). There are a plethora of factors which may alter attitudes on a regular basis. Measuring attitudes can be a complex task, but it remains an essential element in a larger mosaic of activities individuals must do in order to facilitate inclusion in all of society, including the church, for those with developmental disabilities and their families (Tada 2003, 41). The complexities of attitudes cause them to be difficult to measure empirically. This difficulty should never prevent advancement in attitude research, but expecting the complexities and planning for them is imperative.

Attitudes may change day by day and with various life circumstances and challenges. The current study reflects only a brief snapshot in time as a measurement of attitudes of pastors. Since the pastor completed the survey, he may have already encountered a circumstance which has altered his attitude scores. The ever changing nature of attitudes may serve as a contributor to the weaknesses of a study such as this

one, but it is important to realize that it is only a brief snapshot in time which can serve as an important part of a bigger whole in attitude research. The ultimate goal remains to address the societal barriers to full inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

### **Sample Size and Limitations**

There are approximately 2,000 Southern Baptist churches in South Carolina with approximately 1,800 having a current pastor. The online survey for the study was able to reach 1,187 of the churches and/or pastors, but the sample size following assessment of all surveys was only 273 pastors. This met the study protocol guidelines, but sample size is always a concern when there is an intent to discover insights that may be generalized to the population. The larger the sample size the more conclusive the results and the more acceptable are the generalizations about the population. Pastors without email access were not included in the sample population and there was no way for the researcher to assure that the senior pastor of the churches received the email if it was the address provided for the pastor in the Annual Church Profile was a general church email address.

In future research, the study could be expanded beyond pastors of Southern Baptist churches in South Carolina and then could more readily include other variables such as gender differences when assessing attitudes. There are countless variables which may positively or negatively impact attitudes on a daily basis. For the purposes of the current study, only four variables were chosen. For anyone attempting to replicate this study or to research attitudes as they pertain to church leaders, it may be beneficial to consider other variables based on precedent literature review.

There are many variations and additional pieces of information related to the four chosen variables which may have been beneficial for the current study. In considering the educational courses of study of the pastor, considering the length of time since the learning may have offered better insights. The age of the pastor is also another factor that may be considered. Precedent literature addressed the nature of changing societal attitudes over time periods and generational factors may have impacted the attitudes addressed in the current study, but the pastors were not asked to give information regarding age. Another variation of the information used for the current study was the nature of the special needs ministries in the churches. The basis for this question was related to precedent literature review which pointed out how leaders throughout history and in many contexts had been influential in shaping opportunities for inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities. Information concerning how long the special needs ministry had been available at the churches and how involved the pastor was in that ministry would also likely have been beneficial information.

### **Strengths of the Research Methodology**

In the final part of this section the perceived strengths of the research methodology will be presented. Three areas have been identified as strengths which may be beneficial for future research similar to the current study.

### **Important Nature of the Subject Area**

In the area of spiritual importance, the value of research in an area that may help reach many people with the message of Jesus Christ may never be underestimated. There is strong evidence of a participation gap between people with developmental disabilities and their families and the local churches (Cater 2007, 7). Any effort to

discover barriers and facilitators to inclusion in order to improve the process of inclusion will ultimately have life-changing and eternal benefits. Pursuing attitude research as it pertains to various areas of church ministry is a valuable and significantly important undertaking.

### **The MAS Instrument**

A second perceived strength in research methodology for the current study is the MAS instrument used to assess attitudes. It met three criteria which are important when considering instrumentation for attitude measurement. It is a multidimensional, self-report, indirect measurement tool which has been tested for validity and reliability. There are many instruments available for assessing attitudes, but the MAS is based on a multidimensional design which allows the researcher to see variances in emotional, cognitive, and behavior components of attitudes. The tool is also a self-report survey which eliminates the need for observations and interpretations by an observer concerning the areas of attitude measurements. Finally, the instrument is intended to be an indirect measurement of attitude through the use of a vignette with respondents being asked to describe how an individual in the context of the story may have felt, thought, and behaved. The survey uses a five-point Likert scale for responses and results may be compiled easily for data analysis. Data in the current study was taken directly from the Survey Monkey website into Microsoft Excel and then into SPSS for statistical analysis.

### **Online Instrumentation**

A final strength noted in the research methodology for the current study was the use of an online survey instrument. The flexibility and ease of use of the Survey Monkey online format was a significant benefit. The design of the online survey was

simple and very user-friendly. The researcher had an opportunity to create the survey and a unique web address which could be included in emails to the pastors as a hyperlink. Data collection could be monitored at any time. Ongoing analysis of the respondents data was available immediately following completion of the survey. The data was easily compiled and transferred for statistical analysis without risking error from human input of the data into a spreadsheet. The use of Survey Monkey is free in many cases, but very inexpensive even if the paid version is needed. Money, time, and avoiding data entry errors were beneficial and should be considered as a viable means for data collection by anyone researching attitude measurements and the implications for inclusion.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter presents an overview of the research purpose for the current study. The implications of the research as they relate to special needs ministry are discussed in the second section. The discussion includes contributions to the literature base for those who are interested in learning more about attitude barriers and facilitators for church-based special needs ministries. A third section includes specific applications of the research findings as well as any limitations of data interpretation. A final section in this chapter offers suggestions for further research in the area of attitude measurement and special needs ministry.

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to explore the attitude measurement score of senior pastors as it relates to awareness of special needs populations, level of special education ministry in the churches, previous life experiences with persons with developmental disabilities, and the pastor's formal and informal educational experiences. Attitude measurement scores toward individuals with developmental disabilities among pastors are rare, yet they provide insights into possible ways to break down barriers that inhibit individuals with developmental delays and their families from becoming involved in a faith community. The current research also offers support for the manner in which positive attitudes have facilitated involvement in special education ministry. Based on

the research findings, effective seminary, college, and Southern Baptist sponsored training opportunities may be enhanced by applying the knowledge learned. Curriculum changes, applied ministry projects, and personal challenges to pastors regarding attitude changes can result in many individuals having an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as personal savior and for believers to grow in their faith within the context of a church community.

