

A STUDY ON WORK SATISFACTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
PARAPROFESSIONALS BASED ON THE INDEX OF
WORK SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my father, Thornton A. Beach, and in honor of my mother, Mildred L. Beach, who instilled in me the value of an education and the love of learning.

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY ON WORK SATISFACTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONALS BASED ON THE INDEX OF WORK SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Peggy Lou Beach Akerman

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a difference existed in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction between special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular education facilities. Further, this study sought to determine whether a difference existed in the perceptions and attitudes of the two groups relative to age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, and years employed. The *Index of Work Satisfaction* (IWS) measure was utilized to collect the data in this mixed method study. The IWS focused on pay, organizational policies, task requirements, interaction, and professional status. A sample of 214 special education paraprofessionals employed by the Escambia County School District in Florida participated in the study. The data analysis included a one-way ANOVA, a MANOVA, and descriptive statistics. Results of the ANOVA showed that on the IWS subscales of pay and organization policies there were statistically significant differences between special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular education facilities. Results of the MANOVA revealed a significant difference on the subscales of years plus tasks requirements, ethnicity plus years with interaction, and education plus level and plus years with autonomy

between the two groups. Results of the analyses of the personal interviews found that the participants loved working with special needs students, but felt paraprofessionals were underpaid for their responsibilities. Other significant findings pointed to concerns of paraprofessionals such as lack of inclusion in the affairs concerning students, being treated with little respect, level of knowledge and skills, and the lack of autonomy. The interconnectivity of the IWS subscales suggested that further research is warranted to ascertain which of the subscales has the greatest impact on work satisfaction.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, the number of special education teachers in the United States has gradually increased. The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services estimates that more than 300,000 individuals have been designated as special education paraprofessionals. The report further predicts the need for these types of paraprofessionals will continue to increase over the next five years (2007).

The role of paraprofessionals in the field of special education has evolved in recent years, with additional responsibilities continuing to be added to job descriptions. Paraprofessionals are currently performing tasks that, at one time, were the responsibilities of the professional educator. In both regular and special education programs, paraprofessionals are now required to provide individual academic instruction and support. Additional responsibilities include such tasks as implementing lesson plans, controlling behavior, providing hygiene instruction, caring for the health-related needs of special education students, performing administrative duties, and tutoring (Blalock, 1991; Rubin & Long, 1994).

The State of Florida, as well as other states throughout the nation, is presently required to provide expanded services for disabled students as a result of federal legislation (Morehouse & Albright, 1991; Stallings, 2000). The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), passed in 1997, specified that properly trained paraprofessionals need to be involved in assisting special education students (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 1997). More specifically,

Paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised ... are to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities. (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2008)

Statement of the Problem

The critical problem that Escambia County, Florida, and other school districts experience concerning the longevity of special education paraprofessionals makes the current study of utmost importance (Cain, personal communication, October 15, 2005). Not only should the findings of this study serve as the impetus for further research on turnover and attrition rates of special education paraprofessionals, the conclusions should also have far-reaching educational implications for all states and the federal government as they address similar issues. Job dissatisfaction and the attrition of special education paraprofessionals are not only costly to school districts but also diminish the services and educational opportunities for special education populations (Cain, personal communication, November 20, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to examine and explore the impact of attitudes and perceptions of special education paraprofessionals on work satisfaction. The two groups studied were special education paraprofessionals employed at an exclusive special education facility and special education paraprofessionals employed at special education programs located in regular education facilities. Each of the three educational levels (elementary, middle, and secondary) were investigated to determine whether there was a statistical difference between the perceptions and attitudes of special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education facilities and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities toward work satisfaction, as measured by the Index of Work Satisfaction Questionnaire.

A secondary aspect of the study was to determine whether work satisfaction components of pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational policies, professional status, or interaction were perceived differently by the two groups. The two different special education populations based on the demographic characteristics of age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level as a function of the number of years employed as a special education paraprofessional participated in the current study. Further, an exploration of perceptions and attitudes concerning the work satisfaction of special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities (as related to age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level) were also examined.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

Is there a statistical difference in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction, as measured by the Index of Work Satisfaction (IWS), between special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular educational facilities?

Research Question 2

Is there a statistical difference in the attitudes toward work satisfaction, as measured by the IWS, between special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular educational facilities relative to age, gender, ethnicity, educational levels, and years employed?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no difference in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction, based on the IWS, between special education paraprofessional employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in regular education facilities.
2. There is no difference in the attitudes toward work satisfaction between special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessional employed in regular educational facilities relative to age, gender, ethnicity, and years employed.

Alternate Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis 1

Special education paraprofessional employed at exclusively special education centers will hold more positive attitudes toward work satisfaction, based on the IWS, than special education paraprofessional employed in regular education facilities.

Research Hypothesis 2

Special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers will hold more positive attitudes toward work satisfaction than special education paraprofessional employed in regular educational facilities relative to age, gender, ethnicity, and years employed.

Central Issue

The central purpose of this study is to identify issues that may inhibit or justify special education paraprofessionals' feelings, beliefs, and attitudes concerning job satisfaction.

Central Question

Based on the components of the IWS, are there specific determinants which may inhibit or enhance special education paraprofessionals' attitudes toward work satisfaction?

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined to increase the reader's understanding of the terms and concepts utilized in this study.

Autonomy. Amount of job-related independence received for work done (Stamps, 1997).

Axial coding. Moving from identifying the concepts that seem to fit the data to focusing around a concept (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Burnout. "A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment" (Maslach, 1982, p. 4).

