UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Emphasizing the Educator in Paraeducator:
An Ecocultural and Activity Theory Perspective on Elementary School Special Education Paraeducators' Instruction

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Education

in

Teaching and Learning

by

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2011

The Dissertation of Hoaihuong “Orletta” Thuy Nguyen is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my father, Bu “Bill” Van Nguyen, may he rest in peace. As a young child, he would always ask me, “Where are you going, a college or university?” My response was always a resounding, “University!” Then he would follow with, “How far are you going?” Without knowing, I made a promise to him and myself. It was a promise that I would eventually fulfill 28 years later, and 25 years after his passing, “All the way!” Here’s to keeping promises, Daddy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

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The Education Studies faculty, who supported me by setting in structures, and learning experiences to tap into my “inner” researcher.

Lastly, to my research participants, thank you for allowing me a peek into your worlds. Your voices will be heard and your knowledge, strengths, and challenges shared.

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2008-2010 **Private Educational Consultant**
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Supervised 6 special education teachers & 6 paraeducators. Provided training in behavior modification, developing parent relations, & IEP goal/objective writing. Worked in fully inclusive & self-contained settings. Provided instructional/behavioral modifications for students with special needs.

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Trained extensively on behavior systems, crisis intervention techniques, & special education law & regulations in a non public school setting for students with emotional disturbance.

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Trained in evaluation & support of new teachers. Provided ongoing consultation & coaching of teachers new to the field & district.

2002 **Lead Teacher & Curriculum Developer**

Trained in backwards planning strategies to develop curriculum in English Language Arts to include lessons, materials, & modifications for diverse learners.

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Trained in AVID teaching strategies targeted to increase literacy & close the achievement gap for students in the academic average who have the desire to go to college & the willingness to work hard.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Emphasizing the Educator in Paraeducator:

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by

Hoaihuong "Orletta" Thuy Nguyen

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University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Alison Wishard Guerra, Chair

The California School Employees Association defines a paraeducator as a person who assists classroom teachers and other certificated personnel in instructing reading, writing and mathematics. The paraeducator's job duties have expanded to meet growing demands on instruction and student diversity. Their school duties mirror those of a typical teacher; paraeducators connect schools to communities, manage challenging student behaviors, and provide direct instruction to students. Although paraeducators are assuming roles that are reminiscent of a classroom teacher, the current paraeducator entry level requirements and professional development do not

mimic that of a typical teacher. Paraeducators rarely receive any formal training before or during their experience. As a result, much of the training that paraeducators do receive is dependent on trial and error, "on the job" training and the quality of supervision they receive from teachers. Thus, paraeducators' skills and competencies vary because paraeducators are subject to different opportunities and expectations from individual supervisors. The research on paraeducators provides a wide range of empirical contributions, but the body of literature is limited in depth. The most glaring gaps revolve around how paraeducators provide instructional services to students, particularly given their lack of training and support.

This study investigated how special education paraeducators completed the instructional responsibilities of their duties. Drawing on ecocultural and activity theory perspectives, I used a mixed methods study that investigated the unique factors that impact the special education paraeducator's instructional practice within the small group instructional setting for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Findings indicated that paraeducators enact a variety of goals through everyday routines; they also access a variety of social, material, and cultural resources. But, the paraeducators' practices are highly influenced by external factors such as the district, school, classroom, and social contexts and settings. Findings also suggested that there was an underlying power structure that limited the paraeducators' control over their everyday routines.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Educators have come to know paraeducators by many different names but their job duties share a definition in common; Werts, Harris, Tillery, and Roark (2004) defined paraeducators as individuals who worked under the direct supervision of licensed professionals and who often provide direct services to students and their families. In practice, direct services typically take the form of educational supports. More specifically, paraeducators assist school professionals in providing instruction (California Schools Employee Association, 2006) and focus their services on student educational outcomes. There are many types of paraeducators within the schools, but for the purpose of my proposed study, I focused on elementary school special education paraeducators (SEP). SEPs provide supports for students with special needs. These supports include, but are not limited to, teaching functional skills (Carroll, 2001), implementing academic interventions (Vadasy, Sanders, & Peyton, 2006), connecting to parents and communities (Chopra, Sandoval-Lucero, Aragon, Bernal, Berg De Balderas, & Carroll, 2004), and assisting in behavior modification (Meuller, Sterling-Turner, & Moore, 2005).

The research on paraeducators has illustrated their strengths and importance in providing services to students (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French 2003). Unfortunately, more striking in the literature is the problematic relationship of having untrained, unskilled individuals working with the most challenging students. SEPs have increased responsibility for providing instructional services to students with

disabilities, yet the degree to which they are qualified to meet such demands remains relatively stagnant. As a result, the students who need the most support from qualified personnel are left lagging behind their non-disabled peers. This paradox is potentially harmful to students.

Although research is emerging to address the paraeducator paradox, the research in itself is flawed. French (2003) argued that there is little to no research that provides a consistent viewpoint on the paraeducator's effectiveness in providing supports to students. In fact, French stated, "The effects of the presence of paraeducator on student independence, social interactions, behavior, and academic achievement remain disputed in the literature. Studies…have yielded varying results" (2003, p.4). In addition to the limited research on a paraeducator's instructional practice, there is also a disturbing lack of the paraeducator's voice and perspective in regards to their instructional responsibilities (Lane, Fletcher, Carter, Dejud, & De Lorenzo, 2007; Quilty, 2007). Even in my own experiences, I have rarely elicited the instructional beliefs of the paraeducators that I supervised. Nor did I ever provide them explicit support on how to provide instructional services to students.

"My" Aides

In my own fourteen years as an educator, I encountered numerous SEPs. I have supervised them, watched my own colleagues supervise, sought their opinions about students, and provided training. But, in the early years of my professional life, I am dismayed that I didn't harness paraeducators' strengths or hear their voices.

In my first years of teaching, I taught middle school students identified with emotional disturbances. I had at least six different paraeducators who worked with me and my students directly. I remember speaking to friends, family and colleagues about my work day, which inevitably involved my paraeducator. I don't recall ever referring to them by name when speaking to my colleagues. I just referenced them using my possessive and territorial understanding of them, "my" aide.

All of my aides helped me work with students, managed their behavior problems, provided instructional support, and completed my clerical needs. Although what they did was important to me, upon reflection, I am quite positive that I didn't acknowledge their contributions, view them as colleagues or provide any real guidance as the supervising professional. I always assumed that they just knew what they were doing and how to do it. This is most poignantly illustrated in one of my strongest memories of "my first aide."

My first teaching post as a teacher was working with six students identified as having emotional disturbance. I had no credential, experience, or understanding of what it meant for a child to be emotionally disturbed. My first aide worked in the school for several years before I arrived. He was an older gentleman, with a strong presence. My aide and I rarely spoke to one another, never delivered lessons together, and never talked about his previous experiences. I never drew on his strength as the more experienced educator, nor did I see him as a fellow educator. After all, he was "just" my aide. Regardless of this lack of a relationship, my aide was constantly at my side. At first, I didn't know why he was velcroed to me, as I never thought to ask.

It wasn't until I had the unfortunate experience of a student punching a classmate so hard that the victim cracked his skull open on the hard linoleum floor of my classroom that I realized that my aide was sticking to me for my safety. Without saying it, my aide protected me from my students and my own naiveté. I never talked to him about the incident. In retrospect, I imagine that he was quite shook up from the blood on the floor, combined with what he had seen in the many years before I came. But, I never asked. I never said goodbye when he quit the following week. Nor did I ever ask his replacement, "my new aide" and protector, what his thoughts were about the school, the kids, my teaching, or his life. Similar to my first aide, I didn't even say goodbye to my new aide when I left at the end of the year.

Over my career, I have seen very little change in how paraeducators are treated and supported in schools. Like my own personal experience, my colleagues often made the same mistakes of not recognizing the value of the paraeducators. I share these experiences not to criticize my fellow educators who may have treated the paraeducators in a similar manner; but rather to emphasize that the paraeducators in my professional experiences never had a voice, were never seen as equal members of the team, and never had support to execute their job duties. Their supervising teachers and I had defective assumptions that an effective paraeducator was one that could manage their challenging job duties with little guidance or recognition (French, 1998). As I reflect, I am ashamed of my own actions, but I also recognize that there is little training for teachers that would have prepared me to work with paraeducators.

Overall, in my experiences and literature, educators view paraeducators as individuals who just execute the teacher's instructions. The paraeducators have very little input into how to provide services to students. More discouraging is that paraeducators are being asked to do more complex tasks, work with our most challenging students, and continue to do so with little to no guidance. Yet, those that I worked with, they managed to come to work every day. Somehow, the paraeducators demonstrated patience and caring, even in the face of challenging situations that they were not equipped to deal with. The question is, "How do they do it?"

Taking a Closer Look at Paraeducators

Current paraeducator literature explicitly explores the SEP phenomenon, and much of it confirms my own experiences in education. The research studies have investigated paraeducators from a range of approaches. Some have focused on the paraeducators skills in connecting to the communities outside of the school setting (Chopra, et al., 2004). Others investigate how paraeducators provide behavior supports (Meuller, Sterling-Turner, & Moore, 2005). A smaller body of the literature represents how paraeducators provide instructional support (Lane, Fletcher, Carter, Dejud, & Delorenzo, 2007; Quilty, 2007; Vadasy et al., 2006). In addition, there is a body of paraeducator literature that suggests paraeducators' skill bases and competencies are generally underdeveloped (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003), where they are left to their own devices. Regardless of the approach and the clear flaws in supervision and training, the bulk of the literature

demonstrates that paraeducators are human resources who are important to providing services to students.

If the CSEA (2006) defines a paraeducator as an individual assists professionals to provide instructional services, the existing research appears unable to truly capture the essence of how the paraeducators are performing the primary responsibility of instruction. Researchers have skirted around paraeducator instruction. Those who attempt to investigate how paraeducators provide instructional support (Lane, Fletcher, Carter, Dejud, & Delorenzo, 2007; Quilty, 2007; Vadasy et al., 2006) focus on student outcomes and intervention implementation. These studies are valuable in the sense that they begin to build a connection between paraeducators and the espoused primary responsibility of instruction. But ironically, their focus on student outcomes leaves out a crucial component of the paraeducator themselves. Studies on instruction fail to take into account influences from the paraeducators' developmental histories, strengths, and contributions from their development before becoming a paraeducator and during their paraeducator experiences. Also, literature on training and support needs (Deardorff, et al., 2007; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003; Steckleberg, et al., 2007) identify that paraeducators need more training and support and provide ways in which to address those needs. But, the authors' suggestions and recommendations for training are based on incomplete research. How can training programs on paraeducator instruction be effective if the research field hasn't defined how paraeducators are currently navigating and making meaning of their instructional roles?

Ultimately, research on paraeducators is a relatively new area of study, emerging with more zeal since 1997. Consequently, there are several gaps of knowledge in this field of study. First, the research on paraeducators is broad in scope, but limited in its depth. Second, although the current literature provides a broad sampling of theoretical frames that look at a paraeducators' roles and their impact on student outcomes, it fails to bridge how paraeducators make meaning of and navigate through their instructional role, particularly in light of limited training and support. Next, the literature attempts to provide a broad base of perspectives on the paraeducator phenomenon. Much of the research that includes the paraeducator perspective focuses on their descriptions of their job duties, interactions with their supervising teachers, and general issues about support and training (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009; Chopra, et al., 2004; Riggs & Meuller, 2001). What the research fails to do is include the paraeducators' voices in how they navigate through their instructional responsibilities. The few studies that claim to focus on the paraeducator's instructional practice (Lane, et. al, 2007; Quilty, 2007; Vadasy, et al., 2006) actually only focus on student outcomes rather than incorporating the paraeducators' perceptions. When looking at the literature in its entirety, current research in the field suggests that paraeducators are often providing services to children with very little guidance and direction and there is a general lack of attention the paraeducators' voices concerning their instructional practices.

The next steps in researching the paraeducators is to move towards studies that capture the paraeducators' instructional roles and investigate how these individuals,

who are historically undertrained and unsupported, are providing that instruction. The existing literature provides a foundation for how to approach this type of investigation. First, the literature on paraeducators' assets as community and cultural members allows us to hypothesize that paraeducators bring a unique set of characteristics that have been developed from their own previous experiences, relationships, and individual cultural development. These characteristics have been explored more thoroughly with bilingual paraeducators and less so with SEPs. But, the literature directs us to value the skills and contributions that paraeducators come to work place with; we need only to focus these contributions towards its influence on the instructional setting. In addition, literature on instruction suggests that explicit training, support from supervising teachers, and the quality of the interaction with students are areas that influence student outcomes. These findings guide us towards an analysis of the instructional activity setting itself and the factors that influence that instructional setting. Essentially, to truly investigate paraeducators and their instructional roles, we must honor the paraeducators' own development that has brought them into their jobs as paraeducators, investigate what their beliefs are about their roles within the instructional setting, and identify exactly what they are doing within the instructional setting. To gain this deeper understanding, I conducted a study based on combination of an ecocultural and activity theory perspective. These theoretical frameworks allow us to capture factors that influence the paraeducators' development and how their development is related to the instructional activity setting.

An Ecocultural and Activity Theory Perspective

The existing literature analyzes paraeducators through a handful of theoretical perspectives such as sociocultural and historical (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda & Genzuk, 2007), apprenticeship (Rueda & Monzo, 2002), critical theories (Rueda & Genzuk, 2007) and personal practical knowledge (Lewis, 2005). The sociocultural historical perspectives provide a strong argument that paraeducators come to the teaching and learning setting with strengths that allow them to forge strong relationships with their students. Sociocultural historical based research studies also suggest that paraeducators use their own experiences and cultural understanding to provide more diverse teaching approaches to students of similar backgrounds. However, the current perspectives fail to bridge the SEPs personal experiences to the actual instructional activity setting in an explicit manner. Lewis (2005) attempts to bridge what the paraeducator brings to the instructional setting by using the framework of "personal practical knowledge" (p. 136). Drawing on Connelly and Clandinin's (1998) definition, Lewis (2005) suggests that personal practical knowledge is present in a teacher's past experiences, in their present beliefs, and in future actions. Lewis's study focused on 17 paraeducators and placed on emphasis on their "personal histories and concrete experiences" (p. 136). Her study was promising in that it begins to bridge the paraeducator's past, present, and future to the instructional setting.

But, Lewis's (2005) study is limited on two levels. The author provides very little data and support in her analysis of the paraeducator phenomenon. Also, Lewis

doesn't make a direct connection to the actual instructional activity, the interactions that occur within that setting, while still maintaining a theoretical focus on how the paraeducator's past, present and future may be influencing the instructional activity. I suggest that ecocultural frameworks and activity theory perspectives are sound theoretical approaches to understanding how the paraeducator's sociocultural historical characteristics and personal practical knowledge impact the instructional setting.

Ecocultural Theory- Nested Systems

Ecocultural theory focuses on influences of different environmental conditions upon human development. In Urie Bronfenbrenner's work (1976), he suggests that there are systems in place that determine how individuals learn and develop. These systems interact with one another on multiple levels: the characteristics of the learner, the learner's environment, and the "interconnections that exist between these environments" (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p.5). Bronfenbrenner suggests that "the environment is…a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (1976, p.5). There are four general structures: the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system (see Figure 1).

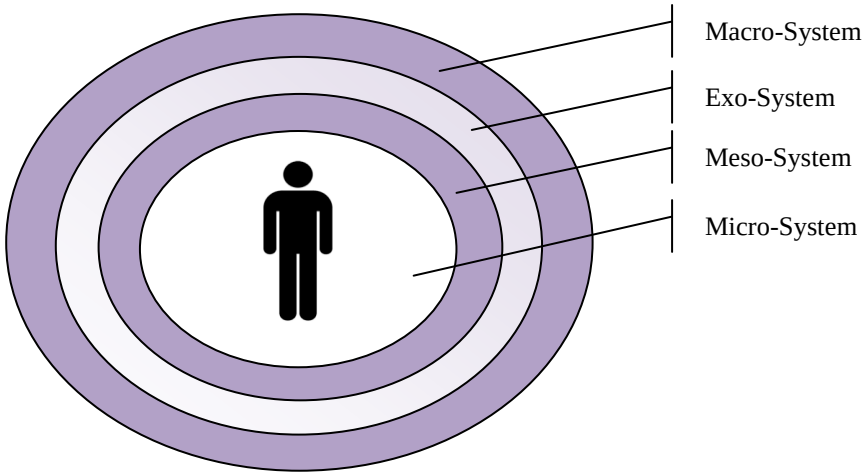


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's nested system.

The micro-system is the immediate setting that involves the learner as they are engaged in activities. For the SEP, one of their micro-systems may be the small group instructional setting where they are engaged in teaching and playing the role of a teacher. The meso-system describes the learner at a particular point in his or her life. It contains multiple micro-systems. For this study, the meso-system is the SEP's history that influenced their development at the time of this study. The exo-system includes the concrete social structures, both formal and informal, that impact the immediate settings containing the individual. The structures have the potential to influence and determine what occurs within the setting. For a SEP, the exo-system may be the immediate structures that are put in place at the school site such as the special education service delivery models that are specific to the school. Finally, the macro-system is the overall institutional or cultural factors that define the entire ecocultural system. For SEPs, macro-systemic structures include the district's special education

delivery model and definition of the paraeducator role. The macro-system not only defines the structures in which SEPs work within, but also carries with it principles of practice, definitions of roles, and expectations of what activities to engage in.

Ecocultural Theory- Everyday Routines

Weisner (2002) discusses ecocultural theory in respect to the influences of everyday routines and activities and how these practices influence human development. When we think of culture and how individuals develop, we often forget to take into account the very things that people experience on a daily basis that mold their development. Weisner (2002) suggests that a deeper analysis of the "cultural pathways… the everyday routines of life" (p. 276) provide rich insights into what individuals value, their goals, how their development is shaped, and the scripts which they come to understand as being the appropriate way to live and think. Weisner (1997) suggests that the everyday routines of life reveal an individual's "goals and values, motives and emotions, tasks to be performed in [an] activity, a script for normative or appropriate conduct…and who the people are who should be participants" (Weisner, 1997, p. 182). In addition, these everyday routines are impacted by an individual's economic and environmental contexts (Greenfield, et al., 2003). Essentially, Weisner (1997) suggests that human development is a product of the things that we experience, the routines we engage in, and the activities that permeate our lives. Ecocultural theorists would argue that with SEPs, the instructional decisions they make are influenced by their nested systems and everyday routines.

Nested Systems Influence Everyday Routines

Although Bronfenbrenner (1976) and Weisner (1997) are ecocultural theorists, they provide different perspectives on how ecocultural factors influence and shape an individual's development. Both perspectives complement one another to provide a richer understanding of human development. Bronfenbrenner provides a larger discussion about the contexts, settings, and environments that serve as the overarching influences and structures that impact individual development. Weisner's framework provides the specific actions that individuals engage in within their microsystems to illustrate and demonstrate their understanding of these larger contextual influences. The everyday routines shift and change depending on their underlying motivations, beliefs, goals, and experiences.

In addition, Weisner (1997) argues that to truly provide thorough investigation of individuals using an ecocultural framework, researchers also need to explore the activity setting that the individual engages and participates in. Weisner (1997) explicitly states that we should have a "direct focus on the activity settings that [humans] are engaged in – the interactional life of the [individual] …living out their everyday routines and activities" (p. 182). The activity resides in the individual's micro-system. Consequently, when studying SEPs, I must also examine the micro-system in more detail. I must also investigate how nested systems and everyday routines are related to the activity setting.

Activity Theory

Activity theory is a perspective that originates from cultural-historical theories developed by Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria. Activity theory focuses on the activity system as the unit of analysis (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999). The theory suggests that individuals learn through their direct interaction with the environment and other individuals. These interactions are mediated by the use of tools (language, artifacts, etc.). At its most basic level, an activity system consists of the subject (individuals), the object (the goal of the individuals working within the activity setting), and the mediating tools (language, signs, artifacts, etc.) used by the individuals to move towards the object (Engeström, 1999) (see Figure 2). The basic elements of activity theory provide a strong basis of how to interpret the immediate interaction between the subjects and object as well as how the interaction is influenced by mediating tools. However, the simplicity of the model does not account for more contextual factors that may be impacting the activity system.

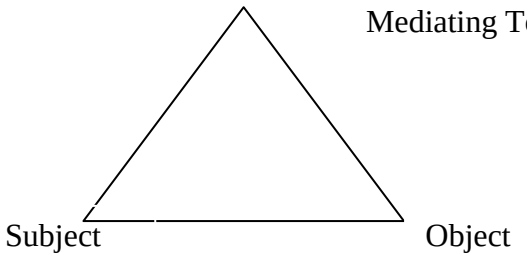


Figure 2. Classic mediation triangle.

Engestrom (1999) argued that the classic model did not fully explain the "societal and collaborative nature of…actions….it does not depict… actions as events in a collective activity system. The outcomes of…actions appear to be very limited

and situation bound" (p.30). Thus, Engestrom expanded the basic mediation triangle to include rules, community, and division of labor (see Figure 3). Engestrom suggested that all activity systems were governed by a set of rules, beliefs, and conventions. In addition, each activity system was situated within a social context of community. The community members interacted within the activity system either directly as subjects or indirectly influenced the subjects that participated within the community. Finally, the activity system also included a division of labor where within the community existed in "multiple layers of fragmentation and compartmentalization" (Engestrom, 1999, p. 31). Each of these components of the activity system is in constant interaction and interplay with one another. In these respects, activity theorists share some similar beliefs as ecocultural theorists. Both perspectives suggest that the contexts of activity are impacted by external factors such as community, social interactions, and rules.

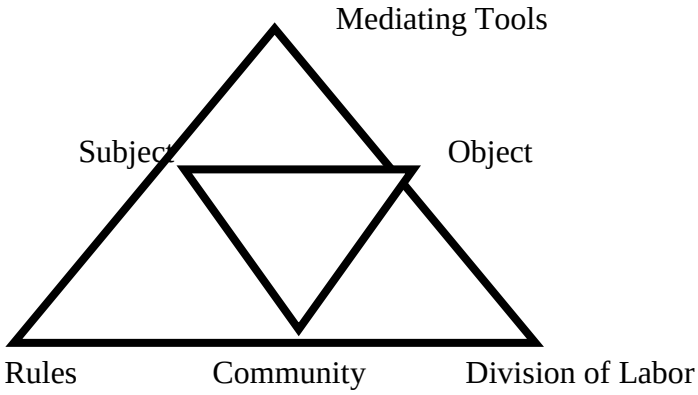


Figure 3. Engestrom's expanded activity system.

In a SEP instructional activity setting (see Figure 4), the subjects might include the paraeducator and students with mild to moderate disabilities. The object

would be providing instruction to students based on their learning needs, such as reading. The mediating tools might include the instructional materials, language interactions between paraeducators and students, and student work samples, which are created by the participant actors to reach their goal. The rules for SEPs may include the norms, procedural processes, and beliefs of the school as a whole. The community that paraeducators participate in within the system may be those of other paraeducators, their supervising teachers, parents, students, and administrators. For division of labor, SEPs may be compartmentalized into departments and given specific tasks (i.e. clerical, small group instruction).

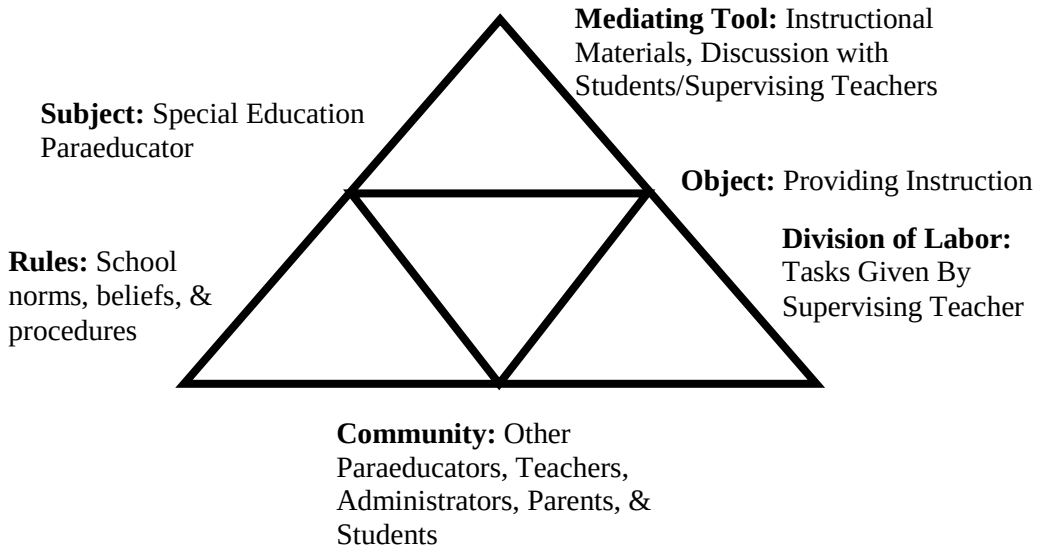


Figure 4. Engestrom's activity system applied to paraeducators.

Where Ecocultural and Activity Theories Meet

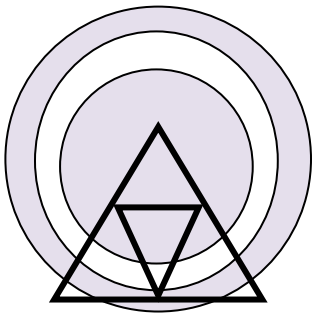
For the purpose of this research study, the combination of ecocultural and activity theory frameworks provides a more comprehensive and thorough investigation of a SEPs' instructional practice. Ecocultural and activity theory lenses offer a deeper understanding of paraeducators by not only allowing researchers to investigate the instructional activity system, but also the impact of the broader contexts that the activity is nested within. The melding of ecocultural and activity theory frameworks is not a new concept. In Nunez's (2009) discussion about activity theory and mathematics instruction, the author suggested that activity systems are nested in multiple contexts.

> Nesting the micro *activity system* within broader contexts may provide educational researchers with further understanding of how microcontexts are influenced and dependent upon larger and powerful entities such as the institutional and cultural-historical contexts level (Nunez, 2009, p. 11).

SEPs who engage in the activity of small group instruction, engage in activity as it is related to larger contextual influences. The ways that they engage in that activity is through their everyday routines. The SEPs change and adapt their routines through their immediate interactions in the micro-contexts of activity as well as through their understanding and interaction on the macro-systemic, meso-systemic, and exo-systemic contexts.

When discussing how activity theory complements ecocultural theory, we must look closely at Engestrom's (1999) activity system triangle (see Figure 5). The classic mediation triangle is set in the micro-system. The immediate actions within the mediation triangle are the individual's everyday routine. The extended activity triangle

incorporates similar ecocultural constructs such as rules, community, and division of labor. Activity theory's construct of rules are similar to concepts of institutional factors in the macro-system. The community is reminiscent of social, environmental, and economic factors in the exo-systems and meso-systems. Finally, the division of labor construct brings forth issues of power. In ecocultural theory, power is described in terms of power relations due to gender, culture, and birth order.



Ecocultural Theory ⟷	**Activity Theory**
Micro-system where everyday routines are enacted	Mediation interactions with subject, tools, and object. Enactment of the division of labor
Meso-system of the individuals' personal histories.	The characteristics of the subject.
Exo-system of the school and supervising teachers.	Rules of the school Community of educators. Division of labor
Macro-system of special education law and district mandate	Federal law and district mandate Division of labor

Figure 5. Where ecocultural and activity theories meet.

Goals of the Study

In this study, I used a mixed methods approach that focused on the SEP as the unit of study. Given the gaps in the existing research, I attempted to delve deeper to look at the systems and contexts that shaped the SEPs' development as paraeducators the impact of that development on the instructional activity setting. In the following study, I answered the overarching question: What ecocultural factors, specifically

everyday routines, impact an elementary school paraeducators' instruction when providing instructional services to students with mild to moderate disabilities? More specifically, I answered the following research questions:

1. What are the paraeducator's everyday routines and how are they related to the SEP led small group instructional activity setting?
2. What are the paraeducators' espoused goals about instruction and student outcomes and how are those goals related to SEP everyday routines?
3. What are the resources (social, cultural, and material) available to SEPs from schools that have different socio-economic settings and how are those resources related to the SEP's everyday routines?

By asking and answering these research questions, I hoped to build a descriptive profile of how SEPs are executing and making meaning of their instructional responsibilities. More specifically, I desired to capture the paraeducators' perceptions and voices of their instructional duties by identifying their espoused goals about instruction and students as well as whether or not their goals were enacted in their everyday routines. Next, I endeavored to describe the relationship between the everyday routines and the activity setting. Finally, I investigated if these everyday routines and instructional interactions were influenced by the SEP's access to resources.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The current empirical paraeducator literature explores a variety of topics: paraeducators' roles and job descriptions (Chopra, et al., 2004), parent perceptions (Werts, et al., 2004), paraeducators' perceptions about their role within the school system (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000), instructional value (Rueda & Monzo, 2002), and relationships amongst paraeducator, teacher, parents, and students (Chopra, et al., 2004). The literature illustrates that paraeducators are important human resources that contribute to student learning. Paraeducators bring a variety of strengths and contributions to the schools, namely their cultural and community memberships and focus on instructional service delivery. But, the literature also reveals that paraeducators lack instructional training and quality supervision. There is also failure to provide deeper investigation on how paraeducators perceive, execute, and use their cultural strengths to perform their instructional duties.

Parameters of Literature Review: Methods and Rationale

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1974 (IDEA) was "established to support states and localities in … improving the [educational] results for [students] with disabilities and their families" (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2000). IDEA 1974 was revised to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997 (IDEA 1997). Major revisions included provisions for culturally relevant instructional principles such as examining students' instructional environments, creating learning environments that reflected diversity, and encouraging collaborative

partnerships with families of students with special needs (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2000). After the passage of IDEA 1997, research on paraeducators in the special education field emerged more prevalently. The literature on paraeducators grew to explore the their multifaceted roles, and their influences on teachers, students, communities, student behavior, and instruction. There was a body of literature about paraeducator practice that addressed how to work with paraeducators as well as suggestions on how paraeducators could manage their many job duties. In contrast, empirical research on paraeducators represented a smaller body of literature. Although literature about practice is useful, I chose to include only research literature on the roles, training, and supports on paraeducator to identify research gaps that would prove useful in the design of this study.

The Strength of Cultural and Community Membership

Often, paraeducators came from the communities surrounding the schools in which they worked (Hiatt, Sampson, & Baird, 1997). Wall, Davis, Crowley, and White (2005) wrote, "Among the strengths of many urban paraeducators is their close connection to the community" (p.183). The research indicated that paraeducators' connections and intimate knowledge of the community outside of school allowed them to communicate with parents (Chopra, et al., 2004), forged strong bonds with families (Hiatt, Sampson, & Baird, 1997; Werts, et al., 2004), empathized with students (Rueda & Genzuk, 2007), and negotiated cultural differences between home and school cultures (Monzo & Rueda, 2003; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004). From an

ecocultural perspective, paraeducators came to schools with a wealth of cultural experiences that helped them to bridge their communities to schools. They used their own backgrounds, cultural understandings, and the context of the environment to assist students and their families to access services.

Research on bilingual paraeducators identified the benefits of cultural membership (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004). Rueda, Monzo, and Higareda's (2004) observational study of 24 bilingual paraeducators illustrated that paraeducators who had similar cultural backgrounds to parents and students tended to connect to parents and students with greater ease. In contrast to teachers, the researchers found that bilingual paraeducators drew on their previous experiences and knowledge of cultural norms. For instance, they used Spanish terms of endearment with students; interacted with students in a more relaxed, friendly manner; and made references to shared cultural experiences. With parents, paraeducators used their primary language to serve as interpreters and facilitated conversations between parents and teachers at parent teacher conferences and school functions. Rueda, Monzo, and Higareda (2004) concluded that bilingual paraeducators' membership in the student's cultural communities allowed them to connect with students in a way that way that was unique to the paraeducator's own cultural background and previous experiences.

The strength of the paraeducator's cultural experiences was also echoed in Ernst-Slavit and Wenger's (2006) ethnographic study of 20 bilingual paraeducator. Using photo-elicited narratives, the authors found that language minority students

relied on the bilingual paraeducators' familiarity with the student's culture and shared language. As a result, the authors concluded that paraeducators tended to bond with students based on cultural similarities.

Ernst-Slavit and Wenger (2006) and Rueda, Monzo, and Higareda (2004) focused on bilingual paraeducators. But, in Chopra, et al.'s (2004) study on special education paraeducators (SEP), the authors found that SEPs acted as bridges between home and school because they had community membership. Through focus group interviews, Chopra, et al. discovered that many of the paraeducator participants lived in the communities in which they worked. The researchers identified that the paraeducator's community membership fostered stronger connections between their communities and schools. The paraeducators were community liaisons/agents, advocates, and interpreters. Like Rueda, Monzo, and Higareda (2004), Chopra, et al.'s paraeducators participants had stronger bonds with parents. Parents viewed them as more knowledgeable of the child in comparison to the classroom teacher.

Chopra, et al.'s (2004), Ernst-Slavit and Wenger's (2006), and Rueda, Monzo, and Higareda's (2002) studies illustrated that paraeducators' cultural or community membership allowed them to connect and build trust. In turn, they assisted teachers and families to bridge cultural differences. Students benefited from paraeducators who understood and connected with the student's community and cultural contexts. All three studies illustrated that cultural factors from the paraeducator's development provided a unique contribution to working with children of similar cultural backgrounds. The aforementioned research focused on the benefits of the

paraeducators' cultural pathways on student and parent relationships. Rueda, Monzo, and Higareda (2002) hinted to the paraeducators' cultural contributions to student learning, by fostering more relaxed relationships. Unfortunately, studies failed to thoroughly investigate the impact of cultural membership upon instruction.

The Paraeducator as Instructional Human Resource

Beyond their ecocultural strengths with the community, paraeducators also act as instructional human resources to assist students in accessing academic content. They bring their varied educational levels and understanding of teaching and learning to work with some of the students who struggle the most in our schools. The California School Employees Association (2006) stated that the primary role of the paraeducator is to assist school professionals in instruction. Paraeducators have assumed a significant role in providing instruction and support to students (Wall, Harris, Tillery, & Roark, 2005) and paraeducators feel "responsible for making many decisions about instruction that could have a great impact on a...student's learning" (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000, p. 176-177).

Several researchers acknowledged the importance of the paraeducator's instructional role (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda & Monzo, 2002; Suter & Giangreco, 2009; Wall, Harris, Tillery, & Roark, 2005). Yet, actual research on the paraeducators' instructional role was limited. Of the handful of studies that claimed to investigate the paraeducator's instructional roles (Lane et al., 2007; Lewis, 2005; Quilty, 2007; Vadasy, Sanders, & Peyton, 2006), the

researchers failed to delve into how paraeducators performed their instructional jobs. There was a general lack of acknowledgement of the ecocultural factors that impacted the paraeducator's instruction. Instead, the research on the paraeducators' instruction was limited to measuring student outcomes based on an intervention rather than the paraeducator's influence in implementing said intervention.

Instruction as the Focus of the Work Day

In a recent study on the special education service delivery model in Vermont, Suter and Giangreco (2009) discovered that Vermont's service delivery model was "substantially more reliant on the use of special education [paraeducators] than any other U.S. state" (p.82). The use of SEPs increased three fold since 1990 despite a visible 11% decline in Vermont's special education population. More than half of the SEPs provided special education support through a "one on one" delivery model (Suter & Giangreco, 2009). The one on one paraeducators primarily worked with one student and provided them comprehensive behavioral, academic, and supervisory support. Through questionnaires, discussions, and anecdotal records of special education teachers and administrators, Suter and Giangreco discovered SEPs spent at least 57% of their time providing instruction to the students that they were assigned to; they spent 74% of their time on instruction and behavior management. Suter and Giangreco also argued that although SEPs were providing the primary instruction, they should not be responsible for that duty, particularly since there was little research to support the paraeducator efficacy in providing instructional supports.

Suter and Giangreco's (2009) study accomplished four things. First, it confirmed the growing trend of SEP employment. The study also confirmed several studies that identified that the majority of a paraeducator's job duty revolved around providing instruction to students (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda & Monzo, 2002). Moreover, Suter and Giangreco's research suggested that paraeducators were in the field, providing instruction, with little to no support from teachers and administrators on how to execute the instructional components of their jobs effectively. However, Suter and Giangreco (2008) did not include the voice of the paraeducator in their study. Data was collected only from special education teachers and administrators with no paraeducator input. This study failed to provide data from the paraeducator, an important actor within the instructional activity system.

In contrast, Guay (2003) conducted a qualitative study that included the paraeducator's perspective in art instruction. Using field notes, informal and formal interviews of teachers and paraeducators, observation, and photographs of the artwork of students; she focused on 12 paraeducators who worked with students on a one on one basis in art classrooms. Guay found that paraeducators rarely had interaction with the art teacher about the curriculum. Instead, SEPs were informed about the learning task upon entering the classroom or when listening to the art teacher's general instructions to the entire class. With that information, Guay discovered that paraeducators modifed the teacher's instructions based on the needs that they saw in the children. Guay also determined that when the paraeducator was present, the art

teachers rarely provided modification or interaction with the students. Guay found that paraeducators assumed the role of the students' primary teacher. This is in direct conflict with the definition of the paraeducator's job title, that they assist school professionals in providing instruction (CSEA, 2006).

A Paraeducator's Instructional Skills Measured by Student Outcomes

Clearly, research studies have illustrated that paraeducators spend a majority of their day providing instructional services to students (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda & Monzo, 2002). But, with all of this time spent on providing instructional services, an obvious question that emerges from the literature is whether or not paraeducators are effective at providing said instruction. French (2003) stated that researchers have attempted to answer that very question for several years. But, given the complex nature of the paraeducator phenomenon, French (2003) discovered that current studies do not provide a consistent viewpoint on the paraeducator's effectiveness in providing supports to students. There are a few studies that have emerged in the last decade attempting to address the paraeducator effectiveness concerns. These studies focus on intervention based designs that measure paraeducator effectiveness by student outcomes. Consequently, the paraeducator's instructional skills are not the focus of the studies. These studies illustrate the potential benefits of highly trained and supported paraeducator instruction; but the studies also make simplistic assumptions about how to measure paraeducator effectiveness. They assume that training equates to valid implementation of the intervention; it is a simple linear, causal model. What the

researchers fail to do is to take into account complex ecocultural factors (i.e. cultural and community membership, social supports) that may impact the instructional activity system. Human nature and action cannot be boiled down to a simple formula; one must take into account the unique contributions and development of individuals and how that individual's development impacts the activity they are engaged in.

Vadasy, Sanders, and Peyton (2006) found that paraeducators provided quality instruction and that student outcomes increased when paraeducators received adequate training, access to instructional resources, and regular instructional coaching. The researchers conducted one quasi-experimental and one randomized experiment designed to evaluate the effectiveness of supplemental reading instruction provided by paraeducators. In both studies, the paraeducator participants received well scripted lessons, instructional materials, three hours of initial training and weekly, ongoing coaching at the school site. The researchers trained paraeducators how to analyze reading errors, provide feedback, model reading practices and strategies, assess student skill level, and how to match reading methods to student needs (Vadasy, Sanders, & Peyton, 2006). Student achievement was measured by pretest and post test measures for picture vocabulary recognition, word level reading accuracy, reading efficiency, reading comprehension, and spelling. However, the second study added an additional measure to investigate student classroom behavior and classroom instruction. Across both studies, Vadasy, Sanders, and Peyton found that paraeducator delivered instruction "resulted in significantly higher reading accuracy or efficiency and fluency skills compared to classroom controls" (2006, p. 375).

In another reading intervention study, Lane, et al. (2007) examined the effects of a paraeducator-implemented reading intervention on students that were at risk for both reading and behavioral difficulties. The researchers hypothesized that with increased reading skill, the students' behavioral challenges would decrease. Three teachers and one paraeducator were trained on reading instruction; however, the paraeducator implemented the intervention with teachers as supervisors. The paraeducator received two hours of initial training in reading development, components of effective reading programs, and behavior management strategies. The paraeducator observed model lessons and was provided with scripted lessons, corrective feedback on instructional practice, and ongoing, weekly training. Lane, et al. (2007) discovered that the students' reading skills did increase, but changes in behavior were negligible. The behavior findings nullified Lane, et al.'s hypothesis that increasing reading outcomes would decrease behavior disruptions. But, commensurate with previous studies, with appropriate training and supervision, Lane, et al. (2007) suggested that paraeducators could be effective in increasing student academic outcomes.