### **Research Implications**

This section will highlight the research findings and consider evidence of how attitudes may serve as barriers to intentional special needs ministry or possibly how attitudes may serve as a facilitator to intentional special needs ministry. The impact of the research findings were compared and contrasted to the biblical, theological, historical, and educational components of special needs ministry. A discussion of these implications is the basis of this section

### **Implications of Multidimensional Attitudes**

The MAS instrument was designed with intentions to measure attitudes on more than one dimension. It assesses the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral domains of attitudes. Trandis highlights how attitudes are essentially the manifestation of a set of emotionally charged inner processes (Trandis 1971, 2). When a person encounters an individual with developmental disabilities, any number of emotions, thoughts, or behaviors may occur. An unpleasant emotion may be suppressed by a selfless thought and the behavioral attitude may be one of approaching the individual rather than avoiding or escaping. On the other hand, more positive or sympathetic emotions may be

overridden by selfishness and underlying negative thoughts when a person encounters an individual with developmental disabilities and he/she may exhibit more negative behavioral attitudes by avoiding the individual. Options are countless and variable when considering many of the ways in which an encounter with someone with developmental disabilities may occur. Time, place, circumstances, and many other variables may change the attitudes from one encounter to the next. At the time of the online survey, the responding pastors exhibited strong correlations between their emotions and behaviors and their cognitions and behavior. These statistically significant findings support that at least when the survey was completed, the responding pastors as a whole could be said to be faithfully displaying behaviors that were consistent with their thoughts and emotions. The positive correlation indicates that pleasant emotions and positive thoughts regarding individuals with developmental disabilities are often accompanied by accepting and approaching behaviors. The scope of this research did not discover all nor even most of the variables that contribute to the positive correlation, but discovering as much about the nature of those attitudes as possible is important to the process of breaking down attitude barriers to inclusion.

A second finding related to the instrument was that the pastors scored the most positive attitude scores overall in the behavioral domain. This was followed by the cognitive domain and then lastly, or most negative, was the emotional domain. The creators of the MAS encountered similar results when testing the instrument and highlighted the concept that often the internal thoughts and emotions of an individual do not match up with the more visible outer domain of behaviors. For some this is seen as a positive concept that indicates the people responding to the survey are suppressing their

more negative attitudes in favor of the more positive (Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner 2007, 166). For others it may be said that the respondents are being inconsistent and those individuals with developmental disabilities may sense the incongruence and view the situation as one of ongoing exclusion rather than acceptance. This is a matter for further investigation and is worthy of consideration due to the important nature of facilitating inclusion into the church community in order to reach people with the gospel and to disciple them in their faith. Inconsistency seen as a barrier is an area of concern which can open a door for instruction, challenge, and warning for pastors when in any educational setting.

Biblical mandates include God's clear teachings regarding the expectations for mankind to express love and compassion to one another. Jesus illustrated this through not only verbal teaching, but also through the manner in which he lived his life. Attitudes are interconnected expressions of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral process which when guided by Christ and biblical teachings, they will manifest as facilitators for inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities into the life of local churches. (Mills 2002, 85-86). The MAS scores are consistent with the concept that pastors as a whole were exhibiting more positive emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes at the time of the current research survey.

Attitudes are also shaped by theology with precedent literature review revealing the invaluable benefits and the necessity of a clear and accurate understanding of the biblical teachings concerning the image of God in all of mankind in relation to special needs ministry. The shaping of accurate theology can directly affect attitudes and break down barriers for inclusion in local churches (McReynolds 2008,

A\_Knowledge\_Tradition.pdf). From an educational view, the impact of increased knowledge in order to improve societal circumstances and open doors for inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities was emphasized in the literature (Antonak and Livneh 2000, 211). The multidimensional nature of the MAS allows a researcher to consider the cognitive attitude domain and how thoughts based on previous knowledge may impact one's overall attitude toward individuals with developmental disabilities.

### **Relationship Between MAS and Special Needs Ministries**

The roll of positive leadership attitudes in reaching out to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families is a foundational contribution to the success of inclusion (Gartner and Lipsky 1987, 68). In analyzing the pastor's survey responses for this study, there was an overall weak but positive relationship between special needs ministries and the MAS scores. The most significant correlation was in the cognitive domain. The cognitive attitude portion of the MAS is intended to assess for positive and negative thoughts as well as whether the thoughts are focused more on self or others. The research failed to indicate whether the more positive thoughts were because of exposure to special needs ministries or whether the ministries are in a part a result of the positive cognitive attitudes of the pastors. The only inference that can be made is that among the pastoral respondents at the time of the survey, there was a correlation between having a more positive cognitive attitude and the existence of a special needs ministry and involvement of individuals with developmental disabilities. The precedent literature consistently revealed the need for facilitating positive attitudes which result in outward societal acceptance and inclusion. If in the context of future research or in discussions with pastors it could be determined not only correlation but direction of influence, then

adaptations could be made in pastoral training in order to facilitate acceptance and inclusion. If the exposure to individuals with developmental disabilities results in more positive attitudes, then practicum types of opportunities could be arranged to help open doors of ministry for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. If the positive cognitive attitudes are in part leading to more effective special needs ministry, then teaching, challenges, and accountability in the area of selflessness and biblical empathy may aid in opening doors for inclusion and special needs ministry.

Another area of interest related to the first research question includes the positive correlation between special needs ministries and MAS scores when observing this relationship and factoring in various subgroups of the respondents. The pastors were asked to estimate the percentage of the population of people ages 5 to 20 in their geographical county who met the criteria for developmental disabilities. When assessing for trends in correlation between the special needs ministries and MAS scores, it was noted that when the pastors gave an accurate estimate (28% of the total) or when they estimate too few people with developmental disabilities in their communities (44%), there was no significant correlation found. Among the pastors who estimated a higher number of individuals age 5 to 20 in the communities, there was a significant increase in statistical correlation between special needs ministries and MAS attitude scores. The scope of impact or direction of influence of the pastor thinking the population of people with developmental disabilities is more than the actual population can't be determined by this research. There is no significant correlation between ministries and attitudes among the pastors with accurate awareness or underestimation. The trend among those who believe there to be a larger population may be a random influence on the variables, but

further analysis of the trend in future research may be helpful in determining whether awareness of the population can contribute to a more positive attitude.