Coding. Process of marking segments of data (usually text data) with symbols, descriptive words, or category names (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Culture. The way of life common to a group of people including knowledge deemed important, shared meanings, norms, values, attitudes, ideals, and view of the world (Parkay, 2007).

Cultural influences. Influences which include the following variables: (a) environment, (b) socio-economic, (c) educational status (Parkay, 2007).

Daily work satisfaction. The feeling about the job at the end of each day, from very dissatisfied to very satisfied (Patrician, 2002).

Demographic variability. An individual or group exhibiting differences in demographic qualities, including, but not limited to ethnicity, age, and gender (Parkay, 2007).

Educational status. The level of education obtained: (a) high school or G.E.D. completion, (b) undergraduate degree, (c) graduate degree, and (d) certification program.

Exceptional learner. Students whose growth and development deviate from the norm to the extent that their educational needs can be met more effectively through a modification of regular school programs (Parkay, 2007).

Exclusive special education facility. Educational facilities that house only special education students.

Individual Disability Education Act. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law enacted in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997. It is designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities by ensuring that everyone receives a *free appropriate public education* (FAPE), regardless of ability (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2008).

Interaction. Opportunities presented for both formal and informal social and professional contact during working hours (Stamps, 1997).

Job satisfaction. A state that depends on the interaction of employees, their personal characteristics, and their work environment and organization (Bassett, 1994). Other definitions of work satisfaction include

1. A positive or negative emotional state an individual feels resulting from one's job or job experience.
2. "A difference between the amount of rewards workers receive and the amount they believe they should receive" (Bravendam Research, 2003).
3. "Any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental that causes a person to say, "I am satisfied with my job" (Hoppock, 1935, p. 47).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Law passed in 2002 designed to close the achievement gap between different groups of students (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002).

Organizational policies. Management policies and procedures put forward by the school administration (Stamps, 1997).

Paraprofessionals. A person who works at a school in an instructional capacity alongside school professionals and is supervised by the certified or licensed professionals who hold ultimate responsibility for the student and programmatic outcome (French, 2001). Other definitions of paraprofessionals include the following.

1. Individuals who work with professionals and whose job consists of subsections of work, heretofore done by professionals for which full professional training is not necessary or assist in new functions that expand the scope of professional services. Jobs are designed at the entry level so that persons with less than formal training or with academic credentials that usually accompany professional status can, in relatively short periods, become sufficiently skilled to perform the work (Lynton, 1967).
2. Individuals, technicians and specialists, who direct instructional, vocational, transitional, therapeutic, library, health, and other related services to special education students (Johnson, Lasater, & Fitzgerald, 1997).
3. Employees who perform educational, academic, and instructional tasks as directed and serviced by a fully qualified professional (Fouse, 1999).

Paraprofessionals are employees whose positions are either instructional in nature or who deliver other direct services to students and/or parents and work under the supervision for the design, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs and student progress (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, 2007)

4. Staff members who work under the oversight of a classroom teacher and assist with instruction (Florida Statute, 1998).
5. A worker trained to perform certain functions, as in medicine or teaching, but not licensed to practice as a professional (McKean, 2005).

Pay. Dollar remuneration and fringe benefits received for work completed (Stamps, 1997, p. 181).

Professional status. Overall importance or significance felt about your job, both in your view and in the view of others (Stamps, 1997, p. 181).

Regular education. Programs where most students have no physically or emotionally limiting disability (Edwards, 1994).

Selective coding. Denotes the final step in analysis - the integration of concepts around a core category and filling in of categories in need of further development and refinement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

Special education. Specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a handicapped child, including classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (Heward, 2008). Other definitions of special education include:

1. A teaching specialty for meeting the special educational needs of exceptional learners (Parkay, 2007).
2. Educational programming provided by schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Parkay, 2007).

Special education programs housed in regular educational facilities. A variety of special education programs are part of a school which also contains non-special education classes. For the purposes of the current study, special education programs housed in regular educational facilities are schools that contain less than 50% special education classrooms.

Special education teachers. Teachers who work in a variety of settings with children and youth who have disabilities. These instructors use various techniques to promote learning and they design and teach curricula designed for students who are classified as special needs (Parkay, 2007).

Tasks requirements. Tasks or activities that must be done as a regular part of the job (Stamps, 1997 p. 181).

Work satisfaction variability. The amount of variation in job satisfaction.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Researching the area of work satisfaction, in itself, is a difficult undertaking, but it is even more challenging to examine special education paraprofessionals' perceptions of job satisfaction. Any individual who deals with exceptional students experiences diverse feelings concerning how satisfied and motivated individuals are in their role as a special education paraprofessional. The satisfaction and motivation is due, largely, to the diverse and numerous roles that special education paraprofessionals assume throughout the course of a workday. The various facets involved in functioning as a special education paraprofessional all have an impact on job satisfaction and motivation. This literature review examines three major subtopics: (a) paraprofessionals, including background, historical evolution of paraprofessionals, legislation, and task requirements, (b) job requirements and training, and (c) job satisfaction.

Paraprofessionals

Background

When paraprofessionals were first recognized as part of the school staff, they had possessed a diverse series of official titles. In the early 1930's, they were referred to as "non-professionals" and "attendants." Following those designations, the term "aide" became the new vogue. Two other titles, "assistant" and "technician," also became common terms (Blalock, 1991). Currently, in addition to the term paraprofessionals,

they have been referred to as “instructional teacher assistants,” “paraeducators,” and “paraprof.” Specific titles have been designated to specific jobs, such as “recreation aide,” “job coaches” or “childcare workers” (Schonewise, 2001). For the purpose of the current study, the term “paraprofessionals” will be utilized to encompass the myriad of titles.