The current research provides compelling evidence that with appropriate supports and training, paraeducators can effectively increase student academic outcomes. Unfortunately, Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) posed major assumptions in their research questions and methodology that took a limited view of the paraeducator phenomenon. Although the studies claimed to investigate the paraeducators' effectiveness in providing supplemental instruction, the authors'

methods and research designs did not adequately capture the paraeducators' impact on the instructional activity and student outcomes.

From an ecocultural perspective, Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) did not take into account the complexity of how paraeducators provided instruction to support student learning. They did not investigate the individual contributions that helped or hindered the interventions. The flaw was more clearly evident in Lane et al.'s (2007) study when the researchers attempted to explain their findings by stating that although paraeducators increased student academic achievement; they failed to lower problem behaviors because the paraeducator may have needed more training in behavior strategies. Lane et al (2007) hypothesized that training may have been an issue, but by measuring only student outcomes instead of the paraeducators themselves, the authors' hypotheses were completely unsupported. The focus on student outcomes limited the researchers' views of the entire context of the intervention, particularly the paraeducator participants' impact on the intervention.

Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) based their research on several assumptions that over simplified the impact of the paraeducator provided instruction on student outcomes. The authors do not take into account the variability of the intervention implementation. From an activity theory perspective, there is a general failure to study the activity system itself. Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) overlooked the dynamics of the paraeducator and student interaction, how the lessons and social interaction mediate the intervention activity, and how each individual agent within the activity system impact the overall implementation of the intervention.

Furthermore, Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) chose to collect their data using quantitative means (i.e. frequency counts, pre and post testing). As a result, the researchers attempted to capture the paraeducator's instructional phenomenon through a set of statistical analyses. Although appropriate to their research questions, the authors unfortunately missed a large piece of the paraeducator's instructional activity by not investigating the paraeducators' own perceptions about the interventions, their implementation of those interventions, and how they believed those interventions affected student outcomes. More qualitative measures, such as interviews, may have provided Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) a richer explanation of additional factors that may have impacted their findings. The researchers could have gained more insight if they simply heard the paraeducators' voices.

Finally, Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) claimed that one area of investigation that their studies answered was whether or not paraeducators are effective instructional human resources. The authors made assumptions that a valid proxy measurement of paraeducator effectiveness was to measure student performance. These assumptions are not uncommon in the educational field. In the current climate of education, such as with the No Child Left Behind legislation, educator effectiveness is often measured by student academic outcomes. Unfortunately, by focusing on student outcomes rather than the educator, Lane, et al. (2007) and Vadasy, et al. (2006) simplified the paraeducators' impact on student

outcomes. The process was reduced to a linear model where training paraeducators equated to implementation of an intervention which then equates to student outcomes.

The real world of the paraeducator is much more complex. Paraeducators participate in an activity setting, like an instructional reading intervention, and provide services not only based on their training, but also filtering that training through their own beliefs, goals, and motivations. Those beliefs and goals are additionally impacted by the context in which they are teaching (i.e. student dynamics, social supports, material resources, level of instructional skill).

Paraeducator and Teacher Interactions

Paraeducators assist school personnel in instruction and as such, they form relationships with their supervising teachers. For SEPs, their interactions and supports provided by their supervising teachers may influence their instructional practice. Current research investigating the paraeducator and supervising teacher interaction displayed a diverse range of relationships. Researchers found that paraeducators' self perceptions and perceptions by others may include several roles. This included being treated as or viewed as collaborators (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000), marginalized individuals (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Lewis, 2005), apprentices (Rueda & Monzo, 2002), or lacking power in comparison to teachers (Rueda &Monzo, 2002). To make sense of these varying viewpoints, I sorted these relationships into more simplistic categories: whether or not paraeducators felt that they were valued or undervalued members of the instructional team.

In studies where paraeducators felt valued, their connections to teachers tended to be more collaborative. Downing, Rynak, and Clark (2000) interviewed paraeducators to determine their perceptions about their job duties, training, and supports. The authors found that paraeducators who felt like valued members in the school tended to collaborate with teachers, contributed to the decision making process, and provided input on student learning and instruction. Rueda and Monzo (2002) studied the teacher and paraeducator interaction using the lens of apprenticeship. Research participants included bilingual paraeducators who were also seeking to become teachers. Rueda and Monzo suggested that when paraeducators were valued as apprentices, teachers invested more time in asking paraeducators for input. The input and collaboration was limited to the instructional activity rather than geared towards the teacher track paraeducator's professional growth.

Within the same study, Rueda and Monzo (2002) found that non-teacher track paraeducators did not receive the same degree of collaboration and interaction as the teacher track paraeducators. Arguably, the difference was understandable because teachers may not view non-teacher track paraeducators as apprentices. However, given the fact that one of the paraeducator's job duties was to assist teachers in providing instruction, their job duties suggested that all paraeducators were apprentices to teachers in some respect. As such, paraeducators needed to have a relationship with teachers that included supervision, learning experiences, and collaboration. But, according to Rueda and Monzo (2002), non-teacher track teachers did not have opportunities to observe teacher practices, ask questions, or receive

feedback. They were given instructions on how to execute basic learning tasks and then asked later if the tasks were completed.

In addition, Rueda and Monzo (2002) reported that paraeducators, both teacher track and non-teacher track, were keenly aware of "significant power differences" (p.516). Ernst-Slavit and Wenger (2006) further illustrated Rueda and Monzo's (2002) references to power differences. Ernst-Slavit and Wenger's participants reported that they felt marginalized, had poor work spaces, and often had to initiate collaboration with teachers by making themselves available during lunch time. These perceived paraeducator power differences impeded the paraeducator's ability to access training and supervision. For instance, if paraeducators felt that they had to take the initiative to make themselves available or seek collaboration opportunities, paraeducators may also feel that teachers were not willing to provide them with needed instructional support. When power perceptions were combined with limited opportunities to receive feedback and ask questions, paraeducators may not feel empowered or even welcome to ask for support. Lewis (2005) echoes Ernst-Slavit and Wenger's findings by concluding that paraeducators "often feel marginalized in their schools. Their narratives and [voices] have rarely been deemed important" (p. 144). From an activity theory perspective, the division of labor between paraeducators and supervising teachers suggests that paraeducators may not be viewed as equals or partners in the instructional activity setting. Thus, Ernst-Slavit and Wenger's study may imply that power difference impact not only the paraeducator's self perceptions,

but also their access to instructional supports needed to execute their instructional responsibilities.

Ultimately, the aforementioned research on teacher and paraeducator interaction focuses on the quality of the interaction, and the teacher and paraeducator perceptions. The quality of the interaction between the paraeducator and teacher impacted the paraeducator's feelings of value. These issues of power influenced their access to instructional resources and supports. Unfortunately, as with the limited literature on the paraeducator's instructional role, current research was remiss in providing a deeper look at how the interactions with teachers truly impact the paraeducator's instructional practice.

Research on Paraeducator Concerns: Training and Supervision

Although teachers and parents are aware of the paraeducator's beneficial contributions, research also highlights concerns. In their study on paraeducators in inclusive settings, Downing, Ryndak, and Clark (2000) argued, "School districts may need to reexamine policies and practices concerning the employment, training, supervision, and responsibilities of paraeducators to support successful education placements for their students" (p. 180). Paraeducator training and supervision opportunities can be inconsistent, nonexistent, or isolated to specific districts, school sites, and classrooms. The lack of training and supervision are problematic, particularly given the fact that federal law requires paraeducators to be "appropriately

trained and supervised... to assist in the provision of special education and related services [for] children with disabilities" (IDEIA, 2004).

In addition, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2005) suggested that paraeducators exhibit instructional competencies. The CEC provided guidelines for paraeducator competencies. Of the 10 competency domains, two address paraeducators' instructional responsibilities. The CEC recommended that paraeducators be competent in instructional strategies and instructional planning as well as demonstrate competence in instructional and remedial strategies, and use materials and teaching plans for instruction as directed by a supervising teacher.

In a recent study on special education paraeducator (SEP) knowledge and preparedness, Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, and Pelsue (2009) analyzed questionnaire responses from 313 SEPs across multiple grade levels and 77 different schools in a Midwestern state. The questionnaire was based on CEC standards for paraeducators. Carter et al. found that paraeducators not only worked with a wide range of students with disabilities, but also that the paraeducators reported moderate levels of knowledge of CEC standards. The researchers also determined that paraeducators with more training had higher levels of knowledge of the CEC standards. A poignant point that emerged from Carter et al.'s study was that paraeducators reported most of their training and preparation to perform their job duties was derived from on the job training. The authors argued that paraeducators required sufficient levels of knowledge, specifically of the CEC standards, to fulfill their roles.

Unfortunately, the CEC's recommendations have not been widely accepted as a national or state standard. Paraeducators often perform their duties with a limited mastery of those competencies. Katsiyannis, Hodge, and Lanford (2000) reviewed several federal court cases involving the faulty delivery of special education services. Through the review, the authors found that in many cases, paraeducators were scrutinized for their lack of training. The reviewers concluded that the court cases had at least one important implication; the lack of training was related to problematic supervision practices. Katsiyannis, Hodge, and Lanford noted that a majority of teachers were unprepared to serve as supervisors because the teachers did not receive supervision training in their credential programs. As a result, paraeducators were unprepared to work with students effectively.

In French's (1998) work, she delved deeper into the supervising teacher's perceptions on supervision. According to French (1998), teachers may not view supervision as a part of their job duties when working with paraeducators. Using interviews, documents, questionnaires, and self evaluation sheets, French (1998) uncovered a teacher perception that an "ideal paraeducator was seen as a person who required very little supervision or direction" (p. 365). Nearly all of the teachers in French's study made statements about how an "ideal paraeducator [could] carry out that things that you want him or her to do, and doesn't have to be supervised" (p. 365). This suggested that teachers did not see themselves as active agents in the training and supervision of paraeducators. Foreshadowing Katsiyannis, Hodge, and Lanford's (2000) conclusions, French (1998) highlighted a larger problem in supervision and

training; teachers generally received little training on how to supervise individuals such as paraeducators. Teachers stated that "they had to learn [how to supervise] all on their own" (p. 365). Thus, French (1998) argued that teachers and paraeducators alike saw a need for additional training in instruction, supervisor training, and working collaboratively to support each other in the classroom.

Most research on paraeducators notes that many work in schools that provide minimal training. They receive poor supervision, and learn how to execute their job duties through on the job training (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003). Giangreco, Edelman, and Broer (2003) argued that typical paraeducator training was informal, situation specific, and student specific. In line with this, Ernst-Slavit and Wenger (2006) suggested that paraeducators were often left to their own devices.

Responses to Training and Supervision Concerns

In response to concerns about the lack of systematic paraeducator training and supervision, some programs were created. They ranged from ongoing training models to web-based instruction. Deardorff, Glasenapp, Schalock, and Udell (2007) and Steckleberg, Vasa, Kemp, Arthaud, Asselin, Swain, and Fennick (2007) investigated two different paraeducator training options. Deardorff, et al. (2007) identified key elements in The Team Approach to Paraeducator/ Supervisor Professional Development (TAPS) Model. The TAPS model was designed to provide competency in several domains specific to working with children with disabilities in early childhood special education programs. The TAPS curriculum addressed varied levels

of paraeducator experience and competency, encouraged ongoing collaboration between supervisor and paraeducator, used self assessment and evaluation methods, used a CD-based curriculum that is easy to access, and provided follow up support and ongoing training.

Steckleberg, et al. (2007) evaluated a web-based paraeducator training resource. The content of the program was based on the CEC professional standards for paraeducators and was equivalent to 15 hours of class time. It addressed professional and ethical issues, and how to work with, train, supervise, and evaluate paraeducators. Deardorff, et al.,(2007) and Steckleberg, et al., (2007) discovered that teachers and paraeducators found both training programs to be a cost-effective means to provide meaningful, ongoing training and supervision support to paraeducators. Paraeducators were satisfied with the TAPS curriculum and methods of instruction. The web-based program gained high marks in participant satisfaction with training materials and increased content knowledge based on the CEC domains.

Unfortunately, research-based programs such as TAPS were not being used on a statewide scale. Based on reviews of various school district websites in California, districts did not typically offer ongoing training and support to paraeducators and their supervisors. Professional development catalogues offered limited training for paraprofessionals, but myriads of training opportunities for teachers, typically focused not on supervision of paraeducators but rather on content, instructional strategies with students, or behavior management. The real reason(s) behind the lack of state

adoptions of training and supervision programs for paraeducators is an area that has yet to be explored.

Despite the limited training and support, paraeducators are still in the field, working with students in several capacities. In many of those instances, paraeducators were valued members of the instructional team. Parents felt that paraeducators were vital to the educational progress of their children (Werts, Harris, Tillery, & Roark, 2004). Many teachers valued their independence (French, 1998), connections to the communities outside of school (Chopra et al., 2004), and their instructional support (Vadasy, Sanders, & Peyton, 2006). Thus, throughout the literature, and unanswered question emerged regarding how the paraeducator provided these instructional supports with little to no support? From an ecocultural perspective, one begins to wonder what everyday experiences and environmental conditions influenced the paraeducator's instructional role. What were the unique, individual characteristics of the paraeducator's development that enable them to execute their responsibilities? Finally, what was truly happening in the instructional activity setting?

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to add to the current body of research that examines how special education paraeducators (SEP) perform the instructional components of their job descriptions. This study specifically aimed to improve our understanding of the complex ecocultural factors that impact the SEP's instruction during the activity setting of instructional interactions, specifically during small group instruction. I conducted a mixed method study that was grounded in eco-cultural theoretical (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Weisner, 2002) and activity theory (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999) frameworks. The study attempted to answer the question: What ecocultural factors, specifically everyday routines, impact an elementary school SEPs' instruction when providing instructional services to students with mild to moderate disabilities? This larger research question was addressed more specifically through the following questions:

1. What are the SEP's everyday routines and how are they related to the SEP led small group instructional activity setting?
2. What are the SEP's espoused goals about instruction and student outcomes and how are those goals related to the SEP's everyday routines?
3. What are the resources (social, cultural, and material) available to SEPs from different socio-economic settings and how are those resources related to the SEP's everyday routines?

The District Context

Dukes Unified School District (DUSD), a fictitious name, was a large, urban school district in California. The district served over 132,000 students who are diverse in ethnic background, socio-economic status, and language proficiency. On average, 12% of the students received special education services (Hehir & Mosqueda, 2007). DUSD also had more than 15,800 employees at district and school levels. The employees ranged from certificated (i.e. teachers and administrators) to classified (i.e. paraeducators and clerks). DUSD's size, diversity and expansive employee population provided unique learning needs of all the educators in the district's employ.

Positionality

Choosing DUSD as the subject of my study was a deliberate decision because over the last six years, I worked as a district school psychologist. My role allowed me to connect with special education teachers and SEPs at various schools throughout the district. As a DUSD employee, I also had knowledge of special education professional development opportunities, understood the district contexts and belief systems, knew district leadership personnel involved with special education issues, and had an insider perspective on how district mandates and special education beliefs impacted special education professionals. Because of my understanding of the district's goals, mandates, and culture, my position allowed me to understand the complex SEP phenomenon in the context of district mandates and supports.

However, my positionality also impacted the study in negative ways. In previous pilot studies with SEPs, I found that working with SEPs who worked at the

same school sites that I did were more hesitant and guarded with their participation in my pilot research studies. The pilot study SEPs viewed me as a person in a position of leadership. Consequently, they responded to my piloted interview questions with an expectation of evaluation or mentorship; thus, my positionality had the potential to skew the data I collected.

Ultimately, my position in the district was both beneficial and disadvantageous to my study. As such, to minimize potential issues with the perception that I was a person in the position of power, I gathered data from schools and personnel who only knew me as a researcher and district employee. These individuals did not have intimate knowledge of my role in the district. I attempted to foster a relationship with participants that were simultaneously confidential, reassuring, and focused on research aims.

Research Design

To investigate the SEP phenomenon using ecocultural and activity theory perspectives, I conducted a mixed methods study that emphasized qualitative research practices. Data collection was implemented in three phases. The first phase used quantitative measures to capture the SEP's demographic characteristics such as level of experience, level of education, gender, age, and time spent on various SEP job duties. Phase One also provided preliminary information about participants who were interested in participating in subsequent phases of the research study. Phase Two drew heavily on ecocultural methodology by using a paraeducator ecocultural

narrative interview (PENI). The purpose of Phase Two was to capture some of the SEP's previous experiences, goals and values, economic and cultural influences, available resources, supports and constraints, and everyday routines. The final phase, Phase Three, was the VEI and video analysis. The purpose of Phase Three was to capture the instructional activity setting to determine the relationship between the SEP's everyday routines and the instructional setting. I conducted a video analysis of the instructional activity setting to determine if there was additional information specific to the activity setting that may have impacted SEP's instructional practice or illustrated ecocultural influences on the instructional activity.

The Sampling Criteria

The study included elementary school SEPs in DUSD. The participating SEPs worked with elementary aged students with mild to moderate disabilities who attended various schools in DUSD. While the students were not the focus of the study, they were included in video recordings of teaching interactions with SEPs. The study took place over a 12-month period which included data collection and data analysis.

There were 117 elementary schools in DUSD. To narrow down the participant pool in a systematic manner, I selected DUSD elementary schools that had grade levels kindergarten through fifth grades (N=83). All 83 schools had SEPs who provided small group instructional services. To minimize potential negative effects due to positionality, I removed two schools because they were school sites that I was assigned to as a school psychologist.

For the remaining 81 schools, I made multiple forms of contact to recruit potential participants. I contacted the schools' principals by email, district mail, phone, in person, and through inquiries made by the schools' site school psychologist on my behalf. Over the course of one month, 11 principals declined participation, while 38 other schools did not respond to my attempts. An additional four schools were removed because the principal reported that the SEPs were not interested in participating in the study. Of the remaining 28 schools, I contacted the SEPs by email, district mail, phone, and in person. I contacted a total of 94 SEPs. These SEPs included individuals that worked with students with mild to moderate or moderate to severe disabilities. Of the 94 individuals, 21 SEPs volunteered to be participants in the study. Sixteen of the potential participants met the criteria of working with students with mild to moderate disabilities in a small group instructional setting. All 16 were asked to be part of the study. However, four individuals were removed from the study due one of the following reasons: (1) one lacked parent consent for students to participate in the research, and (2) three declined completion of all portions of the data collection. Twelve participants remained.

Participant Demographics

The12 participants represented a diverse array of age, education levels, experience, and the grade levels of students that they worked with (see Table 1). Of the volunteers, only one male responded as having interest in participating in the study.

Table 1. Participant demographics.

SEP	Age Range in Years	Experience in years	Education Level	Student Grade Level
Annie	48+	11+	Bachelor	K-3
Gina	48+	11+	Some College	4-5
Louise	48+	11+	Some College	K-3
Nina	48+	11+	Some College	K-3
Debbie	48+	9-10	Some College	K-3
Mary	48+	9-10	Some College	4-5
Gladys	48+	7-8	Some College	K-5
Evelyn	48+	7-8	High School	K-3
Serena	42-47	5-6	Some College	4-5
Daniel	30-35	7-8	High School	K-3
Rosa	30-35	5-6	Some College	4-5
Erin	24-29	0-2	Bachelor	K-3

Participants also represented a sampling of schools from differing socioeconomic statuses. The 12 participants worked from 9 possible schools ranging from 13.5% of the student population identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged to 100% of the student population. Schools that had over 50% of their students identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged were considered lower SES schools; schools under 50% were considered as higher SES schools. There were two schools that I considered as having higher socioeconomic statuses: Upper SES School A and Upper SES School B. Four of the participants were from either Upper SES School A or Upper SES School B. The remaining seven schools constituted Lower SES Schools with eight participants being from those schools (see Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged by SEP and school.

SEP	Upper SES School	Higher SES School %	SEP	Lower SES School	Lower SES School %
Nina	A	13.5%	Erin	C	100%
Evelyn	A	13.5%	Louise	C	100%
Serena	B	48.6%	Rosa	D	100%
Gina	B	48.6%	Mary	E	100%
			Gladys	F	100%
			Annie	G	100%
			Daniel	H	82.1%
			Debbie	I	63.2%

Measures

For this study, I used quantitative and qualitative measures, relying more on qualitative measures such as interviews and video analysis. Each of the measures was designed to address one or more of the posed research questions. I used four different measures. The first measure was a paraeducator demographic survey aimed to gain participant demographic information, time spent on specific job related tasks, and elicit a short description of a typical day, supports, and constraints at the SEP's school site. The second measure was a Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview (PENI) which was a semi-structured interview designed to elicit narratives that provided insight into the participants' everyday routines and ecocultural influences. The third measure was a Video Elicited Interview (VEI) which was a semi-structured interview based on a 15 minute, participant selected segment of video of the participant

providing small group instruction to students. The VEI was designed to elicit responses that addressed the SEP's everyday routines, ecocultural influences, and instructional practice. The final measure was a video analysis of the aforementioned VEI videotape. The primary purpose of the video analysis was to analyze the instructional activity and interactions between the SEP and the students.

Paraeducator Demographic Questionnaire

All members of the SEP group completed a questionnaire that required them to record various aspects of their job duties. The questionnaire was developed based on a previous study using survey data (Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Riggs and Meuller's survey inquired about paraeducator demographic information, including education levels; duties and responsibilities; training and professional development; and job descriptions. Using the Riggs and Meuller's survey categories of demographic information and duties and responsibilities, I developed a short 12 question questionnaire that prospective research participants could complete within 15 minutes. The questionnaire had multiple choice options, check boxes, and short answer responses.

The first section of the questionnaire included questions about the SEPs level of education, type of students they work with, age level of the students they work with, gender, and level of experience. The second portion of the questionnaire focused on the percentage of time spent on various duties and responsibilities that were identified in the current paraeducator literature. Respondents estimated how much time they spend on the following tasks: working with students in small group

instruction, working with students on behavior, administrative tasks, attending meetings, preparing for instruction, assessing students, working with parents, and attending professional development.

Finally, the short answer sections of the SEP demographic questionnaire elicited short responses about everyday routines and resources available that either supported or constrained their abilities to provide instructional services to students. The questions were as follows:

1) Describe the things that make you feel like you are really helping the children? What works? What doesn't?
2) Describe a typical work day at your school.

The paraeducator demographic questionnaire was provided to participants by a paper questionnaire. Participants did have options to complete the questionnaire using online or telephone mediums, but all respondents opted for the paper version.

Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interviews (PENI)

I met with selected participants who represented elementary settings in agreed upon locations to administer the PENI (Nguyen, 2010). The PENI was a researcher developed instrument derived from various sources that drew upon Weisner's Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI). Using samples from previous studies that used an ecocultural framework (Goldenberg, Gallimore, & Reese, 2005; Wishard Guerra, 2009), I crafted several guiding questions to elicit eco-cultural narratives. These questions elicited and identified not only everyday routines, but also reflections upon the factors that helped shape those everyday routines. I asked guiding questions that

were designed to tap into the SEP's goals, professional history, childhood and school histories, institutional influences, and their exposure to alternative ecocultural schemas and models (Goldenberg, Gallimore, & Reese, 2005).

Video Elicitation Interviews (VEI)

In Tobin (1989), researchers used videotape to capture activities within several preschools across three different countries. Tobin used video tape as a means to elicit multiple voices and responses to his own ethnographic observations. Using the videotape during interviews, Tobin elicited rich responses and perceptions from multiple audiences upon the same observed activity. He found that using video to elicit participant responses produced "a series of narratives, and a series of interpretive and evaluative statements" (1989, p. 176).

I used an adapted form of Tobin's method called the video elicited interview (VEI). I videotaped a 15-30 minute teaching interaction led by the SEP with students with mild to moderate disabilities. Using the video, the SEP was asked to select a 10-15 minute segment based on the prompt: "Choose any section of the video that you would like to talk about." Of the 12 selected participants, 11 followed the instructions of the prompt and selected a 10-15 minute segment to discuss; only one SEP refused to self select a segment. Using the participant chosen video excerpt, I conducted a semi-structured interview driven primarily by the SEPs' comments elicited from the video. The SEP that didn't select a segment was still interviewed after the video was taken regarding her instructional practices. I used the VEI guiding questions to elicit responses about the instructional interaction.

Although the VEI was primarily driven by the SEP responses to the video of the teaching activity, the VEI had guiding questions to encourage richer, more detailed narratives. The VEI guiding questions were designed to address one or more of the posed research questions in a conversational, semi-structured manner. The guiding questions focused on eliciting narratives about the SEP's everyday routines, the factors that shaped the routines, and the relationship between those routines and the instructional activity that we were viewing on the video. The VEI also tapped into the instructional strategies and practices that that the SEP used to perform their teaching duties.

Video Analysis

Erickson (2006) addressed videotape as a recording medium to capture activities and phenomenon. He suggested that the "advantage of this kind of footage is that it provides a continuous and relatively comprehensive record of social interaction" (Erickson, 2006, p. 177). I gathered at least 30 minutes of video, per participant, on a SEP led instructional activity with students with mild to moderate disabilities. Although only 10 to 15 minutes of it were used in the VEI, the entire video was subject to video analysis. I captured the various interactions between the SEP and students, their responses to one another, the instructional strategies the SEP used, and the mediating tools that mediated the instructional activity.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place over an eight week period, from April 2010 to June 2010. Data collection was divided into three phases. In Phase One, the paraeducator demographic questionnaire was administered. After the questionnaires were collected, I reviewed the responses and selected 12 SEPs who met the criteria of working with students with mild to moderate disabilities in small group instruction. I contacted them by phone or email to arrange a time and location to conduct, Phase Two, the PENI. I used the paraeducator's questionnaires and PENI guided questions to elicit narrative responses that addressed my research questions. The PENI was conducted in a conversational, semi-structured manner. Also, the PENI was designed to take approximately 60 minutes to administer, but the duration of the PENI was be dependent on how effusive the respondents are to the guiding questions. The duration of the interview ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The paraeducator's responses to the PENI were audio recorded for later transcription and data analysis.

I videotaped a SEP selected 30 minute portion of a SEP led instructional activity at their school. After videotaping the instructional activity, I provided a copy of the video to the SEP to view in a location of their convenience. I prompted them to select a 10-15 minute portion of the video using the prompt. At that time, I arranged a time and location to conduct the video elicited interview (VEI).

During the VEI, the participant and I viewed the SEP selected portion of the video together. During the VEI, I used Inqscribe to annotate when the SEP made references to the video. I also used the VEI guiding questions throughout the interview

to elicit narrative responses that addressed my research questions. The VEI was conducted in a conversational, semi-structured manner primarily driven by the SEP's responses and reactions to the videotaped excerpt of their teaching. Although the VEI was designed to take approximately 60 minutes, the actual duration of the VEI varied depending on the participant's loquaciousness. The VEI duration lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. In conjunction with the Inqscribe annotations, the SEP's responses to the VEI were audio taped for later transcription and analysis. The video tape was used for video analysis.

Pilot Testing

All measures were pilot tested with SEPs in the Dukes Unified School District prior to data collection. The pilot testing information was used to inform the format and wording and to determine if the measures were valid in respect to my research design and questions. The pilot participants' responses were not included in data analysis.

Paraeducator Demographic Questionnaire

The paraeducator demographic questionnaire was piloted in October 2009 through the online medium with six SEPs. The pilot questionnaire has been helpful in revealing how much time is spent on job duties and talking about job duties, but it did not provide a more descriptive and detailed exploration of how SEPs performed those duties on any given day. Even the short answer responses to describe the educators' typical day did not prove to be very helpful in providing descriptive and meaningful

detail to how educators execute their job responsibilities. The short answer responses read more like a list or schedule rather than capturing the nuances of the day, who and how SEPs interacted with students or other educators, or how SEPs spent their time performing job tasks. Consequently, the paraeducator demographic questionnaire was revised to could include more qualitative questions that had the potential tap into more descriptions about how SEPs perform their various job duties. Additional measures were added to the research design: follow up interviews such as the PENI and VEI that would focus on a more narrative and qualitative exploration of the educators' job requirements, how they make meaning of their responsibilities, and how they execute their job duties.

Finally, in administering the pilot study, I encountered an unforeseen obstacle. The pilot questionnaire was developed as an online questionnaire that could be accessed by participant emails. I had difficulty accessing SEPs' valid email addresses that they would actually use to complete the online questionnaires. As a result the paraeducator demographic questionnaire was revised to broaden the various mediums of administration (paper and telephone) to increase the likelihood of responses.

Video Elicitation Interview (VEI)

The VEI was piloted in February 2009 with one SEP who worked with a student with mild to moderate disabilities. The video was taken to capture 30 minutes of a SEP led instructional activity. The SEP chose a 15 minute segment of the video to discuss with the researcher when given the prompt, "Choose any 15 minute section of the video that you want to talk about." The VEI was administered in a

conversational and semi structured interview format. No guiding questions were developed before conducting the interview.

Through the pilot of the VEI, I found the video elicitation technique to be very fruitful in getting the SEP to talk about instruction. But, given the open ended nature of the interview, I found holes in my VEI questions. All of the questions and prompts were based off of the informant's responses. With the lack of guiding questions, the questions were limiting. The questions were either closed ended; they were merely clarifying questions; or they were leading the informant to answer in specific ways.

The pilot study provided valuable information on how to conduct the VEI more effectively for the current study. After reviewing the transcript of the pilot, I captured some of the questions I posed, calibrated them with my research questions, and reworded them in a manner that would elicit a richer narrative connected my specific research questions. In addition, I used the language of the SEP to reinforce my questions in a more approachable, understandable manner that was tailored to SEPs.

Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview (PENI)

The PENI was piloted with an elementary school SEP in March 2010. The PENI pilot was conducted in a conversational, semi-structured manner. During the analysis of the PENI pilot response, I looked for flaws in the measurement tool itself, specifically the effectiveness of the guiding questions to elicit responses and address my research questions. Results from my PENI pilot informed me that my guiding questions were effective in eliciting participant responses. The questions were simultaneously open ended enough allow a conversational interview style that was

open to a variety of responses, while structured enough to continue addressing my research questions. Consequently, the PENI did not need additional revision.

Data Analysis Procedures

Drawing on Engestrom, Miettinen, and Punamaki (1999), Bronfenbrenner (1976), Weisner (1997, 2002), I developed a priori codes to apply a deductive analytic approach (Brenner, 2006) to the study. The a priori codes guided not only the crafting of my measurement tools, but also the analysis of the data gathered from those tools. The codes were as follows: Goals & Beliefs; Everyday Routines; History; Institutional Factors; Exposure to alternative cultural schemas; Instructional Practice; Division of Labor, and Resources. Since the paraeducator phenomenon has never been studied from ecocultural or activity theory perspectives, I anticipated that additional codes would arise; I allowed for inductive approaches in the form of emerging codes and included them in the data analysis process as they unveiled themselves. Emergent codes that arose through the data analysis were Assessment; Training; Decision Making; Supports; and Challenges.

Paraeducator Demographic Questionnaire

The paraeducator demographic questionnaire was analyzed using a combination of statistical and qualitative analysis. For the statistical analysis, I used descriptive statistical measures to describe the SEPs who chose to participate in the research. The analysis included frequency counts number of participants, gender, level of education, and levels of experience.

For the short answer responses, I used responses in two ways. The first way was to provide a basis to start the PENI. By using the SEPs' own responses, I hoped to provide a nonthreatening basis to begin the interview using the SEPs' own words. The second way I used the short answer responses was as qualitative data that coded and included in my analysis of the PENI, VEI, and video analysis.

Interviews

I audio recorded all interviews, PENI and VEI, and transcribed the talk. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe various ways to analyze interview data, including coding and annotating. I reviewed the interview data multiple times and analyzed them multiple ways. I applied deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis by using a priori and emerging codes.

In my first level of analysis of the interview data, I conducted a content analysis. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe content analysis as a way to systematically describe the content of the communication. Kvale and Brinkman suggest that "the complete interview is read through to get a sense of the whole" (2009. P. 205). I read through the interview to get a sense of the data. But, I continued to read through the transcripts multiple times and followed it with writing a brief annotation of my impressions of the interviews. I attempted to provide initial impressions of the data based on my research questions.

In my second analysis of the interview data, I coded the data using my a priori codes. As I coded, I left room for an inductive approach to data analysis where the data provided me with emergent codes. Using a within case analysis method, I used

the deductive and inductive approach to code and compare the SEP's responses in their respective PENI and VEI.

In my third analysis of the interview data, I did a cross case comparison by comparing my annotations and codes across all twelve SEPs' PENIs and VEIs. To make meaning of my data, annotations, and codes, I conducted frequency counts of coding references. I used the coding reference frequencies for statistical analysis to determine if there were trends or differences across cases in the number of code references. I used measures of central tendency to describe the references. I also compared means (ANOVA) to determine if there were statistically significant differences across cases in regards to the SEPs' code references.

Video Analysis

Using 15-30 minute video recording of a SEP led instructional activity, I analyzed the video for trends in SEP and student actions within the instructional activity. Erickson (2006) describes this approach as an analysis of "social interaction" (p. 181). Based on activity theory, I looked for how the SEPs and students interacted within the activity setting of instruction. Again, drawing on my a priori codes as well as leaving room for additional codes to emerge, I coded and annotated the video as it connected to my research questions.

In terms of more specific procedures, I followed Erickson's (2006) video analysis guideline. One type of analysis was a "whole to part, or inductive approach" (Erickson, 2006, p. 183) which was broken down into additional analysis steps. In Step One, I reviewed the video in its entirety without stopping. I wrote annotations

noting verbal and nonverbal phenomenon that were tied to my research questions and theoretical approaches.

In Step Two, I reviewed the video again, this time stopping at the sections that the SEP referred to in the VEI. I also stopped at sections where I noticed natural shifts in the interactions between the SEP and the students. These natural shifts were identified as changes in tasks, teaching strategies, or student responses.

In Step Three, I chose an "episode of interest" (Erickson, 2006, p. 184). This episode corresponded to the SEPs' chosen selection in the VEI; the SEP selected episode allowed me to triangulate the VEI data with the video analysis data. While watching the episode of interest, I completed frequency counts on specific interactions: the number of times that an SEP gave praise or asked a question.

Frequencies were determined by denoting praise or questioning interactions. In Mehan's (1976) work on interactional sequences that occur between teachers and students, he described an interaction sequence of "initiation, reply and evaluation." Mehan illustrated that at its most basic level, teachers initiated an interaction, typically in the form of a question. The student would then respond or "reply" to the initiation. In Mehan's work, the response would be verbal. The teacher would then evaluate the student's response. The sequence of initiation, reply, and evaluation was considered one interaction.

With the episode of interest for this study, I adapted Mehan's (1979) framework to calculate frequency interactions for when the SEP provided praise, termed praised interaction, and when the SEP evaluated a student's learning through questioning,

termed questioning interaction. For example, with questioning, one questioning interaction was recorded per student action when a SEP initiated a question to a student and then the student responded, and then the SEP evaluated that response. In contrast to Mehan (1979), the student's response was not limited to a verbal response. The student's response could either be verbal, nonverbal (nodding head), or by performing a task (writing an answer down on a worksheet). If the SEP followed the sequence of initiation, response, and evaluation, it was counted as one frequency of a questioning interaction, regardless of how many questions were asked during the initiation phase of the sequence. The same premise was applied to praise interactions. The SEP would initiate the interaction by asking a question, gesturing, or giving directions. The student would respond. And the SEP would evaluate the response. The only difference with praise interactions versus questioning interactions was that the evaluation portion of the interaction sequence always ended in praise. The praise could either be verbal or nonverbal.

In the final step, Step Four, I conducted a cross case comparison of the videos to determine the typicality or atypicality of the instances I transcribed, coded, counted, and annotated. I looked for trends across the videos and attempted to triangulate the video analysis with the interview and questionnaire data. Using descriptive statistical analysis and ANOVA, I conducted quantitative analyses of the frequencies of praise and questioning interactions to determine if there were any significant differences.

CHAPTER IV: EVERYDAY ROUTINES AND THE GOALS THAT FUEL THEM

Weisner (2002) discusses ecocultural theory in terms of the influences of everyday routines on an individual's development. He suggests that an individual's daily experiences and activities shape their development. Weisner (1997) believes that human development is a result of the things that they experience and the routines and activities they engage in. Thus, when investigating a special education paraeducator's (SEP) development as paraeducators, an examination of their everyday routines provides insight into their growth as paraeducators and their understanding of their roles and duties. For the SEPs in this study, analysis of the SEPs' questionnaires, interviews, and instructional activity revealed that there were four types of everyday routines that they engaged in: Instructional Routines, Assessment Routines, Behavior Management Routines, and Communication Routines.

Everyday routines are the observable actions that individuals engage in while participating in an activity. Weisner (2002) also suggests that a closer examination of everyday routines will reveal the goals that fuel them. Weisner believes that a deeper investigation of those everyday routines uncover an individual's goals and values that underlie the everyday routines they enact during an activity setting (Weisner, 1997). With the SEPs in this study, their everyday routines stemmed from their goals about instruction and their desires for student outcomes. They hoped that students would acquire basic academic skills, make progress towards those academic objectives, and

build their self esteem. Across multiple settings, the SEPs were engaging in various routines to meet academic, progress, and self esteem goals (see Figure 6).

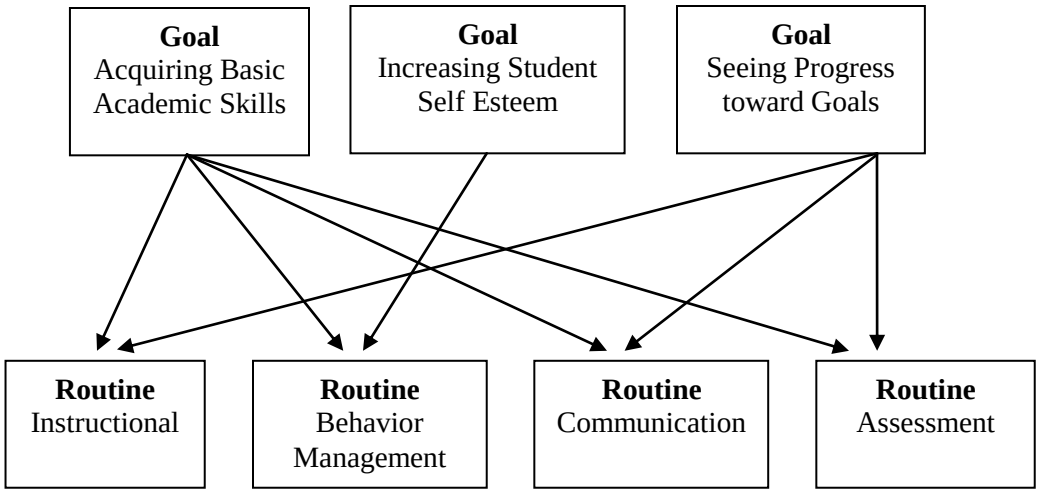


Figure 6. The connection between goals and everyday routines.

Method of Analysis

I reviewed the questionnaires, Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview (PENI), Video Elicited Interview (VEI), video of the instructional interaction looking for all the different everyday routines that SEPs engage in within and across cases. Everyday routine codes were defined as activities and actions that SEPs engaged in on a daily or weekly basis. I developed a list of a variety of routines. The list enabled me to complete an across case analysis.

To determine the SEPs' goals, I coded the aforementioned data sets looking for goals. Goals were defined as the paraeducator's goals for themselves and for the students they work with. This included the motivations and rationales behind why they

perform certain practices and activities and the SEPs' underlying beliefs about teaching, learning, job duties, and responsibilities. The SEPs were fairly explicit by stating things like, "That's my goal" or "That's my focus" to indicate that they were discussing their goals. Also, the SEPs clearly articulated goals based on the guiding questions that the researcher posed. These guiding questions were designed to elicit information about the SEPs goals. On a more implicit level, SEPs suggested additional goals by describing their own belief systems. For example, they would state things such as: "I believe" or "I think it's important." Thus, I targeted the language and the specific responses to the guiding questions to begin analyzing and identifying the SEPs' goals.

In the same fashion as my analysis of the SEPs' everyday routines, I conducted within case and across case analyses. Specifically, I did a frequency count of the emerging codes to determine how many times these codes emerged from the transcript. Once the most prevalent codes were found, I compared the SEPs' goal references to my previous analysis on everyday routines to determine how the goals and the everyday routines were related. I determined how the goals were enacted in the SEPs' everyday routines.