Historically trends have emphasized the sheltering and institutionalizing of individuals with disabilities with some viewing this as an effort to promote an out of sight out of mind mentality (Webb-Mitchell 1994, 63-65). More recently efforts have been made to shift those trends and for society to be more open and accepting of individuals with developmental disabilities. A goal of societal and legal changes has been to promote equality and inclusion. Assuring that individuals with disabilities are not a closed off and forgotten group in society is important and raising awareness has been a recent trend (Carter 2007, 8, 16-17, 25). The current research did not discover a definitive correlation between MAS scores and special needs ministries when considering accurate perceptions about the population of individuals with developmental disabilities. Raising awareness has been a focus in recent years, but awareness alone did not prove to be a significantly consistent variable in this study.

In a thorough examination of the correlation between special needs ministries and MAS scores, another unavoidable concept would be that many if not all of the pastors would have been aligned into more than one of the variables. It would be difficult to consider only one variable when the likelihood is that the variables are so interconnected that it is impossible to keep them separate. With this consideration, correlation statistical analysis was calculated in all combinations of two, three, or four variables in order to observe for trends which may highlight the most significant variables.

Five sets of variables emerged as statistically significant with four of the five

including the variable of tenure as pastor in the current church being one of the variables. The intent of requesting this information in the demographic section of the survey was to allow for the fact some churches may have been led by pastors with very brief tenures and they had not had sufficient time to build relationships and lead the people in some areas of ministry. The demographics indicated an almost even distribution among the four categories of tenure included on the survey. Figure 4 summarizes the tenure in a bar graph format. A note of caution is important due to the sample size among the sets of variables ranged from 17 to 68 respondents. The specific sets of data would likely be different for any random sample population, but a benefit of this study is to consider that in this sample of responding pastors, correlation coefficient values clearly do not reveal that increased positive attitudes always lead to increased levels of special needs ministry, except when considering characteristic sets of respondents based on common variables.

### **Impact of Selected Variables on Special Needs Ministry**

The analysis of variables as predictors of increased levels of special needs ministries began by considering each variable independently. Even though literature review seems to support the concept that having an awareness of the fact that there are people in many neighborhoods who have some type of developmental disabilities and who are unreached by churches, the assessment of the respondents awareness of the population indicated there was no significant impact on ministries based on this variable alone. One evaluation that should be considered is whether or not the survey question was adequate for assessing the awareness of the surrounding population of individuals with developmental disabilities between the ages of 5 and 20.

A surprising insight was also discovered in the area of how the variables

impact special needs ministries. Statistical analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between life experiences and levels of special needs ministries among the 273 respondents in the sample population. It seems that the more significant the level of life experiences the pastor has with an individual with developmental disabilities, the more likely he is leading a church that has significant special needs ministries. The scope of this current research did not include timeframe questions regarding the beginning of the special needs ministries and whether the pastor was instrumental in that process. This is an area that may be included in future research. A foundational assumption for this research was that pastoral influence and leadership in the church would in part be related to the levels of various ministries, including special needs ministry. There seems to be a positive effect among the respondents for this study at the point in which the surveys were answered.

Generally the variable that was found to be of most significance was that of previous life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities. Second most significant was previous informal courses of instruction in the area of special education. In the research design, educational experiences seemed to be an important variable based on the literature review. The third most significant variable was formal educational courses of instruction. Only 7% of the pastors had some significant formal education but almost 70% of them had none. This large variation in the groups can generally minimize the effects of the variable on the dependent variable. A total of 92% of the pastors had little to no informal courses of instruction which by survey guidelines would have 0-3 course over their ministry time. One aspect of consideration in this area is the availability of informal courses of instruction for pastors. If the research indicates that informal

education is an important factor in shaping attitudes and positively impacting correlating to the existence of special needs ministries, a leadership consideration for denominations is to assess for greater opportunities to provide educational training. Within the local church, this concept may offer support for the investigation of ways to provide for educational training for church members in order to increase positive attitudes and open more doors for ministry for individuals with developmental disabilities.

In evaluating combinations of variables and their impact on special needs ministries, the most significant set of two variables which had a higher predictive influence on having a higher level of special needs ministry was those individuals who had life experience with individuals with developmental disabilities and those who had enrolled in previous informal courses of instruction. In each case of analyzing the variables as they compare to the dependent variable, an informative discovery is that the combinations of two to three variables consistently improve the predictability of who may be in the various levels of the dependent variable. A comprehensive approach for addressing the possibilities of facilitating positive attitudes and special needs ministry involvement is the most effective means according to the survey findings.

### **Impact of Selected Variables on MAS Attitude Scores**

Each of the variables were analyzed separately as they related to the MAS scores in order to consider the best predictors of positive attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities. The accuracy of awareness of the population variable indicated significantly small levels of variability and no statistical significance was noted. The respondents did continue to score the most positive attitudes in the behavioral domain which had been consistent throughout the survey responses. Life experiences

with individuals with developmental disabilities indicated a positive relationship with the MAS scores, but it fell below statistical significance. Twenty-nine pastors reported having no experience with people with disabilities, and it is interesting to note that these pastors all scored well above the mean on all aspects of the MAS scores. Their scores were significantly higher than the other respondents which indicate a more negative attitude toward individuals with disabilities. Precedent literature highlighted that in some cases more experience in the area of special needs could actually lead to a more negative attitude if the experiences were not pleasant. In the case of the 273 pastors responding to this study, the opposite was true and those with more significant levels of life experience with people with disabilities tended to have more positive attitudes in all three domains. In comparison to the other variables, life experiences seem to remain in the forefront of the most significant.

Formal and informal education levels did not prove to be significant predictors of more positive attitude scores overall. It may be noted that the respondents who had minimal to moderate levels of informal courses of instruction, which indicates between one and six training courses related to special education, the attitude scores were more positive. The current research study is not able to predict whether the individuals enrolled in the courses because they already had more positive attitudes or if the courses of instruction positively impacted their attitudes. With that consideration, no definitive inferences may be made about the value of informal education for the pastors.

Using regression statistic methodologies, variables were analyzed in relation to MAS scores. There was an overwhelming consistency in life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities as the number one variable throughout the

regression models.

### **Research Applications**

Research applications are presented here as subjective proposals for pastoral leadership in the area of special needs ministry based on the research findings. The proposals apply specifically to attitudinal issues as they relate to pastoral involvement in the development and ongoing quality of church-based special needs ministry.