Teachers’ roles and responsibilities have increased and changed significantly over the past several decades. This tremendous change has resulted in less time for direct instruction by the teacher. Pickett, Vasa, and Steckelberg (1993) assert that if teachers are to perform these expanded duties successfully and continue to meet individual learners’ needs, additional support is required. Florida administrators and legislators, as well as those in other states throughout the nation, have had to search for supplemental resources to solve the increased demand for educators. In fact, one avenue used to solve the educator shortage problem is the employment of paraprofessionals.

In examining the dimensions of paraprofessionals, one must consider various descriptions and definitions of paraprofessionals. The root of the word “paraprofessionals” comes from the Latin word “para,” which means “along side of.” The word paraprofessional means “a worker trained to perform certain functions, as in medicine or teaching, but not licensed to practice as a professional.”

According to Pickett (1980), a paraprofessional is an individual whose position is to either provide direct instruction to students or to provide individual assistance to students or their parents. Paraprofessionals also assist teachers with creating and implementing individual education programs (IEP) or other services including hygiene, eating, toileting, and other essential life skills (Tarver, 2006). Causton-Theoharis (2003) expounded on Pickett’s definition of paraprofessionals, indicating that paraprofessionals are individuals hired by a school district whose sole purpose to assist students based on the directions of qualified personnel.

Florida Statute, section 228.041 (1998), defines paraprofessionals as “staff members working under the oversight of a classroom teacher and assisting in instruction”

(p. 2). Currently, the concept of inclusion or placing special education students in regular classrooms where they receive services by a paraprofessional assisting in the regular classroom is commonplace. Inclusion is currently a major component of special education programs. Paraprofessionals continue to provide increased support to special education students in the regular classroom (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French & Pickett, 1997; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Rebelowski, 2003). The National Resources Center for Paraprofessionals summarized paraprofessionals in the following manner:

Paraprofessionals are employees whose positions are either instructional in nature or who deliver other direct services to students and or their parents and work under the supervision of a special education professional for the design, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs and student progress.

(Pickett et al., 1993, p. 23)

In the Fall of 1997, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) projected that 75% of all paraprofessionals were employed in elementary schools, with 18% of the paraprofessionals working in Title I schools (Leighton et al., 1997). Information provided by the Department of Education (1997) indicated that two-thirds of all school districts in the United States employed paraprofessionals to work in Title I schools, accounting for approximately 18% of employed paraprofessionals. The remaining 82% are employed in non-Title I schools. Presently, the greatest number of paraprofessionals is employed in the special education field.

School districts and state educational departments have improved the effectiveness of paraprofessional's work by providing appropriate training, instructional team support, and adequate supervision. Even with improved effectiveness of paraprofessional training, many new and diverse programs will need to be designed in an attempt to develop effective utilization of paraprofessionals. Research studies have shown that the paraprofessional is a valuable member of a school staff, improving the quality of

education in schools (Lacattiva, 1985; Pickett, 1990). In 1991, the Federal Department of Education indicated that paraprofessionals were of utmost importance during times of teacher shortages, which is a perennial problem. U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley, in his State of American Education Address (Sixth Annual State of American Education Speech, 1999), requested that both state legislatures and governors carefully examine the current needs of their states. Secretary Riley indicated that in the next decade the nation will need at least 2.2 million teachers (Schonewise, 2001). In the State of Florida, there is a projected a need for 17,000 to 23,500 new teachers will be needed for the 2008 - 2009 school year (Florida Department of Education Office of Evaluation & Reporting, 2007).

Florida's colleges and universities are graduating approximately 5,000 teachers a year (Scott, 2006). With the low numbers of graduating individuals qualified to teach throughout the nation, an impetus exist to address the need to employ additional paraprofessionals. Doyle's (1995) prediction that the paraprofessional occupation would become one of the fastest growing educational positions has been proven accurate. Doyle's predictions were proven correct in many areas of the United States, including the State of Florida (Doyle, 1995). Vasa (1980) predicted more than 20 years ago that expansion in the utilization of paraprofessionals would continue in the field of education.

Florida statute, section 228.041, further indicates that the state board was required to define the competencies and requirements for all "school-based personnel." Florida, as one of the first states to employ paraprofessionals, has been instrumental in updating laws, acts, and regulations. Numerous states have followed Florida's plan in devising their educational paraprofessionals programs.

The Individual Disability Education Act legislation has mandated that school reform needs to be in accordance with previous and current legislation. Particularly affected by this legislation are students with special needs in diverse settings, such as Title 1 and preschool. It is critical to provide adequate services to students with economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Morehouse & Albright, 1991; Pickett, 1986; Stallings, 2000).

Historical Evolution of Paraprofessionals

Utilizing paraprofessionals in the classroom to work with children is not a new phenomenon (Pickett, 1986). The earliest recorded data concerning the utilization of paraprofessionals in classrooms was documented in 1798, when Lancaster, Pennsylvania, employed a monopteral system in education. The purpose of this system was to provide provisions for allowing teachers to instruct a larger number of students. Young men were employed to provide assistance to teachers in the educational system. A further benefit to these helpers was that knowledge gained allowed many of the young men to become teachers. The monopteral system lasted until the post-Civil War period when emphasis on certified teachers increased (Gartner, Kohler, & Riessman, 1971a; Maust, 2003). Some documentation appears in the literature indicating that paraprofessionals were employed during the 1900s (Schonewise, 2001).