To analyze the goal enactment further, I returned to the SEPs' videos of the instructional activity. In reviewing each 15 minute episode of interest (Erickson, 2006) I determined how the instructional and student outcome goals were enacted in the observable routines that the video afforded. I conducted frequency counts on specific routines such as praise routines and questioning routines. The frequency counts were

determined using an adaptation of Mehan's (1976) model of interaction: "initiation, response, evaluation." Using the frequency counts, I conducted statistical analyses through comparison of measures of central tendency. I compared the frequency of praise and questioning routines between SEPs that espoused specific goals and compared the frequencies to those SEPs did not espouse the goal.

Instructional Routines

All of the SEPs in the study described that they engaged in providing instruction to students. They described this instruction using words such as teaching, assisting, supporting or tutoring. Regardless of the words that they used to describe their instruction, they all engaged in providing instructional services. The SEPs demonstrated their instructional routines on a daily basis. They provided instruction on a variety of subjects such as reading, math, and writing.

The most prevalent subject taught was reading. All of the SEPs discussed that they helped students with reading. For example, in Rosa's case, reading was the focus of all of her instruction. Fourth and fifth grade special education students came to Rosa's classroom and they worked on reading fluency daily. Rosa's instructional routines revolved around the reading fluency program.

> ***Rosa (PENI)***: The program is, they, there's a paragraph and they read. The set up is that they have, the title, say the first one is "colors". And there's a picture of some crayons and then it has three key words. And then, underneath it, three little lines where you are supposed to write a prediction. I go over the key words and then they read the paragraph. They are timed for a minute. Wherever they stop, I stop and I count the words and I minus how many they got wrong. Then, there's this CD that's played. The person reads to them. She reads it three times. After that, they read it over again. Usually they get at least 10 words more and their fluency is much better.

In Evelyn's case, she didn't use a scripted program to teach reading. However, she did demonstrate a specific set of instructional routines whenever she taught reading. Evelyn described how she used strategies that helped student decode unfamiliar words, read with expression, comprehend the text, use pictures to increase their comprehension, and visualize the text. In her work with a third grade student, Evelyn exhibited all of these instructional routines and discussed them later in her video elicited interview (VEI).

> ***Evelyn (VEI)***: It seemed like the reading contained so much more than just reading the book. It was explaining things. It was understanding if he knew what the concepts meant. It asked him to think about what he saw in the picture and explain it to me. He could comprehend the book much better by the end of it. I made him do it verbally because he could be thinking a lot of things that I wouldn't normally know, if I didn't stop and ask questions. I like to teach reading this way, because a lot of times my students don't understand what the concept is.

The SEPs in this study worked with students across multiple settings, multiple grades, and multiple subject areas. Consequently, their instructional routines provided a wide breadth of instructional routines (see Table 3).

Table 3. Examples of instructional routines.

Reading	**Writing**	**Math**	**General Instruction**
Connecting Sounds to the Alphabet	Helping Students Illustrate their Writing	Teaching Even and Odd number concepts	Choral Response
Connecting Sounds to Tangible Items	Reminding students to use appropriate spacing	Illustrating how to Calculate Problems	Repetition
Using a Phonics Program	Counting Words for Writing Fluency	Illustrating Place Value	Asking Questions
Using Phonics Flash Cards	Teaching Spelling Rules	Playing Math Games	Showing Visuals
Teaching Sight Words	Helping Students Formulate Complete Sentences	Using Math Manipulatives for Adding and Subtracting	Modeling
Connecting Pictures to Comprehension of Text	Helping Students Expand on Sentences	Identifying Key Words in a Word Problem	Activating Background Knowledge
Teaching the Meaning of Vocabulary	Reminding Students of Appropriate Grammar and Punctuation	Using Math Manipulatives for one to one correspondence	Using interactive games

Assessment Routines

All of the SEPs engaged in some form of assessment routine on a daily basis. These assessment routine was either formal or informal. When SEPs demonstrated assessment routines, they asked questions, observed student work, listened to students' responses, observed student behaviors, provided formal assessments, and documented student progress. The assessment routines provided the SEP with information to adjust their instructional routine as needed.

In Nina's case, she did informal assessment daily and throughout her instructional interaction. She observed her second grade student's behavior, looked at the student's written responses, listened to her student's oral responses, and observed how her student responded to specific tasks. Her assessment routine assisted her in determining what instructional routine was needed to help the student access the instructional content.

> ***Nina (PENI)***: [My student] reads very well. Her comprehension isn't real good. We do [a computer based reading program]. She loves to read the story but she doesn't want to answer the questions. And that really panics her [begins mock hyperventilating]. She breathes real hard. I just sit there and we'll read the story together. And then she will actually accept the fact that she has to answer the questions. And if she doesn't do it the first time, doesn't get at least 4 out of 5 answers, we do it again immediately. I don't want her to scramble around and pick different stories and then forget what she actually read the first time. We repeat. We repeat. We repeat. [I modify things] if it's not working for her. Modifying and going back.

Nina's story is not an isolated one. Annie worked with more than one student in the area of math. Her math group consisted of four to five, second grade students. During the math activity, Annie used her assessment routine of observing how students responded, asking questions, and drawing on her previous observations of what the students understood to inform which instructional routine she would employ. Annie adjusted her instructional based on her assessment of the students' performance and skills in her instructional groups. In Annie's instructional interaction, she taught the students the difference between even and odd numbers. Based on her previous experiences with the students and observing how they progressed with math concepts, Annie made conscious decisions on how to approach the content. Her assessment of students informed her that they would get confused if she started teaching even and

odd concepts by beginning with the number one. When Annie started with the number two, and then returned to the number one, she observed how the students responded. Annie's assessment routine of observation enabled her to determine that her students understood the concept.

> ***Annie (VEI)***: The one thing though is that I did backtrack on purpose. I didn't know how to do the 10 to make it a zero. The one, I skipped that on purpose. If I'm going to start talking partners, I'm not going to start with one because they weren't going to get it. So I started with two on purpose. I know that's backwards. But they totally got it. When I went back, well where is one? Where does it belong? They got that. The 10 was hard. But we've talked about it. They have done double digit addition before. So they do know ones place and tens place. But I knew that they would understand 10 because I had a 10 frame. I knew they would understand zero. Zero's too hard.

Both Annie and Nina demonstrated that SEPs used informal assessments as part of their assessment routines. Their informal assessment routines allowed them to determine if their students understood the concept being taught and then adjusted their instructional routine accordingly. Four out of 12 SEPs used more formal assessment routines. Mary tested fourth and fifth grade students for her supervising teacher. These tests were used to inform the students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals and progress towards those goals. Mary's formal assessment routines were part of her weekly schedule of tasks.

> ***Mary (PENI)***: I do a lot of testing. I do all the basic testing. [My teacher] does testing too. But, I do a lot of testing. Basically, in fact, this one child [shows researcher a portfolio of assessments], I just started his testing. What [my teacher] does, she'll tell me, "Mary, this month these are the kids that need to be done this month." So, this is what I do for [my teacher] and then I give it to her. And she goes from there. This is what she uses in her meetings.

The other three SEPs did formal testing that was tied to their instructional routine. The programs that they used to provide instructional services also allotted for

assessment. Some of these assessments involved counting the number of words that a student read per minute, taking a spelling test, or reading a list of sight words organized by reading level.

Behavior Management Routine

All of the SEPs engaged in behavior management routines. Behavior management routines included monitoring student behaviors to keep students on task, attending to the teacher's instruction, completing work, increasing motivation to complete tasks, increasing appropriate behaviors, and increasing self esteem through praise. The behavior management routines included spending more time helping student focused, stay on task, and monitoring behavior. For example, when Rosa supported a fourth grade student by checking in on him to make sure that he was on task and had the appropriate materials.

> ***Rosa (PENI)***: I would go and check up on him. I'd go peek in [the classroom] and [the teacher would say], "He's fine." And I would sometimes go in there and just look out in the back and watch him do the stuff that some of the teachers would expect. See if he has his paper out. And So, I'm just watching, making sure.

There was a relationship between the SEPs' instructional, assessment, and behavior routines. The SEPs used their assessment routine of observation and asking questions to determine if their students were on task and engaged in the learning. If they were not engaged, the SEPs adjusted their instructional routines to bring the student back to the lesson. For example, Mary articulated the connections among instructional, assessment, and behavior routines by describing that she watched how her fourth and fifth grade students responded to the lesson and adjusted her teaching.

> ***Mary (VEI)***: I want to make sure that they are looking at me, that all eyes are on me
> ***Interviewer***: Why is that?
> ***Mary***: I just want to make sure that they are focused.

If Mary determined that the students were not focused, she redirected them to look at her. Then she repeated the information, and then she followed up by asking the students to repeat the information to her.

In Daniel's case, he used a behavior management system throughout the instructional activity for his group of first and second grade students. The system was based on praise and rewarding students with "stars" for participating in the lesson, completing assignments, and answering questions correctly. Daniel used the star system as part of his behavior management routine to increase student engagement in the lesson and motivation.

> ***Daniel (VEI)***: the reason why I think that they are so going is because of the star chart that I have. I think it's really good. It's a really good motivator. Most of the stuff I've come to them with, they are all on board with it. They're into it. I try to make it as fun as possible. I like to reiterate with my rewards chart thing, is you do something good, something positive that you are doing, why don't you get a reward for it?

All of the SEPs used praise as part of their behavior management routines as well. They responded to student responses, both verbal and nonverbal, with some form of praise. The SEPs praise could come in confirming a correct answer, providing words of praise such as "good job," or using nonverbal praise such as giving a "high five."

Communication Routines

All of the SEPs engaged in a communication routine. These routines include collaborating and communicating with supervising teachers. The communication

routine could be formal or informal. In the formal manner, SEPs used documentation of student progress, collaboration meetings, and lesson plans for communication with their supervisors. They also used informal means such as writing notes on worksheets and brief conversations during break times or transitions. Communication routines allowed SEPs to communicate with supervising teachers about the instructional, assessment, and behavior management routines that the SEPs were engaging in.

Five out of 12 SEPs engaged in more formal communication routines. Three of the four SEPs used documentation procedures to communicate with their supervisors. The SEPs used some form of a log book to document student progress towards goals. In Evelyn's case, she initiated a log book as a form of communication between her and her supervisors. The log book had the student's reading levels, lists of books she read with them, spelling lists, work samples, a behavior chart, and anecdotal notes.

> ***Evelyn (VEI)***: I talk to my teachers a lot about my students. I want them to know what's going on. Not only do I keep a log on each of them, when I think that something is really important has happened and is really good, I make sure they know that. Or if I'm struggling in an area with them, I make sure that they totally know that.

Like Evelyn, Mary also kept a teaching long. But, her log was initiated by her supervising teacher. Mary used the log to indicate which lessons she covered with students and which lessons were next. Mary also logged any behaviors that she wanted to discuss with the teacher at a later time.

> ***Mary (PENI)***: I also write on here, a teaching log every day. When I go to each class, this morning I went here. These are the kids that I saw. We started on lesson six and we finish lesson seven and we're going to start tomorrow lesson eight. And I put [that the students] had a hard time focusing. If we notice a trend or if they are absent. I put on there, "Absent." I have to watch out for things like that.
> ***Interviewer***: Is this log something you came up with?

> ***Mary***: She gave it to me.
> ***Interviewer***: [Your teacher] gave it to you?
> ***Mary***: So, if she needs to look in there; this is my schedule right here.

Annie and Gladys were the only two SEPs who received lesson plans or participated in collaboration meetings with their supervisors, respectively. The supervising teachers provided lesson plans; however, the data from questionnaire and interviews did not reveal who initiated the collaboration meetings, the supervising teacher or the SEP. The data did reveal that SEPs and their supervising teachers engaged in formal communication routines on a weekly basis. Annie received weekly lessons that she reviewed and discussed with her teacher. Gladys also met with her supervising teacher weekly to discuss lesson plans, student progress, and plan future lessons together.

Finally, all of the SEPs identified that they engaged in informal communication routines. They discussed students and communicated about instruction using notes or brief conversations during the instructional day. Four out of 12 of the SEPs stated in their interviews that the supervising teacher initiated the communication routine. For example, in Serena's case, per her teacher's request, per teacher request, Serena and the teacher kept notes on what they were doing with the students during the instructional interaction. Or, the teacher provided Serena with notes on the lesson to prepare her for the upcoming instructional activity. Serena described this communication routine:

> ***Serena (PENI)***: We do our notes and keep our eye on the time. Try and get everything done before it's time to go. If they have a worksheet to do that day, we'll guide them on what they need to do on the worksheet. Generally, they give me to use the teacher's manual. So, the teacher will let me know, "We're in this section" but point out to me in the lesson on the side. [My teacher] gets my notes. We try and keep notes on what kind of words they stumbled on. And then she'll read my notes.

Serena also interacted with her teacher through brief conversations during transition times.

> ***Interviewer (VEI)***: Do you get to share with her right after or that week of how your group is doing?
> ***Serena***: Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. Sometimes we have a minute or two to talk about [the groups]. But other times, I'm leaving so she'll see my notes. But if there's something in particular, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, you won't believe what so and so said." I'll share that with her, but the kids are transitioning at that time.

Four out of 12 of the SEPs were the primary initiators of communication with their supervising teachers. As stated earlier, in Evelyn's case, she kept a documentation log that recorded all of the activities, assessments, and behavior information on the students that she worked with. During her description of the log, Evelyn revealed that she initiated the log.

> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** The resource teacher may want to see what I'm seeing or may question me about something. I can open my book and say this is what it is. These are the scores…it's always open to my teachers.
> ***Interviewer:*** So you initiated it, not your teacher?
> ***Evelyn:*** Yes. I did

Communication routines were interwoven throughout the SEPs' day. The communications could be formal or informal. Most of the communications were related to the students' progress during the instructional interaction: what they are working on, how they responded to instruction, what materials were used, and how they behaved. These communications also helped guide the teacher's and the SEP's instructional routine.

Goals for Instruction

SEPs identified that they had academic goals for their students. The academic goals varied depending on the subject that students were learning. Rosa phrased the ultimate academic goal best when she described how SEPs aimed to help their students attain grade level standards, "We all want our kids to be at grade level. That would be the ideal goal for our kids to do that ….that's basically it, to be at grade level" (Rosa, PENI). Ironically, in practice, the academic goals tended to be at the basic levels of content rather than grade level appropriate. The academic goals focused on skills such as reading fluency, reading decoding, vocabulary, memory, and legibility of writing. More generally, SEPs in this study wanted students to have basic academic skills. For example, although writing is a complex process that incorporates a variety of skills, Nina's goal for her student was focused on the lower levels of writing, actual spacing and letter formation: "We really work on the spacing and the height of her letters. Staying on the lines. Not being all over the place" (Nina, VEI). Similarly, reading is just as complex as written language, but most of the SEPs that taught reading tended to teach reading at the basic levels of reading fluency and decoding. For instance, Mary described how she wanted her students to differentiate between the different consonant sounds:

> ***Mary (VEI)***: Right now, they [the reading program] are not teaching them both of the sounds of the "c" or the "g". They only picked the "k" sound of the "c". They are not doing that. They just do those sounds. In the [another] program, they had a program where the "c" rule and the "g" rule. They could tell when to use the "k" sound and when to use the "s" sound just by looking at the next vowel.

The SEP's discussion about students, their reports provided many more examples of their academic focuses for students (see Table 4).

Table 4. Examples of academic goals.

Fluency	Decoding	Basic Skills
Interviewer (PENI): What do they [teachers] believe the focus of the program is? Rosa: Fluency. That's what I was telling them.…That's what the whole thing is, fluency right here.	Evelyn (VEI): Even though he's not up to that reading level, I still try to show him that you can make smaller words out of a bigger word so you can learn to recognize a smaller word in a bigger word. And then you can maybe get the context of it.	Louise (PENI): My goals are to get them the basic. When they come in and they are struggling with sight words…" it, the, on, when, they." I feel like if you can get them to do that, that's a goal for me.
Memory	**Vocabulary**	**Writing**
Mary (VEI): I take a little bit from a program …that had to do with remembering and picturing. Making a picture in your mind.…I want them to make a picture in their mind before they write it because I think that's really important... I think it would really benefit that boy that is having a memory problem.... Look at a picture and try to remember. We even put colors for their memory. It helps them with their memory.	Mary (VEI): The meaning of the words is not part of the program. But they are learning words that are not 2nd grade words. They are little bit higher.…I just kind of throw [the definition] in real quick about what they mean too. Like today, we had "Exit…."[but] we were really looking at the sounds and looking at that "e"	Daniel (VEI): Right now, with doing their sentences, because we're getting into writing. I just want them to get familiarized with the sentence. Beginning of the year, we were just doing "I like to play. I can play." It's like simple, simple words. Now, we're getting into more of elaboration of more. Let me know more…I just want them to really give complete simple sentences that make sense right now.

Through interviews, the SEPs articulated that they had academic goals for students. Analysis of the video of the SEPs instruction revealed that these goals were enacted in their small group instructional setting through the SEPs use of instructional routines. For instance, using a scripted program, Daniel illustrated his espoused goals of understanding basic phonics rules during his teaching of how the "silent e" affects how word should be read. The program was scripted in how you delivered the phonics and spelling lesson. However, during the observed instructional interaction, Daniel moved away from the lesson script to incorporate more repetition of the phonics rule, review words that used the "silent e" rule, and reviewed the rule repeatedly. He described his purpose in doing the repetition is as follows:

> ***Daniel (VEI)***: I want to be really adamant about making sure that they get it. Because if I just go 1-10 and say all the words, write it, write it. Don't go over it. And then they take the test. I don't want to be like a simple spelling test with this. And that's what it is really. You want them to come out of it, to make sure they know how to spell the word. I don't want to do that. I want to make sure that they know what the sound is. What sounds are in it. When to use "e" and all that stuff. Then they can write it. Hopefully they know the sounds and to write it.
> ***Interviewer***: They repeat.
> ***Daniel***: When we get down to 5 or something, I want them to repeat the words that they did so that they remember it.

Like Daniel, Mary was provided with a scripted phonics program. The program served as the basis for Mary's instructional routines. The program included reading words that use specific phonics rules, such as reading short vowel sounds. As part of the program, students were required to read text, read a sentence that used several words that followed the phonics rule, wrote sentences, and read "challenge" words. Challenge words were words that were provided at the end of the lesson that were above the students' grade levels, but still used the phonics rules. For instance, when

working on the short “u” sound, the majority of the words were single syllable words such as “hug.” The challenge word was “submit.” During the interviews, Mary described this program and illustrated that the program’s focus was phonics; however, she felt that students should also understand the meaning of the words.

> ***Interviewer (VEI)***: If the focus is on the sounds, why do you feel the need to give the meaning?
> ***Mary***: I just throw it in real quick just so they know. I mean, "exit" they have probably seen the word. What does that mean? We did that word but we don't know what it means? Maybe it'll stick, maybe it won't. Like the challenge words, I told them what those meant. And those, they take home. I told them what this means. Some of their parents probably don't even know. This way, if your mom doesn't know what this word means, you can tell her. Why not tell them the meaning? It only takes a little bit of time.

Analysis of the teaching interaction revealed that Mary enacted her goals of providing the meaning behind words through instructional routines. For example, she was observed to show students the words, “Habit and Submit.” Upon showing it to the students, she stated, “You know what, I didn’t tell you what these [words] mean. Habit means doing things over and over. Sometimes they are good habits. Sometimes they are bad habits. And, submit is to turn something in” (Mary, Video).

Evelyn worked with a student daily on reading, writing, and math. When describing her goals for the student, one goal was about how to read out loud with inflection and excitement. She reported:

> ***Evelyn (VEI)***: I want them to be excited about what they are reading. I also want them to see that if someone is talking in the book. They don't just talk blandly. They are either happy, or excited, or sad. Or they have some emotion as to the person. I teach them to read with excitement or some kind of inflection. They are saying, “Oh, ok. I can get into this book because they talk just like me. Or, I'm excited about this too.” When you read something like this, you can be excited when you are reading it.

Evelyn's basic academic goal of adding expression to oral reading was enacted in the teaching interaction when she and the student were reading a text. In the video, the student said, "I know" in a monotone voice. Evelyn used instructional routines such as drawing his attention to the pictures and exaggerating her voice by saying, "He jumped up and said, 'I know I know!'You have to read with excitement" (Evelyn, Video). The student reread and placed an emphasis on his words to show the excitement. Evelyn praised him. She went on to illustrate how punctuation marks, specifically the exclamation mark, indicate where to read with excitement.

All of the SEPs articulated that they had academic goals for their students. These goals were focused on basic skills such as learning phonics rules, reading with expression, and writing legibly. In order to meet these goals, the SEPs exhibited their instructional routines that matched the content area, the student's needs, and the setting. They also used assessment routines to determine if their instructional routines were working. If the SEPs assessment indicates that the student doesn't understand the concepts, they modified their instructional routines.

Goals for Student Outcomes

All of the SEPs identified goals tied to student outcomes. The SEPs indicated that they wanted to see students meet their academic goals; they desired to see that their students made progress towards the student's goals. In addition, SEPs also indicated that students needed to feel confident about their skills and their abilities. They articulated goals about increasing students' self esteem.

Seeing Progress

Half of the SEPs found it motivating to see growth and progress in their students; they claimed that the growth was what kept them coming back year after year. SEPs found that being paraeducators was rewarding when they could see how their students grew and learned while in the SEPs' care. Their descriptions relayed an implicit goal of wanting their students to improve in their areas of weakness. Mary and Gladys shared their personal experiences of seeing growth in their students.

> ***Mary (PENI)***: I know that they are learning. I know that there's something that I'm teaching them that's going to stick with them. Yesterday I had a child. I've been with him since he was in kindergarten. Now he's in 4th grade. I see him growing and growing and growing. I know that they're learning.

> ***Gladys (PENI)***: When I see a growth, I feel like I've done something. When it's here [in my own classroom], and I can actually, really see the growth. [The teachers] tell me, "Hey you know what, you're working on so and so and he's now proficient." I have that 4th grader that's reading at 2nd grade level, now he's at 3.5.

However when comparing those SEPs who espoused goals of seeing progress versus those who did not, there did not to appear to be any differences in their instructional and assessment routines. Close scrutiny of assessment routines during the video of the instructional interaction supported the fact that there were no distinctions between the two groups. Ultimately, regardless of whether or not the SEPs espoused to see progress in their students, SEPs demonstrated assessment routines. Assessment routines included observation of student behavior and academic responses, and asking questions and evaluating the response.

Assessment Routine: Observations

When observing the six SEPs who espoused that they wanted to see progress during their instructional interaction and comparing that interaction with their narratives; the SEPs engaged in a variety of student assessment routines in order to determine whether or not their students were making progress. In Debbie's case, she was asked on the questionnaire: "What works?" She responded with: "I feel like I am helping when I see progress in the children." This simple sentence illustrated what half of the SEPs desired for student outcomes. Debbie desired to see progress in her student; in turn, the progress indicated that she is effective at her job. The idea was carried through into her VEI and observably enacted in the video. Debbie engaged in a variety of assessment routines that enabled her to determine whether or not her students were making progress. One of these routines was to observe the student. The observation was based on how a student responded to a particular direction, task, or instructional concept. Debbie watched carefully as students completed worksheets, worked out math problems on their white boards, or how they generally responded to the instructional task. Depending on what she observed, Debbie redirected students.

> ***Video***: Debbie observes students as they are completing math assignment on word problems. She looks at a student's paper.
> Student: It shows you the price
> ***Debbie***: It shows you the price? [Takes her pen and points to the price on the student's paper.] Subtract. Do step one. Do one step at a time. [Observes student as the student begins the assignment. Student stops].
> ***Debbie***: Ok. Come on. [Taps her pen on the table. Starts to read the problem.] Carrie has 8.
> ***Student***: Carrie has $8.50. She buys a toy for $4.00. And her grandpa gives him $2.45. How much money does Carrie have now?
> ***Debbie***: Ok. [Observes that student takes a long pause.] What's the first step?

In the aforementioned excerpt, Debbie used observation. Through observation, she identified whether or not a student was completing the assignment correctly. These types of observations were identified in the other five SEPs who identified that they wanted to see progress and growth in their students. All six SEPs who espoused goals of seeing progress clearly watched their students carefully looking for how they responded to directions or completed tasks. Through observations, the SEPs assessed whether or not the students understood the instructional concept and adjusted their teaching according to what they were observing.

But, there did not appear to be a difference in assessment routines for individuals that espoused goals of seeing progress in comparison to those who did not espouse the goal. Annie, an SEP who did not espouse that she aimed to see student progress, also used observations in her instructional interaction. In the video of her instructional interaction, Annie taught her second grade students the difference between odd and even numbers. She used worksheets, manipulatives, graphic organizers, and white boards. Through observation, Annie assessed how the students responded to the given tasks using the aforementioned items. For example, students were asked to replicate a given number using cubes. The cubes were placed on a graphic organizer that forced the numbers to be represented in pairs. Annie gave the students a number, and then observed if they could correctly place the cubes in appropriate pairs. Based on this observation, Annie assessed whether or not the students understood that cubes that had a pair or partner represented an even number.

In all of the six SEPs who did not espouse that seeing progress was one of their goals, all of them used some form of observation to assess student learning.

Assessment Routine: Asking Questions

When reviewing the video of the SEPs' instructional activity, one routine that emerged in the instructional interactions was the use of questioning. The six SEPs who espoused that they wanted to see their student make progress asked several questions during the instructional interaction. These questions pertained to the instructional topic. Instructional questions were questions that were directly connected to the content being taught. These questions tended to check to see if students understood the content, such as a spelling rule. Depending on how the students responded to the questions, SEPs would change their teaching. If the SEP interpreted the student's response as correct, they moved onto the next concept. If the SEP interpreted the student's response as incorrect, they corrected the student immediately, retaught the concept, or asked additional questions to guide the student to the correct answer. Table 5 illustrates examples of the instructional questions that the SEPs asked during their instructional activity.

Table 5. Examples of instructional questions.

SEP who Espoused Seeing Progress as a Goal	Instructional Question
Daniel	What's the first sound though? How do you spell save?
Nina	Who was in the parade with you? Think, what else? Was [your best friend] there?
Gina	Why are we capitalizing Pancakes? What else do you capitalize? What's another word for happy?
Gladys	What is tapping? The tip of your tongue or the back of your tongue?
Debbie	How much did he have? What are we going to do? If the number on top is smaller, what do we do?
Mary	How do we start the sentence? Did everybody start with a capital?

One of the best examples of the questioning assessment routine was when Gladys attempted to teach her student a new concept. According to the reading program that Gladys was using, the sounds that letters make belong to specific families of sounds. Students are required to identify the sound and the family that the sound belongs to.

> ***Gladys (Video):*** What does “B” belong to? Which label?
> ***Student***: Lip Tapper?
> ***Gladys***: Not Lip Tapper. Put your hand here [puts hand in front of mouth and makes the “b” sound]
> ***Student***: [mimics Gladys's hand movements and sounds]
> Gladys: "B"
> Student: "B"
> ***Gladys***: Which label? What does it belong to?

Student: Tip tapper?
Gladys: Let's say Tip Tapper. "T"
Student: "T"
Gladys: "B"
Student: "B"
Gladys: Do those two go together? Look in the mirror. Say "T"
Student: [Looks in mirror] "T"
Gladys: Look at your mouth. "T"
Student: "T"
Gladys: "B"
Student: "B"
Gladys: Do they belong in the same family?
Student: No.

The aforementioned interaction between Gladys and her student lasted approximately three minutes. Within those three minutes, Gladys engaged in eight questioning interactions where she asked questions, waited for the student's response, and evaluated the response. Depending on the student's response, Gladys determined if additional questions, more examples, or re-teaching were required.

These types of questioning interactions were prevalent across of the videos of instructional interactions for all of the six SEPs who espoused that they wanted to see progress in their students. The six SEPs asked questions and observed the responses from their students. The student responses could be verbal, nonverbal (nodding of the head), or completing a task (filling out the answer on a worksheet, setting up manipulatives). The SEP then assessed the response to determine if the child was correct or incorrect in answering the SEP's questions. If the students were incorrect, the SEP altered the lesson in an attempt to elicit a correct response.

I found that the remaining six SEPs who did not espouse that seeing growth in their students was a goal also exhibited questioning interactions. The remaining SEPs used questions in a similar fashion: to assess student learning and adjust their teaching

accordingly. For instance, when Evelyn worked with her student, she came across the concept of "voting" in the story that they were reading together. As part of her check for his comprehension of the reading, Evelyn asked the student a series of questions about voting. When she realized that her student didn't understand, Evelyn changed her teaching.

> ***Evelyn (Video):*** Do you think that's a good idea [to vote for the food at the party]?
> ***Student***: I have no idea.
> ***Evelyn***: If they are having a party and there's all kinds of food, do you think it would be a good idea to take a vote? What does [Mrs. Cremer] do? If she says read on the carpet or on the grass outside, what would she do?
> ***Student***: Read on the carpet.
> ***Evelyn***: What does she ask the students in the classroom?
> ***Student***: She asks the students...
> ***Evelyn***: She asks the students if they want a reading on the carpet, raise your hand. And if you want reading on the grass, raise your hand. What did she just do?
> ***Student***: She told us to read on the floor.
> ***Evelyn***: Did she take a vote?
> ***Student***: [Nods head no]
> ***Evelyn***: Yes, she did. Because look, if [Mrs. Cremer] is deciding which place to read, either on the carpet or on the grass, and she asks everybody in the classroom. If you want to read on the grass, raise your hand. If you want to read on the carpet, raise your hand. Is that taking a vote?
> ***Student***: Uh huh.
> ***Evelyn***: Are you sure?
> ***Student***: Yeah.

Evelyn's questioning interaction occurred over approximately two minutes of instructional time. Within that segment of time, she had 10 questioning interactions. As she asked questions and realized that her student didn't understand the concept of voting, Evelyn repeatedly attempted to illustrate the concept in terms that her student could understand. In this case, she related the concept of voting to the student's classroom teacher and the routines revolving around reading time in the classroom.

Overall, the combined instances of questioning interactions during the video excerpt for all twelve SEPs ranged from a minimum of 15 interactions per 15 minute period to a maximum of 54 per 15 minute period (see Table 6). The mean for all twelve SEPs was 34.83 with a standard deviation of 8.89. I compared the two groups, the espoused versus the non-espoused SEPs to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean scores of their questioning interactions. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the amount of questioning interactions, p= 0.86.

Table 6. Frequency of question interactions.

SEP Group	Min Question Interaction per SEP *	Max Question Interaction per SEP *	Mean Question Interaction across SEP**	Standard Deviation
Espoused (6 SEPs)	15	45	34.33	6.50
Not Espoused (6 SEPs)	22	54	35.33	11.45
Total SEPs (12 SEPS)	15	54	34.83	8.89

* Question interactions calculated over 15 minutes of video for each participant.
** p>.05

Increasing Students' Self Esteem

Nine out of 12 SEPs mentioned that the wanted their students to feel successful and have good self esteem. Self esteem goals involved a desire for students to increase their acceptance of their differences and feel good about themselves; as well as receive acceptance from others. Analysis of the SEPs' instructional interactions revealed that they focused on increasing student feelings about themselves through frequent praise on academic tasks. The praise was evident across all settings observed. Gladys

captured these desires to help students feel good by using praise when she described the student she was working with:

> ***Gladys (VEI)***: The other thing that saddens me about [the student] and I really try to do high fives. But just like, let's give each other five because she gets really down on herself. With [this student], I really try to make her feel that she's being successful.

However, similar to the goals on seeing progress, closer inspection of the data revealed that when comparing the nine SEPs who espoused self esteem goals to those who did not, there was no distinction in their use of behavior management routines when enacting self esteem goals. Of the nine SEPs who identified self esteem as a goal, all of them used behavior management routines, specifically they used a form of praise or recognition of student accomplishments to increase self esteem. Accomplishments were determined by how students responded to academic prompts or instructions. If an SEP asked a question, and the student answered correctly, the SEP provided praise (see Table 7). For example, when Erin provided phonics instruction to a group of 4 students, she praised the students for getting the correct answer. One of the tasks was for the student to read simple words and put them together to make compound words. When the student completed the task correctly, Erin praised the child:

> ***Erin (Video)***: If this is tea and this is pot, what would the word be?
> ***Student***: Teapot
> ***Erin:*** Very good.

Table 7. Frequency and examples of praise.

SEP N=9	Frequency of Praise * N=110	Examples
Rosa	15 times	Excellent my man. Good job. Giving a High five
Louise	27 times	Yes, you've got nice printing You are an amazing speller. Good. You are on the right track. [Claps hands] Bravo.
Daniel	17 times	For a point, who can tell me all the words we've done so far?[gives a point] What kind of "A" was that? Long. Good job.
Gina	5 times	That's a good word. Never heard of it, but it's a good word. You are very close.
Erin	11 times	Great. Yes. Correct. Can you read the sentence? Ok. Good
Serena	7 times	What should you push? "Search." Good. If you got all 4, then you can give yourself 4 out of 4 and pat yourself on the back.
Nina	8 times	Very good. You're right. There you go. Perfect.
Evelyn	10 times	Good idea. Very good idea. Nice reading [big smile]
Gladys	10 times	Very good [hand bump]. We're going to write this and put it up because you know it now. Oh, you are just making me so happy today.

*= Frequency of praise was calculated based on a 15 minute video segment of the SEPs' instructional activity

Praise was also given to students who exhibited a behavior that the SEP had been working on previous to the lesson that that was videotaped. It is most poignantly illustrated in Rosa's video. The video was focused on reading decoding which was

followed by answering a series of comprehension questions. When completing the comprehension questions, Rosa did not tell students to "look back" at the story to find their answers. However, all three students flipped back and forth through the story to answer the question. Rosa praised them for this behavior; it was evident through her praise and communications with her students that this was an area that she and the students had worked on in the past:

> ***Students***: [Looking through their stories]
> ***Rosa (Video):*** Good job you guys, going back and forth.
> ***Students***:[Look up and smile. Then they return to their reading tasks]
> ***Rosa***: Look at how proud of you I am. You guys are going back and looking. [Pauses and watches students]……You remember when you guys would come to me and I would ask you questions. You would go over here [to the comprehension question section] and then you would [makes a face as if to indicate that the students didn't know what to do]. You'd look up instead of going back to the story. You guys should be proud of yourself. You guys have made such good improvement.

One SEP, Daniel, in addition to verbal praise, used a positive behavior chart. The students earned points for completing tasks correctly, answering questions, and for exhibiting positive behaviors. The person with the most points at the end of the day received a star. The stars added up over time and equated to a pizza party. Daniel described his behavior system:

> ***Daniel (VEI):*** I like to reiterate with my rewards chart thing, is you do something good, something positive that you are doing, why don't you get a reward for it? Points and stuff.

There were no statistically significant differences in the amount of praise given to students between those SEPs who espoused goals of increasing self esteem and those who did not (see Table 8). Ultimately, SEPs that did not espouse self esteem goals still provided praise.

Table 8. Frequency of praise interactions.

SEP Group	Min Praise Interactions per SEP*	Max Praise Interactions per SEP*	Mean Praise Interactions Across SEPs **	Standard Deviation
Espoused (9 SEPs)	5	27	12.22	6.68
Not Espoused (3 SEPs)	8	19	15	6.08
Total SEPs (12 SEPS)	5	27	12.92	6.39

* Frequency of Praise interactions calculated over 15 minute video segments per SEP
** p>.o5

Repetition of Generic Praise

All 12 of the SEPs provided praise to increase self esteem. However, the praise appeared to be generic. Many of the SEPs stated things like, "Good" or "Good Job." These praise phrases didn't appear to be specific to the actual student responses, but rather a stock way to recognize the student for their responses. Out of the 145 incidents of praise, there were 95 incidents where the SEP praised the students by saying some derivation of "good" without stating what the exactly the student did well. They said, "Good; Good job; Good for you; and Very good." In an additional four incidents, the SEP said the word "Good" but made the praise more specific about what was being praised:

> ***Evelyn***: Good idea. Very good idea.
> ***Rosa***: You guys have made such good improvement.
> ***Louise***: That's a good sight word.
> ***Gina***: That's a good word. Never heard of it, but it's a good word.

There were additional terms that were used at praise, but also appeared generic. SEPs said things like, "very nice" (N=9); "Perfect" (N=4); and "Great" (N=5).

SEP Goals

SEPs had two general goal areas: goals for instruction and student outcomes. Instructional goals were based on academics, more specifically aspirations for students to reach grade level standards. SEPs illustrated that they attempted to assist students to reach grade level standards through remediation of skill deficits. For the students in this study, those skill deficits crossed over several academic areas such as reading, writing, and math. Student outcome goals related to the expectation that students would make progress towards academic goals and have increased self esteem about themselves and their abilities. All of these goals were noble and touted by several SEPs. The SEPs used their every day routines to enact their goals. When comparing how SEPs enacted those goals, I found that regardless of whether or not those goals were espoused, all of the SEPs were working towards meeting those goals as evidenced by their participation in instructional, assessment, and behavior management routines.

CHAPTER V: THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXTS AND SETTINGS

In Bronfenbrenner's work (1976), he describes an ecocultural concept that individuals are nested within multiple systems. Essentially, the contexts and settings in which learning and development occurs exist "as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 5). These systems impact and interact with one another. All individuals learn and develop within these systems; thus, their development is subject to systemic influences. According to Bronfenbrenner, there are several levels of the system: macro-systems, exo-systems, meso-systems, and micro-systems.

For the special education paraeducators (SEP) in this study, data illustrated that they impacted by multiple systems. The systems set the rules and guidelines of the SEPs' job duties; this includes where they provided services, how they provided services, the goals of what those services are designed to meet, and the resources they could access. The impact of the systems essentially removed autonomous decision making power from the SEP in regards to their instructional practice.

In Chapter IV, we discovered that our twelve participant SEPs engage in four basic types of everyday routines: Instructional, Assessment, Behavior Management, and Communication routines. The data revealed that the SEPs' everyday routines enabled the SEPs enact two goals areas: Instruction and Student Outcomes. More specifically, data drawn from questionnaires, interviews, and video of the SEPs' instructional activity illustrated that SEPs use their everyday routines to teach students

basic academic skills, monitor and assess student progress, and increase their students' self esteem.

In this chapter, I discuss how the SEPs' macro-system and exo-system impact the settings and contexts which consequently dictate the SEPs' everyday routines. I suggest that the macro-system, which is comprised of special education law and district aims, provide an overarching structure of how SEPs deliver instructional services. At the exo-systemic level, the individual schools and supervising teachers dictate where, when and ultimately how these services should be delivered (see Figure 7). In Chapters VI through VIII, I will illustrate the impact of the context and settings to the SEPs access to social, material, and cultural resources. Consequently, subsequent chapters will continue to unravel a unidirectional relationship between of contexts and settings upon the SEPs' everyday routines.

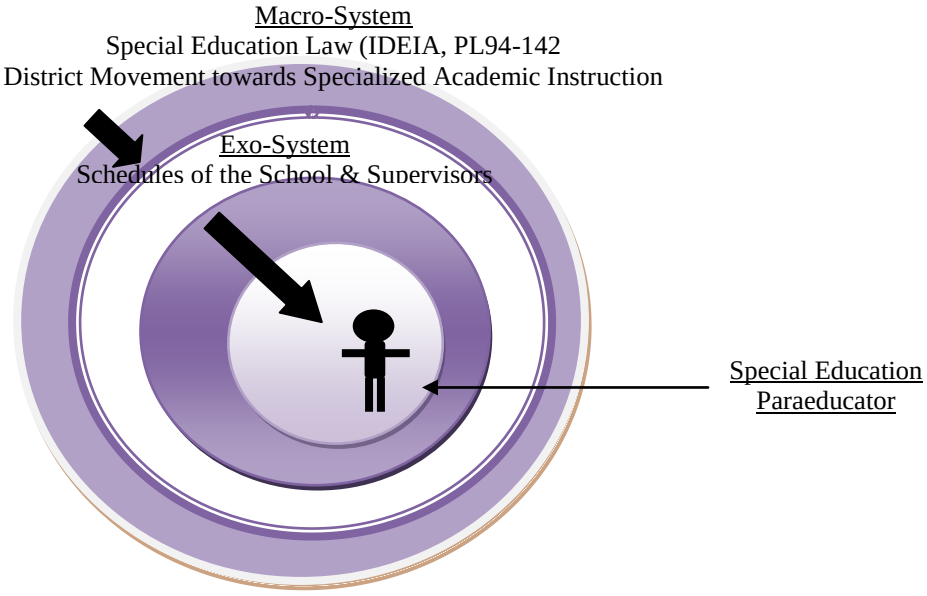


Figure 7. Nested system impact on the SEP.