### **Pastoral Transparency**

The first application is related to the actual pastoral attitudes and the manner in which they may be interpreted by individuals with developmental disabilities as they search for acceptance and inclusion. Attitude researchers highlighted that positive behavioral attitudes without cognitive and emotional positive attitudes can be perceived by some people as incongruence and superficial concern. For some people in the community, the lack of interest shown by minimal efforts at special needs ministry can communicate far more of a negative attitude and present a barrier to inclusion. Among the respondents for this survey, pastors of 22 churches out of 273 reported having intentional ministries for individuals with developmental disabilities. On average, approximately 10% of the county populations between the ages 5 and 20 meet the criteria for having developmental disabilities. Pastors attitude scores overall indicate an outward positive attitude toward people with disabilities, but the lack of leadership in moving forward to reach people with disabilities and their families can communicate inconsistency to those affected by the decisions of churches and pastors to not reach out to those with disabilities. Southern Baptist leaders highlight the difficulty with the manner in which lack of consistent Great Commission focus can result in many

unchurched people never being reached with the gospel and never having the privilege of living in fellowship with a Christian faith community.

### **Life Experiences**

A consistent theme throughout the research study was the benefits of personal life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities. From the precedent literature there was a focus on the compassion of Jesus as he reached out to those with disabilities. In the historical implications there was evidence that sometimes personal involvement with people with disabilities would lead people to action in the area of inclusion. Research concerning attitudes is often centered on the education system because of government mandates that schools make provisions for individuals with disabilities. In the survey for this study, life experiences continues to rise up as one of the elements in sets of variables which seemed to be more significant predictors of positive attitude scores. These types of consistent findings point to the need for pastors and other church leaders to be exposed to some types of practicum experiences in order to facilitate positive attitudes and to aid in the elimination of attitude barriers to inclusion.

Practical experience may be a component of formal education but also may be more ministry-focused and be short-term experiences such as camps and retreats. Denominational and parachurch organizations may offer summer camps for individuals with developmental disabilities as well as weekend retreats. Many of these types of ministries rely on volunteer support and taking an opportunity to participate as a volunteer would provide practical experiences in a controlled environment in which a more positive attitude may be facilitated.

Effective leaders will not only seek out opportunities for life experiences

themselves but will also provide opportunities and encourage participation from others in the local churches to have those practical experiences in order to be better prepared for an inclusive church ministry. Hands-on practical types of experience can reach across generations as well and involve children, youth, and adults. A comprehensive effort can facilitate a church become more Great Commission focused and reaching out to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

### **Education and Complexity of Attitudes**

Church leaders will be more effective in the area of special needs ministry and will be better prepared to lead the church members toward a culture of inclusion if they understand the complexities of attitudes and how they stand as either barriers to or facilitators of special needs ministry. Literature review in chapter two highlighted the starting point of adequate theological perspectives in order to be comprehensively effective in reaching out to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

A beginning place is to understand the nature of man and of God and how this understanding shapes attitudes by effecting emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. The manner in which a pastoral leader understands and communicates the image of God in man will then determine how he views others. When there is accurate understanding of man, viewpoints which lead to emotions and the resulting actions more closely resemble the types of ministries which Jesus taught and emulated. For a pastor who desires to create a church environment where attitude barriers are eliminated, teaching and modeling accurate theological principles are a foundational component. Literature review in chapter two highlighted the importance of shaping attitudes and ministry with an understanding of theological principles, and the combined significance of life

experiences with people with developmental disabilities and formal and informal courses of study are supported by the precedent literature as valuable tools for improving attitudes and opening doors for ministry.

### **Research Limitations**

There are general limitations of scope and applicability of the research findings presented in this study. The data gathered from this study will not necessarily generalize to all pastors in the United States or to staff pastors functioning in roles other than senior pastor. Results will also not necessarily generalize to senior pastors of churches outside of those within the South Carolina Baptist Convention of the Southern Baptist Convention nor to those in South Carolina who do not have accessible email contact information published by the state convention.

Any inferences made from the data must consider the sample population and size. Gender, denominational, and geographical differences will prohibit the generalization of the results in circumstances outside of those represented by the characteristics of the sample population.

### **Further Research**

In this final section the discussion will focus on suggestions for further research in the area of attitude measurement and special needs ministry. The intent is to identify topics based on the subjective experiences of the researcher as this current study has been conducted.

### **Exploration of Additional Variables**

The potential variables for a study of attitudes are almost endless. Through

literature review, other variables could be selected to observe for more definitive and specific correlation between attitudes and ministry. There are issues such as theological training and understanding of theological concepts which could provide a foundational area of exploration. It may be of interest to some if research could focus on the theological training and current viewpoints of pastors as they relate to the nature of man and the image of God in order to assess how viewpoints shape attitudes and ministry involvement. Levels of special needs ministry was included in the current study, however some researchers could also assess levels of specific ministry involvement for details on how behavioral attitudes are exhibited in the context of the local church and community. Gender, age, years in ministry, and many other demographic types of data may yield informative results which may aid in facilitating positive attitudes.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Literature review illustrated the manner in which knowledge can provide a basis for improved attitudes. Another suggestion is for a research study on the effectiveness of various methods and types of teaching content as it pertains to attitude formation. This may involve selected teaching programs and methodologies with pre and post tests to aid in measuring effectiveness. The methodologies may also include hands-on practical experience in an area related to special education in order to introduce the component of experience into the program. The pre-test could be followed by sequential post-tests to assess for changes in attitudes scores over time. The current study did not include demographic questions to assess the educational background of the pastors and whether they had seminary training. There was a majority of the pastors who had no previous formal course of study which dealt with special needs. It may be beneficial for

future research studies to consider a comparative analysis of the course content in educational, theological, ethics, and biblical classes in various colleges and seminaries and then make the comparisons to attitude scores and ministry involvement.

### **Evaluate Special Needs Ministries**

A researcher may benefit by establishing criteria for defining effective intentional special needs ministry based on literature review. Then a search could be implemented to locate churches with ministries meeting that criterion. Follow up observational research may aid in discovering some common variables which can be implemented in other churches in order to help them focus of the mission of reaching out to everyone. This type of research could also span across geographical and denominational categories to assess for similarities and differences as they relate to ministry and attitude measurements.