Another occurrence in utilizing paraprofessionals was noted in the early 1930s when paraprofessionals were employed in housing projects, such as Chicago's Hull House. By the end of the decade, during the great depression, paraprofessionals were employed by the Social Security Administration, the Works Progress, and the National Youth Administration. During this period, paraprofessionals provided primarily clerical work (Gartner, et al, 1971b; Maust, 2003). During the 1940's, partially because of World War II, little emphasis was placed on paraprofessionals. Thus, little or no improvements were noted in conditions for working paraprofessionals. However, during the WWII era, small improvements were observed in the working conditions of paraprofessionals employed in the educational setting, such as involvement and working with individual teachers and students (Schonewise, 2001).

Paraprofessionals began, in earnest, working in classrooms during the 1950s as a result of WWII. During this time period, a severe shortage of teachers occurred across the United States (Long, 1984). The shortage created the necessity to search for ways which would allow teachers increased time for teaching and less time completing supplemental

tasks. It has been asserted that paraprofessionals were utilized during the 1950s to perform clerical and administrative support for classroom teachers (Blalock, 1991; Frith, 1982; Jones & Bender, 1993; Lindsey, 1983; Miramontes, 1991; Pickett, 1993; Stallings, 2000; Wallace, 1997). Two landmark research studies examined the needs of paraprofessionals. One project was funded by the Ford Foundation in Bay City, Michigan and the other project implemented at Syracuse University by Cruickshank and Herring (1957). The Ford Foundation research was aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of allowing classroom aides to complete duties, such as monitoring students and performing clerical work. At the same time, Cruickshank and Herring (1957) examined the utilization of personnel in special education classes and discovered that paraprofessionals were limited to assisting only with social skills. Occurring in the same time frame, the Bay City Public Schools in Bay City, Michigan, became one of the first public schools to hire paraprofessionals in their schools. The effectiveness of the Bay City Program was instrumental in the advancement of reliance on paraprofessionals in education across the country (Pickett, 1986).

The New Careers Program, which was implemented by the federal government in the 1960s, was an attempt to alleviate difficulties that low-income and minority persons had in obtaining educational occupations jobs. A further goal had been to provide meaningful careers for unemployed individuals. Through this program, the federal government hoped to increase morale and enrichment to individuals residing in impoverished communities (Cohen, 1976). Moreover, by placing additional adults into the classroom, increased attention was provided to disadvantaged youngsters who were in need of tutoring. By hiring disadvantaged and lower socio-economic adults, who resided in the same communities as the students, it was anticipated that these paraprofessionals would be able to provide valuable information to the teachers. Since these adults were already familiar with the hardships and difficulties of disadvantaged students, they were able to provide positive support to the students and provide a connection between the

parents and the school. The results were that students developed more positive attitudes, increased self-concept, and increased hope since the paraprofessionals were “one” of them (Cohen, 1976).

Continued concern for students who had hardship or exhibited difficulties in learning spurred the development of special education. A dramatic increase was observed in the hiring of paraprofessionals in the 1960s. However, Blessing (1967) stated that paraprofessionals were previously employed in Headstart and Title 1 programs. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988) gave states and local districts permission to employ paraprofessionals. Through the guided assistance of qualified personnel, paraprofessionals were able to assist in alleviating pressures placed on the qualified bilingual education teachers (Coates, 1997). Jones and Bender (1993) predicted continued growth in paraprofessional numbers as the shortage of qualified teachers continued to increase. This dramatic expansion resulted from both political and demographic pressure. Laws, such as the Bilingual Education Act, enacted in 1968, and the passage of the Education of the Handicapped Act, enacted in 1974, forced districts and states to develop methods which would meet legal requirements. Thus, states were forced to develop individualized educational services for students with handicapping conditions. During this period, only 18 states designed programs to mandate training of paraprofessionals to assist in special education and preschool programs (Department of Education, 1997; Edwards, 1994).

Pickett and Gerlach (1997) and Lindeman and Beegle (1988) reported that only a few states had a licensing or credentialing system to guarantee that paraprofessionals possess the necessary knowledge to provide quality assistance for students. In the 1970's, the first documented information initiatives from the states of Vermont, Florida, Kansas, and Nebraska explained each state's mandated credentialing and training procedures. Programs dealing with requirements for paraprofessionals were initiated, which led to qualified paraprofessionals, and in some cases, lead to a fulfillment of requirements to

eventually become a fully credentialed school teacher. However, Doyle (1995) indicated that at that time little research or information had been completed concerning the level of effectiveness of paraprofessionals since research on paraprofessionals was still ongoing. When paraprofessionals were not adequately prepared, dissension frequently occurred among the paraprofessionals, the teachers, and other administrative personnel in a school district.

Downing, Ryndak, and Clark (2000) and Pickett (1986) noted five trends which increased utilization of paraprofessionals: (a) the current waves of educational reform designed to restructure the quality of all education systems and practices; (b) the move to unify and fully integrate general and special education systems; (c) the passage of federal and state legislation requiring school districts to provide individualized educational and vocational services to previously under-served categories, including students ranging from infants to young adults with special needs; (d) the increased demands for providing appropriate instruction to students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; and (e) the provision for the chronic shortages of teachers and other professional support staff. In 1990, Pickett went further by addressing the possibility that the most important reason for expanded use of paraprofessionals, in all demographic and geographic areas of the United States, was to redefine the roles of teachers, to involve instructors more directly in determining the best procedures for allocating human and fiscal resources, and address ways to increase instructional services.