Method of Analysis

I reviewed the four different types of routines that were identified in Chapter IV: Instructional, Assessment, Behavior Management, and Communication routines. I completed an across case analysis looking for patterns of the types of routines and the settings in which those routines were occurring.

Macro-Systemic Influences

The SEP's macro-system was the overarching institutional or cultural factors that define the special education delivery model and the SEP's role. It not only defined the structures in which SEP's worked within, but also carried with it ideologies of practice, roles, activities, and motivations. Overall, the SEP's job was dictated by the special education law and the Dukes' Unified School District (DUSD) model of special education service delivery.

A Macro-Systemic Ideology of Practice

Public Law 94-142 (PL 94-142; Boyle, 1979) was legislation that supported the 1974 Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). IDEA 1974 was revised to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004 (IDEIA). PL 94-142 articulated how educators would enact IDEA, and subsequently, IDEIA, in schools. The public law stated that students with disabilities were entitled to a public education, and with that, they had certain rights. Among these rights included access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), individualized education plans (IEP) that met their specific learning needs, and provisions to receive special education services through the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). With the

passage of IDEA, IDEIA, and PL94-142 came optimistic discussions which suggested that the face of education was changing. All students would have the opportunity to receive quality instruction that met their individual needs, and helped them reach their "fullest...interests and abilities" (Boyer, 1979, p. 298).

Regrettably, schools enacted PL 94-142 using their interpretation of the law. Specifically, schools used the "special education and related services to meet their unique needs" to design programs to group and assign students. Each program received a designation and each student needed a designation to participate in the program. Often, this meant that students with a specific designation were automatically placed in a specific program regardless of their individual learning and behavioral characteristics. It was easier to give a child a label, place him or her into a program, then shut the door. It was far more difficult to look at a child's specific needs and design a program around the child.

Sadly, optimistic visions of special education were dashed by the realities of the schools. But, the actuality of PL 94 -142 and IDEIA have given rise to a new movement in DUSD known as Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI). DUSD sought to design supports around the students needs rather than force students into pre-set programs. For the SEPs of this study, SAI proved to be encumbered by the reality of schools, their systems, the people who operated the system, and the individuals for whom they served.

The Impact of Ideology on Instructional Settings

For the SEPs in this study, interview data revealed that the SAI movement changed the setting in which SEPs provided their instructional services. For DUSD, the SAI movement began in 2007. DUSD's move towards specialized academic instruction was the catalyst for special education services providers, such as the SEPs, to begin providing services in the general education classroom. The SAI movement also stimulated schools to revisit and revamp their special education delivery models. Seven out of the 12 SEP participants found themselves providing services in settings and programs that were novel to them. For instance, previous to the SAI movement, the aforementioned seven SEPs provided special education services in small groups in a special education setting. Since the institution of SAI, these same SEPs were now providing services in larger group settings within the general education setting. Through interviews, the five out of the seven SEPs reported challenges with the changes in their service delivery model.

> ***Gina (PENI):*** What happened is that [the district] disbanded the special day class. So, we are now covering every kid that has an IEP. [whisper] It's not working. And we're spread really thin.
> ***Interviewer***: So tell me why it's not working.
> ***Gina***: The kids aren't getting the service they need. I'm used to being in a special day class. So, we have 9-10 kids. They are in there for all their academics. They're all right there. So, there are two adults servicing those kids. Whereas [in this model], we're literally running around trying to service kids. There are not enough adults.

The change in location of the service delivery to general education classes also impacted the way in which SEPs provided services. In the years prior to the SAI movement, SEPs used a "pull-out" model of service delivery. In this model, students

went to a separate classroom and received services from the SEP on their deficit skills. The pull-out model enabled SEPs to design a regimented schedule where students would arrive at a specified time, day, and location. The model also allowed SEPs to group students in homogenous groups based on subject and skill deficit area. Finally, the pull-out model permitted SEPs to work in isolation, not having to necessarily depend on what the supervising teacher was teaching on a daily basis.

In contrast, the SEPs referred to the new type of service delivery as "push-in" services or "mainstreaming." In the push-in model, SEPs went into the general education classroom to support all students. Typically, SEPs moved around the room, kept students on task, and supported the instruction by modifying assignments for students with disabilities. Many SEPs equated push-in services as assisting the teacher in helping students with behavior or remaining engaged in academic tasks.

> ***Daniel (PENI)***: The push-in I do is if there is a large number of students in one classroom. I'll go into the push-in. And then there's some cases, I do the pullout in the push-ins. So, it's a mixture. The pull-out, I do with two separate groups. The rest is push-in. The majority of the time I'm doing the push-in versus the pullout.

On other occasions, the SEP pulled small groups of students into a section of the room to either work on deficit skills or to modify assignments. The services were still provided in the general education classroom, but students were afforded with a lower student to teacher ratio within the larger class setting. But, being in the general education classroom, where there was up to 35 children, lent itself to different problems. Specifically, SEPs identified that their students tended to get more

distracted and had trouble focusing on the tasks at hand. Mary described her routine when pulling students into a small group within the general education classroom:

> ***Mary (PENI)***: The teacher has a kidney table like this for me and I already have a drawer. I have a white board with me. I prefer to do, I would love to do it here [indicating her room] because it is, kind of hard because the teacher is going on with whatever she's doing and we're trying to do ours. Sometimes I think it gets kind of noisy. I would prefer if they came here [into a pull-out setting].

DUSD's movement towards SAI was derived from a closer adherence to the tenets of PL94-14 and IDEIA. These macro-systemic ideologies carried with it beliefs that students with disabilities have the right to a free and appropriate education within the least restrictive environment. As these ideologies trickled down to the SEP, it changed the face of special education service delivery. This change forced SEPs to change the way they provided services, beginning with the immediate environments in which those services were to be delivered.

Exo-Systemic Influences

The exo-system embraced the concrete social structures, both formal and informal, that influence the immediate settings containing the individual, thereby influencing and even determining what went on there. For SEPs, the exo-systemic influences came from two structures: the individual schools that they worked in and their supervising teachers.

Impact of the School on Instructional Settings

DUSD's decision to move towards SAI impacted the way schools provided special education services. In previous years, many schools had special education

programs that were designed specifically for special education students. These programs, in their most restrictive forms, manifested themselves as "Special Day" classes. These were classes that typically contained one special education teacher, at least one SEP, and no more than 12 children. All of the students were identified as having disabilities. In the less restrictive forms, the program was called the "Resource Specialist" program. These programs relied heavily on the pull-out models of service delivery. Again, all of the students in the Resource Specialist pull-out were identified as having disabilities.

In contrast, SAI brought forth the "Learning Center" or "Learning Lab" model of service delivery. In a Learning Center, there was a mixture of students with and without disabilities. Special education teachers and SEPs were available on a "drop-in" basis. Students could be referred by any teacher to go to the Learning Center to receive extra help. Extra help ranged from homework help to strategic teaching. The Learning Center was a distinct shift from how services were delivered in the past.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** We're doing the Learning Lab, [where] I am pretty much on standby. I wait for kids that come in small groups or one to one. Learning lab is a center that is available for the whole school that allows teachers to send in [students]. We're like a big assistant for the whole school. It allows to teacher to send in their kids if they need to, [for] just a little bit more help. [It's for] a group of students or individual students who need help with the class.
> ***Interviewer***: Do they have to be special or can they be regular education students?
> ***Rosa***: Regular kids.

In addition to the Learning Center, the exo-system of the individual schools also influenced the SEPs' schedules. They structured their everyday routines based on the

school's master and bell schedules. Typically, SEPs started their days with students, took breaks during the students' recess, and ate lunch during the students' lunch times.

> ***Serena (PENI):*** [The students'] lunch, they leave at 12 o'clock and they're back in the classroom by 12:40. The bell rings at 12:40. About 12:30, or 12:25, the kids start coming back into the classroom if they have work to do. So, I munch down a little bit of a snack. I don't usually bring a full lunch…. I don't officially earn a whole hour's lunch. I have the two 15 minute breaks. I take the 15 at recess and then another kind of 15 at lunch. Sometimes, it goes a little longer if nobody comes back.

SEPs also provided their push-in and pull-out services based on the overall master schedule, namely where students were placed in their general education classrooms or when certain subjects were being taught. For instance, the pull-out portions of the day were directly related to where the students were and the general education classroom teacher's schedule.

> ***Daniel (PENI):*** The pull-out, I do with two separate groups. The rest is push-in. The majority of the time I'm doing the push-in versus the pullout. The reason is why I am doing the pull-out is because… I'll give you an example. A 2nd grade level, we have one student in [the general education teacher's class] and one student in [another general education teacher's class], and then 2 students in [a third general education teacher's class]. Those are the 3 teachers in 2nd grade. Well, we were trying to get the hours in. And we were having problems. If I saw them 1 on 1, that's 3 hours for each kid. With the pullout, we combined the 3 classes in a pullout so I can be providing their services for 3 hours.

Impact of the Supervising Teacher on Instructional Settings

Analysis of the SEPs' questionnaires and interviews revealed that the SEPs' everyday routines were dependent on the supervising teachers' schedule. The supervising teachers, both the special education and general education teachers, instructed the paraeducator on what schedule to follow (the classroom routine established by the teacher), what tasks to complete, and what roles to play. Since the

schedule was dependent on individual teachers, the SEPs in the study had a wide array of instructional tasks to complete. Mary captured this dependency best when she described her duties during push-in.

> ***Mary (PENI):*** I am supporting the class. So, whatever they're doing, the teacher gives me, "Mary I want you to do… they need to read this and understand this." Or they are doing math. Help them with that. Or we go on the computer, programs on there. ...We still try to do what they are doing. It's up to the teacher, whatever he wants me to do.

Other SEPs followed a more regimented routines that were set by the teacher's schedules. The teachers set the content to be taught, the time it would be taught, and how the SEP supported the instruction. Six out of 12 SEPs listed their instructional activities in terms of time, number of students they worked with, and the subject area they covered. A prime example was Annie's responses to the prompt: Describe your typical day. In her response, Annie listed all of her duties by time, day, students and subject.

> **Annie (Questionnaire):** 7-7:55 Whole school supervision
> 8-8:20- Math Whole Group: Assist teacher with behaviors on rug and assist in demonstrations
> 8:20-9:00 Math Small Group: I'm currently working with 2nd grade following the school wide math curriculum (4 students).
> 9:00- Readers' and Writers' Workshop: Generally teacher reads to the whole group on the rug. I assist when necessary. Students then come to two different tables for their writing assignment. I help the students who come to my table with their writing assignment for that day.
> 10:00 Guided Reading Rotations: I teach spelling and handwriting in 20 minute rotations of groups of 3-4. At this time we have approximately 12 students in the room.
> 11:00 Language: I assist teacher with whole group on the rug. I also use this time to prepare for Friday's art lesson.
> 11:30-12:10- School Wide Lunch Time Supervision
> 12:10-12:30- Unpaid lunch
> 12:30-2:00 - I follow the 2nd graders to general education classes as they rotate to room 19 for science and room 20 for social studies &

> health. I mainly assist my students but I also move about the class to assist all students.
> Fridays 1:00-2:15- I teach art lesson of my own creation to our students and the 4th and 5th grade special ed students in my room.

Ultimately, SEPs' everyday routines were impacted by exo-system structures that dictated where and when they would provide their special education services. The overarching school bell and master schedules, as well as the supervising teachers' schedules, defined the SEPs the overarching structure of how they completed their job duties. The setting for instruction highly regulated the SEPs' routines; depending on the setting, SEPs adjusted their routines to meet the expectations and rules set forth by the existing contexts and structures.

The SEPs' Micro-system: Instructional Settings

Data gathered from questionnaires and interviews indicated that the SEP's every day routines changed depending on the setting they are told to provide those services. In general there are two different settings to provide services: in a general education class or in a special education class. Within those two settings, there were four ways to deliver services: Push-In Support in general education, Pull-Out Support in general education, Whole Group Support in special education, or Pull-Out support in special education. These settings were the most immediate to the SEP and consequently comprised the SEPs' micro-systems (see Figure 8).

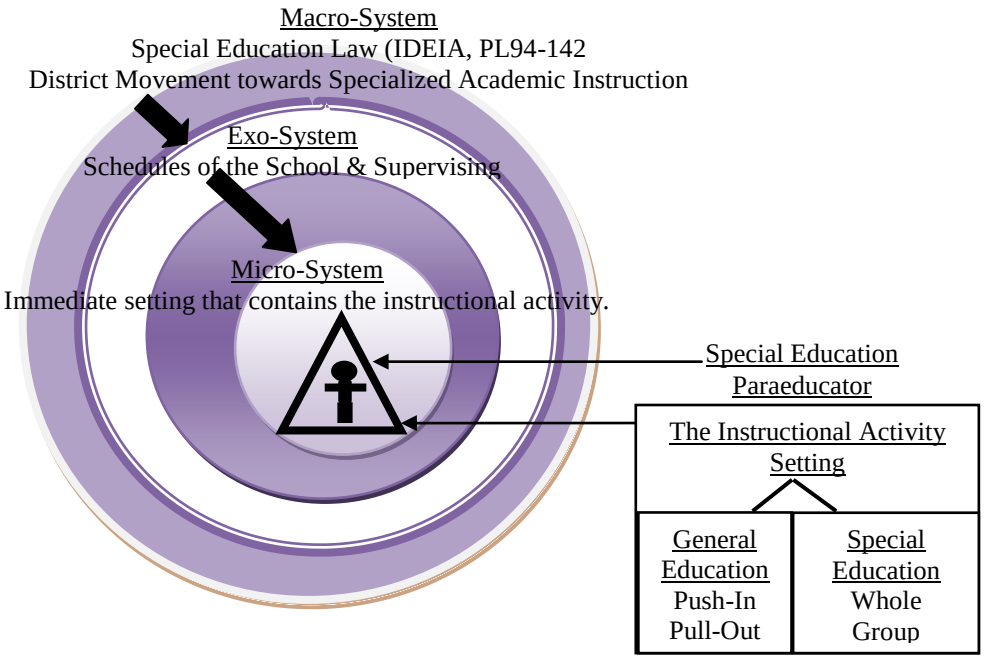


Figure 8. SEPs' instructional activity settings and nested systems.

Push-In Support In General Education

All 12 SEPs described that they provided services in as push-in support in the general education classes. SEP provided services that were dictated by the general education teacher's schedule and instruction in the classroom. SEPs went into the general education classroom and supported both students with and without disabilities. SEPs reported that they went into general education classrooms to "support" (Mary, PENI) or "piggy back" (Daniel, PENI) on whatever the teacher was doing. SEPs helped keep students on task and complete work. In other areas, SEPs helped the students to access grade level curriculum. SEPs modified work, retaught, and clarified concepts (see Table 9). The SEPs supported students across a variety of academic areas: writing, reading, math, social studies, and science.

Table 9. SEP Supports in the push-in setting.

SEP	Area of Assistance	SEPs' Descriptions
Nina	Staying on Task	She's come a long way as far as her behavior. Everything from behavior... because when I came to her in Kindergarten. She would just get up from her chair. Run around the room. Do what she wanted to do. It was going to be her way. Bring her back to what she was supposed to be doing. It took a long time to get her to get used to just doing her work, sitting at her desk, doing it (PENI).
Gina	Monitor Work Completion	I'll monitor and I'll walk through the classroom. I've noticed that when I keep them out there, they'll take work and it's not finished and they'll jam it in their desks. It's hard to keep an eye on them. They are kind of spread out in the room (PENI).
Gladys	Subject Specific Concerns	I try to push-in to do math. Even though they may be 4th or 5th graders and they are still working on their multiplications. Their need is to do their grade level. That's when I push-in (PENI).

SEPs provided support in the general education class for the entire class. When they encountered a student struggling, they tended to gravitate toward the student and assist them in accessing the content. However, this assistance was more closely tied to behavioral support; SEPs tended to help students by making sure they were on task, paying attention, completing assignments.

Pull-Out Support in the General Education Setting

Five out of 12 SEPs described providing pull-out or small group instructional support in the general education classroom. Small group instruction ranged from working with individual students to groups of eleven. Similar to the push-in support in general education, three of the SEPs followed the instructional guidelines set by the supervising teacher. For example, Serena was placed in a general education classroom all day. Although she was assigned to work with one student in particular, the general

education teacher had her working with groups of students that did not have disabilities. The classroom operated on a regular schedule; the students received the general instruction from the teacher and then they were broken up into smaller groups to practice the concepts that were taught in the general instruction. This procedure occurred multiple times throughout the day in all subject areas. Serena was in charge of one group each time the class broke out into small groups.

> ***Serena (PENI):*** Usually the teacher will start off with a lesson. And then we'll read a section. Then we are going to break into groups. Most often we break up into groups and I take a group with me to the library.

Serena worked with small groups for math, social studies, language arts, and science. The system also allotted for changes in groups. Serena never worked with the same groups for extensive periods of time. She described a rotation system where the students would rotate to groups and teachers periodically through the year so that the teacher would have the opportunity to work with all the students.

> ***Serena (PENI):*** [The teacher] tries to group [the students] together in ability groups, but they are working on the same things. So, they are by colors right now. This week, I have the blue group. Last week, I had the orange group. Before that, I had purple group. [The teacher is] rotating on purpose mainly for herself because she wants to be able to see, to get a sampling [of all the students].

Mary and Gina also provided small group instruction in the general education classroom, but they differed from Serena in that they followed a scripted instructional program that was provided by the supervising teacher. For instance, Mary described how she pulled a set number of students into a small group daily. The students were all students with disabilities and the group did not change throughout the year. Mary used a scripted phonics program with them in the back of the general education classroom.

The rest of the students in the class followed the general education teacher and learn a different lesson.

> ***Mary (PENI):*** The reading program I just started. I don't even know the name of it. It was just one day to another and I had just started, trying to read it. It has to do with phonetics….And it's just really focusing on their vowels, certain things that children are really lacking in.

Small group instruction occurred within the general education setting. SEPs followed the general education teacher's schedule and lessons, or they were given other tools to use that diverged from the general lesson. At least three SEPs in the study worked with all of the students in a general education pull-out setting, regardless of the presence of a disability.

Whole Group Support in Special Education

Four out of 12 SEPs reported that they supported instruction in the special education setting. These supports differed slightly from the push-in supports in general education in that SEPs worked solely with special education students. When in the special education classroom setting, SEPs supported the instruction provided by the special education teacher. They followed the special education teacher's schedules and instruction. For example, in Erin's narrative, she described how her special education teachers provided the whole group lesson. While that lesson was happening, she sat with the students and helped them follow the teacher's lesson or stay focused.

> ***Erin (PENI):*** We do calendar. We do the ABC's [and] months of the year…. They go up there and do their numbers individually. Sometimes, if we have time, we do Spiderman math; [it is] Spiderman flashcards with the math on it. We have counting bears. Usually, I'll help them with whoever needs help. Usually it's the kindergartener who needs help with math. I'll help him with using the bears.

All four of the SEPs identified that they served as a support to the special education teacher during the teacher's delivery of the lesson. Whenever they identified that the students needed support, SEPs provided that support to them. Similar to the push-in model in general education, the students were not necessarily prescribed or assigned to the SEP prior to or during the lesson. The major difference between the whole group support setting and the push-in model in the general education classes was that SEPs provided support exclusively with students with disabilities.

Pull-Out Support in Special Education

Ten of the 12 SEPs provided pull-out support in the special education setting. The pull-out or small group instructional support revolved around several content areas: reading, writing/spelling, and math. Two SEPs, Serena and Nina, provided small group instruction in Science and Social Studies as well. When providing these pull-out supports, SEPs had small groups of children, ranging from one to no more than six students. The groups worked with the SEP on a regular basis, using a regular schedule set by time and day. Eight of the ten SEPs provided instruction from a program or curriculum that was targeted to the students' specific skill deficits rather than following the grade level appropriate curriculum.

Daniel illustrated the structure of the pull-out. In his groups, Daniel had a regular reading group three days a week. A group of four second graders came to the special education classroom on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for approximately 40 minutes. All of the students had disabilities and struggled with decoding grade

level texts. During that pull-out time, Daniel taught phonics rules using scripted programs. When the students were done, they returned to their general education class.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** In the pull-out situation, you pull them in here?
> ***Daniel***: Right. I take them in here and I do a lesson on the side with them.
> ***Interviewer***: What type of lesson? What does that look like?
> ***Daniel***: It's more of the phonics things that I work with them. I got some stuff right here [pulls out folders with worksheets]. I'll do a lesson with them. Depending on their level... cause the majority of their group size is five. So, I'll go through a lesson with them.

In Annie's case, the students were in the special education classroom all day. But, the structure of the class was set up in a way where Annie worked with the students in preset small groups daily. Like Daniel's groups, the students were grouped by ability and grade level. The groups rotated to Annie after they received the general lesson from the special education teacher. In the groups, Annie provided either content that supported what the special education teacher taught or a new lesson entirely. She provided small group instruction for math, reading, and spelling.

> ***Annie (PENI):*** She [teacher] generally does a lecture of math on the rug. And then we split them into groups. Lately I've been having the second graders for my math. We [try to] stay on the same subject even though we are three different grades, but it's obviously different. I've been using out of a second grade text. So, we started fractions today. We had to cut these bars. This is actually the second grade text.

Debbie followed a similar structure where she worked with small groups of students on a regular basis within the special education classroom. Unlike Annie, Debbie did not provide a new lesson. Instead, she strictly supported whatever the special education teacher taught the students in the previous rotation. Debbie helped the students finish the assignment that the teacher assigned, clarified concepts, and retaught. Afterwards, Debbie facilitated an interactive game that matched the content

being taught. For example, if the students are working on math, they played a math game.

> ***Debbie (PENI):*** I'll ask [the students] if [they are] having problems with math. The first group is math. So, we work with the math. Each group lasts about half an hour. We try to keep it at 30 minute increments. The group that the teacher is working math, we'll switch and they come to me. And I'll work with them with more math. If they are struggling with fractions, we'll try to do more fraction sheets to get it. And then we'll play a fraction game.

In contrast, Nina illustrated that the pull-out setting can have only one student in the group. Nina was a "one on one" aide; she assigned to a specific student. Three out of the 12 SEPs were technically one on one aides. When they worked with their students, their supports were dominated by the individual student themselves. For one on one aides, working with a student an individual basis consisted of assisting the student in completing work, modifying assignments, keeping the student on task, or tutoring. However, being assigned to one student did not keep them from working with others in the classroom. For example, Louise was assigned to one student; however, she found herself working with all the students in the classroom on an individual basis one time or another throughout the day. She stated, "For writing we generally have eight children. So, we just go around the room and help who needs help" (Louise, PENI).

In Louise's statement, she demonstrated that one on one aides work with other students. But she also illustrated that pull-out instruction can be based on working with individual students. This is best exemplified in Gladys's case. Gladys worked with a first grader on a daily basis. Every morning, the first grader came to Gladys's classroom and received instruction in reading on a pull-out basis. Using a scripted

program, Gladys focused on phonics instruction, specifically on how sounds are formed in your mouth.

> ***Gladys (PENI):*** I have a very low first grader that I'm using [a phonics] program [with. It] is basically a lot of phonics.
> ***Interviewer***: Is that individual that you do it with her?
> ***Gladys***: Yes, we do. Yeah, [we do it] one on one.

Pull-out instruction in the special education setting was similar to the pull-out instruction in the general education setting in many ways. SEPs worked with groups of students from as little as one student to multiple students at a time. The groups tended to be preset, and SEPs provided services on a regular schedule. The groups were also homogeneous so the teaching targeted specific skills. However, across all ten SEPs engaged in pull-out instruction in the special education setting, one distinct difference between pull-outs in general education versus special education settings was that all of the students in the special education setting were students identified with disabilities.

Contexts and Settings Matter

Bronfebrenner (1976) suggested that individuals were impacted by the interaction of the multiple systems in which they were nested. For SEPs, they provided instructional services in a variety of settings and contexts. The context was derived from special education law and district aims to provide students with disabilities with access to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive educational environment possible. The instructional activity settings were divided into two major groups, either in the general education setting or in the special education setting. These settings comprised the SEPs micro-systems that contained the SEPs' instructional

activity. The data illustrated that these settings and contexts matter. With the influence of macro-systemic and exo-systemic structures, the settings and contexts dictate not only where the SEP will provide services, but also how and with whom.

CHAPTER VI: SOCIAL RESOURCES

In previous chapters, the data illustrated that the special education paraeducators (SEP) in this study engaged in a variety of every day routines. These routines allowed them to enact specific instructional and student outcome goals. However, the degree to which the SEPs exerted autonomy over which routines they could engage in was dependent on factors associated with the setting and contexts of the SEPs' macro and exo systems. Essentially, setting and contexts dictated where, with whom, and how the participating SEPs provided special education services within their micro-systems, or instructional activity systems. Thus, we turn to a closer look at the impact of settings and contexts, specifically the impact of the SEPs' exo and meso systems, on the instructional activity system.

In Engestrom's (1999) discussion of activity theory, Engestrom describes the role of community and its impact on the activity system. According to activity theorists, there is a societal and collaborative interaction when individuals are engaged in activity. Community serves as a greater contextual factor which suggests that communities also influence our activity. For SEPs, although they engage in instructional activity with the students directly, they are part of a larger educational community. SEPs interact with school staff and in some cases, with parents (Werts, et al., 2004).

In the existing paraeducator literature, researchers discuss how SEPS are involved in the educational community. Namely, they interact with the community

through their social interactions with their supervising teachers. By job definition, paraeducators are required to work under the direction of a certificated teacher to provide direct instructional services. Consequently, the implicit result of this definition is that paraeducators must form some type of relationship with their supervising teachers, be it a positive or negative one. Current research investigating the paraeducator and supervising teacher interaction displays a diverse range of relationships (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda & Monzo, 2002).

In this chapter, I illustrate that special education paraeducators (SEP) in this study also have a variety of relationships with their supervising teachers and other individuals involved with the children that the SEPs work with. From an ecocultural perspective, these relationships stem from the exo-system and permeate the SEPs' meso-systems over time (see Figure 9). The individuals that SEPs come in contact with include current and former supervisors, service providers, other SEPs, and parents and community members. The SEPs access and use of these individuals inform their instruction and vary depending on the quality of the relationship with the individuals and socio-economic factors. I suggest that the individuals that SEPs socially interact with are social resources that impact the SEPs' instructional activity. I defined social resources as individuals that SEPs either directly, or indirectly work with students with disabilities.

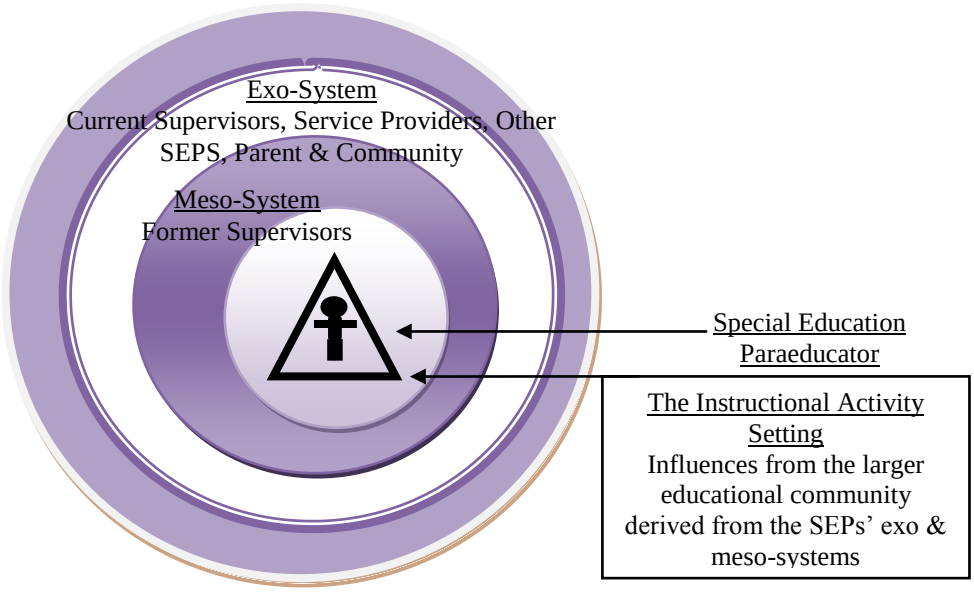


Figure 9. Influences from larger, educational community.

Method of Analysis

Using the Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview (PENI), Video Elicited Interview (VEI), and paraeducator demographic questionnaires of all 12 participants, I identified all references to individuals that the SEPs came in contact and communicated with in previous and current experiences. I conducted within case and across case analyses. Several categories emerged; these individuals included current and past supervisors, service providers, other SEPs, and parents and community members.

I determined whether or not SEPs had access to specific social resources across cases by whether or not the SEPs identified if they had interactions with the social resources. In addition, although all of the SEPs were asked similar guiding questions

from the questionnaires and interviews, a closer analysis of their responses indicated that the SEPs' varied in their responses in terms of uses of social resources. Thus, in order to determine the relationship of the SEPs' use of the social resource in their everyday routines, I calculated the frequency of how many times the SEPs referenced specific social resources. To minimize inflation of frequency counts based on the SEPs' verbosity, I applied a standard method of frequency counting across all cases. The frequency counts were determined by the number of times the SEP referenced the social resource in one interview exchange. Specifically, counts were identified based on the SEPs' responses to one question on the questionnaire or interview. For example, if an SEP identified a parent as a resource to help a student complete homework after I asked a question, it was counted as one frequency. If the SEP referenced the parent multiple times in response to one question, it was still counted as one frequency. If the same SEP identified a parent across two different questions, it was counted as two frequencies.

I also denoted if the social resource was perceived by the SEP as being a negative resource. Negative perceptions were determined as whether or not the SEP identified the resource reference as frustrating, challenging, or lacking.

I compared the references to social resources to determine if there were any differences between the SEPs from lower and higher socio-economically (SES) different schools. Specifically, I analyzed if there were differences between the groups in the amount of references per social resource and the percentage of negative to positive references. Frequency counts were analyzed using statistical analysis:

measures of central tendency and analysis of variance (ANOVA), to determine if there were any significant differences between the means of references in respect to the types of positive to negative references, the types of individuals cited, and differences among SEPs from schools with different SES levels.

Social Resources

Social resources were individuals who either worked directly or indirectly with students with disabilities. These individuals could be administrators, teachers, service providers (speech teacher, occupational therapists, tutors), parents and community members, and other SEPs. Across the questionnaires and interviews, SEPs explicitly described how these social resources either supported or posed as obstacles to their work with children. From interviews, I found that there were five different types of social resources: former supervisors, current supervisors, service providers, other SEPs, and parents and community members. Overall, at least 50% of the SEPs in this study identified that they had access to all five types of social resources (see Table 10).

In addition, some SEPs also identified that they did not have access to specific social resources. I determined that SEPs did not have access to social resources if the SEPs solely made negative references to the resource such as reporting that they didn't interact with and/or had a negative communication or interaction with the resource. There were SEPs that didn't reference certain social resources at all throughout their interviews. The lack of information did not allow me to determine whether or not they had or did not have access to said resources.

Table 10. Access to social resources.

Social Resource	Percentage of SEPs' **with** access to the social resource *		Percentage of SEPs' **without** access to the social resource *		Percentage of SEPs' **who did not make a reference** to the social resource *	
Current Supervisors	100	(n=12)	0		0	
Parents & Community	75	(n=9)	17	(n=2)	8	(n=1)
Former Supervisors	58	(n=7)	17	(n=2)	25	(n=3)
Service Providers	58	(n=7)	8	(n=1)	34	(n=4)
Other SEPs	50	(n=6)	8	(n=1)	42	(n=5)

* Percentages calculated from N=12 SEP participants.

At least 50% of SEP participants had access to the aforementioned social resources, with current supervisors being accessible to all of the SEPs. However, deeper analysis of the frequency of references within the SEPs' interviews indicated that although certain social resources were accessible, the social resources were not necessarily influencing the SEPs' everyday routine. For example, although parents and community members were accessible to 75% of the SEPs in this study, the SEPs' references and descriptions of with parents and community members revealed that the SEPs interactions with parents and community members were limited. References to parents and community members constituted 15% of all the references to social resources (see Figure 10). Ultimately, qualitative analysis of the SEPs' interview references to their social resources revealed two factors impacted the relationship between the social resource and the SEPs' everyday routines. The strength of the

relationship between SEP and social resource and their school's respective socio-economic statuses impacted the types of everyday routines they engaged in.

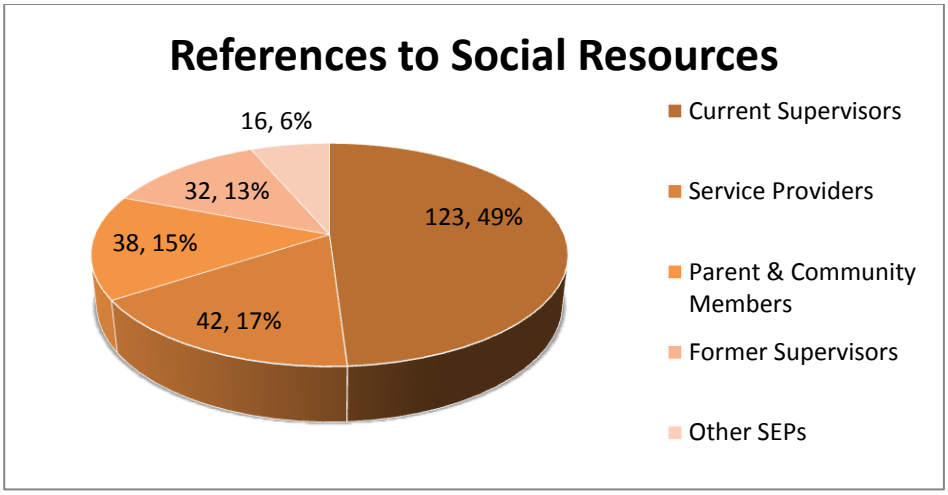


Figure 10. Distribution of references to social resources.

Current Supervisors

The most prevalent social resource among the 12 SEP participants was current supervisors. All 12 SEPs not only referenced their current supervisors to indicate that they had access to their current supervisors, but the frequency of references also indicated that current supervisors were used as social resources to inform the SEPs' everyday routines. Current supervisors were the individuals that the SEPs had direct contact with during the data collection period of this study. These supervisors included administrators, special education teachers, and general education teachers. Nearly 50% of the references made about social resources were about the SEPs' current supervisors. Save one SEP, Rosa, all of the other SEPs had more positive things to say

about their current supervisors than negative. When describing the positives, the SEPs shared that their current supervisors helped them improve their teaching practices, communicated and collaborated with them, and provided instructional materials.

Annie's relationship with her current supervisor was a relationship built over eight years. Annie only had positive things to say about her interaction with Janie. Janie provided structures to what was to be taught, clearly communicated these structures, and gave Annie autonomy to execute lessons the way she saw fit.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** How does the school support you or give you obstacles to doing what you think is best for the kids?
> ***Annie***: She [teacher] makes it very easy for me. Like the spelling, I get to teach this pretty much any way I want to. [The teacher] lets me use pretty much whatever what I want to use. She leaves that up to me….She chooses the topic that I am going to teach. And she will show me…But, she lets me pretty much teach it the way I want to.

Annie also described that there was an ongoing communication and collaboration between herself and her supervisor. Her supervisor even provided her with daily lesson plans.

> ***Annie (PENI)***: I have lunch up here with everybody and that's when we get to talk.
> ***Interviewer***: What do you talk about?
> ***Annie***: Everything. If there's something coming up, she [the teacher] will tell me. These are really good lesson plans. So, usually, I don't have questions. When she calls the kids to the carpet, I'll read this. What is this going to entail? Do I need to get materials ready for this?

Annie's experience was not an isolated one. All 12 SEPs made references to their current supervisors and how they interacted with the supervisors (see Table 11). Ultimately, the SEPs came to rely on their current supervisors as a social resource. The current supervisors helped the SEPs complete their instructional responsebilities.

Table 11. SEP Positive references to current supervisors.

SEP	Reference to Current Supervisor	SEP	Reference to Current Supervisor
Daniel	The training usually comes from him [referring to supervising teacher.] All this stuff I've got [to teach phonics], he provided me with it. He taught me the lesson first because I didn't know anything about it (PENI).	Debbie	[This school] is really good and supportive. It is good that we can, the teachers, we talk with each other about different students. (PENI).
Evelyn	Evelyn: Yes, I talk to [my teachers] a lot. And tell them, "you know what, he didn't know what voting meant today." And then I'll tell them what I did. They'll say, "Oh, ok." Or they maybe make another suggestion. Try this and see if he gets it better.... I talk to my teachers a lot about my students. (VEI).	Louise	I like to observe whatever teacher I'm working with, whatever certificated teacher I'm working with, I like to observe and listen. That's how you learn. I'm constantly listening to how [my current supervisor is interacting with the children (VEI).

Current Supervisors: Obstacles to Progress

Twenty percent of the references to current supervisors did indicate some negativity where current supervisors presented themselves as obstacles rather than resources. In these instances, the SEPs felt limited in what they could do as educators. Current supervisors limited the SEPs access to materials or the SEPs had concerns regarding the communication they shared between themselves and their supervisors.

In Daniel's case, his current supervisor posed as an obstacle to getting material resources needed to allow Daniel to expand his teaching repertoire. His supervisor tended to focus on phonics instruction. The supervisor's focus was transferred onto Daniel where all of his teaching revolved around teaching students basic phonics rules and decoding. Unfortunately, Daniel wanted to bridge out further and learn how to

teach reading comprehension. When asked about why he did not branch out, he relayed that he didn't have the appropriate materials, and in order to get the materials, he needed to go through his current supervisor. But, the supervisor did not share Daniel's aspirations and failed to initiate getting Daniel the appropriate materials. So, Daniel was forced to seek alternatives and draw on other people to get materials.

> ***Daniel (VEI):*** I would like to do something different like maybe doing reading groups. I've asked.
> ***Interviewer***: You've asked whom?
> ***Daniel***: I've asked him [the current supervisor]. I've asked resource teachers but we just don't have materials. The materials right here, like this book here, [are] all out of date. It's like 1970. Dick and Jane stuff.

In other instances, current supervisors tended to complicate the SEPs' jobs by failing to initiate communication with them. These supervisors tended to be the general education teachers or teachers that had the mainstream classrooms. SEPs rarely interacted with them; and when they did, the interaction was limited. Mary discussed how she attempted to interact with teachers in order to give them information on how students were progressing.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** Does the gened teacher ever ask you what you are doing over here?
> ***Mary***: She hasn't. I just started
> ***Interviewer***: Do teachers typically ask you?
> ***Mary***: Not really. Usually I have to furnish the information. Sometimes they don't ask me. I feel like they should ask me. Because I do feel a little bit like my work doesn't mean much.

Lack of communication between SEPs and their current supervisors was a prevalent challenge (see Table 12). The failure to communicate hindered the SEPs from maximizing their current supervisors as social resources regularly.

Table 12. Communication challenges.

SEP	Communication Challenges with Current Supervisors
Gina	Interviewer: Do you ever talk to them about the kids? Gina: Very little. I mainly talk to the special ed teachers that are above me. I have very little conversation with general ed (VEI).
Rosa	Interviewer: Does the teacher ever ask how the groups are going? Rosa: No. Sometimes I come up to the teachers, "Oh my God, they are doing so wonderful." They don't really come up and ask. No, I tend to be more of the one who tells the teacher what's going on. Not the other way around (VEI).

Ultimately, all 12 SEPs made references to their current supervisors. The frequency of references in the interviews and analysis of the actual references indicated that current supervisors influenced the SEPs' everyday routines. Overall, the SEPs perceived their current supervisors to be social resources because the supervisors were supportive. Unfortunately, SEPs did identify that current supervisors could also serve as obstacles. Often, communication was a hurdle where current supervisors did not initiate communication with the SEP. In other cases, the supervisor acted as a block to the SEP's access to instructional materials. They dictated what instructional materials the SEP would use, thus limiting the SEP's choice of instructional content.