### **Expand Current Study**

The current study may be replicated with variations such as different geographical location, different denomination of churches, or different people other than the senior pastor of the church. It could be expanded to youth pastors and children's workers. The researcher could do a comparative study between some of the various populations to assess for unique characteristics that could aid in developing more effective special needs ministries.

### **Compare Attitude Scales**

A significant number of instruments are available for attitude measurement research. A study could be implemented among pastors with whom a comparative

analysis is done between instruments to assess attitude scores. The comparative analysis could vary significantly from the pastor to include other church leaders or even students in a youth ministry.

### **Summary**

Churches have a distinct responsibility and privilege to reach out to and disciple individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. A documented participation gap indicates churches are not facilitating participation and families which include individuals with developmental disabilities are missing an opportunity for inclusion in faith communities. Attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities serve as either facilitators or barriers regarding inclusion.

The intent of this research has been to highlight variables which may aid in the development of positive attitudes which facilitates inclusion. Providing leaders with informal education opportunities and exposure to individuals with developmental disabilities may open doors for ministry. The ultimate goal of special needs ministry must remain focused on the Great Commission. In a day when churches are searching for ways to be more mission oriented in ministry, leaders cannot afford to neglect the missional opportunities in their church neighborhoods by overlooking the population of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The research for this dissertation indicates the possibility that variables including experience and education can aid in improving attitudes. The result can lead to weakened attitude barriers and a more significantly noted inclusive church community.

## APPENDIX 1

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Appendix 1 provides a copy of the demographic questions as they appear on the online survey. It also includes the instructions for completing the survey and an area to provide informed consent for participation in the proposed research study.

## 1. Agreement to Participate in Research Survey

**\* 1. The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the relationship between attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities and selected variables. This research is being conducted by Bobby Howard for the purposes of dissertation research. In this research, you will respond to eight demographic questions and a vignette-based attitude survey. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.**

**By your completion of this electronic survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.**

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

## 2. Demographic Information

**\* 1. For the purposes of this research, the following has been identified as the criteria for participation:**

**senior pastor (will include the paid or volunteer, full-time or part-time primary or lead pastor) of a Southern Baptist Church in the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Interim pastors are excluded from the research.**

**Do you meet these criteria for participation?**

**If yes, please proceed to the following questions.**

Yes

No

**\* 2. Please check the county in which the church where you pastor is located. Also, please note the county population for ages 5 - 20 as a matter of information for answering the following question.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abbeville (pop. for ages 5-20: 6,105)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenville (pop. for ages 5-20: 83,958)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aiken (pop. for ages 5-20: 33,383)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Hampton (pop. for ages 5-20: 5,297)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allendale (pop. for ages 5-20: 2,634)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Horry (pop. for ages 5-20: 38,755)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anderson (pop. for ages 5-20: 35,826)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Jasper (pop. for ages 5-20: 4,872)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bamberg (pop. for ages 5-20: 4,315)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Kershaw (pop. for ages 5-20: 12,137)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barnwell (pop. for ages 5-20: 5,972)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lancaster (pop. for ages 5-20: 13,975)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beaufort (pop. for ages 5-20: 23,205)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Laurens (pop. for ages 5-20: 16,194)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Berkeley (pop. for ages 5-20: 35,470)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Lee (pop. for ages 5-20: 4,659)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calhoun (pop. for ages 5-20: 3,355)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Lexington (pop. for ages 5-20: 49,188)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charleston (pop. for ages 5-20: 69,077)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Marion (pop. for ages 5-20: 8,850)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cherokee (pop. for ages 5-20: 11,794)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Marlboro (pop. for ages 5-20: 6,757)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chester (pop. for ages 5-20: 8,129)       | <input type="checkbox"/> McCormick (pop. for ages 5-20: 1,816)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chesterfield (pop. for ages 5-20: 10,071) | <input type="checkbox"/> Newberry (pop. for ages 5-20: 8,231)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clarendon (pop. for ages 5-20: 7,574)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Oconee (pop. for ages 5-20: 13,176)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colleton (pop. for ages 5-20: 9,284)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Orangeburg (pop. for ages 5-20: 22,974)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Darlington (pop. for ages 5-20: 15,688)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pickens (pop. for ages 5-20: 27,594)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dillon (pop. for ages 5-20: 7,973)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Richland (pop. for ages 5-20: 73,173)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dorchester (pop. for ages 5-20: 24,614)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Saluda (pop. for ages 5-20: 4,385)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edgefield (pop. for ages 5-20: 5,409)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Spartanburg (pop. for ages 5-20: 56,313) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairfield (pop. for ages 5-20: 5,515)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sumter (pop. for ages 5-20: 25,911)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Florence (pop. for ages 5-20: 30,074)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Union (pop. for ages 5-20: 6,497)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Georgetown (pop. for ages 5-20: 12,372)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Williamsburg (pop. for ages 5-20: 9,713) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenwood (pop. for ages 5-20: 15,410)    | <input type="checkbox"/> York (pop. for ages 5-20: 39,086)        |

**\* 3. When the Census Bureau is classifying an individual as one having a disability for the 5-20 age category, they have to meet one of the following two conditions:**

- Five years old and over and reported a long-lasting sensory, physical, mental or self-care disability;
- Sixteen years old and over and reported difficulty going outside of the home or working at a job or business because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more.