The Utah State Board of Education (1990) proposed a philosophical basis for utilization of paraprofessionals in the classroom. The Utah Board suggested that the key factors to a more efficient and effective utilization of educator's time and capability was to improve the educational opportunities for educationally deprived students. These included improving the moral and ethical standards of the staff and students, and increasing utilization of paraprofessionals, thereby, improving the atmosphere for instruction and learning.

It should be noted that, in addition to preparing teachers in the effective use of paraprofessionals, it was also important that paraprofessionals be utilized in appropriate ways. Riggs (2004) contended that utilizing paraprofessionals in appropriate ways would not only increase paraprofessionals' knowledge and skills but faculty members would also increase paraprofessionals' ability to work cooperatively with instructors. Ashbaker and Morgan (2001), in an earlier study, found the same results that were later confirmed by Riggs (2004); that is, policies and procedures provided the best impetus for developing ways to utilize paraprofessionals effectively.

Legislation

Laws enacted, both at the federal and the state level, have impacted the occupational role of paraprofessionals. Of particular importance, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1964) designed by Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel, was passed in April 9, 1964. This piece of legislation was designed to provide enriched educational opportunities to deprived lower socioeconomic and underachieving children. Through special funding (Title I), significant resources were allocated and geared to meet the educational needs of "deprived" children. Title I of ESEA led to the beginning of Head Start, a preschool program designed for disadvantaged children and aimed at opportunities which were based on readiness for first grade.

Federal legislation, addressing Head Start and Title I, provided more concrete evidence of the government's concern for providing the best possible programs in educational settings, thus, aiding both teachers and students. These federal mandates required that instructional paraprofessionals be enrolled in programs which provided minimal instruction. However, Morgan, Forbush, Nelson, and Christensen (2003) argued that not only should the paraprofessionals receive training, but the training should also be conducted with the supervising instructor. By designing training in this manner, teachers would acquire a minimal knowledge in appropriate ways to work with paraprofessionals.

A compelling impetus for paraprofessionals and related economic opportunities was the passage of the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), PL 94-142, early in 1975. A major component of this law was the requirement to provide a “free and appropriate” education for all students, including students with disabilities. This created a heightened need for paraprofessionals, as school districts were forced to comply with the law or lose federal funding. Paraprofessionals provided school districts with the means to remain in compliance with the law by ascertaining that each student’s individual needs were met (Hammeken, 2003; Maag, 2007).

Other acts and laws that followed over the next several decades stressed the importance of meeting students’ needs and led to the increased utilization of paraprofessionals. These acts and laws included the following: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1994), the School to Work Opportunities Program (1994), Goals 2000: The Educate America Act (1994), and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (1997). All these legislative efforts were critical victories for paraprofessionals (Hammeken, 2003; Hawkins, 2004; Stallings, 2000; Ward, 2000).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 specified that paraprofessionals, if they had been properly trained, were to be involved in assisting instructions to students. More specifically, that law provides that “paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised . . . are to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities” (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1977). Hawkins (2004) contended that this law was not completely accurate. Hawkins reported that many paraprofessionals were expected to perform as experts in dealing with students and their needs, yet, were provided little or minuscule training or education. According to the law, paraprofessionals were staff members who provided services in an indirect manner, rather than a direct manner. The amendments to IDEA, enacted in 1997, redefined paraprofessionals as “an employee who, following appropriate training, performed tasks as prescribed and

supervised by the licensed or certified professional or practitioner” (IDEA Partnership, 2001, p. 2). This amendment created considerable concern among school districts and state personnel regarding how they would enforce the requirements of the amendments.

Twachtman-Cullen (2000), in reference to IDEA’s Final Regulations, summarized the report by stating

Greater emphasis on appropriately trained personnel, both professionals and paraprofessionals, was needed, and by holding states to a higher standard whereby they must ensure that those who provide services for students with disabilities have an adequate knowledge base and the skills to do so” (p. xi).

In October 1999, the United States House of Representatives approved federal requirements which described the altered federal mandates which applied to Title I programs. At the same time, the United States House of Representatives mandated that the Title I amendment be enforced for an additional five years (Billig, 1999).

Combining ideas from the laws and acts, such as Title I of the ESEA legislated in the 1990s, it had become evident to legislators that numerous actions would have to be adopted in order for states and districts to be in compliance. Title I of ESEA provided guidelines for the utilization and preparation of paraprofessionals. Funding support for these initiatives was described in the guidelines for the employment and training of paraprofessionals planning to work with linguistic-minority students. Training of other paraprofessionals was addressed in Title II of the ESEA. Furthermore, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act elaborated standards on professional development for all educational personnel (Pickett, 1997).

The NCLB, signed by President George W. Bush, provided opportunities for paraprofessionals to increase their knowledge, education, and responsibilities. This legislation provided paraprofessionals with an opportunity to obtain an associate or college degree (Hawkins, 2004). The NCLB created a need for all states to ascertain ways to accomplish the mandates of the law within the confines of decreasing funds.

Paraprofessionals who provided instructional support in Title I and exceptional education school programs were required to meet mandates originating from federal and state legislations, which included the NCLB. Paraprofessionals employed after January 8, 2002 were required to obtain the above qualifications by January 8, 2006 in order to continue employment in Title I schools (Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004, 2008). According to the NCLB, paraprofessionals were expected to do the following: providing one-to-one tutoring, assisting with classroom management, providing instructional assistance in a computer lab, conducting activities aimed at increasing parental involvement, providing support in proper utilization in the media center, acting as translator, or providing instructional support under the direct supervision of a teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The number of paraprofessionals in the United States increased from approximately 25,000 individuals in the 1960s, to over 500,000 individuals in 2003, resulting in a 1900% increase in paraprofessional personnel (Causton-Theoharis, 2003; Maust, 2003). Trautman (2004) indicated there were more than 525,000 paraprofessionals employed in some type of educational role. By 2006, this figured increased to 1,312,000, a 150% increase (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected an increase in paraprofessionals employed in educational settings to approximately 1,449,000, a 10.4% gain. The report concluded that there were approximately 2,060 openings for paraprofessionals throughout the United States. Since the need for paraprofessionals continues to grow, particularly in the area of exceptional education, additional importance has been placed on recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision.