Service Providers

Eight out of twelve SEPs discussed their interactions with service providers. Service providers included, but were not limited to, speech and language teachers, occupational therapists, autism specialists, and school psychologists. Seven of the eight SEPs identified that they had access to service providers as social resources. The service providers provided them with materials and strategies to work with students.

There was one SEP that reported that although the service provider was available to the SEP as a resource, a difference in teaching and learning philosophy made the service provider an inaccessible resource. The remaining SEPs in the study (n=4), didn't reference service providers at all in their narratives.

Across the eight SEPs who discussed service providers, approximately 17% (n=42) of the references to social resources were about service providers. Of the 42 references, there were 7 negative comments about service providers (17%). A majority of the references suggested that service providers were an additive element to helping SEPs perform their instructional duties. This was best exemplified in Nina's case. The student that Nina worked with had several services. These included speech and language, occupational therapy, and consultation with autism specialists. Consequently, Nina had opportunities to work with several types of service providers regularly. Nina described where she learned some of her strategies and how much she valued the support from the autism specialists.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** So who taught you the strategy of using checklists and boards and visual cues?
> ***Nina***: Oh, Autism department. Definitely. They are really great. They are here all the time. They are here for us. You guys give us these great strategies and hope that they work.

Nina also referenced how the occupational therapist supported her student. Nina's student also had sensory needs. With these needs came the need to sit on a piece of foam that was attached to her chair and placement of her feet on a platform.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** Do [the autism specialists] give you the supplies too? She has a foam that she sits on.
> ***Nina***: That [platform] came from occupational therapist. They just started that. She has a foam that she sits on from occupational therapy.

Service Providers: A Difference in Philosophy

Five of the nine SEPs that discussed service providers also shared that some of the service providers were not used as social resources. Seventeen percent of the references to service providers were about the challenges, specifically with other special education teachers that were not the SEP's direct supervisors. For example, in Evelyn's previous school, there were special education teachers that did not share the same goals for students as Evelyn. Evelyn believed that the purpose of providing special education support was to help students get out of special education, to help them reach their potential.

> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** In special ed I found that in two classes, the teachers were not proactive in getting the student to push a little harder. This is the child's IEP, this is what they think they are capable of doing, that's fine. Period. I'm thinking, "Wait a minute. You're just going to teach the child this? And they keep getting bigger and they are only doing what their IEP says? They are never going to get anywhere." My goal is always to get my student out of special ed.

Evelyn went on to describe another special education teacher, who was not her supervisor, and how even in her current school, there were individuals who did not share the same philosophies about student learning.

> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** This lady that's right here is the resource specialist. She and I do not see eye to eye on a lot of things. I worked with her last year for 6 weeks. And she, in my personal opinion wastes her students' time.

Louise described how other educators marginalized them and their students. These educators refused to support the special education programs and left Louise and other special education staff isolated.

> ***Louise (PENI):*** Administration at that school was frustrating for a lot of us that were in the special education classrooms, especially the special needs classrooms because there was a feeling that we were on the fringes.

In sum, overall, the nine SEPs identified that service providers were potential social resources. The service providers assisted in obtaining material resources for their students as well as worked to collaborate and consult to help SEPs provide instructional services. However, in a few instances, SEPs referred to the negative actions of service providers. Some service providers didn't share the same teaching and learning philosophies of the SEP or made the SEP feel that they were isolated and alone.

Parents and Community Members: An Inaccessible Social Resource to SEPs in Schools with Lower SES

Nine SEPs identified that parents and the neighborhood communities were accessible social resources. Two SEPs identified that parents and community members were inaccessible resources. When parents and community members were inaccessible, the SEPs described how they had no contact with parents or that parents and community members were not active participants in the students' educations.

Across all 11 SEPs, references to either parent or community member involvement constituted 15% (n=38) of the total references to social resources. Fourteen of those references were negative (37%). There appeared to be a difference between the references from SEPs working in schools in higher income areas versus SEPs who worked in schools in lower income areas. The SEPs in schools with higher SES areas referenced parents and community member involvement more positively

with 77% positive references. In contrast, SEPs in schools with lower SES referenced parents and community member involvement with 60% positive references.

Of the positive references, SEPs identified the strengths of the communities in which they worked. Evelyn, an SEP in a higher socio-economic area, described parent involvement at her school.

> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** The parents at this school are very interested and very involved. We have two parents that come in and do art every other Friday or every 3rd Friday. We have one mom that comes and she does all the photography at the school. I see several parents in the PTA here all the time. They are either making something or getting stuff ready or whatever. We have a lot of parent volunteers. I think there's a lot of parent involvement here.

In addition, Louise, an SEP from a lower income area school, described the pride that the community members took in their heritage and value of schooling.

> ***Louise (PENI):*** The community, I think it's a good community. It's mostly Hispanic. They take pride when their children do [well] in school whether it's regular ed or special ed. I have to say that most of the parents from our classroom… for the most part…are very, very invested in that bridge from school to home.

As a caveat to Louise's mention of ethnicity, Mary piggy backed on Louise's comment by describing the strength of her community's diversity. Mary also worked in an area with socio-economic disadvantage.

> ***Mary (PENI):*** This is considered a very diversified community. So, I guess that the strength is that they are getting to know a lot of different cultures. They are getting to know that everybody's the same.

Mary discussed how the diversity allowed students to appreciate each other and learn from each other. This discussion about the children illustrated that the SEPs looked at the community not only in terms of the parents, but also in how the children were

reflections of the community. Unfortunately, in contrast to SEPs in schools with higher SES, there were less positive references from SEPs in schools with lower SES.

The SEPs in schools with lower SES described a general frustration with the community. Although many of the SEPs are community members, they recognized that the lower socio-economic areas may have had less material resources, or may have been downright dangerous. In Erin's narrative, she lived a few houses down from the school. She described how poverty stricken the area was, how parents did not provide support to their children, and how dangerous the neighborhood could be.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** How would you describe the community?
> ***Erin***: It's terrible. This area in general, especially where I live, there are a lot of thugs. People sell drugs, the gang life kind of thing. Kids are out at all hours of the night. These kids are bad. They have no parents living there. There are all these kids, but no parents. At the same time, there are a lot of people being carried out in stretchers, like a bunch of kids at night. Parents are not supervising their kid.

In addition to Erin's observation of a general lack of parenting, Annie described how parents had a difficult time providing strong supervision because of the nature of poverty. She articulated that parents were "fighting with life."

> ***Annie (PENI):*** This neighborhood, the parents don't complain about anything. My kids went to SDUSD schools near San Carlos. Every parent would have been in here complaining. This neighborhood, the parents just don't complain.
> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** What are the demographics?
> ***Annie***: 100 percent free lunch and free breakfast. Very poor. They're too busy working. A lot of the kids are raised by grandparents. They just fighting with life. They don't have time to fight with the school.

Annie's narrative also illustrated the contrast between schools in upper and lower socio-economic areas. Being a member of an upper socio-economic area, she compared the school life of her own students to that of her own children.

To conclude, out of the eleven SEPs who discussed parents and community members, there were four SEPs who represented schools in higher socio-economic areas. They had more positive references to parents and the community. These four SEPs illustrated that parents had were more involved in their children's educations by providing volunteer time. Seven of the SEPs who worked at schools in lower socio-economic areas also provided information on the strengths of the community; primarily the community's diversity and wanting their children to have a good education. However, the SEPs believed that the nature of poverty tended to set priorities of education aside in lieu of other priorities such as acquiring proficiency in the primary language of English, working to put food on the table, and avoiding dangerous situations. As a result, it appeared that in lower socio-economic areas, the parents and community were social resources that were inaccessible to SEPs.

Former Supervisors

Nine out of twelve SEPs described interactions with former supervisors as individuals who constituted their social resource network. These individuals were former principals or former teacher supervisors. Seven of the SEPs indicated that their former supervisors were accessible; they described how former supervisors helped to mentor them and provide them with materials. Two of the SEPs indicated that former supervisors were inaccessible social resources; they reported that their former supervisors did not support them or there was no interaction.

Across the nine SEPs that mentioned former supervisors, 13% (n=32) of the references to social resources were about former supervisors. Five references were

cast in a negative light (16%). Thus, the majority of the references to former supervisors were positive. The SEPs discussed how their former supervisors were supportive of their work with children and helped to mentor them and build their skill base with instruction. For example, Evelyn described her former supervising teachers

> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** So, I had a wonderful teacher and she just made me jump right in. She give me this and that and do this. And she gave me all kinds of ideas. So, I use a lot of that material… [and my other supervisor] is a really great teacher. He's really into literature. We were reading. I was reading with the kids.

Evelyn described how her former supervisors taught her how to imagine, be creative, and teach herself how to improve. The interaction between Evelyn and her former supervisors directly influenced how she provided instruction to students. In her PENI interview, Evelyn stated: "From my two teachers, sometimes I just dream up stuff. She taught me how to dream up stuff." She also described she continued to draw on her former supervisor's ideas and materials even in her current practice.

> ***Evelyn (VEI):*** I asked my [former] teacher, "Can I take one of the things that I think are really important that I really like? " "Sure, by all means, take whatever you like." I've emailed him, "Could you send me this form?" And he sends it to me.

Similarly, six more SEPs referenced former supervisors in a positive light; sample excerpts are provided (See Table 13).

Table 13. SEP Positive references to former supervisors.

SEP	Reference to Former Supervisors
Louise	The teacher was marvelous. She was an excellent teacher. Very dedicated (PENI).
Gina	I worked with a resource specialist and she used to do, and it worked really well. She would record words, say a row of those words. And they would have to go back and listen to it on a tape recorder. And then they would turn off the tape recorder and they would have to try to do it themselves. And then we would do it with them. And it was wonderful. So, that's one of the reasons why I want to do those vocabulary words. It's kind of the same thing, only without the recording (VEI).
Serena	All the people that were [at my old school] are there because they are willing to work with handicapped kids. They're all very understanding, usually very mellow people. Giving. They're the kind of people like I am that like to work with kids no matter what they're issues are (PENI).

Former Supervisors: The Not so Nice Picture

In contrast, there were two SEPs out of the nine that only had negative things to say about former supervisors. Their experiences with the former supervisors appeared to anger them. For example, with Rosa, she described how her former supervisor treated her differently and disrespectfully.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** [My former supervisor], that woman was absolutely horrible. She wouldn't back me up. She never listened to me. The kids would tell her, "Oh she wasn't watching us." I went to the bathroom. Or the kids would tell her, "She wasn't watching us."
> [She would ask,] "Well, where were you?"
> "I went to the bathroom."
> [She'd say,] "Well, you're supposed to be watching them."
> "I needed to go to the bathroom."
> [She said,] "No, you're supposed to be watching them."

Rosa's example may seem extreme, but another SEP, Daniel, shared a similar story of mistreatment from a supervisor. But, his maltreatment took the form of being ignored

and cast aside. He worked with a student on a one-on-one basis. Daniel supported this child throughout the day and accompanied him to all of his classes. Instead of getting support from the classroom teachers, the child's case manager, or the special education teacher, Daniel was left to his own devices. Daniel's tale illustrated how his former supervisors failed to serve as a social resource because he and his student were neglected.

> ***Daniel (PENI):*** [The] case manager, she rarely came by to talk to me. Maybe once in every two months she would come. She would give me props and stuff. I remember she would give me these [folder games] to work with him. But, it wasn't a lesson. The resource teacher didn't want [anything] to do with [my student]. [She'd say,] "I'll take him out when I have to test him." That's the only time she would see him.

In sum, nine of the twelve SEPs identified that former supervisors were social resources. Seven of the nine found that they were able to tap into these social resources, while two of the nine struggled with their former supervisors and were not able to access them as social resources. These struggles stemmed from the former supervisors' treatment of the SEP. Either the former supervisor acted in manner that disrespected the SEP or they simply cast the SEP aside. Either way, the SEPs who had negative experiences with their former supervisors tended to become angered and feel devalued.

Other SEPs: An Untapped Social Resource

Seven out of twelve SEPs made references to other SEPs in their schools. Six of the seven identified that there were other SEPs on their school sites. One of the seven described the inaccessibility of interacting with other SEPs. Although half of the SEPs identified that there were other SEPs on their school sites, the frequency of

references within their interviews to the other SEPs was minimal. References to other SEPs represented six percent (n=16) of all the references to social resources. Six of those references were cast in more negative lights (38%). The negative comments tended to revolve around the participant SEPs' judgments about other SEPs effectiveness. For example, Gina described other SEPs at her school site: "We do have people that sit in the corner and read a good book" (PENI).

But, for the most part, the SEPs that mentioned other SEPs at their school did so just to describe that other SEPs existed at their schools. The participant SEPs descriptions of the other SEPs indicated that the interaction between the participant SEPs and other SEPs was minimal. For example, Evelyn compared her previous work experiences in the northern part of the state to her current work experiences. She felt that in her previous job, SEPs had the opportunity to attend trainings where they could network and share ideas. In that setting, Evelyn indicated that other SEPs were social resources that would help her in her own instructional practice. Unfortunately, an SEP community did not exist in Evelyn's current school. She attempted to create an SEP community, but the SEPs were hesitant to share their ideas or discuss student.

> ***Evelyn (VEI):*** I would really like the aides to also have a time when they come together and say, "What are you doing? How do you do this? "That's aides training aides. If you have a new aide, you should have a meeting and tell them all the things that they are going to step into and how to deal with it. You have none of that.
> ***Interviewer***: An aide community?
> ***Evelyn***: Yes.
> ***Interviewer***: You don't have that at your school? You don't talk to each other?
> ***Evelyn***: No. Like today, I said, "Let's have a meeting today and talk. And see what some of our pitfalls are. What we're doing. Why don't we try this once a month?" Normally on Tuesday it's teacher meeting day. The aides are assigned to the book room. We just talk all the time, but there's no formal

> thing. Sometimes we're afraid to say something about our other student or a teacher because it might get back or whatever. In a small school, everybody knows the teacher you're working with.

Evelyn's narrative illustrated that in any given school, there were multiple SEPs working with students. But, it was rare to have the SEPs come together to collaborate and use each other as social resources.

Even if the SEP was in the same classroom, interaction was rare. For example, in Annie's classroom, there were two additional SEPs. The other two SEPs were assigned to specific children who were in Annie's classroom. Annie saw them on a daily basis and watched them interact with their respective students. But, there was a general lack of communication and collaboration. In fact, when Annie described the roles that she and the other SEPs play in the classroom, it appeared very compartmentalized where each SEP has their own job and their own students.

> ***Annie (PENI)***: There are 3 total [SEPs] right now. She's the one on one for him [referring to an aide and a student]. He has a one on one [referring to another student and aide]. I'm the classroom aide. There's Mr. [Harris]. He's [Jim's] one on one. And they've been out running around the field. They've been doing exercise. I have the girls in 2nd grade class. So they go into a classroom and I go with them.
> [Ms. Smith] actually takes care of [Travis] pretty much. He is so regimented that he is actually on a timer which is a signal that he responds to. So the timer goes off and he walks over to [Ms. Smith].

In the end, although there were multiple SEPs on the same school site or classroom, the interaction between the SEPs and other SEPs was minimal. As Evelyn illustrated, other SEPs had the potential to be social resources, but for the seven participants who referenced other SEPs, other SEPs appeared to be untapped social resources.

Accessing and Using Social Resources

In conclusion, SEPs identified five categories of social resources: former supervisors, current supervisors, other SEPs, service providers, and parents and the community. Their accessibility and use of these social resources varied depending on the SEPs experiences and their respective schools' socio-economic status. In addition, in line with activity theorists' belief of the societal and collaborative impact on the activity system, the SEPs' experiences with their social resources inevitably influenced their instruction during the instructional activity.

Overall, for the SEPs in this study, current supervisors were not only the most accessible, but also the resource that was most frequently talked about in the SEPs' interviews. Based on the SEPs own talk about their current supervisors, it appeared that current supervisors influenced the everyday routines the SEPs engaged in during the instructional activity. They provided materials, collaboration, and guidance. However, the SEPs recognized experiences where current supervisors posed as obstacles. When current supervisors served as barriers, SEPs were left feeling isolated, disrespected, unable to access resources, and uninformed. The findings on current supervisors are commensurate with current paraeducator literature. The quality of the supervisor and paraeducator interaction influenced how paraeducators perceive themselves and how they executed their instructional roles (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Rueda & Monzo, 2002).

One of the things that were missing in the literature was the role of service providers and their interactions with paraeducators. In this study, findings indicated

that service providers were also viable and additive social resources. Similar to current supervisors, service providers provided SEPs with materials, consultation, and collaboration.

Much of the research on parents and paraeducators stressed the parents' perceptions of the quality of paraeducator services (Hiatt, Sampson, & Baird, 1997; Werts, et al., 2004; Monzo & Rueda, 2003; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004; Rueda & Genzuk, 2007). Less is known about how paraeducators use parents and the community as a social resource. The social resources of parents and community and other SEPs at the participant SEPs' school sites proved to be more problematic for the SEPs of this study. The parents and community were more readily available as social resources to SEPs who worked at schools with higher SES. In contrast, SEPs from schools with lower SES found that the parents and the community had other priorities that kept them from being an accessible social resource. Finally, despite the fact that there were multiple SEPs at the school sites, the SEPs who participated in this study did not use them as a social resource. The participant SEPs did not interact, communicate, or collaborate with other SEPs.

CHAPTER VII: MATERIAL RESOURCES

In Chapter VI, data from this study illustrated that the special education paraeducators' (SEP) instructional activity system was influenced by the quality of their interactions with their social resources. More specifically, SEPs' everyday routines were influenced by the quality of the relationships and levels of support that SEPs had with and from their social communities. In this chapter, I illustrate that material resources, the actual tangible items that SEPs use in their everyday routines, also influence the SEPs' instructional activity. Similar to previous chapters, the data suggests that the SEPs' use of resources, specifically material resources, help to shape what type of everyday routines the paraeducators engage in.

To begin, we must return to Engestrom's (1999) activity theory perspective. He describes the pivotal role of tools to mediate the immediate activity system where subjects, in this case special education paraeducators (SEP), mediate the instructional activity. Within the basic mediation triangle, tools can include artifacts and language that SEPs use to interact with students. Within the extended triangle that incorporates greater contextual factor such as the community that the SEP interacts with to meet the outcomes of the activity. In this study, I suggest that the mediating tools the SEPs use to facilitate the instructional activity include material resources. I defined material resources as resources that involved tangible items that SEPs used to provide instruction. These resources originated from the SEPs' macro, exo, and meso-

systems. More specifically, they were typically provided to the SEP by the district, the school, current supervisors, and past supervisors (see Figure 11).

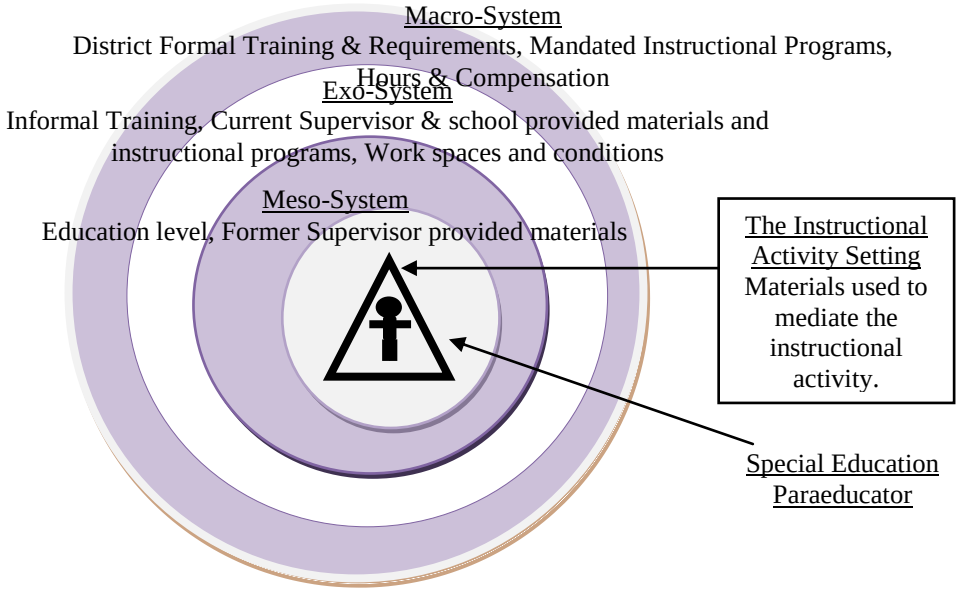


Figure 11. Influences on SEP access to material resources.

Material resources were broken down into two general categories, materials that were used for instruction and materials that structured the SEPs' overall work in the schools. Materials that were used for instruction included scripted programs and curriculum, subject specific resources (math, writing, and reading) lesson plans, instructional presentation tools, interactive learning tools, behavioral tools, assessment tools, the actual IEP document, class size resources, and training on instruction and behavior. The material resources related to the SEPs' overall working conditions were the hours of the work day and time to complete tasks within the work day, space to work, and compensation.

Method of Analysis

Using the Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview (PENI), Video Elicited Interview (VEI), video of the teaching interaction, and paraeducator demographic questionnaires of all 12 participants, I identified tangible materials that influenced the SEPs' instruction. Dichotomous coding methods were used to determine if SEPs had access to material resources. Specifically, identification was based on whether or not the SEP was observed to use the material resource in their instructional activity and if the resource was referenced in their interviews. In addition, I conducted within case and across case analyses looking for trends in the types of materials the SEPs referenced.

Although all of the SEPs were asked similar guiding questions from the interviews and questionnaires, a closer analysis of their responses indicated that the SEPs' varied in their responses in terms of their references to material resources. I analyzed the frequency of how many times a SEP mentioned a material resource in their interviews to determine the relationship between the material resource and the SEPs' everyday routines. The frequency counts were determined by the number of times the SEP referenced the material resource in one turn take during the interview, observed use of a material resource during the video of the instructional interaction, or responded on the questionnaire.

To minimize inflation of frequency counts based on SEPs' verbosity in their interviews, I applied a standard method of frequency counting for their references to material resources. I counted references to material resources based on interview

exchanges, specifically, the SEPs' response to each interview question. For example, after I asked a question, if an SEP identified the use of a white board as a material resource to show a student an example of a math problem, it was counted as one frequency. If within the same response to the question, the SEP reported the use of whiteboards multiple times, it was still counted as one frequency. If the same SEP identified that whiteboard across two different questions, it was counted as two frequencies.

Similar to the manner in which I analyzed social resources, I also denoted if the material resource was perceived by the SEP as being a negative resource. Negative perceptions were determined as material resources that the SEPs desired to use, but did not have.

Then, I divided up the SEP references into two separate groups: 1) SEPs from schools with higher socioeconomic (SES) statuses (n=4) and 2) SEPs from schools with lower SES (n=8). I compared the references to material resources to determine if there were any differences between the two SES groups in the amount of references to material resources and the percentage of negative to positive references. Frequency counts were analyzed using statistical analysis: measures of central tendency and analysis of variance (ANOVA), to determine if there were any significant differences between the means of references in respect to the types of positive to negative references and differences among SEPs of different SES.

Instructional Material Resources

Instructional material resources were resources that the SEP either described in the narratives or were observed to be used in their videos of the instructional activity. The instructional material resources were used to provide instruction to students and enable them to complete tasks. The instructional material resources could be further broken down into ten more categories:

1. Training
2. Behavior Resources
3. Assessment Resources
4. Interactive Resources
5. Scripted Programs and Curriculum Resources
6. Subject Specific Resources
7. Presentation Resources
8. Class Size
9. Resources based off of the students Individualized Education Plans (IEP)
10. Lesson Plans

Overall, through the SEPs' interviews, questionnaires, and videos, at least half of the SEPs in this study had access to the aforementioned instructional material resources (see Table 14). SEPs had access to these instructional resources if the SEPs mentioned that they were using, had the resource available for use, or were observed to use the instructional resource. In addition, some SEPs also identified that they did not have access to specific material resources. I determined that SEPs did not have

access to instructional resources if the SEPs identified that they did not have access to or there was a lack of the instructional material resource. There were SEPs that didn't reference certain instructional material resources at all throughout their interviews, questionnaires, or videos. The lack of information did not allow me to determine whether or not they had or did not have access to said resources.

Table 14. Access to instructional material resources.

Instructional Material Resource	% of SEPs' **with** access to the instructional material resource *		% of SEPs' **without** access to the instructional material resource *		% of SEPs' **who did not make a reference** to the instructional material resource *	
Training	100	(n=12)	0		0	
Behavior	92	(n=11)	0		8	(n=1)
Assessment	83	(n=10)	0		17	(n=2)
Interactive	83	(n=10)	0		17	(n=2)
Scripted Programs & Curriculum	83	(n=10)	0		17	(n=2)
Subject Specific Resources						
Reading	100	(n=12)	0		0	
Writing	92	(n=11)	0		8	(n=1)
Math	83	(n=10)	0		17	(n=2)
Presentation	75	(n=9)	0		25	(n=3)
Class Size	67	(n=8)	8	(n=1)	25	(n=3)
Resources based off (IEP)	58	(n=7)	0		42	(n=5)
Lesson Plans	50	(n=6)	8	(n=1)	42	(n=5)

* Percentages based off of N=12 SEP participants

At least 50% of SEP participants had access to the aforementioned instructional resources; training was the most prevalent of all of the resources. However, when looking more deeply at the references within the SEPs' interviews, questionnaires and videos, it appeared that even though items like training were accessible to all, the SEPs' use of these resources within their everyday routines emphasized an importance on subject specific, scripted programs, and assessment resources above all other resources. Subject specific resources, scripted programs, and assessment resources constituted the majority of the references to instructional material resources described and used in their everyday routine (see Figure 12).

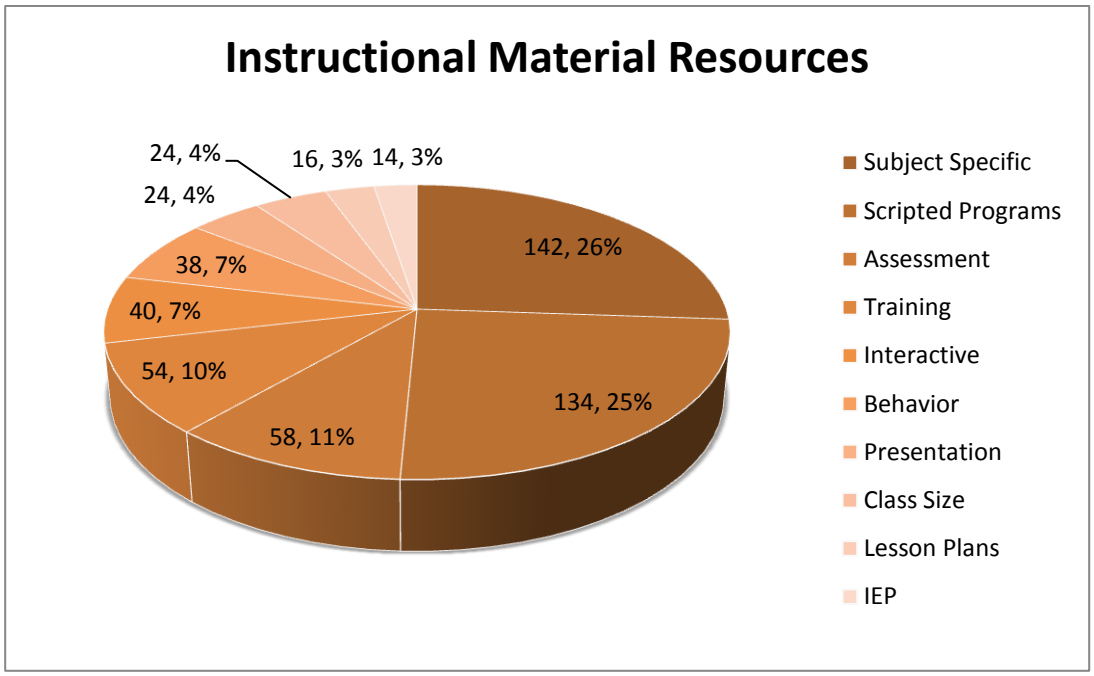


Figure 12. Distribution of references to instructional material resources.

In addition, statistical analysis of the frequency of references to specific instructional indicated that some instructional material resources were impacted by the

schools' SES. For some instructional material resources, there were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of references; however, there was a trend (see Table 15). A reporting and further description of statistically significant differences or trends based on the schools' SES will be included in this chapter.

Table 15. Differences in references to instructional material resources by schools' SES.

Instructional Material	Statistical Significance	Trend	SES Difference
Scripted Programs & Curriculum		X	SEPs from lower SES schools tended to talk about scripted programs and curriculum more.
Subject Specific Resource: Reading		X	SEPs from lower SES schools appeared to be limited in the types of reading materials available.
Presentation Resource	X		SEPs from lower SES schools talked more about the use of visuals during instruction.
IEP Resource		X	All the SEPs from higher SES schools revealed that they had access to the IEP.

Scripted Programs or Curriculum

Ten of the twelve SEPs identified that they used either a scripted program or curriculum. Scripted programs were programs that explicitly identified the content to be taught, provided materials to teach the specified content, and dictated how to teach the content using specific strategies. Curriculum resources were resources that explicitly identified the content to be taught, provided materials, and suggested how to teach the content. The difference between scripted programs and curriculum was that scripted programs dictated the implementation of the content through specific strategies, whereas curriculum only suggested strategies to use. Across the ten SEPs,

approximately 25% (n=134) of the total instructional material resource references were references to scripted programs and curriculum. In addition, video analysis revealed that eight out of the ten SEPs that described scripted programs or curriculum in their interviews also used the programs during their video captured instruction.

When looking at whether or not there was difference among SEPs based on their school's socio-economic status (SES), there were no statistically significant differences in the means of the frequency of references to scripted programs. But it appeared that SEPs from schools with lower SES tended to talk about scripted programs and curriculum more than SEPs from schools with higher SES. SEPs from lower SES schools made an average of approximately 17 references to scripted programs and curriculum (SD= 9.8). In contrast, the SEPs from higher SES schools made an average of six references to scripted programs and curriculum (SD=2.6). The increased frequency of talk for SEPs from schools with lower SES suggests that SEPs from schools with lower SES appear to describe their everyday routines more in terms of scripted program or curriculum resources.

Across all ten SEPs, only six references to scripted programs and curriculum were perceived as negative. These negative references tended to be commentary on the limitations of the program or curriculum. For example, Mary commented on the new reading program she was using in comparison to previous scripted programs. Mary desired to go back to using other programs rather than using the new one.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** If you had a magic wand, what would you wish for?
> ***Mary***: To do away with [the current] program and do my own and teach [the other programs I learned (lists three different programs)]. The programs that I learned and that I know that do pretty well. They cover a lot in more detail.

from these six negative references, the remaining references indicated that SEPs who were using scripted programs or curriculum found them to be helpful material resources. In Rosa's case, she used a program that focused on reading fluency. She used the program for five years, and rarely deviated from it. During the videotaping, Rosa focused on the reading fluency program. She had students read out loud, counted the numbers of words they read per minute, identified oral reading errors, correct those errors, had them answer reading comprehension questions based on the passage they had just read, and used the worksheets that accompanied the program. All of these components were part of the scripted program. Even the introduction to the reading passage contained a script; the script was provided by an audio CD where the passage would be read out loud to the students. Rosa took pride in the fact that she would sometimes forego the audio CD and read the passage to the students herself. She described the program in detail.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** [In] the program there's a paragraph and [the students] read. The set up is that they have, the title, say the first one is "colors". There's a picture of some crayons and then it has three key words. Underneath it, three little lines where you are supposed to write a prediction. I go over the key words. Then they read the paragraph. They are timed for a minute. Wherever they stop, I stop and I count the words. Then, there's this CD that's played. The person reads to them. She reads it three times. She goes over the key words. Then she reads it to them 3 times. After that [the students] read it over again. Usually they get at least ten words more and their fluency is much better.

Rosa's use of the reading fluency program illustrated that there was little alteration from the script. She followed the guidelines that are set forth in the program from the way in which she assessed student reading (fluency) to how the lesson was delivered.

There were multiple examples across the ten SEPs of the use of scripted programs to teach instructional concepts. Seven of the ten SEPs used programs to teach reading. The focus was primarily on teaching children how to decode using phonetic rules.

In contrast to scripted programs, Annie and Serena used curriculum to guide their instruction. The curriculum informed them of what they were to teach, and provided teaching materials. However, the curriculum did not dictate how to teach the content. In Annie's case, she would flip through the curriculum and pick and choose what she wanted to teach. The curriculum would provide her with suggestions of the materials to use, such as graphic organizers or specific types of manipulatives. In Serena's case, she would get copies of the teachers' guide to the curriculum. When she came across a note in the teachers guide, she would typically use the note to add further explanation to what she was teaching.

> ***Serena (VEI):*** If [what I'm teaching] came from a textbook, [the teacher will] give me a copy of the teacher's guide version. It'll have in the sidelines what to point out to the kids. There's side information that's not even in their book. "Explain to the children what slavery means if they don't know."
> ***Interviewer***: Do you find those notes to be useful?
> ***Serena***: Yeah. Especially if I've read them ahead of time and see it coming. Sometimes I get to the end and I realize, "Oh, I probably should have addressed that." Sometimes I forget.

Subject Specific Material Resources

Through interviews, questionnaires, and videos, all 12 SEPs indicated that they had access to subject specific material resources. Subject specific material resources were the tools that the SEPs used to teach math, written language, and reading. Most of the tools referenced were subsequently used in the videotaped instructional activity. Consequently, the subject specific material resources acted as mediating tools to

mediate the learning activity. Twenty-six percent of the total instructional material resources references were references to subject specific material resources. Breaking that down further, the majority of the subject specific material references were in regards to the subject of reading (see Figure 13). In contrast to the scripted programs and curriculum resources, these resources were not derived from or used in conjunction with any scripted program or curriculum.

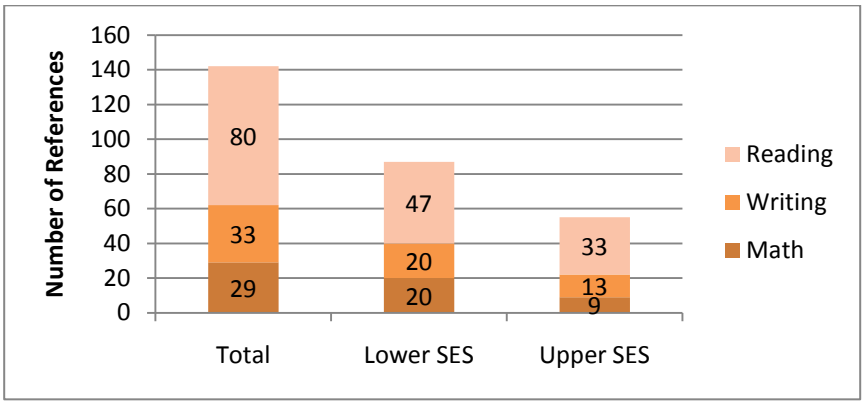


Figure 13. Distribution of references to subject specific material resources.

Reading Resources

All twelve SEPs identified that they had access reading resources as instructional material resources. Reading resources included the use of reading books. Contained within the books were pictures and text that the SEPs could use to help students decode unfamiliar words and comprehend the text better. For example, in Evelyn's video and narrative, she described how she used a book and the pictures contained within to increase the student's reading comprehension.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** You ask all these questions throughout each page. How do you know what questions to ask? Are you shooting for a certain type of question or answer?
> ***Evelyn***: He knew [the story] had something to do with the party. But I wanted him to explain to me why it had to do with the party. That's one of the reasons I did it. The other reason is [that] it's taking the whole picture in and being able to figure out what's actually going on. I have a tendency, if I think that the picture has more things in it that I really want them to know, or I want them to explain to me. I will discuss that page. To me, he's putting those two things all together: the picture and the words so that when he is telling me for his comprehension, he can tell me small details. You're not just reading words. There's a whole bunch more to it than just reading words.

In other SEPs' narratives, the reading materials they used were sight word lists. These were lists that students needed to read and memorize because they did not follow specific phonetic rules. When Gina provided instruction to a group of fifth grade students, Gina had the students read over sight word lists and identify words that they were unfamiliar with. Once the students identified the more challenging words, Gina helped them decode the word. Overall, she was happy that most of her students did not need review of the sight word lists, but she kept it handy for her students who had more reading challenges.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** Are these 6th grade words?
> ***Gina***: I think so. But, to be honest, I'm not sure either. They are pretty easy though. There's 1000 of them. There's a couple [students] that I'd still like to do it with.

In Erin's classroom, the kindergarten through third grade students had many more reading challenges than Gina's students. She used tools that were more focused on phonics. The students reviewed an "ABC" chart at least twice a day. With this review, the students went through the alphabet and identified the sound that each letter made. Then, when they wrote or completed a reading worksheet, Erin had a paper version of the alphabet on the table. This paper version had the letters of the alphabet with a

corresponding picture to remind the students of the alphabet sound. Finally, when students broke into reading groups, each group had to rotate to an independent reading section. There, one of the activities that they could do was to go through "alphabet tubs." These were small plastic tubs that were separated and organized by the alphabet. So, each letter of the alphabet had its own tub. Contained within the tub were objects. These objects corresponded with the sound that the letter made. For example, if a child opened up a tub marked with the letter "T," the tub would contain a little figure of a turtle, toilet, tank, etc. These figures were used to reinforce the sound and letter correspondence.

When looking at whether or not there was a difference between reading material resources by the schools' SES, SEPs from schools with lower SES did make nine negative references to reading materials; mostly about a difficulty accessing reading materials. Daniel epitomized this notion when he described how he didn't have access to any texts other than phonics based reading materials.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** What would want more training on?
> ***Daniel***: New materials....I just want to know if I'm doing my job. Just because I got one thing [the phonics program], am I supposed to go onto different thing? If I'm going to be doing this phonics the whole year, is that okay? Should I get more?
> ***Interviewer***: Have you asked them?
> ***Daniel***: No, I haven't because I know there are no materials. I want to do stories, reading groups and stuff.

In contrast, none of the SEPs from schools with higher SES made any negative comments about their reading materials. This suggests that SEPs from schools with lower SES may have access to reading materials, but this access is limited to specific

types of reading materials. For example, in Daniel's case, he had access to phonics materials, but he did not have access to reading comprehension materials.

Writing Resources

Eleven out of the 12 SEPs identified that they had access to writing resources. There were no negative references made about writing resources. References to writing resources revolved mostly around resources to assist in the legibility of the student's handwriting, spelling, and grammar. Mary and Nina both discussed the importance of having appropriate spacing and writing legibly for their students. Their emphasis on handwriting was best exemplified in Nina's instructional activity. Nina's student was provided with a lined paper that had heavy dark lines on it, a box above the lines for a picture, and dots (created by Nina) to indicate how tall the student's capital letters should be. Nina used this document to help the student generate writing that was legible.

Six of the eleven SEPs referenced using writing resources for spelling. For example, in Erin's instructional groups, she not only used the alphabet page that cited the letters of the alphabet and attached to a picture that denoted the corresponding sound the letter made for reading, but she also used it for spelling. When a child attempted to write and had trouble spelling the word, Erin directed the child to the alphabet page and had them sound out the letters of the word.

Finally, four of the eleven SEPs used the children's own writing or worksheets to assist in teaching them how to use proper grammar. In Louise's group, she worked with them on writing stories. In a group of five, she elicited their stories and helped

them to craft sentences. Louise looked at the student's writing and listened to the sentences that they wanted to write. With those resources, she determined if the sentences made sense and would help them craft those sentences.

> ***Louise (VEI):*** They know what they want to say. But, forming the thought and having it come out with any sense, they can do a sentence. But, they'll [have] incorrect prepositions. For us, it's just a matter of getting it to make a little bit of sense. But, [in on student's] sentence, she talked about her mom cooks good food for her. That was her first sentence. I pointed it out to her, "Read your first sentence." She read it. And then it was my mom cooks good for me. She wrote it so that what she left out was food. I just had her correct it. She just erased and she put in what she [originally wanted] and then it made sense then.

Gina provided grammar instruction in her warm-up. When the students came to her for small group instruction, she had a list of poorly written sentences on the board. The sentences were wrought with mistakes in conventions. They had errors in grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. The students were required to identify the mistakes and write the sentences correctly. Using these writing resources, Gina taught them correct usage rules.