**Individuals in institutions, individuals under five years old or over 20 years old are excluded.**

Based on this defining criteria, please select your best estimate of the percentage of people between the ages of 5 and 20 years living in the county you selected above that you believe would be classified as disabled:

%

**\* 4. In the following set of responses, please check the response that most accurately describes your life experiences concerning contact with individuals with developmental disabilities**

- |  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None (No significant prior life experience involving individuals with developmental disabilities; cannot recall any awareness or contact with an individual with developmental disabilities.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal (May have knowledge of someone who has developmental disabilities, but have no/little significant occasion for regular contact with the individual.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrequent (Some life experiences with persons with developmental disabilities including family friend or distant relative with developmental disabilities. Would include some contact with the individual but not on a regular or frequent basis) | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (Some life experiences with persons with developmental disabilities including family friend or distant relative with developmental disabilities. Would include regular contact with the individual but not on a frequent basis or living in same household.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Close/Frequent Contact (Experience involves living in same household with a person with developmental disabilities or regular work experience involving direct contact with persons with developmental disabilities) |
|--|---|---|--|---|

**\* 5. In the following set of responses, please check the response that most accurately describes your academic background as it relates to FORMAL TRAINING in the area of special needs/education**

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None (No undergraduate or graduate coursework that focused on Special Education or working with Individuals with developmental disabilities) | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal (Minimal number of undergraduate or graduate courses that focused on Special Education or working with Individuals with developmental disabilities. Not enough courses to get a minor in the area of Special Education) | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (Had enough classes in your undergraduate or graduate education that focused on Special Education or working with Individuals with developmental disabilities so that you earned a minor in some area associated with working with Individuals with developmental disabilities) | <input type="checkbox"/> Significant (Includes an undergraduate or graduate level major in an area directly related to working with Individuals with developmental disabilities. Would include Education Major or possibly a health related major that includes direct training related to Individuals with developmental disabilities) |
|---|--|---|---|

**\* 6. In the following set of responses, please check the response that most accurately describes your academic background as it relates to INFORMAL TRAINING in the area of special needs/education:**

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None (No Informal training courses that focused on Special Education or working with Individuals with developmental disabilities; Includes any type of informal training in which academic credit is not offered) | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal (1-3 Informal courses which have focused on Special Education or working with Individuals with developmental disabilities; includes any type of informal training in which academic credit is not offered) | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (4-6 informal courses which have focused on Special Education or working with Individuals with developmental disabilities; includes any type of informal training in which academic credit is not offered) | <input type="checkbox"/> Significant (Regularly participates in Informal training opportunities at least 1-2 times per year. Equipped to serve as a church or associational resource person for special needs ministry) |
|--|---|--|---|

**\* 7. In the following set of responses, please check the response that most accurately describes the special needs ministry in the church where you are currently serving:**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None (No intentional ministries efforts designed for Individuals with developmental disabilities; no Individuals currently attending or if they are attending they participate in minimal church-related ministries) | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate (Some Individuals with developmental disabilities attending, but no intentional ministries designed for their participation. They may participate on a regular basis in general worship services, but little or no active involvement in other ministries of the church) | <input type="checkbox"/> Significant (Church has specific plans in place for intentional special needs ministry. There are volunteer or paid staff responsible for the oversight of this ministry and reaching out to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families is a stated part of the church vision/mission) |
|---|--|---|

**\* 8. Please check the appropriate response below to indicate your years of service as Pastor at the church where you currently serve**

- |                                      |                                      |                                       |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 2 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 - 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 + years |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

**\*9. Would you say that your church is currently fully handicapped accessible?  
A yes response indicates that an individual who is confined to a wheelchair  
or who requires the use of assistive devices such as walkers, crutches, or  
orthopedic braces could easily access any area of the church facility where  
ministries that are available to everyone may be held.**

Yes

No

## APPENDIX 2

### THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL ATTITUDES SCALE TOWARD PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Appendix 2 includes the text of the instrument used in the online survey to determine the attitude measure score. It was used by permission from the authors. Documentation granting permission is also included.

### 3. Vignette-Based Attitude Survey

**\* 1. Imagine the following situation:**

Joseph went out for lunch with some friends to a coffee shop. A man in a wheelchair, with whom Joseph is not acquainted, enters the coffee shop and joins the group. Joseph is introduced to this person, and shortly thereafter, everyone else leaves, with only Joseph and the man in the wheelchair remaining alone together at the table. Joseph has 15 minutes to wait for his ride. Try to imagine this situation.

People experience a variety of emotions when they are involved in such a situation. Following is a list of possible emotions which may arise before, during and/or after such a situation. Please rate on each line the likelihood that this emotion might arise in Joseph:

	1 Not at all likely	2	3	4	5 Very much likely
Rejection	<input type="radio"/>				
Pity	<input type="radio"/>				
Fear	<input type="radio"/>				
Helplessness	<input type="radio"/>				
Shame	<input type="radio"/>				
Guilt	<input type="radio"/>				
Shyness	<input type="radio"/>				
Tension	<input type="radio"/>				
Nervousness	<input type="radio"/>				
Stress	<input type="radio"/>				
Upset	<input type="radio"/>				
Depression	<input type="radio"/>				
Calmness	<input type="radio"/>				
Serenity	<input type="radio"/>				
Relaxation	<input type="radio"/>				
Alertness	<input type="radio"/>				

**\* 2. People experience a variety of cognitions when they are involved in such a situation. Following is a list of possible thoughts which may arise before, during and/or after such a situation. Please rate on each line the likelihood that this cognition might arise in Joseph:**

	1 Not at all likely	2	3	4	5 Very much likely
Why not get to know him better?	<input type="radio"/>				
He will enjoy getting to know me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I enjoy meeting new people.	<input type="radio"/>				
He looks friendly.	<input type="radio"/>				
I can make him feel more comfortable.	<input type="radio"/>				
He seems to be an interesting guy.	<input type="radio"/>				
We may get along really well.	<input type="radio"/>				
He looks like an OK person.	<input type="radio"/>				
He will appreciate it if I start a conversation.	<input type="radio"/>				
I can always talk with him about things that interest both of us.	<input type="radio"/>				

**\* 3. People experience a variety of behaviors when they are involved in such a situation. Following is a list of possible behaviors which may arise before, during and/or after such a situation. Please rate on each line the likelihood that Joseph would behave in the following manner:**

	1 Not at all likely	2	3	4	5 Very much likely
Get up and leave.	<input type="radio"/>				
Start a conversation.	<input type="radio"/>				
Move to another table.	<input type="radio"/>				
Move away.	<input type="radio"/>				
Read the newspaper or talk on a cell phone.	<input type="radio"/>				
Continue what he was doing.	<input type="radio"/>				
Find an excuse to leave.	<input type="radio"/>				
Initiate a conversation if he doesn't make the first move.	<input type="radio"/>				

Bar-Ilan University  
School of Social Work  
Ramat-Gan 52900



אוניברסיטת בר-אילן  
בית"ס לעבודה סוציאלית  
רמת-גן 52900

Dear Rev. Bobby Howard

December 14, 2009

Re: Permission to use the MAS

We hereby grant our permission for the usage of the MAS (the Multidimensional attitude scale) in order to examine attitudes toward people with disabilities among pastors for your Dissertation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.  
Please feel free to contact us for any further questions regarding the MAS.