Although the number of paraprofessionals continued to increase in the U.S., those who were fully qualified were in short supply. Reasons for these shortages included inadequate wages, lack of career mobility, burnout created by insufficient resources, lack of support personnel, and geographic isolation (Vasa, 1980). This situation has continued to be quite evident in the contemporary educational setting.

Devlin (2002) suggested that the proliferation of paraprofessionals appeared to have outpaced the paraprofessionals' need to have their roles and responsibilities, as well as training needs and supervision requirements, clearly defined. French (1998) feared that the limited research which had revealed that paraprofessionals would continue to be hired at increasing rates, would lead to a threat in the integrity of the teaching field and the welfare of students. French indicated this outcome possibly resulted from a lack of consensus on the minimum competencies needed by paraprofessionals to adequately perform their duties.

Dohm and Shniper (2007) summarized the reason for the increased demand for paraprofessionals.

Over the next decade, the mounting enrollment of students with special education needs or of those who are learning English as a second language will boost the demand for teacher assistants (paraprofessionals). Legislation requires both students with disabilities and nonnative English speakers to receive an education equal to that of other students, and teacher assistants play a central role in meeting this requirements. (p. 98)

Devlin (2002) described that paraprofessionals who resided in major urban or rural areas were from racial and language minority groups (60% to 75%) whereas paraprofessionals located in suburban areas were mainly white, middle-aged females. Moreover, Causton-Theorharis (2003) reported that paraprofessionals were usually the poorest paid employees in a school district. Frequently, they earned either minimum or just above minimum wage. Since paraprofessionals were often in the lower socioeconomic status, they ended up seeking financial assistance in order to attend paraprofessional education programs or a community college. At this time, “paraprofessionals continue to be underappreciated, under-compensated, and asked to undertake critical instructional responsibilities . . .” (Giangreco, Eldelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2003, p. 31). This situation occurred because most paraprofessionals were

hired by local school districts located near the paraprofessional's residence. Title I, Part A, of the amended NCLB Act defined paraprofessionals who were remunerated through Title I in the following manner: paraprofessionals who provide instructional support, included those who provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher, assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials, provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory, conduct parental involvement activities, provide instructional support in the library or media center, act as a translator, or provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher.

Task Requirements

D'Aquanni (1997) contended that before training or educational programs were planned, it was critical that officials involved in the training and educational aspects should discuss and agree upon the critical topics to be developed. In addition, these authors stressed that consensus was critical regarding approaches to be utilized in training. Without a clear understanding of both these issues, a well structured and efficacious program could not be established.

These roles, which reflected utilization of paraprofessionals, depended largely on needs of the individual schools and individual students. Paraprofessionals, as discussed by Cruickshank and Herring (1957), were increasingly recognized by leaders in the educational field. Thus, paraprofessionals were beginning to become more involved in the academic aspect of the educational process. Robb (1969) noted the assets of paraprofessionals included a liaison between the classroom, school, and community. "Each school is to develop a nucleus of supporters who would possess a first-hand knowledge of school needs, therefore binding the community, through shared responsibility and interest" (p. 1).

The paraprofessionals' roles were designed so that they assisted the classroom teacher with tasks, including making copies, reading with students, and reinforcing social skills. Usually, a paraprofessional would, in a relatively short period, become sufficiently skilled to perform the work. Moreover, paraprofessionals' roles were interpreted in numerous different ways. Increased responsibility was being allocated to paraprofessionals who possessed considerable educational and behavioral training, especially paraprofessionals who assisted the needs of students in inclusive classroom programs (Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). Moreover, Downing, Ryndak, and Clark (2000) reported that paraprofessionals frequently were required to provide instruction, tutoring, management of classroom behavior, and other minor academic duties.

Schonewise (2001) discussed the dynamic functions of paraprofessionals in the overall educational setting. She believed it was important that paraprofessionals were familiar with the job expectations. Without understanding the school districts' expectations, paraprofessionals would not perform designated tasks efficiently and appropriately. The importance of knowing expectations was believed to directly impact rates in student success. Twachtman-Cullen (2000) argued that a student's success in the classroom was directly proportional to the expertise of the paraprofessional and the quality of the assistance provided by the paraprofessional related to their training.

Chase and Mueller (1993) found that originally paraprofessionals spent 20% of their time working with individual students discussing or reviewing lessons presented by the classroom teacher. Five percent of a paraprofessional's day, according to Chase and Mueller, was spent assisting students with either worksheets or workbooks. The other 75% of time, paraprofessionals spent time grading papers, running copies, assisting with toileting, bus duty, and other activities specified by the administration or the classroom teacher. In effect, paraprofessionals' jobs were designed at the entry-level training.

A practical analysis of the paraprofessional's role indicated that they were members of educational teams and supported student learning. While paraprofessionals might

still perform routine clerical and administrative tasks, prepare materials, and monitor students in non-academic settings, such as lunchroom, study halls, and playgrounds, paraprofessionals had performed functional and other assessment activities, such as documenting data on learner's performance and behavior. Further, they led behavior management programs, instructed individuals and small groups of learners and assisted teachers with modifying programs to meet the needs of individual learners (Pickett, 1999).