> ***Gina (VEI):*** They get a wrong sentence and they have to fix it. Each lesson has certain things that they're looking for [such as] question marks, apostrophes, proper nouns. So, it's just a quick writing lesson because so much of it they just don't know or they just need to be sharpened up on.

Math Resources

Ten of the 12 SEPs indicated that they had access to math resources. References to math resources included math worksheets, number lines, and manipulatives used specifically for math. None of these math resources were tied to a scripted program or curriculum. In Annie's narrative, she enjoyed teaching math and

used a variety of material resources that were already in use in the classroom. One of the resources that the students used was a graphic organizer called a "Ten Frame." When used in conjunction with counting blocks, the Ten Frame helped students understand place value. When the Ten Frame was filled, it represented the numerical amount of 10.

Similarly, SEPs used math manipulatives to teach basic calculation. Evelyn used this concept as well with math tiles. In her video lesson, Evelyn had the student take out a series of tiles. She gave the student several directions on what to do with the tiles and he would manipulate the tiles to arrive at a numerical answer.

Summary of Subject Specific Material Resources

Regardless of the schools' SES, overall, the SEPs had access to several material resources that were specific to the subject taught. These resources were discussed in the SEPs narratives and observed to be used in their actual instruction. Evident from the higher instances of references (n=80), reading appeared to be the most prevalent subject being taught, with the most resources to access. Reading was the only subject area where SEPs, specifically SEPs from schools with lower SES, had negative things to say about the material resources. They reported that there weren't broad enough resources that could move the SEP away from teaching basic reading skills such as phonics towards more reading comprehension instruction.

Assessment Resources

Another common material resource was the use of assessment material resources. Ten out of 12 SEPs identified that they used tests and documentation sheets

to assess student learning and behavior. Approximately 11% (n=58) of references to instructional materials were references to assessment resources. There was only 1 negative reference. All ten of the SEPs that referenced assessment resources did some form of documentation on the students' progress in their groups. These resources could be formal, informal, or tied to scripted curriculum (see Table 16).

Table 16. Examples of assessment resources.

SEP	Assessment Resource	Origination of Assessment
Daniel	Spelling Tests	Derived from Scripted Phonics Program.
Debbie	Point Sheets	Derived from teacher made behavior program to monitor behavioral progress.
Gladys	Phonics Test	Derived from Scripted Phonics Program.
Mary	Academic Testing & Documentation	Formal testing programs. Teacher initiated documentation system.
Rosa	Fluency Test	Derived from Scripted Reading Fluency Program.
Nina	Formal notes	Derived from teacher made documentation system.
Evelyn	Informal notes	SEP made documentation booklet.

Evelyn made negative references when she described the use of special education testing to identify students with disabilities. She felt that there were too many rules and procedures to special education testing that often took too long to complete or excluded students from the assessment process, even when they clearly needed some form of support or extra help. The example she used was to describe the young boy she was working with. The child was home schooled until the third grade when he arrived at Evelyn's school. The home schooling experience may have caused him to be performing significantly below grade level. He had very little number sense

and could not read. But, because of the laws that govern special education testing, the IEP team denied testing. Consequently, the student would have been left in general education classes without extra help to get him to grade level.

But, the other 57 references described how SEPs assessed students and provided documentation to teachers about their levels of performance both academically and behaviorally. Serena used assessment resources to chart how students were doing in her groups, as well as provided feedback to the teacher. At the beginning of the year, she and her teacher set up a system where Serena wrote notes on the children. These notes included what they read, if they made a mistake, and general progress on the lesson. The notes were handed to her supervising teacher for her review when the teacher did grading.

> ***Serena (PENI):*** [The teacher] gets my notes. But, she didn't hear firsthand how they are doing with the fluency, on the reading, all that kind of stuff. So, we try and keep notes on what kind of words they stumbled on. And then she'll read my notes.

Training Resources

All 12 SEPs made references to training resources; these references indicated that they all had access to some form of training. In their descriptions of training, the SEPs' described two different types of training: formal and informal. Formal training was training provided by the district or school; informal training was training that SEPs received from their supervisors. Approximately 9% (n=54) of references to instructional materials were references to training resources. Over half (55.6%) of the

training resources references were negative references. Negative references indicated that there was a general lack of formal training.

Formal Training

Half of the SEPs in this study had access to formal training. Three of the SEPs worked for the district long enough to attend several professional development trainings early in their careers as paraeducators. Specifically, Gladys, Mary, and Annie all attended mass, district trainings on specific scripted phonics programs. Nina, was the only SEP who attended several different professional development trainings to learn how to deal with a specific disabilities, specifically autism. At her video elicited interview, Nina brought forth proof of attending these workshops by showing the researcher "certificates of completion." All of the trainings dealt specifically with how to work with students with autism both academically and behaviorally. Debbie received one formal training from the district. That training was on how to diffuse problem behaviors and place students into restraints if they were endangering themselves or others. Evelyn received training at her previous district, but not at DUSD. That left the other six SEPs who never received any formal training.

Informal Training

Half of the participants of this study completed their training from watching teachers and getting informally trained by their supervisors (Table 17).

Table 17. Informal training resources.

SEP	Training History
Erin	Interviewer: Is there any training? Erin: It's more so [my supervising teacher]. If it's giving me a direction and if I don't understand, she'll show me how to do it. But, there's no formal training coming in. I do have experience tutoring. I am sure that it would be beneficial to have tutoring from the district. But, I feel that I am good at working one on one with the students because I've done it before (PENI).
Louise	Last year, one of our sped resource teachers, Holly, she did an inservice for all of us SEA's from different classrooms and different grade levels. She did a nice inservice in the library on dealing with small reading groups. Of course, I don't do that. It's like language for me, if you don't use it, you lose it (VEI).
Daniel	The training usually comes from him [referring to supervising teacher.] All this stuff I've got with the sights for sounds and this. He provided me with it. He taught me the lesson first because I didn't know anything about it (PENI).

General Lack of Enough Adequate Training

Even though all of the SEPs reported that they had access to either formal or informal training, an analysis of the SEPs' negative comments regarding training revealed that there wasn't enough training or the training wasn't adequate to meet the demands of being a paraeducator. Generally, SEPs' negative references to training indicated that training resources were lacking and unavailable.

Evelyn commented that the district only required the base minimum of qualifications, the passage of a basic skills test. This minimal requirement didn't paint an adequate picture of the true skills needed to perform the SEP role effectively. Evelyn described how important it was that SEPs be trained. They needed training on how to work with students, how to deal with behavior problems, and how to interact with their supervisors.

> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** I feel that the aides need more training. They need to all be [behaviorally] certificated. Because we always have to do our red cross training. Why not [behavior] training? Give them that opportunity when the teachers have in-service days, do it for the aides too. Make the training appropriate for what they do. Just because you can pass that test, and you apply to be an aide and you pass that test doesn't mean you are going to be a good aide. And I think the district needs to be more sure about who they're making aides. And give them some more training.

Interactive Resources

Ten out of 12 SEPs reported that they had access to resources that made students engage and interact in learning experiences. Approximately 7% (n=40) of the references to instructional material resources involved interactive resources. These resources primarily included the use of flashcards and games. There were three negative references to interactive resources. The negative references alluded to the fact that interactive resources could not only enhance the learning experience, but also serve as a distraction. Annie stated it best when she describes her lesson where she uses multiple interactive tools. She noticed that one of her students is very distracted, needed frequent redirection, and was not engaged in the learning.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** If you had to do [the lesson] differently, how would you do it?
> ***Annie***: I don't know. I think I would do it again. If I would have asked [the student] to stop [fidgeting], she would have stopped it. But then she would have sat there idly. If I would have reprimanded her or been stern with her about her behavior, she will shut down and be a total behavior problem. So, I don't know what I would do differently. I had a lot of materials. I know that's kind of an issue. I have all this stuff in front of me. But I think I needed all this stuff.

Aside from the three negative references, six of the ten SEPs who used interactive material resources reported that interactive materials assisted in getting students excited about learning.

The most prevalent form of interactive materials was the use of games. The SEPs either used store bought learning games, or made up games themselves. For example, in Debbie's class, students were rewarded for working on their assignments by playing games that were associated with the content being learned. Debbie described her routine as first reinforcing what the teacher learned by working with students individually on the assignments that the teacher gave. After the students were done with that assignment, Debbie would play math games with them.

> ***Debbie (VEI):*** If [the students] done everything with [the teacher], then they'll come to me and that's when they usually do the game.
> ***Interviewer***: They get to pick the games.
> ***Debbie***: If it's during math, it has to be a math game. Sometimes it's the allowance game. That's what they really love because they feel like the money is real. But when we're doing fractions, we do like a fraction bingo. Now, they've just started going to multiplication. So, now we're doing multiplication flashcards. Today they did a worksheet test and they went back to the allowance game.

In Gina's use of interactive resources, she created flashcards that she called "sound cards." The sound cards had the spelling of specific phonemes such as "oo, oa, and ch." On each of the cards, Gina included a picture with a word that used the phoneme. For example, if the sound card represented "oo," she had a picture of a "stool." But, Gina took the flashcards to the interactive level by turning it into a game. She played "Around the World." In this game, students competed against each other to identify the sound on the sound card the quickest. The winner moved onto every student in the group until they lost. Then, a new winner moved onto subsequent students. During the videotaping, Gina demonstrated "Around the World." The students were excited to play. They laughed, jumped at the chance to go first, and shouted out the answers to the sound cards.

Behavioral Modification Resources

Eleven of the 12 SEPs identified that they had access to resources to manage student behaviors. Approximately 7% (n=38) of the references to instructional materials were about behavior modification resources; there were no negative references. Behavior modification resources included checklists and reward charts.

Two SEPs liked to use checklists. For example, Nina liked to use checklists to help students stay on track and focused on tasks. She created checklists based on the instructional activity. Nina helped her student to write a story about a recent parade. She used two types of checklists. The first type of checklist was the general procedures to complete the writing task. Her student needed to "Read, Check our work, and Write." The second type of checklist was a running record of all of the events that her student discussed about the parade. As her student talked, Nina jotted down the events on a nearby notepad. Every so often, her student took a break from writing. During that break, Nina directed her to the checklist of events to check her work.

Another behavior modification material resource was the use of rewards systems. These systems charted when students behaved appropriately. They were used as motivational tools to encourage students to continue behaving in a manner that would allowed them to access the content being taught. Debbie, Daniel, and Gladys all used these types of systems. In Debbie's case, behavior resources were instrumental in helping students engage in learning tasks. Debbie worked with students with emotional disturbances. These students had significant behavioral challenges that

significantly impacted their ability to be academically successful. Consequently, Debbie's class used a structured behavioral program targeting maladaptive behaviors. She described the behavioral resource in detail when she referred to it as the student's point sheet

> ***Debbie (PENI):*** They have little point sheets. It's like a sticker like sheets on their desk. If they're sitting there, we'll go around and sign them, make sure their homework and their point sheets are turned in.
> [The point sheets] basically let the kids know how they've done throughout the day. It's very simple. Following directions; staying on task. I remained in the classroom the whole day.

In Gladys's school, they instituted a program that focused on positive behaviors. When students exhibited appropriate behaviors, they had the chance to earn a prize. This behavioral resource was not only available to Gladys's specific students, but to students in the entire school.

> ***Gladys (PENI):*** Plus, we have a [behavior] program. It is [about] character and responsibility. The counselor does that. The pillars of character. We give out character catches which are little pieces of paper. If they pick up a piece of paper from the floor and there were ten people that walked over it, and you picked it up, then good for you. We give out character catches [shows a little slip off paper with a stamp] and they're names are drawn at the end of the week from each grade level. They get to go in the office and pick a prize.

According to the SEPs who used them, behavioral management resources assisted students in remaining engaged and focused in the task. Depending on the type of behavioral resource, students responded by refocusing, increasing their engagement and motivation, or demonstrating appropriate behaviors in order to obtain rewards.

Presentation of Instruction Resources

Nine out of the 12 SEPs had access to various resources that allowed them to present instructional information. Presentation of instruction resources included using

whiteboards and making things more visual through posters. Approximately 4% (n=24) of the instructional material resources were made about presentation resources. None of the references were negative. On average, SEPS from schools with lower SES made more references to presentation resources (M= 5, SD=3.6) in comparison to SEPs from schools with higher SES (M=1, SD=0.6). The mean differences of the references to presentation resources were significant where SEPs from lower SES schools tended to make more references to presentation resources ($p<.05$).

Whiteboards were referenced and used in five of the SEPs' narratives and videos. Whiteboards displayed information relevant to the instructional interaction. For example, Annie used the whiteboards to show students the focus of the lesson, the difference between even and odd numbers. Debbie used whiteboards to show students how to calculate math problems. Mary used a whiteboard to display words and sentences that followed specific phonics rules. Gina used the whiteboard to display grammatically incorrect sentences. She had students fix the sentences, and she would return to the whiteboard to record the correct answers.

Rosa and Daniel used whiteboards to reteach concepts. In Rosa's case, she used whiteboards to track what words students read incorrectly. She showed the students the word and taught them to correct way to pronounce the word. In Daniel's video, he identified that students had difficulty isolating the individual phonemes in the word "witch." So, using the whiteboard, he visually displayed the separate phonemes by writing the word and then segmenting the sounds using the symbol "/." Nina used a whiteboard to visually display her student's checklist.

Posters were also used to display information. For example, Serena used posters as a reference to information. The posters were either created by her supervising teacher, or she made them. Serena used the poster to remind students about the content that the teacher had already introduced in prior lessons. In the event Serena was not present to witness the lesson, the poster also served as resource to communicate to Serena what the class lesson was.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** Tell me about the poster.
> ***Serena***: The teacher had written that one up. They had been doing this test prep stuff for a week or so. So, it's saying sometimes the answer can be found in the passage itself. Sometimes they expect you to know it from your prior knowledge. Sometimes it's both, like inference. Read the story. It doesn't say it word for word. But you can tell that guy is a doctor. Sometimes they expect them to figure it out. That was the chart.
> ***Interviewer***: Do you find that they use the chart?
> ***Serena***: I saw some of the papers that came through on the test prep. It had A or B. I wasn't there for the first lesson or two, so I was like, "What? Why do they have an A off to the side here?" Then I saw the poster.

Class Size Matters

Nine out of the 12 SEPs identified class size as a resource. From their interviews, SEPs reported that smaller groups of students were more effective ways to provide instruction. The smaller the group, the more individualized attention the students could receive. Approximately 4% (n=24) of the references to instructional material resources referred to class size. Of the class size references, nine references were perceived as negative (38%). These negative references tended to be commentary on the current movement of the district towards more inclusive practices. The SEPs illustrated that they didn't understand why their students were included in larger groups except to get more social interaction. The SEPs did not feel that being in

larger classes was conducive to their students' learning of academic material. In fact, the SEPs felt that their students ended up being neglected.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** How do you like the mainstreaming?
> ***Erin***: I think the mainstreaming is beneficial for them. Some of them seem to have social issues and they are so used to being with each other. I think it's better to start getting them with other groups. However, mainstreaming for me as an assistant, it's difficult because I find in this particular class, there are a lot of students that are low. Everybody wants help. Everyone needs help. You don't want to deny a kid help. But, I feel that sometimes, I neglect our kids too. [Mainstreaming] is taking away from them. They really need the most help.

When SEPs had the opportunity to provide small group instruction, they felt more comfortable in their work with children. SEPs like Gina articulated that small groups allowed them to target instruction in a more strategic, and efficient way. Gina discussed that when students were spread out in the mainstream, SEPs had a difficult time providing services to them all. When looking at the students' IEPs, the special education staff was required to provide a specific number of hours of service. In order to meet those hours, it was easier to have students clustered or grouped in a systematic way.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** You loved small groups, but it's not a large part of your day. Tell me about that?
> ***Gina***: This is one day's schedule. What happened is that they disbanded the special day class. So, we are now covering every kid that has an IEP. It's not working [whisper.] And we're spread really thin. It's really thin. It's really hard.
> ***Interviewer***: So tell me why [mainstreaming] is not working.
> ***Gina***: The kids aren't getting the service they need. I'm used to being in a special day class. So, we have 9-10 kids. They are in there for all their academics. They're all right there. So, there are two adults servicing those kids. Whereas this, there aren't enough adults servicing all these kids. Instead of getting [the set number of hours], they're getting a half an hour here and a half an hour there; whereas before, they were in a group all day. It's really hard trying to cover all these kids.

Mary also discussed the frustration of working with larger groups of students. But, she had the benefit of being able to work with a small group of children within the mainstream class. There was a section of the class that was designated her area. In that area, Mary would pull four to five students to target strategic phonics instruction. However, even in that situation, Mary did not see any real benefits to including students in a larger classroom. She shared that the classroom was noisy and the students were easily distracted. So, it begged the question about how much of the targeted instruction were they able to access?

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** You mentioned that you would prefer to have [the students] pulled out.
> ***Mary***: Yeah. Right now I am doing a group that I actually told the teacher. I told the teacher, you know what? These children are not getting it. They're looking around while you are teaching them on the board. Right now I am pulling those boys out and I bring them here. I told them that I would rather they come here. It would be better.
> ***Interviewer***: I don't understand the benefits of them being in the gened class when the teacher is not interacting with you and the students are not interacting.
> ***Mary***: They can get distracted….I don't see any benefit because sometimes I can get kind of loud. I prefer to have [them in a pullout]. This way, I can get as loud as I want [in separate class]. I prefer this way [in separate class] because I could have all that information written on the board already. That would be faster to me than having to hold the board and look at them and make sure that they are paying attention.
> ***Interviewer***: What is the effect on the kids?
> ***Mary***: I think they have to try a little harder to focus. Sometimes people will walk in from outside. Right away they all turn around. They already lost where they were and lost the focus. It does affect them.
> ***Interviewer***: Negatively?
> ***Mary***: Yeah.

Although there weren't any statistically significant differences between the means of positive to negative references to small group instruction, when reviewing the references more closely, the negative comments indicated that SEPs preferred to

provide small group instruction, preferably in a separate classroom. Debbie illustrated the point in two of her comments in two separate interviews (see Table 18).

Table 18. An argument for smaller class size.

	Reference to Small Group Setting	Negative References to Small Group Setting
Debbie	(VEI) It was supposed to work out that they would all be mainstreamed out. Anyone that was having problems with learning then they would be put in the learning center. This is our first year doing it like this. Personally I prefer the other way [where] primary and upper [grades] were separated. That's how we were.	(PENI) In the beginning, I think [mainstreaming] was a disservice to the kids because our kids are slow learners. So, they were throwing them into the general ed. And I said, "Oh my goodness, it's just going to be so hard." And even in the beginning of the year, the kids had a hard time. They were just walking out of the classroom. They were playing tetherball. And no one knew because the gened teachers had so many students that they're not aware. No one knew where they were or what they were doing.

Lesson Plan Resources

Seven SEPs identified having access to lesson plans from the teacher was a material resource. Approximately 3% (n=16) of the references to instructional resources were about lesson plans. There were four negative comments about lesson plans; the negative comments identified a general lack of lesson plans. There were statistically significant differences between the general references and negative references to lesson plans. But, the negative references did indicate that SEPs did not get lesson plans all the time. For example, Rosa described how teachers were supposed to provide her with lesson plans a week in advance. But, she had never seen these plans.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** Well [the teachers are] supposed to be sending the lab their lesson plans of the week. So, we could kind of know what

> they are doing. But, I don't know how much of that is being done. I don't know how much of that has withered away.
> ***Interviewer***: So you haven't seen the lessons?
> ***Rosa***: No. No. No. No. No.

Of the SEPs that described that the received lesson plans from their teachers, they described the lesson plans as an added resource that assisted in their teaching. For example, with Annie, her teacher provided her with weekly lesson plans. The lesson plans allowed her to prepare for what was going to happen in the week, know what to teach, and facilitated discussion and interaction between Annie and her supervising teacher.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** What are your interactions like with [your supervising teacher]?
> ***Annie***: She gives me a lesson plan for the week to let me know what's coming.
> ***Interviewer***: You don't discuss it? You just read it over?
> ***Annie***: Right. But I have lunch up here with everybody and that's when we get to talk.
> ***Interviewer***: What do you talk about?
> ***Annie***: Everything. If there's something coming up, she will tell me. These are really good lesson plans. I'll read it in the morning. I do have free time. When she calls the kids to the carpet, I'll read this. What is this going to entail? Do I need to get materials ready for this?

Drawing on the IEP

Five SEPs referred to having access to the IEP as the final instructional material resource. When they were allowed to read the IEP or attend an IEP for a student that they were working with, the SEPs found the resource to be helpful in terms of informing them about what the child's goals were and what additional strategies they could use when working with the child. Approximately 2.5% (n=14) of the references to instructional materials were about the IEP. Two SEPs made negative

comments about their access to IEPs, indicating that they did not have access to the IEP. The negative comments described the consequences of when the SEP did not have access to the IEP. For instance, Rosa relayed a tale of an altercation she engaged in where she didn't know how to provide services to a student. The student had severe behavioral challenges. In attempt to find out more about the student, Rosa tried to access the student's IEP. Her supervisor at the time denied her access. As a result, Rosa felt that this withholding of information had the potential to create a dangerous situation whenever she interacted with the student.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** Then this student came... this one kid gets there. When I started in special ed, the first teacher I worked with encouraged me to read the IEPs. I don't know what I was reading, but she was like,
> "Read what it says, and see what you get from it."
> So, I thought it was a normal thing.
> When I got to [another supervisor], I asked her, "Do you mind if I read the IEP?"
> "Oh, you cannot read the IEP. They're strictly confidential. No, No. I will let you know all you need to know."
> Okay. So, this kid comes in. Really big, tall, bulky boy.
> She tells me,
> "Oh you just need to talk to our principal. And, need to talk to him regarding his IEP. And, that's it."
> "Well, YOU [emphasized] need to talk to me about his IEP. I don't understand." I try to get to the principal and I tell her that she needed me to talk to you in regards to this kid. [The principal] said, "Tell her to let you look at the IEP."
> This kid sometimes would get upset. I didn't know what the deal was. I finally talk to the principal again.
> "He's schizophrenic."
> I'm not equipped to work with kid. I'm not physically equipped. I'm not mentally equipped to work with this kid. Who was going to tell me? No one told me. Two months working with this kid. These other kids could be a trigger for him. My life is in danger.

At the very beginning of Rosa's narrative, she mentioned that with a previous supervisor, she was encouraged to look at IEPs. Unfortunately at the time, Rosa didn't

understand that the IEP was a resource. But, other SEPs, like Nina, immediately found IEPs to be a beneficial resource. Nina described how she enjoyed going to IEPs. She always attended IEPs for every child she worked with. IEPs offered more information about the student she worked with, included more individuals that worked with the student, and fostered more ideas on how to work with the student. But also included in Nina's narrative was a hint that not all schools were necessarily open to SEPs attending IEPs. She had to ask permission to attend the IEP.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** Do you ever sit in on the IEPs?
> ***Nina***: Yes. I have always sat in on every IEP that I have ever been in the school district. And I didn't know how this school was going to handle that. I started [with my student] late. I said," Do you mind if I sit in?" "Oh no, absolutely." I learn from IEPs. Listening to IEP's, [and] listening to other people. They'll say "This works for me when I worked with her." You know, I've never tried that one. I like to sit in IEP's.

Although there were no statistically significant differences by SES for the average amount of references to having access to IEPs as a resource, it is important to note that all (100%) of the SEPs in the upper SES schools made a reference to having IEPs as a resource. In contrast, only three (37.5%) of the SEPs in the lower SES schools referenced the IEP. This may suggest that SEPs in upper SES schools have more access to viewing and participating in the IEP.

Summary: Instructional Material Resources

SEPs have access to several instructional material resources. SEPs used scripted programs and curriculum, subject specific resources, assessment tools, interactive tools, behavior modification resources, presentation tools, lesson plans, and the students' IEPs. All of the SEPs had access to some form of training, but their

access varied by way of receiving formal versus informal training. Overall, except for the use of presentation of instruction resources, these resources are not statistically different due SES factors associated with the school in which the SEP works. However, depending on the material resource, the data implied influences by SES.

Work Related Resources

In the SEPs' interviews and questionnaires, all the SEPs made references to the work related material resources. These resources included hours and time to perform their duties, having a space to work, and compensation for their work. Approximately half of all the SEPs indicated that they had access to work related resources (see Table 19).

Table 19. Access to work related material resources.

Work Related Material Resource	Percentage of SEPs' **with** access to the work related resource *		Percentage of SEPs' **without** access to the work related resource *		Percentage of SEPs' **who did not make a reference** to the work related resource *	
Space to Work	58	(n=7)	0		42	(n=5)
Hours and Time to Complete Tasks	50	(n=6)	25	(n=3)	25	(n=3)
Compensation	42	(n=5)	16	(n=2)	42	(n=5)

* Percentages based off of N=12

Approximately half of SEP participants had access to the aforementioned work related resources, with space to work being the most prevalent of all of the resources. However, when looking more deeply at the references within the SEPs' interviews and

questionnaires, it appeared that even though items like space was more accessible, the SEPs' references within their narratives and questionnaires indicated that hours and time to complete tasks was a resource that had a greater impact on their everyday routines. References to time constituted nearly half of the work related references. Below is the distribution of the references made to the different types of work related resources (see Figure 14).

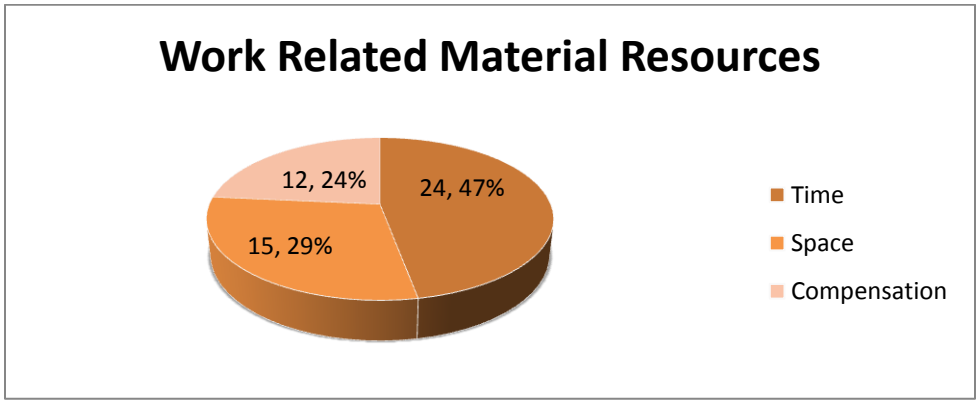


Figure 14. Distribution of work related material resources.

Hours and Time to Complete Tasks

Out of the nine SEPs who referenced the hours that they worked and the time allotted for them to complete their work duties, three of the SEPs found time to be an inaccessible resource. Approximately 47% (n=24) of the references to work related material resources referenced time. There were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of references to time based on the schools' SES. Half of the references to time were perceived as negative. The negative references tended to be articulated frustrations about not having enough time or hours. The SEPs worked five

hour days. The students were in school for six and a half hours. Consequently, the SEPs could not support students throughout their full school day. Daniel articulated that this was problematic; if he had the extra time at his school site, he could provide could do more with his time and be more effective with students.

> ***Daniel (PENI):*** My only pet peeve... It's too short. I'm only here for five hours. I don't understand why I can't work from the time the students get to school until they get out. It would relieve a lot of my scheduling because my scheduling is jam packed in the five hours. And it's not even meeting a lot of hours that I'm supposed to be working. But, that extra hour that I'm here could do wonders for it. I don't understand it.

In an attempt to remedy the problem, two SEPs took on additional jobs so that they could stay longer in the day. For example, Gladys became a noon duty aide. In this capacity, she could get paid for an hour of lunch supervision in the middle of the day. By doing that, she could split up her five hour day into two segments, before and after lunch. This enabled Gladys to stay and work with the students throughout the day and be compensated for it.

> ***Gladys (PENI):*** I am here for six hours and I get paid for five. So, I do noon duty so that they pay me for noon duty so I can be here all day. It doesn't make sense that the district did this, to have five hour [SEPs] in the resource room.

The issue with time didn't only revolve on the set number of hours that the SEP was paid to work. In two cases, SEPs felt that when they are working with students, there was pressure to rush. They were required to provide services quickly and efficiently. The thinking behind this rushing was that the faster the services, the faster the students would achieve grade level standards. There was a sense of urgency and need to speed up learning. Mary described how her supervisors were frequently "rushing" her.

> ***Mary (PENI):*** But you know what I find myself, what I don't like. Rushed. Like for instance these lessons I have to do [with] the new reading program. They expect me to do them really fast. I have to keep rushing them. Rushing them. Rush, rush, rush. I feel that I think that the teachers are being rushed too. Just, they're being rushed.

Although there were no statistically significant differences between SES in regards to the average references to hours, it is important to note that out of the 12 negative references made, 11 of the references were reported by SEPs from schools with lower SES.

Space to Work

Seven SEPs made references to their work spaces as resources. Approximately 29% of the references about work related resources were made about work space. There were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of references to work space based on the schools' SES. However, like the references to time, nearly half of the references to work space were negative. When SEPs referenced their work spaces, they identified that they had spaces to work. When there was a negative response, the SEPs identified that either their work spaces were invaded by others or there were inadequate conditions within the work space. The negative discussions of work space were commensurate with previous paraeducator research on working conditions. According to Ernst-Slavit and Wenger's (2006) study, the researchers found that the paraeducators did not have work spaces that were adequate for the delivery of instructional services.

All seven SEPs described that they did have work spaces to provide instructional services to students. These work spaces varied in size and privacy. Four

SEPs all had separate areas or "classrooms" where they could pull students in to conduct small group instruction. In each of the spaces, there was appropriate furniture, lighting, and immediate access to instructional materials. In Rosa's case, having a space was very important to her. She was proud of her space and but she was also very cognizant that it could be taken away from her.

> ***Interviewer (VEI):*** If you had a magic wand, what would you change?
> ***Rosa***: That I would keep [my] room. I would be able to keep a space a little space like this. It doesn't have to be a big room. It would just be a private little space like this. It could be just
> a little size. If I could have my magic wand, [it would be] my own space and have people respect it.

Gina also had a space of her own, but she described how it was a space that she had to take initiative to get for herself. If she had not taken initiative, she would be sharing spaces in classrooms with other teachers.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** How did you get a hold of this space?
> ***Gina***: My initiative. I came in this building. I was in kindergarten. My understanding was that we were going to be doing groups. That was our purpose. So, I came in here and it was empty. It was supposed to be one of those special ed people's, but they ended up out in [another room]. But this room sat empty for three weeks. So, finally, I went to the principal and asked what are they doing with that room? She said, "Nothing." "Can I turn it into a learning center for the kindergarten building?" She goes, "Go for it."

Unfortunately, three SEPs all described times when their spaces were either inadequate or invaded. In Mary's school, she not only had a private space to test students, but she also had a table within the general education class to pull small groups. She felt that this space was inadequate because she always had to bring her supplies to the room or the room was too noisy for the students. The table sat next to the door that entered the classroom. The students would often become distracted by other people walking past the doorway.

In Rosa's school, although her space was private, many people had access to it. She was very frustrated that when other people entered her space, they would not respect the space by keeping it clean or leaving her things untouched. She described a confrontation with her supervisor over respecting her space.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** For some reason, people think that they can come in [my space] and just do whatever they want. That sucks. That's not ok. I have always liked to keep my area, my work space clean. If you're going to use it, please put things back where they belong. And, don't leave your mess in there. I got tired of [my supervisor] thinking that he could just leave things in there.

Compensation

Seven SEPs referenced the compensation resources they received for as paraeducators. Two of those SEPs made references that indicated that compensation was a inaccessible resource. Compensation included their pay and health benefits. Approximately 24% of the references to work related resources were about compensation. There were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of compensation based on the schools' SES. Approximately one third of the references to compensation were negative. The negative comments tended to revolve around how SEPs were not paid well. The poor pay led them to want to get second jobs. But ironically, it was the compensation that led them to become paraeducators in the first place. Two examples of this irony were evident with Debbie and Erin.

Debbie did not intend to be a paraeducator. It was not her career choice. In fact, she spent a large part of her career in electronics and was returning to school to learn how to work with computers. But, a job lay off sent her in a different direction

> ***Debbie (PENI):*** I started with the special ed through a friend. I had just lost a job and I was going to school. But, it wasn't bringing in money. I was like, Oh, I need a job, I need a job. A position came open and I started as a one on one with a little girl. She was a handful. I've been there ever since.

Erin had a similar situation. She was a college graduate and had several jobs prior to becoming a paraeducator. Erin became a paraeducator because the job was convenient, the school was located down the street, and it brought in some income for her and her husband.

> ***Erin***: I got my [degree] in finance real estate law. It was a business degree and concentration in financial real estate law. I did get a job out here. I was working for a law firm. I got laid off. That was really devastating to me I don't know how I found out how the school district was hiring. I just went up there [and] filled out the forms. I'm just happy to just have work.

Debbie and Erin's stories are not isolated incidents. All of the SEPs came to be paraeducators by chance. Their lives ran a course that made becoming a paraeducator convenient and logical. Although the SEPs indentified that the pay is not ideal, they stay for what pay there is and the added compensation of getting health benefits (see Table 20).

Table 20. Compensation resources.

SEP	How Participants Became Paraeducators
Gladys	Volunteer at her children's schools. Offered a position as an assistant.
Serena	Volunteer at her children's schools. Offered a position as an assistant.
Annie	Volunteer at her children's schools. Offered a position as an assistant. Added incentive to obtain health benefits because her husband was self employed.
Rosa	Was going to school to become a teacher. Became pregnant and needed a job with benefits.

There were no statistically significant differences by SES of the average references to compensation resources. However, it is important to note that of the seven SEPs that referenced compensation as a material resource, only one of them was from an upper SES school. The remaining six were all working in lower SES schools. This constituted 75% of the total SEPs who worked in lower SES schools.

Summary: Work Related Resources

Work related resources were identified by all 12 SEPs. These resources revolved around work hours and time to complete job duties, work space, and compensation. There were not statistically significant differences by the schools' SES for the average number of references; however, there were some differences in the number and types of references made by SEPs from schools of different SES levels. SEPs from schools with lower SES tended to have more negative comments regarding time to complete their jobs and compensation for their duties.

CHAPTER VIII: CULTURAL RESOURCES

In current paraeducator literature, researchers discuss the benefits of the paraeducators' cultural membership, particularly with bilingual paraeducators, and how that membership allows them to bridge cultural differences between the culture of schools and the individual cultures of students (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004). From an ecocultural perspective, culture encompasses more than just ethnicity or language. Culture includes an individual's accumulation of cultural experiences drawn from their backgrounds, personal and work histories, the context of the environments in which they engage in activity, and cultural understandings (Weisner, 2002).

From an activity theory perspective, the subject brings their own cultural backgrounds to the activity system (Engestrom, 1999). In addition, the subjects' roles and functions within the activity system are impacted by division of labor factors (Engestrom, 1999). For SEPs, division of labor factors can be discussed through the SEPs' perspectives on and placement within a set structure of power. Within the existing paraeducator literature, there is a clear indication that SEPs believe that they lack power in comparison to teachers (Rueda &Monzo, 2002).

From both ecocultural and activity theory perspectives, culture impacts the activity system. In this study, SEPs draw on their personal and work histories to formulate their understandings of how students learn and which instructional practices would be effective in meeting the student's needs. They use their personal and work

histories derived from their exo systems as cultural resources to inform their instruction. In addition, SEPs function within a specific power structure that is dictated by external factors that come from the macro and exo systems. The systems influence how labor is divided in the activity system. The degree of access to power impacts not only the instructional activity system, but also the SEPs' perceptions of their value as paraeducators. Hence, power can also be viewed as a resource.

In Chapter V, I discussed how the SEPs in this study are impacted by settings and contexts. These contexts dictate the everyday routines that SEPs engage in during the instructional activity. In Chapters VI and VII, the data revealed that the social and material resources were also impacted by the contexts of their macro, exo, and meso-systems. In this chapter, I illustrate this impact further with a discussion about the SEPs' personal and work histories and access to power as cultural resources. For the SEPs' personal and work histories, their meso-systems play a role in their repertoire of everyday routines. For power, I suggest that the district and school contexts divide up labor between SEPs and their supervisors. The division creates an overarching power structure that SEPs navigate through (see Figure 15).

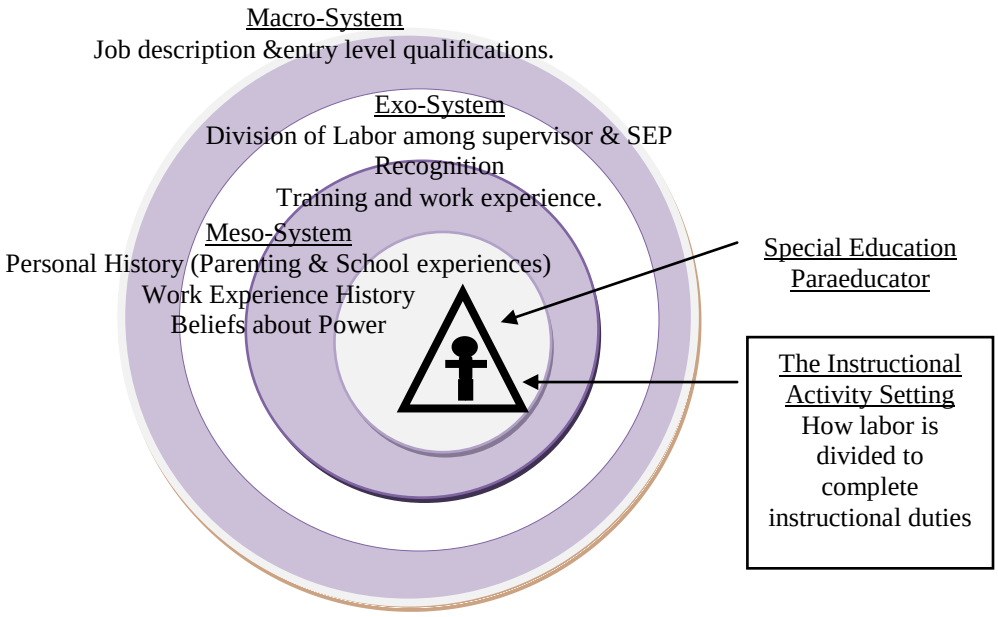


Figure 15. Influences of cultural resources on SEP.

Method of Analysis

Using the Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview (PENI) and Video Elicitation Interview (VEI) of all 12 special education paraeducators (SEP), I identified cultural resources by analyzing my codes for history, politics, division of labor, institutional factors, beliefs, challenges, training, and supports codes. The cultural resources were resources that involved the SEPs histories and power. I began listing the SEPs that mentioned the types of resources, the frequency of how many times they mentioned the resources, and denoted if the resource was perceived by the SEP as being negative, challenging, or lacking. A cultural resource was counted as one frequency count every time the SEP mentioned in one turn taking of their narrative. For example, if an SEP described their work history when responding to the interviewer's question, it was counted as one frequency. Their work histories were

counted again if the SEP responded with elaboration to another interview question. Finally, I divided up the SEP material resource references into two separate groups, 1) SEPs from higher SES schools (n=4) and 2) SEPs from lower SES schools (n=8). I compared the references to cultural resources to determine if there were any differences between the two SES schools in the amount of references to cultural resources. I used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there were statistically significant differences.

History as Cultural Resources

SEPs draw on cultural resources from their meso-systems, specifically their personal and work histories. Overall, all 12 SEPs made references to their personal and work histories that led to them becoming paraeducators. Across all 12 SEPs, there were 129 references to histories. Work histories constituted 48% of references; personal history was 52%. There were no statistically significant differences between SES from SEPs from lower and higher SES schools in the means of the number of references to cultural resources related to personal and work histories.

Work Histories

All 12 SEPs described their work histories, detailing how they became paraeducators as well as the influences from their work histories on their current practice. Work histories included how the SEPs entered into the education field, their experiences throughout their SEP histories as paraeducators, access to paraeducator trainings, and the mentorship they received from their supervising teachers. Work histories also included the general supports and challenges that the SEPs encountered

over their careers as paraeducators. Across all 12 SEPs, there were 62 references, representing 48% of the references to history. Of those 62 references, only 9 were perceived as negative references (14.5%). The negative references referred to working in environments that they found undesirable. For example, in Louise's narrative, she described how she worked in a special education classroom that included several students who had significant behavioral challenges. In order to deal with the behaviors, Louise was often left feeling like there were other students who were neglected. Her narrative detailed feelings of isolation, frustration, and feelings of being unsupported.