Good luck with your research,

Liora Findler, Noa Vilchinsky and Shirly Werner

APPENDIX 3  
CORRESPONDENCE

This appendix includes the emails that were sent to the pastors requesting their participation in the survey. They appear in the order in which they were sent.

Email Correspondence #1

*Please Forward to Senior Pastor if Applicable:*

Good Morning. My name is Bobby Howard and I am currently a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. I am also on faculty at Charleston Southern University teaching in the Religion Department. I plan to graduate in May, 2010 with the Doctor of Education Degree and I am currently doing the research component for my dissertation. This research is an evaluation of specific variables that may enhance a pastor's efforts at leading their churches to be effective in ministry with and to individuals with special needs and their families.

The only way for me to complete this dissertation is to have input from pastors, so I have created a survey that takes approximately 5-15 minutes to complete and I would be forever grateful if you would take an opportunity to help me with this important step in my educational process. The link to the survey is below. It is completely anonymous and I have blocked access to any of your IP information that may be connected to the survey, so I can not determine who has or has not responded. Thank you in advance for your willingness to assist me in Kingdom work by participating in this step in my dissertation process. Have a great week!

Survey Link:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Dissertation\\_Research](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Dissertation_Research)

In Christ,

Rev. Bobby Howard  
xxxxxxxxx@csuniv.edu  
phone: xxx.xxx.xxxx  
fax: xxx.xxx.xxxxx

Email Correspondence #2

*(Please forward to Senior Pastor if applicable)*

Good afternoon. This is an update and a follow-up note regarding the previous email sent earlier requesting your assistance with my dissertation research survey concerning Special Needs Ministry.

My name is Bobby Howard and I am a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and will graduate with the Doctor of Education degree in May, 2010. I also currently teach in the Religion Department at Charleston Southern University. Thanks to so many of you who have responded so far. I have had 119 pastors log-on and complete the survey so far. The goal for data collection is 260 completed surveys before 1/18/2010.

If you haven't taken an opportunity to assist me with this project, please consider helping me reach this goal in data collection by clicking the link below and taking this quick survey. Most pastors have completed it in less than 10 minutes.

Here is the link to the brief survey and your time is greatly appreciated:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Dissertation\\_Research](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Dissertation_Research)

In Christ,

Rev. Bobby Howard  
xxxxxxxxx@csuniv.edu  
phone: xxx.xxx.xxxx  
fax: xxx.xxx.xxxx

Email Correspondence #3

Dear Pastor Friends:

My name is Bobby Howard and I am currently a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and will graduate with the Doctor of Education degree in May, 2010. I also teach in the Religion Department at Charleston Southern University.

This is my final appeal for assistance with an online survey for dissertation research. The closing date for responses will be Monday, 1/18/2010. For all of you who have helped me by completing the online dissertation research survey, I wanted to express my sincere thanks for your assistance in the data gathering phase of my dissertation work. I could not progress with this project without your willingness to help me.

If you haven't completed the survey yet, please consider investing a few minutes of your time in this valuable research regarding Special Needs Ministry in order to assist me in meeting my survey response goal. The survey takes an average of 7-8 minutes to complete. I appreciate your willingness to help me with this and look forward to moving ahead with analysis and writing after tomorrow.

Here is the link to the online survey:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Dissertation\\_Research](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Dissertation_Research)

In Christ,

Rev. Bobby Howard  
xxxxxxxxx@csuniv.edu  
phone: xxx.xxx.xxxx  
fax: xxx.xxx.xxxxx

## APPENDIX 4

### PASTORAL RESPONSES ON THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL ATTITUDES SCALE TOWARD PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

Appendix 4 includes a summary of the pastor's responses to each statement on the MAS. The responses are entered in table format.

Table A1. Number of pastoral responses for emotional attitude measurement.

<b>Emotions (N = 273)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b><i>m</i></b>	<b><i>sd</i></b>
1. Rejection	109	89	46	21	8	2.01	1.07
2. Pity	11	43	87	82	50	3.43	1.08
3. Fear	62	69	76	52	15	2.59	1.19
4. Helplessness	35	58	94	66	20	2.92	1.12
5. Shame	107	94	45	20	7	2.00	1.04
6. Guilt	93	93	60	22	5	2.10	1.02
7. Shyness	32	49	81	82	29	3.10	1.17
8. Tension	29	52	76	87	29	3.13	1.16
9. Nervousness	29	44	64	97	39	3.27	1.20
10. Stress	47	66	81	64	15	2.76	1.15
11. Upset	108	99	39	21	6	1.97	1.02
12. Depression	161	75	25	8	4	1.60	0.88
13. Calmness	22	49	111	68	23	3.08	1.04
14. Serenity	13	26	90	98	46	3.51	1.067
15. Relaxation	13	22	91	98	49	3.54	1.058
16. Alertness	5	31	100	99	38	3.49	0.87
Cumulative Emotions Attitude Score						2.78	

Note: MAS included a vignette regarding a person having an encounter with an individual in a wheelchair at a coffee shop. Participants are asked to consider the likelihood of the emotions in questions 1 through 16 may arise in the individual's mind: 1 = Not At All and 5 = Very Much Likely

Table A2. Number of pastoral responses for cognitive attitude measurement.

<b>Cognition (N = 273)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b><i>m</i></b>	<b><i>sd</i></b>
17. He seems to be an interesting guy.	25	101	110	35	2	2.59	0.85
18. He looks like an OK person.	29	102	110	29	3	2.54	0.86
19. We may get along really well.	26	89	106	47	5	2.69	0.93
20. He looks friendly.	35	96	115	25	2	2.50	0.86
21. I enjoy meeting new people.	42	88	105	37	1	2.51	0.92
22. He will enjoy getting to know me.	25	60	123	60	5	2.85	0.93
23. I can always talk with him about things that interest both of us.	41	104	82	42	4	2.50	0.97
24. I can make him feel more comfortable	28	93	92	55	5	2.69	0.97
25. Why not get to know him better?	46	79	108	38	2	2.53	0.96
26. He will appreciate it if I start a conversation.	38	124	84	23	4	2.38	0.88
<b>Cumulative Cognitive Attitude Score</b>						<b>2.58</b>	

Note: MAS included a vignette regarding a person having an encounter with an individual in a wheelchair at a coffee shop. Participants are asked to consider the likelihood of the thoughts in questions 17 through 26 may arise in the individual's mind: 1 = Not At All and 5 = Very Much Likely

Table A3. Number of pastoral responses for behavioral attitude measurement.