The NCLB required that paraprofessionals need to be employed in schools which were funded through Title I funds and worked directly under the guidance of a qualified teacher. They were expected to provide one-on-one tutoring which would not occur during a time when a teacher was providing direct instruction. Paraprofessionals were to assist with classroom management, including assisting the teacher with organizing instructional materials; providing assistance, with teacher input, in a computer laboratory; providing activities which created involvement with parents; providing support in the library or media center; acting as translators; and providing instructional support under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher (Lamont & Hill, 1991; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The U.S. Department of Education (2002) outlined the qualifications that an individual must possess in order to be considered for hiring or training as a paraprofessional. The individual must possess a secondary school diploma or a General Education Diploma and if employed after January 8, 2002, individuals were required to maintain a level of proficiency of general education skills. Further, individuals who planned to work in Title I facilities had to hold an associate's degree from an institution of higher education, possess the ability to assist the teacher in providing assistance on instructing students in the area of reading, writing, and mathematics, or, if working with younger students, provide readiness instruction in preparing students to be successful with peers in regular classrooms.

In a review of the extant literature, Ghery, York-Barr, and Sommerness (2002) found that paraprofessionals either assisted or acted as a hindrance in the educational setting. These investigators identified duties which paraprofessionals had been expected to complete including the following: give students assistance in providing instruction to teacher-led sessions; gather and prepare lesson materials and procedures, provide guided reinforcement and enrichment activities to students; facilitate communication between communities, teachers, and parents, provide individual instruction to students with limited English; track absenteeism and work to promote student attendance; and provide assistance in any area designated by the school principal. This information reinforced the finding of other researchers on the topic. Other educators took a more collaborative approach to training and focused on the student. For the student's benefit, joint training programs were recommended so that the two could work together, leading to more effective cooperation between the two, ultimately providing for the utmost services to these students (Morgan, Forbush, Nelson, & Christensen, 2003). French (2003, 2002) pointed out two additional advantages in utilizing paraprofessionals. First, paraprofessionals provided more time for educators to assess and develop flexible curricula for students. Second, paraprofessionals had been providing for a diversity of ideas and work styles among their duties. French also recognized that using paraprofessionals helped to decrease the teacher/student ratio. Moreover, training issues directly impact employment requirements for paraprofessionals.

Trautman (2004, p.133) listed 10 factors which should be considered in the employment of paraprofessionals:

1. qualifications in accordance with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,
2. previous work experiences and area of experience,
3. appropriate skills for the position being considered,
4. positive attitude towards children,

5. interest in learning and self-improvement,
6. good interpersonal skills,
7. good communication skills,
8. ability to follow written plans and instructions,
9. good organizational skills, and
10. positive outlook on life.

Training

Lack of Sufficient Training

There has been limited research on the lack of training for paraprofessionals. The implication that could be drawn from this sparse research is the need to improve both the quality and the quantity of the already provided services (Gerlach, Pickett, & Vasa, 1992; Hall, McClannahan, & Krantz, 1995; Mueller, 1997; Passaro, Pickett, Latham, & Hong, 1994). These investigators concluded that very limited training had been provided to paraprofessionals before they were placed in a classroom for the first time.

Training of paraprofessionals was recognized as an important issue during the early 1970's when several states including Vermont, Florida, Kansas, and Nebraska, mandated credentialing and training provisions (Schonewise, 2001). Educators, researchers, and educational consultants had reported many times over the past 25 years that training for paraprofessionals was of utmost importance (Blalock, 1991; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Giangreco et al., 1999; Wadsworth & Knight, 1996). According to Edwards (1994), only a small number of State Departments of Education required formal training or education for paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals, in general, had found that their roles and responsibilities had changed over the years, making certification more beneficial.

Four issues delineated the major reasons paraprofessionals needed to obtain official certification: a level of quality would be assured since standards and a mandated course of studies were required, paraprofessional growth and career advancement were

enhanced, differentiation of duties and responsibilities were clearly enumerated, and formal recognition that paraprofessionals were an intimate part of the educational team (Pickett, 1986). Obtaining certification, according to Vasa, Steckelberg, & Ronning (1982), benefitted paraprofessionals by reviewing knowledge of ethical and moral responsibilities encountered in their work. Obtaining certification had an impact on how well paraprofessionals performed their jobs. It was difficult for paraprofessionals to gain certification because of the limited educational programs that had been developed.

Training and skill development appeared sporadic, at best. Schonewise (2001) discovered that, minuscule attention had been given to ensure that the training of paraprofessionals had been completed in such a way as to guarantee a high level of proficiency. At that time, no set standards were in effect regarding training procedures. This resulted in “training that runs the risk of being a haphazard, inconsistent, and ineffective” (p. 4). Further, it did not appear that paraprofessional training was a major aspect of personnel development (Pickett & French, 1997; Pickett, 1996, 1994). Roberts (1989) believed that faculty administrators, school district staff development personnel, and state accreditation agencies needed to develop or improve effective training programs for paraprofessionals.

Although improvements for training opportunities were designed, this training had been inadequate (Pickett, Vasa, & Steckelberg, 1993; Stallings, 2000). Even teachers and supervising paraprofessionals believed that proper and thorough training were not being provided to fully develop qualified paraprofessionals. Classroom teachers felt that a strong training would be most beneficial, if provided before school began (Hammeken, 2003). Prior research studies have shown the paraprofessional to be a valuable member of the school staff who helps to improve the quality of education in schools (Lacattiva, 1985; Pickett, 1990).