> ***Louise (PENI):*** [There] was one place that I did find myself getting burned out. I got a little bit frustrated [because] the powers that be decide that every single[child] just put them all in one classroom. It doesn't matter. To me, that seems very unfair when you have possibly a child that [is] high functioning that can learn something by the end of the school year. And then you have one or two or three children in the classroom that are placed because that's the law, that's the requirement. You have to basically ignore the other children and their potential to keep these children… from being combative or aggressive toward the other children. After a couple of years of that, I just felt like there was some resentment in the pit of my stomach…. Administration at that school was frustrating for a lot of us that were in the special education classrooms, especially the special needs classrooms because there was a feeling that we were on the fringes….I didn't have a good feeling about that.

Five out of the 12 SEPs, regardless of the SES levels of their respective schools, made negative references to their previous work experience. Similar to Louise, the references were indicative of experiences that left the SEP feeling a lack of support and frustration in trying to do their jobs.

In contrast to Louise, the majority of the references to work histories were cast in a favorable light. For example, in Evelyn's work histories, she described how her work experiences were supportive and helped her develop into an SEP.

> ***Interviewer***: What was it like walking into your class for the first time?
> ***Evelyn (PENI):*** It was like oh my gosh… what am I doing? And then, [the teacher] just threw stuff at me. She just gave it to me and I absorbed it like a sponge. I just was very happy learning anything and everything I could with her. And the other aide that was there. They had been together for like almost 10 years. They already knew all the system so they had to teach me. [The teacher] was always saying, if you don't have anything to do or whatever, go in that bottom cupboard and look at all the math materials. Look at all the language arts materials. You might see something if you are working with somebody that you can help them. She taught me, more or less how to be an aide. Be interested in your student. Help other students in the class.

SEPs that worked in the field longer tended to have more cultural resources from their work histories to draw from. The increased length of time in the field allowed them access to more opportunities and experiences in training, working with students, and working with other educators. For example, with Mary, she was in the educational field as an SEP for a minimum of ten years. In her questionnaire, she described how she had several trainings in her SEP work experience, but she also had formal training in education:

> ***Mary (Questionnaire):*** My first 3 years with the district, I worked with pre-school and kindergarten as a regular assistant. During that time, I also worked giving the CELDT test. I have been in special education for the last seven years. I'm experienced in [several scripted instructional programs]. I also have a degree in child development.

Mary goes on to elaborate on these experiences by describing how she became a paraeducator and how being in the field for several years afforded her with many more opportunities to improve her instruction.

> ***Mary (PENI):*** When I started about 10 years ago, I started as an assistant in the classroom. That's when I actually went back to college. I had been in college many, many years before. So then, I decided to go back to college and I graduated when I was 50. I was 50 when I graduated with honors and everything. It was an AA. It was for preschool teacher. So, when I wanted to get hired as a preschool teacher, there were no positions. That's why I just stayed as an assistant. I just ended up staying as an assistant. [The principal] told me, "You know you got

> laid off. We're going to train you to be a special ed assistant." So that's when they sent me to that [referring to the professional developments listed]. I really like those programs. And we were using them for a while. And [the district] paid for all these people, all these teachers that take these trainings

Mary's case is not isolated. Among all of the 12 SEPs, ten of the participants had over seven years of experience as paraeducators. In each of their narratives, they described how their experiences allowed them to develop as SEPs. They would draw on these experiences as resources to provide services to students. Depending on their work experience, the SEPs would use those experiences to inform their everyday routines (see Table 21).

In sum, SEPs drew on their experiences in the education field as cultural resources to inform their current practices. SEPs with more years of experience tended to have a greater breadth of cultural resources to use. Their work experiences exposed them to different experiences (both good and bad) and training opportunities that benefited their instructional practice.

Table 21. Experienced SEPs' connections from history to current practice.

SEP	Years of Experience	Relevant Work History	Relevance to Current Practice
Annie	>11 years	I was a math aide in remedial math (PENI).	Runs math groups daily.
Nina	>11 years	This was [an] Autism [training], stress behavior. Here's another one for tips for teaching students with autism. They called them Paraeducator conferences after a while (VEI).	Works one on one with a child with autism.
Gina	>11 years	I just learned working with these other special ed people. These are things that they used that I just kind of hung on to and it just works (PENI).	Creates and uses collected resources from previous experiences during the instructional interaction.
Daniel	>9 years	I've had cases before where a kid would be pulled out and the whole class would be like, "Oh yeah, he needs extra help." That's my pet peeve. I don't want the kid or the student to feel like he's being singled out (PENI).	Includes non-disabled peers in instructional groups.
Debbie	>9 years	Debbie: I learned just from watching [another aide]. Interviewer: What did you pick up? Debbie: The rewards system. Just modeling what she does. Going around passing out rewards (PENI).	Rewards students on their daily behavior tracking sheets.
Rosa	>7 years	I've been doing this program for at least five years. And to see year after year after year going over that lesson. And going over that lesson.	Prepares students for portions of lesson that have been difficult in the past.

Personal Histories

Eleven SEPs described their personal histories, detailing how their personal histories impacted the way they conduct themselves as paraeducators. Personal histories included how the SEPs discussed their school experiences as children, family

dynamics, and their own experiences as parents. Across those 11 SEPs, there were 67 references, representing 52% of the references to history. Of those 67 references, only 11 were perceived as negative references (16.4%). The negative references referred to negative experiences that the SEPs had as children going through school. Through these experiences, the SEPs strove to help their students avoid such experiences. For example, in Daniel's story, he had learning disabilities while he was in school. Consequently, he had "help" as well. This help left him feeling stigmatized. As such, Daniel's personal experiences helped him shape his approach to students in special education. He strove to alleviate some of that stigma when he worked with his own students.

> ***Daniel (PENI):*** I remember being in school. I actually had help myself in middle school. I felt singled out and I didn't want to be embarrassed and stuff. I don't want that to happen. I try as much as possible to include general ed friend or whatever just to be included so they don't feel singled out.

Similar to Daniel, Rosa also had a negative experience as she went through school. She was a limited English speaker and had a lot of trouble understanding what the teachers were teaching due to language barriers. As such, the experience left her with a greater understanding of what her current students were feeling and experiencing when they sat in the class, not fully understanding what was being taught. So, Rosa used that experience to inform her own instructional practice. In order to support English language learners, Rosa drew on the strategies that worked for her when she was going to school, specifically the use of visuals to present information and clarifying cultural differences.

> ***Rosa (PENI):*** I had a hard time with English growing up. So,

> when it came to working with them. It was helping them with the vocabulary. Say it in English. Or, say it in Spanish. If they don't still understand it, show them a picture. I'm a visual person. So, how do I learn? How is it that I would learn? How do I not remember not raising my hand when they would say this?"… I remember growing up, one of my famous stories, when I was working with [my supervising teacher] and he would read stories, I said, "Always tell kids when you are reading someone's name." And he said, "Why?" I said, "Always explain to them the name because I remember growing up in my house, we used to have Juan, Carlos. I remember the teacher talking about a John. I said, "What is a John?" I didn't know what a John was. And she would never say what a John was." I am using my own experiences growing up and trying to learn things to try to help these kids out.

School Experiences

Positive school experiences also influenced how SEPs' everyday routines. Nine of the eleven SEPs described positive school experiences as children. SEPs used the strategies that they were exposed to in school to inform their teaching. For example, with Gladys, she described how she learned how to read. When she went to school, the focus was on explicit phonics instruction. When she learned how to teach students to read using phonics programs, Gladys expressed that she felt very comfortable teaching phonics because that was how she learned.

> ***Gladys (PENI):*** Then I went to Catholic school. What I always remember learning how to read was phonetically. Sometimes the district just totally confuses me with the language arts… whole language, phonics, no phonics. So what I do is I remember being taught phonetically, learning how to read. I do love the [phonics programs]. I was trained. I incorporate [them].

Additionally, two of the SEPs worked directly with students with special needs when they were in school. Serena had the school experience of being paired with students with disabilities. These experiences helped her build an acceptance of differences and increased her comfort levels of working with students with different needs. These

experiences were best exemplified in Serena's description of a club she participated in during middle and high school. The club's objective was to pair students with moderate to severe disabilities with their non-disabled peers.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** Tell me about the high school extracurricular class you took?
> ***Serena***: They had a couple of bungalows set aside for handicapped students. So, instead of taking like art... they told me that I could take that as a class and I did. And that girl that I knew that had [cerebral palsy]. So, I came and helped out in her classes. When she graduated and wasn't there anymore. I just kept doing it. I don't know, I just feel like a lot of people can't handle it for some reason. And I can. It doesn't bother me.
> ***Interviewer***: It was like a student helper?
> ***Serena***: Students helping other students. ... We'd go in and [the teachers would] have you sit with one particular student and we'd read to them. Or helped them fill out a worksheet. Just in there helping. I would help her eat because she had a hard time getting her hand up to her mouth sometimes. She was sitting generally with a bunch of kids from her class. I would help whoever was sitting near me. Other people would say, "Why are you sitting with all the retarded kids?" It didn't phase me.

Ultimately, SEPs used negative and positive experiences from their time as children going through the schooling experience as cultural resources to inform their practices. If it was a negative experience, the SEP empathized with the students and their unique needs. As a result, the SEP attempted to help students avoid the negative experience by embedding supports during their teaching (i.e. visuals). If it was a positive experience, the SEPs used those strategies they encountered in their own schooling as part of their own teaching practice.

Parenting

Seven of the eleven SEPs who discussed their personal histories discussed their experiences of being parents. Being a parent offered an additional cultural resource because the SEPs drew on their parenting experiences to inform their practices. These

parenting experiences allowed SEPs to understand what schools expected of their children in terms of behavior and academics. The SEPs also understood how to approach children using a nurturing manner.

In Annie's case, she articulated how her children went through school and the schools required extensive parent involvement in order for her children to complete assignments. Through these experiences, she was better able to understand how rigorous the curriculum was and how her classroom students were at a disadvantage in meeting these curriculum standards, not only because they had disabilities, but also because they had little parent support. Annie felt that her experience as a parent gave her an advantage over SEPs who were never parents.

> ***Annie (PENI):*** My kids were in the GATE program. They had some bizarre assignments. We had to work as a family on them a lot on the weekends. I know what a teacher expects of children. So, I know, just as a parent's standpoint, what a child should be doing. It has to help me, as opposed to someone who has never been a parent.

Gina and Mary reiterate the SEPs ability to draw on their parenting skills as a resource (see Table 22).

Table 22. Parenting experiences that inform the SEPs' instructional practice.

SEP	Relevant Parenting Experience
Mary	I've got two boys. I raised the two boys. I do take a lot of what I did with them with the kids because I was very strict with them. I didn't even send them to preschool. I taught them myself. I was like a teacher to them. I would make sure they understood everything. They'd bring their homework. And I sit with them and make sure they understood what they didn't understand. I was really disciplined them. I use some of that that I learned from my kids (PENI).
Gina	I can be very nurturing. I can be motherly. And, I'm also a grandma. So, I can be grandmotherly. I relate to the kids. I think I relate really well. The principal was in there. And she was watching that group. I just let myself be me. I have. I love to laugh with them. I tease them and stuff. They just respond. And that's just me (PENI).

Summary: History as a Cultural Resource

All of the SEPs have identified the crucial role that their meso-systems had on their everyday routines. Specifically, the SEPs' previous work and personal histories influenced their practice. SEPs drew on their previous experiences to inform how they performed their instructional responsibilities. These ideas came directly from their own experiences as parents as well as the interactions and experiences that they gained as they accrued more years of service as paraeducators. The longer time they had as paraeducators, the more resources they accessed.

Power as a Cultural Resource

In Rueda and Monzo's (2002) work on paraeducators, they investigated the paraeducators' collaborative interactions between paraeducator and teachers. One of their significant discussions was the power relationship between paraeducators and teachers. They found that "Paraeducators believed that the teacher–paraeducator

relationship was characterized by significant power differences. This differential power was "embedded in the school cultures" (Rueda & Monzo, 2002, p. 516). Rueda and Monzo's finding indicated that power could affect the relationships between teachers and paraeducators. I suggest that power is a cultural resource. SEPs that accessed power used it as a resource for their instruction.

Viewing power as a cultural resource is made clearer when determining what comprises power in this study. In this study, power was derived from SEPs' access to material and social resources and their perceptions about their value as a paraeducator. Across all 12 SEPs, there were 954 references to power. These references pertained to how SEPs wanted to be viewed and respected, and the supports and challenges they encountered when attempting to access their social and material resources. Out of the 954 references, 170 references were perceived as negative (17.8%). The negative references alluded to a lack of access to power resources. The remaining references (n=784) either described instances where SEPs had access to power resources (n=765), or simply described the existence of power differences between themselves and teachers (n=19). There were no statistically significant differences of the means of the references to power between SEPs that were from lower versus higher SES schools.

The Structure of SEP Power

Rueda and Monzo's (2002) suggested that power differences were embedded in school cultures. This finding was confirmed when analyzing the SEP's job description. The job description defined a paraeducator as an individual who provided

direct instructional services to students under the direct supervision of a credential individual (CSEA). The key to this job description were the words, "under the direct supervision." The job description automatically sets up a power differential where paraeducators have less power than their supervisors. In the SEPs' narratives, the SEPs also made clear distinctions between themselves and their supervising teachers where they were content with assisting and supporting whatever the supervising teacher has instructed them to do. They were also content with being paraeducators because even though they were encouraged to get their credentials, many SEPs noted that they did not want the added responsibilities that accompanied the teacher role.

Happy to Assist

Eight SEPs identified how their power lay in how the teacher directed them. They were there to serve as a support and assist the teacher in whatever the teacher needed. In Louise's questionnaire, she described her job as a way of assisting the teacher:

> **Louise (Questionnaire):**
> 11:35-12:30 Assist with more classroom instruction (calendar, alphabet, whole group math concepts)
> 12:30-2:05 Accompany and assist our students that go to a 1st grade regular education classroom for mainstreaming. [We provide] instructional aide to our special needs students, myself and [another SEP] assist other students in the class as needed.

In Louise's description, she suggested that her role was to serve as a support to the students and the teacher. She did not direct or decide upon the instruction. This structure of "assistance" was also evident in Mary's description of her role at the school. She described how her supervising teacher outlined her role and job duties.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** Is she one of your main contacts [referring to supervising teacher] Do you guys interact a lot?
> ***Mary***: Well, she's my teacher. She's the one I work under.
> ***Interviewer***: What do you guys do when you are working together?
> ***Mary***: Well, she'll tell me... we'll work out the schedule. She'll tell me, "Mary, these are the groups you need to work with."

Two SEPs had more autonomy in their teaching practices, but in the end, they deferred to their supervising teachers. For example, in Annie's case, she runs groups in math and spelling. Her supervising teacher gave her the latitude of choosing how she would teach the math and spelling. However, Annie did not choose which spelling words to give. Her supervising teacher gave her lesson plans and the spelling words beforehand. In the area of math, Annie picked what math concept she taught, but she frequently conferred with the supervising teacher to determine if the math concept and the manner in which she planned to teach the concept was appropriate.

> ***Annie (PENI):*** I generally do spelling, various activities with spelling.
> ***Interviewer***: Is this something you chose to do?
> ***Annie***: [My supervising teacher] wants me to do this. But, she lets me do... like I've been starting to do the drawing and that's okay with her. The spelling she leaves it up to me. One day like today, we verbally did it. Tomorrow we'll work on this packet. She leaves my schedule up to me. But between 10 and 11 and I cover those subjects.
> ***Interviewer***: So you choose what they are going to learn?
> ***Annie***: No, she chooses the spelling words. We confer on it because we were seeing that we had to back track some words. But, she generally picks the words.

Become a Teacher? No thanks!

Six SEPs described how they were encouraged to pursue their teaching credentials and become teachers. Becoming a teacher would enable them to access more power, specifically in giving them more power over what was to be taught and how as well as more compensation. However, none of the six reported that they

wanted to pursue this career course. They were happy to remain SEPs because they did not want the added responsibility of being a teacher. For example, Mary had pursued a degree in child development with aspirations of being a pre-school teacher. But, after witnessing teacher duties, responsibilities, and pressures, she did not want to become a teacher. Although she didn't have the added benefit of more power, she was content with being a paraeducator.

> ***Mary (PENI):*** I wanted to work at a preschool. I wanted to be a teacher there. I really want to. But then, little by little, I see what the teachers go through and I say "Oh No." I don't want to be a teacher. I do not want to be a teacher.
> ***Interviewer***: What are you seeing that is discouraging you?
> ***Mary***: They're very frustrated. I love working with the kids because I love it when I see that they are doing better. I like it the way it is because I can go home and I don't have to think about it. I don't have to carry it with me. I know teachers. They have to take the work with them. They work a lot.

Rosa reiterates this point by describing how she believes that the power issues between SEPs and teachers are not because SEPs want more power, but rather that teachers want less power and hence, less responsibility. Rosa describes the power issue using the word "hate."

> ***Rosa (VEI):*** I get to work with kids, where they [the teachers] don't. I think that's where they hate us. I think that's why they hate us because we get to work with kids and we don't have to go home and deal with paperwork. They have to go to school and we didn't. We get to do the things that they want to do. And I would get mad too, if I had to go to school and deal with all this other [stuff].

In sum, the overarching structure of the SEPs' job set up a power relationship between the SEP and their teachers. In many of the SEPs' narratives, they were content with interacting within this power inequity because they did not want to assume the additional responsibilities that accompany additional power. Erin summed

up the power difference the best when she described how her students perceived her versus the supervising teacher.

> ***Erin (VEI):*** The students know that you are a teacher, but you are not THE teacher. The parents know that too and so does everybody else.
> ***Interviewer***: There is a difference?
> ***Erin***: Yeah. They [the students] know their teacher. They would rather get in trouble by me than her. They know she's THE [emphasized] teacher. We're teachers, but not THE [emphasized] teacher. I think they have that down pat.

Respect

All 12 SEPs discussed their difficulty gaining respect from others (i.e. educators and parents). Respect as a power resources included getting respect from their supervising teachers, being allowed to have input into their jobs, and having autonomy and independence to execute their jobs as they saw fit. In all, there were 75 references to respect. Of the 75, nine of the SEPs made a total of 34 negative references (45.3%) indicating that they did not receive the respect that they felt they deserved. There were no statistically significant differences between mean references to respect in terms of the schools' SES; nor were there any statistically significant differences between the mean references to respect in terms of positive to negative references.

Voice and Autonomy

Six SEPs identified that having a voice in what they were doing and autonomy helped them perform their instructional duties. In a prime example, Annie epitomized the ability to have a voice and be autonomous in her classroom. She worked with her supervising teacher for eight years. Over the eight years, she developed a relationship

with her supervising teacher that afforded her the ability to choose how she wanted to deliver instruction. Annie had lesson plans provided by the teacher, daily discussions about students, and a regular exchange of ideas about how to teach a lesson. Annie was allowed to choose, design, and prepare for weekly art lessons.

In Gina's case, she identified that she worked best when "left alone." In describing her relationship with her supervising teacher, Gina described how they were a good team because each of them learned from each other, yet they did things independently from one another: "She and I were just the best team. I did my thing, she did her thing. And it just worked out fabulous" (PENI). But, Gina really captures this desire have independence and autonomy in her description of what she finds to be a great support of her job.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** What have you found supportive?
> ***Gina***: Supportive... What I found really helped me. I have a lot of initiative. I'll just take things on. And I'm not a leader which is really weird. I just come up with ideas to do things. I don't wait around long for you to figure it out. I think that's part of it. Part of it has been "Leave me alone." Just show me what you want me to do and then leave me alone. And let me kind of build on it.
> ***Interviewer***: So you like that they give you independence?
> ***Gina***: I love that. Give me a room and leave me alone. I don't think everybody's going to want to hear that. But that's how I feel.

Being Valued by Others

Five SEPs described that they desired have others view them and treat them with respect. The "others" included their supervising teachers, other educators, and parents. Across the five SEPs, there were 15 references to receiving this respect, with an overwhelming 13 references that were negative. The negative references described

experiences when the SEPs did not receive the respect that they wanted. For example, with Daniel, he described how some teachers didn't see Daniel as a support, but rather a distraction or someone to remove a challenging student from the classroom.

> ***Daniel (PENI):*** The other thing is working with certain teachers. Certain teachers, they don't want you in the classroom. They just, "You know, I'm doing my lesson and you're [the SEP] a distraction. I don't want another body in my classroom." Basically, [that's] how I feel. Let me do my thing. That's a hard part is working with a teacher like that. And there are some teachers like that here that I'm working with that [are] just, "Take the kid. I'm done. I don't have to see him for an hour. I'm good."

Gladys was an SEP that was highly recognized for her work by her supervising teachers, administrators, and educational community. She won an award for her work. Yet, even she voiced frustrations when encountering some parents. Gladys articulated that despite her accolades, she was not viewed by parents as someone who was an asset to a child's education.

> ***Gladys (VEI):*** I think that when they changed our title to "para" educators, we are equal support for the teacher. I think our role is really important, our support of what the teacher has taught and support for the children. I felt that our role was finally coming as equal as the teachers. [It is] just teaching without a credential that most of us do.
> ***Interviewer***: What will it look like? If paras are more equal, what does that look like in the classroom?
> ***Gladys***: They need to actually know that we are actually teaching their children. We're teaching. A paraeducator is a coteacher. It's a teacher without a credential.
> ***Interviewer***: From teachers or parents? Who is it that you want to view you that way?
> ***Gladys***: Everyone…. It makes me cringe when I hear, "Oh you're the helper," I coteach your children. I'm your child's second teacher.

Summary: Power as a Cultural Resource

On a macro-systemic level, there is an overarching structure to the paraeducator that is dictated by their job descriptions. These job descriptions set up an

automatic power difference between the SEP and their supervising teacher; there was a distinct and accepted division of labor. These power differences are evident and generally accepted by the SEPs in this study. They recognized that they are required to take direction from their supervising teachers, and they did not feel the need to assume the teachers' roles. In fact, the SEPs were content to remain SEPs because if they chose to pursue becoming a teacher, they would have increased responsibilities and frustrations. These increased responsibilities were undesirable.

Within the overall structure that was accepted by the SEPs, there operated additional access to power that directly impacted their micro-systems of instruction. Their access to power as a cultural resource was bolstered and affected the instructional activity when the SEP was provided opportunities to give their input (voice) about what they want to teach and how they want to teach it. As a caveat to voice, SEPs not only want to be heard, but they also wanted to be valued to execute their ideas. They accessed power when their supervising teachers gave them independence and autonomy to provide instruction the way they saw fit.

Regardless of the fact that in general, SEPs perceived themselves to be accessing power related cultural resources to provide instruction, interviews revealed that SEPs voiced frustration with the power differences. Nearly half of the SEPs in this study identified that they wanted paraeducators to be recognized for the additive value and service they provided to children. They wanted to be perceived as "equal" to the teacher and "respected" for their contributions to the students.

CHAPTER IX: DISCUSSION

Previous chapters illustrated that the special education paraeducators (SEP) of this study articulate goals, enact those goals through their everyday routines, and use various resources to mediate the instructional activity with varying degrees. Unfortunately, they lack autonomy and power to make decisions about how, where, and with whom to provide those instructional services. Commensurate with my own experiences and literature, the SEPs of this study are constrained by an overarching power structure that leaves them dependent on external factors, such as district, school, and supervising teacher support, to further their development as paraeducators. The unidirectional power structure was omnipresent in several aspects of the SEPs' nested systems. The structure impact SEPs' perceptions of their own value to education, the settings in which they provided services, the goals they formulated for their students, the everyday routines they used to enact those goals, and the types of resources they could use to mediate their instruction.

The undergirding power differential ultimately devalues the SEPs' contributions to the educational field, fails to recognize their individual strengths, and retards their paraeducator development. The findings of this study suggest a dismal systemic perspective that SEPs are simply tools to execute district, school, and supervisor edicts. The sad irony of this systemic perspective is that SEPs are not tools, but rather individuals who have high degrees of contact with students and responsibility for student academic achievement.

Researcher Expectations: A Contrast to the Reality

The current study was designed to investigate the paraeducator phenomenon more deeply with a thorough investigation of the factors that shape and influence the special education paraeducator's (SEP) everyday routines. I explored how those routines were related to the SEPs' instructional activity and what resources enabled them to enact those routines. Using ecocultural and activity theory perspectives, I attempted to understand SEPs' instruction by determining how they were executing their instructional responsibilities and how they made meaning of those responsibilities. Based on my experiences with SEPs' and the current paraeducator literature, I expected to find narratives similar to the following fictitious vignette.

> ***Interviewer:*** Tell me about your typical day.
>
> ***Expected SEP Answer:*** I start out my day thinking about which kids I have on my schedule to work with, and what it is that they need to learn based off of what we did yesterday. I have a lot of leeway with what I can do because my teacher rarely has time to talk with me. I get my kindergarteners from their general education classes. We have to make sure that they learn their alphabet sounds.
>
> ***Interviewer***: How do you know?
>
> ***Expected SEP Answer:*** Well, I have kids of my own. When they were going through school, we worked alphabet sounds a lot. Plus, I have a good memory and can remember my first experiences in school. It was all about singing and learning the alphabet. So, I usually do that with my first group. We do a lot of singing and connecting the alphabet to the sounds. Then, I usually have a group of 3rd and 4th graders. They have trouble understanding what they read. So, I usually go get a book from our librarian. I try to pick books that I think the kids will find interesting. My own children used to love books about science, like dinosaurs. Once I get the books, I read the book out loud to my 3rd and 4th graders. We stop every once in a while and look at the pictures. I ask questions to make sure they understand.
>
> ***Interviewer***: Why do you do that?

> ***Expected SEP Answer:*** I've been a paraeducator a few years now. I used to have the kids read the book to me. But, they don't read very well. That's why they are with me. I saw that they were really frustrated with it and it made the time with me go slower. So, I learned from that. Why force them to do something hard like that? Besides, I figure that the point to reading is to understand right? Well, that's at least what I think reading should be. So, I cut out that reading out loud part. I am more interested in whether or not they understand. These days, you can books on tape and stuff, so why stress them out with the reading part if they are already in 4th grade?

The aforementioned vignette described an SEP that drew on her personal history, experiences, and trial and error to determine how she would provide instructional services to students. The expected responses indicated that the fictitious SEP used her experiences in her own childhood and her parenting of her own children to determine what content should be taught and how. In addition, she drew on what she learned through trial and error to develop her goals for her students in the area of reading comprehension. The hypothetical SEP had little contact and support from her supervising teacher and was thus left to her own devices on how to execute her instructional duties. Because there was little contact and support from the SEP's supervisors, I expected that the SEP had more autonomy within the instructional setting to make decisions about what to teach and how to teach it to her students.

In contrast, the data from this study revealed a complex relationship between a variety of SEP routines and an underlying power structure that inevitably dictated which routines to use, with whom and where. The relationship was defined by the power structure that afforded SEPs with very little control over their activities and minimal empowerment to change the structure. In the end, the findings pointed to the fact that SEPs' routines, goals, and access to resources were dependent on external factors. To illustrate the contrast between my expected findings and my actual

findings, I crafted a vignette of the typical SEPs drawn from the responses of the SEPs in this study.

> ***Interviewer***: Tell me about your typical day.
>
> ***A Typical SEP Answer:*** Well, I start with morning supervision of the crosswalk. The pay isn't very good here and I don't get enough hours; so, I have to pull a second job. Then, I have to go to the general education classes. My students are spread out all over the school. So, to meet the hours on their IEP, I have to spread my time over five different classes in the morning. I usually spend about 30 minutes in each classroom. I usually help out the teacher with making sure the kids are on the right page, listening, and have their materials.
>
> ***Interviewer***: How do you know what to do?
>
> ***A Typical SEP Answer:*** I just follow what the teacher tells me to do. Truthfully, I don't think I am very effective in the general education classes. I'm just babysitting really. But, we're not supposed to talk about that. It's what the district wants, so we have to do it. Right after lunch, I have a small group that comes to me for reading. They are 2nd graders. I work with them using this program. It's about how to sound out letters to make words, phonics. Sometimes, I add some of my own stuff from trainings I have had in the past.
>
> ***Interviewer***: Why do you do that?
>
> ***A Typical SEP Answer:*** This program focuses on sounds. It goes really fast. So, I went to a training a few years ago on a program on memory. I try to get the kids to memorize the sounds through repetition. I think it really works. But, I don't tell my teacher that because the memory program was discontinued. We're not supposed to use the old program anymore. But, my teacher wants me to do this program now.

The typical SEP vignette illustrated that SEPs are executing their instructional duties by engaging in routines that are directed and influenced by outside sources. From the onset of the day, the SEPs' schedules were bound by issues of time and compensation. These issues were created by the district when the district created the SEPs' job descriptions. Nine of the SEPs in the study had five hour work days and similar compensation; they had to execute their job duties within the work day even

though students were at school for six and a half hours. To do this, at least three of the SEPs took on extra jobs at the school. Next, the typical SEP engaged in push-in and pullout instructional settings. The instructional routines they engaged in were dictated to them by a combination of district goals for Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI), school schedules, and the supervising teachers.

Declarations of Power Differences

The overarching power structure was directly identified through the SEPs' own declarations. Through their interviews, SEPs stated that they were aware of power differences between themselves and others. Many of the SEPs voiced frustration about the differential; and they communicated that they desired to be more valued and respected by the educational community for their contributions to students. All of the SEPs identified that they took direction from their supervising teachers; although they were providing instruction, they always deferred to their teachers for approval.

Existing literature on paraeducators indicated that there was an embedded school culture of power differences between paraeducators and teachers. This power structure set up a power differential where paraeducators felt marginalized (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Lewis, 2005) or felt a general lack of power (Rueda &Monzo, 2002). This study's findings are commensurate with paraeducator literature; SEPs are functioning within a prescribed power structure where their everyday routines and their goals are dictated by external factors. Nearly half of the SEPs recognized the power structure and voiced their frustrations with their position within the structure. The SEPs articulated that they wanted respect and to feel equal to the teacher.

In addition, the parameters of this research study did not incorporate how paraeducators were viewed by other educators, but current paraeducator literature did illustrate that teacher perceptions of paraeducators reinforces the underlying power structure. In French's (1998) study on the relationship between paraeducators and their supervising teachers, French found that teachers perceived paraeducators in three ways: helpers to the students, helpers to the teachers, or partners. Relevant to this discussion was her identification of paraeducators as "helpers." Paraeducator helpers were not decision makers, but rather individuals that helped to execute instructions from the teacher or helped the student. French's study illustrates that paraeducators are viewed more as an extra support rather than essential personnel, thus solidifying the persistent power differential. For the SEPs in this study, Gladys reinforces the teachers' and the parents disempowering view of her as a helper when she states:

> It makes me cringe when I hear, "Oh you're the helper." No. I do help your child, but I coteach your children. I just don't like to be called a helper because I help everyone. I help my family at home but I'm still a wife and a mother and a daughter. I'm not a helper. I'm your child's second teacher (VEI).

Unidirectional Influence of Setting and Contexts

The power structure was evident in Chapter V's illustration of the impact of settings and contexts upon the SEPs' instructional activity. SEPs were engaged in a variety of routines, but the setting and context dictated which routines to enact. The setting and contexts informed and set guidelines for special education service delivery. SEPs identified how their routines and schedules changed depending on where they were asked to provide services. They were dependent on the district's SAI movement

and their individual schools' interpretations of SAI. SEPs were then reliant on the supervising teacher's schedules and tasks assigned.

External influences, namely influences from special education law, district mandates, individual school structures, and supervising teachers, dictated where the SEPs' instructional activity occurred and which routines the SEPs engaged in. The influence appeared to be unidirectional where the macro-system's mandates dictated the exo-system. These mandates trickled down to the SEPs' micro-systems and prescribed the SEPs job duties. SEPs identified the influences of the district and school contexts explicitly through their descriptions of how DUSD's movement towards SAI has changed the way they provide services to students. Also, through the SEPs' descriptions of the pull-out, push-in, and learning center models, the SEPs provided descriptions of the impact of the SAI on the school special education delivery models, and consequently their own practices. Given the unidirectional nature of the structure, there was little room for the SEP to make autonomous decisions about their everyday routine. SEPs were told what to do, when to do it, and with whom.

In Rosa's and Debbie's cases, the schools implemented a learning center model that provided services to students regardless of the presence of a disability. In the learning center, Rosa's and Debbie's everyday routines revolved around either homework help or targeting specific skill deficits. All of the SEPs did some form of a push-in model where they entered the general education classroom to support students. In all of the cases, they received direction from the supervising teacher on how to perform their instructional duties. In Mary's case, she implemented a scripted

instructional program. In Serena's case, she assisted the teacher in lowering the student to teacher ratio in every subject area by working with small groups on a rotating schedule. Ultimately, the setting, which included the model of service delivery and the supervising teacher's own everyday routines, defined the SEPs' instructional activity. The SEPs appeared to have very little input on the settings in which their instructional activities were nested; and consequently, very little control over their routines.

Goal Origination and Adoption

The SEPs' lack of power was also present in the SEPs' goals and everyday routines. As illustrated in Chapter IV, regardless of whether an SEP espoused a specific goal, all SEPs enacted on similar instructional and student outcome goals. They appeared to adopt, be it conscious or unconscious, a set of goals and objectives that were derived from special education law, district vision, school structures, and supervising teacher's directives. The data did illustrate that goals like increasing self esteem seemed SEP driven; however, upon closer inspection of the enactment of self esteem goals, specifically the fact that all SEPs enacted the goal regardless of espousal and the generic manner of enactment, it appeared that SEPs were adopting goals of increasing self esteem from some form of cultural script.

SEPs had two general goal areas: goals for instruction and student outcomes. Instructional goals were based on academics, more specifically aspirations for students to reach grade level standards. SEPs illustrated that they attempted to assist students to reach grade level standards through remediation of skill deficits. Student outcome

goals related to the expectation that students would make progress towards academic goals and have increased self esteem about themselves and their abilities. When comparing how SEPs enacted those goals, I found that regardless of whether or not those goals were espoused, all of the SEPs were working towards meeting those goals as evidenced by their participation in instructional, assessment, and behavior management routines. This suggested that the SEPs were not originators of the goals, but rather the SEPs were merely adopting the goals set forth by the external systems that are impacting the micro-system of their instructional activity setting.

The Origin and Adoption of the Instructional Goal

At the macro-systemic level, the overarching purpose of education was for students to gain mastery of educational concepts. With current educational legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), students are more closely scrutinized and expected to meet grade level proficiency standards. For students with disabilities, they are also held to academic standards. Not only are they subject to NCLB proficiency targets, but they are also held to the doctrines set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). More specifically, they each have their own individual standards as defined by their Individual Education Plans (IEP). Essentially, NCLB and IDEIA delineate the academic goals that students must meet. SEPs like Gladys referenced macro-systemic goals when she described how her goal for students was based on their IEP (Gladys, PENI). Similarly, Rosa referenced NCLB grade level proficiency mandates. When she was explicitly asked about her goal, Rosa answered the goal was to get all children on grade level (Rosa, PENI).

At the exo-systemic level, when looking more closely at the IEP, IEPs are developed by IEP teams. The IEP team was typically comprised of special education teachers, service providers, administrators, and parents. The IEP team determined the student's academic goals, what services they received, how much service, and how that service would be delivered. Although the SEP was technically part of the IEP team, it was common practice that they were not included in the decision making process or even allowed to attend IEPs. Only seven SEPs discussed that they were either privy to looking at the IEP or were allowed to attend. But, access to the IEP was completely dependent on the SEP getting permission from their supervising teacher.

So, even at the exo-systemic level, SEPs were typically excluded from the IEP development process. Even though SEPs were not part of the IEP development, they adopted the IEP goals and used the IEP to formulate their academic goals for students. Gladys expresses the connection between the academic goals and the instructional services she provides when she states, "This is their time here [referring to pullout] that we work on the goals of the IEP" (Gladys, PENI). In the end, the data illustrated that the SEPs' instructional goals stemmed from macro and exo-systemic forces and the SEPs adopted these goals as their own. The adoption of the instructional goal reiterates the SEPs' limited decision making and power in the instructional activity.

The Origin and Adoption of Seeing Progress Goals

NCLB and IDEIA also dictated how educators assess that students are making progress towards their goals. NCLB's dictates that 100% of students should reach proficiency is typically measured by statewide standardized assessments. IDEIA sets forth specific assessment procedures to qualify students for special education services, and it includes a provision for reassessment every three years. IDEIA also mandates that students with disabilities have an annual review regarding their progress.

At the exo-systemic level, the IEP contains annual goals that are broken down by benchmarks or objectives that clearly delineate expected student progress. Special educators are required to continually monitor student progress to determine what supports are needed. For SEPs, that means that they also need to include assessment routines to their repertoire to monitor progress. When asked about how SEPs determine progress, Gladys articulated, "The teachers give me what the students that I am working with, their goals. We sit down at the beginning of the school year. And we go through everyone's IEP: their disability, then their goals, [and] then benchmarks" (Gladys, PENI).

Gladys made a direct connection between the seeing progress goals and its origins in macro and exo-systems. She illustrated through her narratives that she adopted these goals by wanting to see progress in her students; she provided regular assessments to determine if the students met their IEP benchmarks. On more subtle levels, all of the other SEPs illustrated that they adopted seeing progress goals as well. The SEPs articulated their desires to see progress not by meeting IEP benchmarks, but

rather by seeing "growth." For instance, Mary stated, "I know that they are learning. I know that there's something that I'm teaching them that's going to stick with them. I see them grow" (Mary, PENI). To see growth, the SEPs engaged in assessment routines, such as asking questions. When comparing the SEPs that espoused seeing progress goals to those who did not, there were no differences in the ways that they assessed students. All of the SEPs enacted assessment routines to determine student growth. The universal engagement in assessment routines indicated that seeing progress goals were derived from external factors. SEPs were adopting these goals as their own; some consciously like Gladys and Mary, while others unconsciously.

The Origin and Adoption of Self Esteem Goals

Smith and Nagle (1995) conducted a research study on students with learning disabilities and the impacts of having a learning disability on the student's self esteem, researchers compared students with disabilities to their non-disabled peers in regards to their self-perceptions. The researchers found that students with learning disabilities generally perceived themselves as less competent in the areas of intelligence and academic proficiency. Also, in comparison to their non-disabled peers, students with learning disabilities also felt less socially accepted by others. Smith and Nagle's study suggests that students with disabilities have a greater propensity for lower self esteem.

This belief that students with disabilities have a greater chance of developing low self esteem is a common perception among educators. Historically, students with disabilities have been marginalized and even forgotten; hence, the introduction of legislation such as IDEIA to assist in bringing students with disabilities to the

forefront. IDEIA illustrated that at a macro-systemic level, society recognized that students with disabilities needed support to access education. Underneath IDEIA vision was an implicit statement that students with disabilities needed help because they had extra challenges. Without the appropriate amount of support, students with disabilities would fail, which would ultimately lead to feelings of failure or low self-esteem. The implicit message of self-esteem fueled a belief system through the exo-system and meso-systems.

These beliefs trickled into the exo-systems of the schools. A culture of education was developed where students were given supports to access a free and appropriate education, but these supports were "special." These students were failing and being treated differently. For the SEPs of this study, their district and subsequently their schools began moving towards specialized academic instruction (SAI). In the SEPs' words, they began "mainstreaming" their students. When asked about the purpose or benefits of the mainstreaming, one SEP, Erin, reported her take on the purpose: "Mainstreaming is basically, we go to a general education class….I believe the purpose of that is to integrate them with other kids. They are in a small class for a majority of the day and they are just trying to integrate them into a larger group." (Erin, PENI). The underlying purpose behind the integration was to allow students to learn and socialize with their non-disabled peers; it was to keep them from feeling so isolated and special.

The SEPs' meso-systems constituted specific points in the SEPs' personal and work histories. From their own childhood school experiences, SEPs fortified the belief

that children needed confidence and high self-esteem to be successful. For instance, in Daniel's narrative, he describes how he was a special education student in middle school. As a special education student, Daniel felt stigmatized for getting "help" (Daniel, PENI). His experience directly translated to his need for his own students to feel accepted by their non-disabled peers.