<b>Behavior (N = 273)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b><i>m</i></b>	<b><i>sd</i></b>
27. Get up and leave.	125	81	42	20	5	1.90	1.03
28. Start a conversation.	58	93	99	18	5	2.34	0.95
29. Move to another table.	169	68	24	8	4	1.57	0.88
30. Move away.	160	74	24	11	4	1.63	0.91
31. Read the newspaper or talk on a cell phone.	68	79	79	41	6	2.41	1.08
32. Continue what he was doing.	29	51	104	69	20	3.00	1.08
33. Find an excuse to leave.	74	73	81	31	14	2.41	1.15
34. Initiate a conversation if he doesn't make the first move.	47	80	105	35	6	2.53	0.99
Cumulative Behavioral Attitude Score						2.22	

Note: MAS included a vignette regarding a person having an encounter with an individual in a wheelchair at a coffee shop. Participants are asked to consider the likelihood of the behaviors in questions 27 through 34 may arise in the individual's mind: 1 = Not At All and 5 = Very Much Likely

## APPENDIX 5

### VARIABLE COMBINATIONS WITH SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN LEVELS OF SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRIES AND THE MAS SCORES

Appendix 5 includes three tables highlighting the Spearman's correlation coefficient values for pastors in combinations of respondent sub-groupings.

Table A4. Sets of three variables yielding significant correlation.

		<b>Pastors with (1) high estimate of special needs population, (2) formal courses of instruction, and (3) current tenure as pastor &gt;5 years</b>	<b>Pastors with (1) informal courses of instruction, (2) formal courses of instruction, and (3) current tenure as pastor &gt;5 years</b>
		Levels of Special Needs Ministry	Levels of Special Needs Ministry
Total MAS score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.60 0.01 17	0.43 0.01 33
Emotional Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.49 0.04 17	0.27 0.13 33
Cognitive Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.49 0.04 17	0.28 0.00 33
Behavioral Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.27 0.30 17	0.04 0.84 33

Table A5. Sets of two variables yielding significant correlation.

		<b>Pastors with (1) formal courses of instruction and (2) informal courses of instruction</b>	<b>Pastors with (1) informal courses of instruction and (2) current tenure as pastor &gt;5 years</b>
		Levels of Special Needs Ministry	Levels of Special Needs Ministry
Total MAS Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.33 0.01 68	0.27 0.05 51
Emotional Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.33 0.01 68	0.14 0.31 51
Cognitive Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.33 0.01 68	0.39 0.01 51
Behavioral Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.06 0.61 68	0.07 0.64 51

Table A6. Significant correlation among pastors with formal instruction and tenure greater than five years.

		<b>Pastors with (1) formal courses of instruction and (2) current tenure as pastor &gt;5 years</b>
		Levels of Special Needs Ministry
Total MAS Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.49 0.00 43
Emotional Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.34 0.03 43
Cognitive Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.61 0.00 43
Behavioral Attitude Score	Spearman's Correlation Significance N	0.18 0.24 43

## REFERENCE LIST

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## ABSTRACT

### PASTORAL ATTITUDES TOWARD INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Bobby Arlan Howard, Ed.D.  
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Chairperson: Dr. Brian C. Richardson

It has been indicated through research and by personal testimony that although some barriers for inclusion for those with special needs have been broken down since the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, one of the most significant barriers still remains – negative and often subtle attitudes. Positive attitudes toward individuals with special needs have been shown to facilitate inclusion while negative attitudes hinder inclusion. Since the ADA law exempted churches from the mandates for inclusion, many have found participating in churches a significant challenge. The purpose of this study was to explore the attitude measurement score of senior pastors as it relates to awareness of special needs populations, types of special education ministries in the churches, previous life experiences with persons with developmental disabilities, and the pastor's training through formal and informal courses of instruction related to developmental disabilities. The research explored potential factors which shape pastoral attitudes and result in either barriers or facilitators to intentional special needs ministries.

Data was collected through an online survey format and the results were used in a statistical analysis to facilitate the answering of the research questions. The sample population for the research included the 1296 senior pastors of Southern Baptist churches in South Carolina who have published church and/or personal email addresses in the South Carolina Baptist Annual Report 2008.

Through statistical analysis of the survey results, precedent literature review concepts concerning the value of life experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities can have a positive impact on positive attitudes. The pastors overall had positive attitudes toward individuals with developmental disabilities, but most significantly in the realm of the behavioral domain. Strong statistically significant correlations could not be drawn between having a positive attitude toward individuals with special needs and special needs ministry among the pastor's surveys. There were definite trends which support the important roles of experience and education being made available to pastors in order to potentially bring positive changes concerning inclusion in local churches.

Keywords: attitude measurement, special needs ministry, pastoral attitudes, individuals with developmental disabilities, church special education ministry

## VITA

Bobby Arlan Howard

### PERSONAL

Born: October 26, 1965, High Point, NC

Married: Kimberly Shepherd, June 1, 1985

### EDUCATIONAL

High School Diploma, Southern Guilford High School, Greensboro, North Carolina

A.A.S. Nursing, Guilford Technical Community College, Jamestown, North Carolina

B.S. Nursing, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina

M.Div., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina

### MINISTERIAL

Youth/Music Pastor, Second Baptist Church, Henderson, North Carolina  
1996-1998

Youth/Education Pastor, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina, 1998-2005

### ACADEMIC

Instructor of Nursing, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Asheville, North Carolina, 2001-2005

Instructor of Religion and Youth Ministry, Charleston Southern University, Charleston, South Carolina, 2008-

### PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Youth Ministry Educators

North American Professors of Christian Education