> ***Interviewer (PENI):*** What do you think is the most important thing that you're teaching them?
> ***Daniel***: My thing is they know that they might have a learning disability. I don't want that to reflect in their classroom settings. I've had cases before where a kid would be pulled out and the whole class would be like, "Oh yeah, he needs extra help." That's my pet peeve. I don't want the kid or the student to feel like he's being singled out. I remember being in school. I actually had help myself in middle school. I felt singled out and I didn't want to be embarrassed. I don't want that to happen.

In combination with the overarching societal, district, and school belief systems about special education students, Daniel's experience strengthened his belief that special education students had lower self esteem because of the presence of their disabilities. The SEPs' self esteem goals originate from greater, macro and exo systemic influences is further bolstered by the fact that the praise that they used tended to be generic and evident in all of the SEPs' praise routines regardless of espousal of the goal. SEPs appear to be applying nonspecific praise as an automatic response to the students' correct responses to an SEP initiated task. This suggests that there is an underlying cultural script regarding how to interact with students and what students need to be successful in school.

Adopting Goals through Routines

SEPs espoused goals about instruction and student outcomes. They aimed to assist student reach grade level expectations, desired to see the students making progress towards those goals, and hoped to raise their students' self esteem. At the heart of it, these goals appear to stem from larger societal goals, beliefs, and mandates. The societal beliefs and edicts are then adopted by the school district and schools. The goals become solidified by the SEPs own experiences in their histories. But, SEPs did not appear to be the originators of these goals. For some SEPs, they articulated these goals as their own. For other SEPs, they appeared to adopt the goals unconsciously. But in the end, regardless if they were conscious or unconscious of these goals, all of the SEPs enacted these goals on a daily basis through their everyday routines. The adoption of the goals suggests that there was an underlying structure imposing its own goals on the SEPs' instructional activity. Therefore, if SEPs had very little control over goals, they subsequently had very little control over their everyday routines.

Resource Origination, From Nested Systems

Chapters VI through VII illustrated that issues of power were also embedded in social, material, and cultural resources. All of the resources that SEPs were exposed to appeared to be derived from external forces such as the former or current supervising teachers and district programs for training. The more SEPs had opportunities to accumulate and access these resources, the more they could add to their repertoire of everyday routines. However, regardless of the size of their repertoires, the SEPs only used their resources to execute their supervising teachers' orders.

Social Resources

The reliance on external factors to access resources was particularly evident in the SEPs' discussions about their access to former and current supervisors. The supervisors either supported or constrained their access to resources. In Chapter VII, all of the SEPs' narratives illustrated how their access to current and former supervisors played a pivotal role in how they executed their instructional duties. Supervisors directed SEPs on which students to work with, in which setting, what to teach the students, and what materials to use.

For example, in Louise's narratives, she described how her supervisor believed that students should be as independent as possible. This belief translated into allowing students to make mistakes in their reading and writing. Louise was directed by her supervisor not to be overly critical of spelling errors and not to expect perfection. Louise stated, "I feel like I catch myself thinking that everything has to be perfect. Erase that, that's not how you spell that. [My teacher] has mentioned, 'No, you need to let them. You can't expect perfection'" (Louise, VEI). Louise adopted her supervisor's belief system and enacted her supervisor's directives.

In another example, Annie appeared to have more autonomy and power in comparison to the other SEPs in the study. She created her own weekly art lessons. Annie also ran a regular math group where she had more leeway in determining the math content and how to teach the math content. But, her autonomy was still restricted. Annie made decisions about instruction, but, she would always defer to the supervising teacher to determine if her choices were appropriate for the students. The

deference was illustrated when Annie described how her supervising teacher allowed her to determine how to teach spelling words, but the supervisor always provided Annie with a lesson plan and the list of spelling words for the week. Annie reported that she did not alter the supervisor's lesson plans.

Overall, the SEPs did not have autonomy in their decision making within the instructional setting. Only two SEPs, Gladys and Annie, explicitly declared that they had more flexibility in how and what they provided during the instructional activity. But as illustrated through Annie, even these two SEPs deferred to their supervisors for approval on their decisions. Ultimately, all of the SEPs in the study adopted beliefs and followed directions that they were given by their current and former supervisors.

Material Resources

The underlying power structure was also evident in the SEPs' access to material resources. In general, Chapter VII illustrated that SEPs had a wide variety of material resources to draw upon. However, those resources were impacted by what was available at the school and current and former supervisors. In addition, extenuating environmental factors, specifically the socioeconomic statuses of the schools that the SEPs worked in also influenced the types of material resources that SEPs could use. SEPs that worked in the field longer tended to have more diversity in the types of resources they could use; however, they still had to use those resources to execute a teacher's directive. Finally, the power differential was poignant not only in the findings from this study, but also in the existing paraeducator literature, when discussing the SEPs' access to training.

The Impact of SES

All of the SEPs identified that there were material resources that impacted their instructional duties. There were two types: instructional materials and work condition resources. Ultimately, material resources are used to mediate the instructional activity. Overall, the SEPs have access to a variety of material resources that enable them to provide instructional services to students. Although not statistically significant, excluding the use of presentation instructional materials, there were differences in attitude towards and usage of these material resources by the schools' SES. Two areas appear to be particularly susceptible to SES factors: the use of scripted programs and presentation materials.

Scripted program and curriculum for program improvement schools.

For scripted programs and curriculum**,** SEPS of schools with lower SES tended to have a higher average of references to the use of a scripted program or curriculum resources. The scripted programs and curriculum tended to focus on basic skills such as phonics instruction. This may suggest that SEPs or students in lower SES schools need more guidance and support in learning basic skills. That guidance and support comes in the form of a district and school approved program that has embedded in it a script of how to teach the concept, how to assess, and the pacing of instruction.

Another factor that may account for higher averages to the use of scripted programs is the fact that schools in lower SES areas may be schools in "program improvement." Under the guidelines of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), schools that are in program improvement are schools that have not met their Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP) targets for six years or more consecutive years. AYP measures the percentage of students who have reached proficiency on grade level standards as measured by statewide accountability measures. Often, schools that are in program improvement or are in danger of being in program improvement will attempt to implement programs, services, and supports for students to increase their AYP.

According to district records, there were seven schools that participated in this study that were identified as lower SES. Of those seven, three of the schools were in program improvement. Another three had not met their AYP targets in 2010 and were in danger of entering the program improvement status. The final lower SES school met its target, but the SEPs from that school were not using scripted programs or curriculum. The two schools that represented higher SES schools all met their AYP targets in 2010. The characteristics of six out of seven of the lower SES schools may explain why there is a higher reference of use of scripted programs.

In addition, when discussing work related resources, specifically time, all of the negative references to accessing the resource of time were made by SEPs from schools with lower SES. When considering the schools' needs to meet AYP targets, the pressure to achieve these targets may impose a sense of urgency to meet targets as quickly as possible. Thus, SEPs from schools with lower SES may be experiencing this urgency and pressure from not only NCLB mandates, but from the principals and teachers in the school. All of the educators in the schools in program improvement or in danger of entering program improvement may be feeling a pressure to raise test scores as quickly as possible. This pressure then trickles down to the SEPs.

Increased use of visuals to present instruction.

Another SES difference was the statistically significant difference that SEPs in schools with SES tended to use more presentation resources in their instruction. SEPs from schools with lower SES used more visuals to display information (i.e. whiteboards and posters). A plausible reason for the difference is that schools in lower SES tend to have higher percentages of English Language Learners (ELL). This is evident in the specific schools in this study. Schools in higher SES areas averaged 24% of the student population as being ELL. In contrast, schools in lower SES areas averaged 69% of the student population as being ELL.

Using visuals is a common practice when working with ELLs. In literature on best practices for teaching ELLs, researchers in the field discuss the importance of using visual supports to assist students in accessing curriculum. For example, in the area of reading, Sinatra (1981) discussed the use of visual supports to help students to access curriculum and stimulate language interactions. Boyle and Peregoy (1990) discuss the use of story mapping and illustrations to assist students reach higher levels of reading comprehension. Sinatra (1981) and Boyle and Peregoy (1990) use visuals to not only display information, but also as tools to help students acquire language and access higher order thinking.

In contrast to the research of best practices for ELLs, the SEPs of this study did not use visuals in structured manners to access higher level comprehension skills. Rather, they tended to use the visuals to display more simplistic information. In the research cited, ELLs were encouraged to use language and collaboration with peers in

conjunction with visuals. These additional supports were not evident in the SEPs' instructional activities. There was little interaction in terms of students explaining their ideas or working with one another. The interaction was unidirectional where the SEP did most of the talking and requesting responses from the students. This unidirectional nature of the activity suggests that SEPs do not have a deep understanding of best practices in working with ELLs, but they have a basic understanding that ELLs require some form of additional support. Possibly, the SEPs from schools with lower SES execute this basic understanding through the increased use of visuals.

Lack of Training

Training resources were divided into two different types of training, formal and informal. The SEPs that were in the field longer tended to have greater access to formal trainings put on by the school district. Half of the SEPs had formal training. The other half of the SEPs received informal training directly from their supervising teachers. This finding suggests two things. First, SEPs gain more opportunities to access to formal training opportunities as they gain experience and stay longer in the field. Second, the skill set of the supervisor to train and interact with paraeducators influences the SEPs' everyday routines.

Based on my review of literature, there is no research on how to retain paraeducators in the field. But, there is research on the need to recruit teachers from the paraeducator population (Villegas & Clewell, 1998) to add to teacher diversity. Thus, there are no studies that provide information on why paraeducators stay paraeducators. In this study, 9 out of 12 of the SEPs were in the field for greater than

seven years. Of those nine, four SEPs were career SEPs, having over 20 years of experience. The data indicates that SEPs that stayed longer in the field had more opportunities for formal training. They also had more opportunities to work with various supervisors and gain informal training. When the SEPs participated in both formal and informal training, they increased their repertoire of instructional every day practices.

Next, the remaining half of the SEPs received informal training. This finding is commensurate with the current literature. Existing literature described this informal training as "on the job" training (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009). Often the on the job training was a product of trial and error. This method of training taught paraeducators how to deal the myriad of job duties ranging from instruction to dealing with behavior problems. The SEPs in this study did not discuss informal training as trial and error, but they did discuss how their training was reliant on their supervising teachers. The SEPs' teachers gave them materials, trained them on programs, gave them feedback, and directed them on how to work with children. When SEPs had a strong relationship with their supervising teachers, the teachers served as an informal training resource. The more training the supervisor could provide equated to an increased repertoire of strategies that the SEP could use in their everyday routines.

Impact on SEP Development

My expectation of this study was overwhelmed by findings that illustrated that SEPs were at the lower end of a power structure that dictated their instructional routines. By creating a profile of the SEPs' instructional routines and how that related

to the instructional activity, I uncovered a structure that defined the paraeducator role. The power differential was embedded in the culture of the educational system, from the macro and exo systems and imposing itself as a direct impact on the SEPs' micro-systems. My unanticipated discovery is disconcerting because it may have negative effects on the paraeducators' development as educators. To explore the effects of a lack of power, we must return to Weisner's (1997) belief that everyday routines shape and influence an individual's development.

Given external factors' considerable amount of influence on the SEPs' every day routines, what is the impact of that influence on the SEP's development as a paraeducator? In other words, if an individual has no control over which everyday routines they engage in, what does that say about their ability to control their own development? For SEPs, the lack of control over their everyday routines may indicate a sense of stagnancy in development of their instructional skills. It also suggests that movement in the development of the SEPs skills may need to be initiated by the same external forces that dictate the SEPs routines, namely special education law, district, and supervising teachers. If SEPs were allowed to be involved in crafting instructional goals, determining the settings for instruction, and giving them adequate training and support, it would follow that they would have more power over their everyday routines. The expected and typical vignettes that I introduced earlier in this chapter could significantly alter to reflect a narrative of a SEP who has control over their own development. SEPs who are empowered and supported by the educational community would be valued for their contributions to students, involved in the decision making

process to determine what their students need, and bring forth instructional strengths to support student achievement.

Interviewer: Tell me about your typical day.

An Empowered SEP Answer: On Wednesday mornings, we have meetings. Usually, I meet with my supervising teacher to discuss what we want accomplish for that day, what kids we need to see, and review lesson plans. Some Wednesdays, we have IEPs to attend. My supervisor encourages me to attend because I work very closely with the students. So, she likes me to present my observations, listen to other members, and if needed, give feedback on what that particular child needs. On all of the other days, I typically refer back to my lesson plans that my teacher and I worked on together. Depending on the lesson for the day, I will pull kids or go into their general education classrooms to support them. In the general ed class, the students are clustered so I can work with a few teachers at a time. I talk to those teachers all the time, so I know what the class is working on and what I need to do when I go in. For the pull-out, my students change depending on what they need.

Interviewer: How do you know what they need?

An Empowered SEP Answer: We do a lot of assessment. I keep notes on all the kids. But, my strength is in reading. I took a lot of child development classes at the local community college. My principal also sent me to some district reading specialist trainings. So, I know how to assess a student's reading needs. I do a lot of phonics for my kindergarteners through 2nd graders. But, I try to balance it with comprehension too. I think both are important.

Interviewer: Why do you do that?

An Empowered SEP Answer: My teacher knows that reading is my specialty, so she lets me do most of the reading groups for the struggling readers. From all the trainings, I know that reading is really complicated, you have to focus on all parts of reading to help the kids reach grade level. Also, my teacher goes to all the department meetings. She shares with me the reading resources and she even sat down with me a few times to go over the grade level reading standards. I was amazed. These kids need to know a lot to be at grade level; just teaching them phonics isn't going to get them there.

CHAPTER X: IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, my vignette of the empowered paraeducator demonstrates that when a paraeducator has a voice, power, support, and is included in the decision making progress, the empowered paraeducator has the potential to grow and develop their instructional skills towards the benefit of the students that they work with. From current literature, we already know that paraeducators have much to offer by way of being cultural bridges and instructional human resources. But, existing literature and this study have illustrated that there is a continued lack of training and support for paraeducators in the field. Regardless, paraeducators are in the field, executing their instructional tasks in a system that leaves them stagnant in their paraeducator development.

The findings from this study indicate that paraeducators, specifically special education paraeducators (SEP) are engaged in a variety of routines across a multitude of settings and contexts. But, these routines are controlled by external factors that often leave the SEP without control of what routines to use, where to use them, and with whom. Also, this study afforded some hints to the differences of SEPs from schools with different socioeconomic statuses (SES). This study's findings fuel implications for practice on how to foster the SEPs' development

Unfortunately, with any study, there are limitations. Given the small sample size and design, this study is open for criticism about the generalizability of its findings. It also did not focus on whether or not the SEPs' instructional routines were

effective in bridging the student achievement gap. These methodological and design limitations leave the paraeducator phenomenon open for future areas of research.

Implications for Practice

Ecocultural and activity theory frameworks provided a lens on the everyday routines of the special education paraeducators (SEP) that illustrated that SEPs' instructional activities were greatly influenced by several factors outside of their immediate activity with children. Their everyday routines were dictated by contexts and settings. The SEPs' goals were originated from the exterior systems in which they are nested. Finally, the degree in which the SEPs had access to different types of resources was impacted by their respective district, schools, supervising teachers, and their own personal and work histories. As such, SEPs operated in instructional activity systems were they exercised very little control or power. Even SEPs who were more autonomous, collaborative, or independent had a supervising teacher to clear all decisions with. The overall structure of power for SEPs in Dukes Unified School District (DUSD) implied that any type of true change needs to be supported by all of the subjects that interact with paraeducators on all levels of the SEPs' nested systems.

Setting and Supporting the Bar

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), paraeducators have also been subject to being "highly qualified." At DUSD, in order to be highly qualified, SEPs must receive a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency exam. Also, SEPs must demonstrate proficiency on the Classroom Assistant Proficiency Exam (CAPE). The

CAPE measures basic skills in math, reading, and English. No other specialized training is required to work with students with special needs.

This study illustrated that the SEPs entered the education field with minimal requirements. Of the 12, only three had some form of higher education. Of the three, only one had training in working with children. When all 12 SEPs described their first day as SEPs, each narrative indicated an ignorance of what to expect, what to do, and how to do it. All of the SEPs in this study identified how they were unprepared for working with students. They relied on any experiences they could muster from their own personal lives. SEPs used their knowledge of parenting and their own school experiences as children to attempt to make sense of and provide services in special education. Or, the SEPs relied on cues from the supervising teacher of the classroom.

None of the SEPs received preliminary training or support before entering the classroom. The minimal requirements and lack of preparation before the SEPs enter the special education classroom is unacceptable. Evelyn captured this sentiment best when she described that the test didn't measure the skills that a SEP needed to be successful.

> ***Evelyn (VEI):*** I don't think that the district at this point gives enough. They need to address things so that when [the district is] sending an aide to a school, [the aides] have something to grasp onto. They know how to handle it. They know how to talk to somebody else about it. They know their role that yes, they are important. They maybe not know everything but they can learn it. But to hire somebody, and say, yeah you can be an aide, you passed this test.

SEPs need a greater skill set than just what the minimum requirements suggest. If schools expect to have quality individuals working to educate students, particular students with special needs, there needs to be a higher standard to hold those individuals accountable. The SEPs in this study and the literature illustrated that being a paraeducator was not simply a structure of following directions from supervising teachers. Nor was it a phenomenon of babysitting. In fact, being a paraeducator required a strong set of skills where SEPs were providing instructional services, managing behaviors, and collaborating with other educators. Yet, none of the minimal requirements measured the SEPs' ability to teach, interpersonal skills, or ability to deal with challenging behaviors. Paraeducators need to be more prepared for their duties than they are currently. They need a increased standard to be held to, as well as a comprehensive support program to prepare them for entry into the schools.

A Continued Call for Training

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has provided guidelines on what paraeducators need to be successful in services students. Training programs have been developed that have been proven to be cost-effective and effective at increasing the SEPs' knowledge base and skill set when working with students (Deardorff, Glasenapp, Schalock, & Udell, 2007). Yet, none of these training programs or guidelines has been adopted at DUSD. In the past, half of the SEPs in this study received formal training. Of those that did receive training, the focus was on teaching basic reading skills. One paraeducator received specialized training for working with

students with autism. During the time of this study, there were some district trainings offered to paraeducators, but none of the trainings were mandated or coordinated to encourage paraeducator participation. Thus, of those SEPs who entered the field approximately seven years ago, they did not have the same opportunities to access formal training. Their training was done through informal means, namely through their interactions with their supervising teachers.

Formal Training

The research on paraeducators and the declarations from this study's participants are clear; paraeducators need more training and more support to meet the demands of their jobs. Yet, this has not come to pass at DUSD. In conjunction with setting and supporting the bar, the district needs to implement some type of systematic, ongoing training and support program for SEPs if they wish to see student growth. The formal training would provide multiple benefits students and SEPs. SEPs could improve upon the skills that they enter with. As evident from this study, SEPs' duties varied based on context and setting. Formal trainings would provide consistency across the district on the SEPs' definition of roles, how they provided instructional services, and how they were supported. Formal training would provide SEPs with a foundation about instruction, behavior, and collaboration that they can build upon and tailor at their individual school sites.

Creating Professional Pathways

When districts develop formal training programs, they should consider creating systems where paraeducators can choose to become educators, such as a teacher or other educational professional. The research on diversifying the teaching force (Villegas & Clewell, 1998) suggested that paraeducators were a viable population to encourage becoming teachers. In Rueda and Monzo's (2002) work, the researchers discussed how bilingual paraeducators were seen as apprentices if they identified that they wanted to become teachers. The supervising teachers tended to work with the teacher-track paraeducators differently in comparison to those paraeducators who did not want to become teachers. The paraeducators in this study discussed how they had opportunities to take the teacher trajectory. But they chose not to do so for various reasons associated with time, finances, not wanting to do additional schooling, and not wanting the added responsibility. If districts embed trainings that assist paraeducators in becoming educational professionals, there may be more paraeducators striving to improve their practices as they work towards attainment of a higher degree or educational level.

Training Supervisors

In reality, we know that formal training is not the only solution. When we enter school sites and begin working with students, each school and child have individual characteristics where generic strategies must be tweaked to meet the unique needs. Thus, training also needs to occur on the school sites. However, onsite training is often not very cost effective. Therefore, I suggest that we need to train our supervising

teachers on how to work with and mentor the paraeducators on their school sites. This study has illustrated that all of the SEPs received informal training from their supervising teachers. The SEP carried that knowledge with them to each school site, drew upon it, and often returned to their mentors for support. The SEPs also had frequent interactions with their current supervisors. The strength of the relationships between the SEPs and their supervisors either constrained or supported their instructional routines. Consequently, to meet the SEPs' training and support needs and address the unique situations that SEPs find themselves in, training of supervising teachers is crucial. Supervising teachers need to understand that SEPs need guidance and that a "good aide" is not just a person that needs minimal directions and is self sufficient (French, 1998). But rather, good aides are those that have good training, support, and mentorship. Supervising teachers need to recognize the pivotal role that they play in the SEPs' development as educators themselves.

SES Specific Training

There were distinct differences in two areas when comparing SEPs by their schools' socioeconomic statuses (SES). SEPs from lower SES schools tended to use more scripted programs and curriculum as well as more presentation visual resources. In chapter seven, I discussed the possible reasons for these differences. First, the lower SES schools involved in this study tended to either be in program improvement or at risk of being in program improvement. The weight of NCLB proficiency goals pushed schools to seek out new instructional programs and strategies in an effort to meet Academic Yearly Progress targets. As a result, SEPs were trained on using and

implementing these programs. Second, the lower SES schools in this study had considerably higher percentages of English Language Learners (ELL). Consequently, SEPs tended to use more visuals to display and teach basic information to illustrate information in a less language loaded manner.

Given the dynamic of the lower SES schools involved in this research, SEPs working in lower SES schools would benefit from training that is geared towards the specific challenges that educators encounter in low income schools. For example, the SEPs statistically referenced the use of visuals. They used whiteboards and posters to display basic information in math and reading instruction. The SEPs used the visuals to show students information rather than to get them to process or engage in material in a novel way that would enrich their learning experience. In the research on ELL instruction, researchers suggest that visuals can be used as a tool to help ELLs access higher levels of comprehension and stimulate language development (Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Sinatra, 1981). SEPs are not using visuals in this manner. Training on the effective use of visuals could potentially increase the students with disabilities' acquisition of language as well as move them beyond basic skills learning to higher order learning.

Value the Educator in Paraeducator

Eleven out of 12 SEPs identified that they were "teaching" in some manner. As Erin described, the students thought that SEPs were "teachers, but not THE teacher" (Erin, VEI). Gladys described what she did as "coteaching" and that she was "just a

teacher without a credential" (Gladys, VEI). Despite the fact that they were teaching, SEPs felt that that they were not valued for their contributions to the children.

The SEPs described themselves as "under-rated" (Annie, VEI) or "underestimated" (Evelyn, VEI). They felt that they were not respected, recognized, or valued for their contributions to the children. Daniel described these feelings as feeling like he was not treated as an "equal" (Daniel, VEI). Although the SEPs recognized that they were operating within a set structure of power where they were typically being told what to do and how to do it, and they were fairly content in abiding by this structure, there was still an undercurrent of frustrations that they were not recognized for their efforts. Evelyn illustrated this frustration when she stated: "I think that aides are underestimated. [SEPs] don't get the support or the recognition that they need" (Evelyn, VEI).

But, those same SEPs did not want to become teachers to gain the same amount of power, responsibility, and respect. Thus, it appears that the SEPs didn't want to become teachers, but they wanted to be valued just like teachers were for their contributions to the children's educations. Evelyn's statement noted a key term that encapsulates this belief when she stated that SEPs didn't get the "recognition that they need" (Evelyn, VEI). The key word in her statement is "recognition." Therefore, I suggest that one way to alleviate the SEPs frustrations about respect and power is to create a system in which they are valued.

Recognition

To be valued, SEPs need a variety of things to illustrate that they are valued as educators. First and foremost, they need to be recognized for their contributions. Gladys was nominated for and awarded the Community Advisory Committee award for her contribution to special education. She spoke of this award with great pride and cited the award in both her questionnaire and her Paraeducator Ecocultural Narrative Interview. She described this award as the schools' way of recognizing her efforts. Districts and schools could increase job satisfaction and provide additional motivation if they created a recognition program to honor those SEPs who are truly "teaching" the children.

Compensation

Several SEPs described that they were not compensated well enough for the tasks that they did during the school day. Paraeducators like Gladys and Annie both did additional jobs at the school site to increase their income. They enjoyed their jobs, and were trusted by their supervising teachers enough to execute lessons with more autonomy. Observations of their teaching interactions indicated that they had a large repertoire of instructional routines to execute their instructional goals. Yet, both Gladys and Annie made several comments in their narratives about the poor compensation for paraeducators. Gladys described how she was extremely valued at her school and effective with the students. The work environment was ideal for her. Yet, the compensation was so poor that Gladys also described how she was tempted to leave her current position to get a higher paying position.

In Erin's narrative, she describes how she wasn't offered a permanent position because of the budget freeze in the district. She was bereft of health insurance. Erin was one of two SEPs that held a bachelor degree and had experience in college with working with students with learning challenges. Yet, because of the of the limited compensation, Erin was actively seeking more lucrative job opportunities, particularly given her training and education level.

Consequently, the SEPs narratives describe a situation where they enjoy working with the students and generally feel effective in helping students succeed. Unfortunately, the paraeducator compensation was a factor that had them all wondering if they should remain as paraeducators or move on to pursue other opportunities. Therefore, if districts and schools want to retain quality paraeducators, they need to feel not only a sense of value from recognition, but also see that they are valued for the skills that they bring to the instructional activity. SEPs need to be adequately compensated for their contributions.

Supporting the Para "Educator"

In short, this study has illustrated that paraeducators are providing instructional services to students on a daily basis. Any educator or educational researcher would agree that instruction is a complex process that requires many supports to ensure effective implementation. Paraeducators are engaged in this complex phenomenon but are lacking a general support structure that is systematic and consistent to assist them in providing those services. Their development as educators is dependent on external systems that dictate and shape who they are as educators. SEPs rely on formal

trainings provided by the district and informal training provided by their supervising teachers. They are subject to minimal requirements and are then thrust into novel situations for which they are unequipped to handle. The lack of support and minimal requirements connotes that SEPs are not valued for their contributions and this breeds a general frustration.

Ultimately, this study suggests that there are a handful of things that districts and schools can implement to assist paraeducators in their development as educators. First, increasing the requirements for and preparation of paraeducators is a must. Next, formal trainings would benefit the overall consistency of service delivery and build a foundation of skills for SEPs to draw on. Third, supervising teachers need to recognize their own roles in the SEPs' development and be supported through their own training on how to interact and support the SEPs that they work with. Finally, SEPs need to be valued for their contributions to the field through recognition and compensation programs that recognize their integral roles.

Implications for Future Research

In this study, I attempted to contribute to the existing paraeducator body of literature. The current literature provides a strong basis for identifying the paraeducators' contributions to education, their training needs, their strengths and weaknesses, and that they are used as instructional human resources. However, given the limitations in training and standards for paraeducators, the existing literature is limited and scope and depth about how paraeducators are making meaning of and executing the instructional responsibilities of their jobs. Consequently, this study was

purposefully designed as an investigative exploration of what paraeducators are doing and how they are doing it with limited support. Unfortunately, because of its investigative nature, there are several limitations to the study that leave open implications for future research of the paraeducator phenomenon.

Limitations of Study

There were several limitations to this study. Among them included critical issues that may be highlighted by the research community: methodological concerns regarding limited sample size, generalizability, and research design concerns about the failure of the research to determine the effectiveness of the Special Education Paraeducator's (SEP) instructional skills.

Given the time constraints and limited resources provided to this proposed study, the sample size was limited to no more than 12 SEP voices. As such, the potential research findings must be scrutinized for their representativeness of the SEP experience as well as questioned about the generalizability of the findings of the study. Given the qualitative nature of the study, generalizability may be further questioned because I chose to use interview and video analysis methods yielded data that are unique to the participants' characteristics, the students they work with, and the specific school setting in which they practice. However, given the nature of my research interests, and my own pilot studies, a mixed methods study offered the best design and methods to capture the individual contributions and meaning making of the SEP led instructional activity. Although the study may not be generalizable, the findings have

the potential to inform the field about the current practices that are in effect and thus build a foundation for future, more generalizable studies.

Finally, this study did not focus on the SEP's effectiveness in providing instruction. As such, the study is open to closer inspection from educational researchers who are interested in student outcomes and special education program evaluations. Researchers may question my choice to focus the study on the SEP as the unit of analysis rather than the student's performance. My answer to this potential criticism is that the research has clearly attempted to determine SEP effectiveness. But, with the constraints of systematic training, the diversity of the students that SEPs work with, and the situatedness of the SEP's job responsibilities and expectations across schools and districts, determining their effectiveness has been very problematic (French, 2003). The crux of the problem in the paraeducator literature is the fact that educators have yet to define who paraeducators are, how they do things, and what they have to say. Without knowing the paraeducator population, how can researchers even begin to determine if they are effective?

Avenues for Future Investigation

This study identifies several characteristics of the paraeducator population. It also focused on the SEP self perceptions and allowed their voices to be heard by the larger educational community in which they belonged. With those voices, the study identified the current supports available to SEPs in various socio economic settings, and the needed supports that have yet to be designed or implemented. This study has the potential to inform SEP training programs and begin to describe a culture of

educators that are often overlooked. It has the potential to be part of the foundation to move researchers closer to conducting in depth studies about SEP impacts on student outcomes.

Determining Paraeducator Instructional Effectiveness

The paraeducator phenomenon is still an enigma when it comes to determining whether or not paraeducators are an added value in increasing student achievement outcomes. Of the existing literature on paraeducator instructional effectiveness (Lane, Fletcher, Carter, Dejud, & Delorenzo, 2007; Vadasy, Sanders, & Peyton, 2006), the literature does not directly connect paraeducator teaching to student outcomes. Rather, the studies measure the effectiveness of a paraeducator implemented intervention. The current study did not evaluate the SEPs' effectiveness in delivery of instruction as related to student achievement outcomes. But, with a focus on the actual instructional routines that SEPs are engaged in, future studies could build upon the SEPs' profiles to determine whether or not those routines are effective for student learning and achievement.

Making a Power Play

Existing literature has briefly discussed the role of power and paraeducators' perceptions about how they lack power (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; Rueda & Monzo, 2002). They discuss how paraeducators keenly feel that they are either marginalized or lack power in comparison to their supervising teachers. In this study, issues of power revealed themselves as a theme that ran through the SEPs' narratives.

SEPs found themselves desiring to be equal, valued, and recognized for their contributions, even though the overall educational system structured their roles in a hierarchical power structure. The issues of power were addressed in this study as a cultural resource where some SEPs had more access to the resource than others. The factors that differentiated between whether or not SEPs could access power were the years of experience as a paraeducator and the strength of the paraeducator and supervisor relationship.

For this study, power was an unanticipated factor with seemingly expansive influence on the SEPs' everyday routines. But, power was not one of the focuses of the study. Consequently, there were many unanswered questions about the influence of power on the paraeducators' job satisfaction, retention, and quality of the execution of their job duties. Especially disconcerting was the finding that there was a power paradox, where SEPs voiced that they desired to be equals yet they didn't take the steps to secure their teaching credentials. Future research studies could identify the reasons for why paraeducators never embarked on a trajectory towards becoming teachers. By identifying these reasons, researchers could develop programs or supports in the schools that could enable paraeducators to become teachers if that was their desire, or to increase the recognition from the educational community about the paraeducators additive value.

One Paraeducator is Not the Same as Another

The focus of this study was on paraeducators that provided instructional services to students with mild to moderate disabilities. During the recruitment phase of

the study, two general types of paraeducators emerged. There were those that met the criteria for the study, and there were other SEPs that worked solely with students with moderate to severe disabilities (MS).

The SEPs that worked with students with MS disabilities had very different descriptions of their typical day. Many of their routines revolved around basic self help skills such as tube feeding and toileting. They also worked with helping students with basic communication skills such as generating one word responses, using assistive communication devices, or using alternative communication modes (i.e. sign language, picture communication systems). The SEPs that worked with students with MS disabilities also focused their instructional routines around functional curriculum where students were learning things like identifying their personal information, what symbols correlated with male and female bathrooming facilities, etc. Given the population of students, these SEPs may have very different everyday routines, goals, and resources. Their instructional activity may also look very different.

In addition, the current study focused on paraeducators at the elementary levels. With different age groups, students have different needs and developmental abilities. Also, as students move into secondary levels of education, the structure of the schools are quite different. Secondary schools typically become more subject oriented, have students cycling through multiple teachers, and become more focused on high school graduation. In addition, secondary schools typically have greater numbers of students. Consequently, there are many more teachers, paraeducators, and special education students on the school sites. The ways in which SEPs' conduct their

everyday routines with secondary parameters may differ significantly in comparison to the SEPs in this study.

Thus, the current study may not be as adaptable or useful to making meaning of SEPs that work with students with more severe needs or students at the secondary levels. Future research in the paraeducator phenomenon should also investigate how the SEPs' roles and duties change based on the students that they work with.

Ripe for Research

Although this study has provided more information on how paraeducators are making meaning of and providing instructional services, it is still limited in several ways. As the research on paraeducators grows, researchers continue to gain deeper understanding of the paraeducator phenomenon, but greater understanding also leads to more questions. To continue to build a strong foundation and truly capture the paraeducator arena, researchers should consider looking more closely at several areas. Researchers can continue to investigate how paraeducators' instruction is related to student outcomes. Are paraeducators effective? If so, what makes them effective? Also, researchers may explore how paraeducators vary depending on the populations in which they serve. Finally, power is a persistent issue that undergirds not only this study, but several others in the field. A thorough explanation of power could inform how to design supports for paraeducators to feel empowered.

CHAPTER XI: CONCLUSION

Over a decade ago, I met a special education paraeducator (SEP). As a first year teacher, I didn't understand who he was, what his role was, or that he could help me understand how to work with students. In fact, he didn't even have a name. I just knew him as "my aide." I underestimated him, didn't know his value, nor did I give him a voice in my classroom. Years later, and many SEPs later, I realized that I was not the only teacher that subjected paraeducators to this treatment. The literature, countless interactions, and this study illustrated that paraeducators are continuing to serve as a valuable resource to students; yet, their contributions often go unnoticed or even unknown.

In the current study, twelve SEPs were interviewed and observed to determine their everyday routines, how those routines were related to the instructional activity, what their goals were, and what resources they had access to. The SEPs all worked for Dukes Unified School District, were drawn from K-5 elementary schools of varying socioeconomic statuses (SES), and all worked with students with mild to moderate disabilities. They represented a wide variety of experience, age, and perspectives. A mixed method analysis of the SEPs' interview narratives, questionnaires, and video of a 30 minute instructional interaction illustrated that that the paraeducator phenomenon was extremely complex and influenced by a multitude of factors.

In an attempt to begin to parse out the paraeducator complexities, I implemented a research design that drew on two theoretical frameworks: ecocultural

and activity theories. Using these perspectives, I suggested that the SEPs' instructional activity was nested and thus impacted by broader contexts. The only way to view the impact of these contexts on the instructional activity was to investigate the paraeducator's everyday routines.

I strove to answer an overarching question about paraeducators' everyday routines and the relationship of those routines to the SEPs' goals, resources, and instruction. My all encompassing question was what were the ecocultural factors, specifically everyday routines, impact an elementary school SEPs' instruction when providing instructional services to students with mild to moderate disabilities? In more specific terms, my research question was broken down to three sub questions:

1. What are the SEP's everyday routines and how are they related to the SEP led small group instructional activity setting?
2. What are the SEP's espoused goals about instruction and student outcomes and how are those goals related to the SEP's everyday routines?
3. What are the resources (social, cultural, and material) available to SEPs from different socio-economic settings and how are those resources related to the SEP's everyday routines?

My 12 SEP participants revealed through their questionnaires that they engaged in four types of everyday routines: instructional, assessment, behavior management, and communication routines. These routines assisted them in enacting goals of providing basic skills instruction, seeing progress in their students, and

increasing student self esteem. Within the instructional activity, SEPs accessed and used social, material, and cultural resources in varying degrees.

Outside of my aforementioned research questions was a silent question about the structure of power. The existing literature hinted to the possibility of a power differential among supervising teachers and paraeducators (Rueda & Monzo, 2002). However, the pervasiveness of the issue of power and its relationship to the SEPs' everyday routines was an unanticipated theme throughout all of the SEPs' narratives. Ultimately, the issue of power could not be silenced.

Using Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecocultural theory of nested systems, I found that SEPs' goals and everyday routines were highly influenced by the outer layers of the system. Specifically, the macro-system, which was comprised of special education law and district mandates, forced its ideologies into the next system, the exo-system. The exo-system, which was made up of the school system and the supervising teachers, accepted the macro-system's ideologies and imposed it onto the SEPs' micro-systems or instructional activities. SEPs adopted these ideologies as their own. The SEPs' own meso-systems, which were an accumulation of personal and work histories, had some impact on the micro-system, but not as strongly as the other peripheral layers.

More striking, the impact of the nested system appeared to be unidirectional. It dictated the SEPs' goals, the contexts and settings in which they provided services, how they provided services, and with whom. The nested systems also dictated what

resources the paraeducators had access to. For example, SEPs exhibited goals of helping students attain grade level standards, wanted to see progress in the students, and hoped to increase the student's self esteem. These goals originated from special education law, district service delivery goals, and the SEPs' supervising teachers (former and current). The students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP), school of attendance, and the SEPs' supervising teachers informed SEPs of the setting in which to provide services, how to teach, and the students that they would work with. In addition, resources were provided and accessible depending on what the district mandated or what the school or supervising teachers had available.

Within the micro-system resided the instructional activity. The instructional activity was analyzed with an additional theoretical lens, Engestrom's activity theory (1999). Although I captured the activity at its most basic level through video, the interaction between the subject and object using mediating tools, careful analysis of the interaction using Engestrom's extended mediation triangle and ecocultural theories indicated that there was more to the teaching activity. Paraeducators were enacting adopted goals through use of instructional, behavior management, assessment, and communication routines. They enacted these goals under the direct consent of their supervising teachers which indicated that there was a distinct underlying structure of power. The power structure was hierarchical where the SEPs had less power in comparison to their supervising teachers.

In the end, my initial research questions were answered. This study found that there were four basic everyday routines: instructional, behavior management, assessment, and communication routines. The routines crossed over multiple contexts and settings. Depending on the setting and the expectations of that setting, SEPs enacted specific routines in accordance with said expectations. Also, the everyday routines assisted SEPs to enact the goals of the instructional activity. Finally, in order to learn and execute the everyday routine, SEPs drew on their social, material, and cultural resources. Access to resources varied in two areas due to SES factors; SEPs from lower SES schools tended to use more scripted programs and presentation material resources.

But, the data indicated that there was more to the paraeducator phenomenon than the initial design of this study set out to investigate. Surprisingly, this study illustrated that SEPs had very little control over what they do and how they do it. There was an overarching power structure that dictated that SEPs are on the receiving end of the decision making process. Other educators are making decisions about what students need and how best to meet their needs. In turn, these educators directed and supervised the SEPs to execute these decisions. The power differential was further bolstered by the fact that SEPs did not receive systematic training or support. Their training and support varied depending on the individual characteristics of the schools and the individuals that they worked with in their past and present experiences.

The SEPs lack of control over their development as paraeducators is disconcerting. With the SEPs of this study, several of the SEPs voiced an underlying frustration with this lack of control. But at the same time, these same SEPs as well as the others continued to function within the power structure to provide instructional services. They worked within the parameters of the structure and overall, had positive perceptions and attitudes about their experiences as paraeducators.

In conclusion, this study suggests that my mistreatment of my own SEP is a mistreatment that is pervasive across the literature and the participants in this study. Although a decade of time has passed, SEP support, expertise, and recognition for their contributions have remained relatively stagnant. This study's findings suggest that SEPs are attempting to execute their instructional duties as best they can, under generally poor conditions related to training, support, and power. They have a repertoire of everyday routines that help them meet their adopted goals. The longer the SEPs are in the field and the stronger their relationships with former and current supervisors allows them to add to their repertoire of routines. In turn, the SEPs have more routines to draw from to meet the expectations of the different settings, diverse students, and variety of supervisors that they must interact with on a daily basis. Finally, this study serves as a jumping point for researchers to begin the next stage of investigation, determining the efficacy of the special education paraeducator in their service delivery and their impacts on student outcomes.

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