Ramseyer (1980) conducted a research project in Minnesota that examined the perceptions of professionals and paraprofessionals in the educational system. The

research concluded that paraprofessionals, as well as teachers, possessed the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the diverse student body, but they maintained different perceptions of each other's roles. Secondly, professionals were often times slow to understand the paraprofessionals' roles in the educational setting. Further, the research indicated that working with students was only as good as the professional's understanding of the paraprofessional's roles. Ramseyer also pointed out that the paraprofessional's responsibilities were not clearly defined and that in the end insufficient education or training was provided.

Utilizing paraprofessionals appears inadequate because of the lack in guidance concerning state and federal guidelines. Hilton and Gerlach (1997) alluded to this issue:

This problem also involves the lack of clearly defined roles for paraeducators that should come from a district's initiative demonstrated in part by developing explicit job descriptions and job definitions. The problems, however, do not end there. Most professionals . . . are not adequately trained, nor do they have proven strategies for planning, supervising, and/or working with paraeducators. Similarly, paraeducators are often not provided with adequate training for the responsibilities they are required to assume. Compounding these problems is the limited ability of schools to attract and maintain competent paraeducators because of low salaries, limited job security, and of the lack of opportunities for advancement. (p. 74)

Magolda (2004) believed that paraprofessionals should be provided increased educational opportunities following participation in a thorough educational or training program. A Minnesota study, conducted in 1997 by Stahl and McMillan (cited in Riggs, 2001), found that basic training provided to beginning paraprofessionals should include educator/paraprofessional roles and responsibilities, characteristics of learners, and job-specific training. Stahl and McMillan argued that additional research should include

competencies such as behavior management, training about learners with special needs, and communication skills.

The issue of education for teachers who had paraprofessionals in their classroom was also addressed and found to be lacking. Moreover, teachers must be knowledgeable in all areas concerning paraprofessionals in order to communicate and plan together. Most of the teachers with training on how to utilize paraprofessionals experienced the most help from the paraprofessional. The direct treatment of paraprofessionals by teachers with whom they worked influenced the effectiveness of paraprofessionals in the work setting. School administrators also need to possess a thorough knowledge of laws, legal, and ethical issues affecting paraprofessional's satisfactory performance. If both teachers and administrators have sufficient knowledge and skills in working with paraprofessionals, a better outcome would be evident. However, even with both teachers and administrators possessing knowledge of the roles of paraprofessionals, problems might develop.

French (2003) provided a list of problems that could occur when employing paraprofessionals. This list included paraprofessionals who perform only clerical work, lack proper qualifications or prior training, do not receive adequate direction or guidance by the supervising teacher or principal, threaten regular teachers or lack of appropriate on-the-job training or in-service supervision.

Several issues reflect feelings of inadequacy in paraprofessionals, such as absence of job descriptions, arbitrary and often inequitable assignment of general school duties, excessive and unreasonable use of paraprofessionals as substitutes, scarcity of time for joint planning with the professional staff, and a feeling that paraprofessionals are not valued or important, particularly if the principal contributes to these feelings (Blalock, 1991). Overall, these issues have led to the need for intense training and education of paraprofessionals in today's educational settings.

Training Needs

Le Tendra (1998) stressed that if American education is to meet the goals of various legislative initiatives, educators needed to provide paraprofessionals with the skills and knowledge to prepare students for the 21st century. In this regard, Frank, Keith, and Stiel (1988) and Lanoux (2007) reported that not only did paraprofessionals desire training, but that the training needs to be relevant to the skills that paraprofessionals use as part of their job assignment.

Devlin (2002) suggested that the proliferation of paraprofessionals appeared to have outpaced paraprofessionals' needs to have their roles and responsibilities, as well as training needs and supervision requirements, clearly defined. French (1998) feared that the limited research which had been conducted to date would lead to paraprofessionals continuing to be hired at increasing rates. This situation would be a threat to the integrity of the teaching field and the welfare of students.

Vasa and Steckelberg (1987), Leighton et al. (1997), and French (1998) delineated the necessity for paraprofessionals to have a clear understanding of district legal and ethical concerns, clarification of paraprofessional responsibilities, as well as the supervising teacher's roles and responsibilities. Investigation of paraprofessional training would be a benefit to individual supervising teachers and school administration in delineating skills that are critical to job performance (Roberts, 1989). Educational training for paraprofessionals has indicated that special education offers the most relevant training programs (Le Tendra, 1998).

According to Le Tendra (1998), paraprofessionals, if they are to perform their jobs satisfactorily, need to become another pair of eyes and ears for classroom teachers. The U.S. Department of Education strongly emphasized the need for paraprofessionals to be trained in the settings where they anticipated employment and to gain work experience with students who reside in the areas where the paraprofessionals would be employed.

Stringfield (1999) discovered that appropriate preparation and training for paraprofessionals in classroom activities do, in fact, lead to increased student achievement. While many researchers strongly believed that the benefits were apparent in involving paraprofessionals in school settings, limitations continued to be evident. Jones and Bender (1993) explained that “no single study was found that employed adequate controls and still supported the use of paraprofessionals” (p. 21).

Other studies found that paraprofessionals felt that they desired the necessary training that would allow them to successfully achieve satisfactory progress in dealing with students (Frank, Keith, & Stiel, 1988; Passaro, Pickett, Latham, & Hong, 1994). Riggs (2001) noted that paraprofessionals requested a need for training in the following areas: special education laws, the use of computers, health and safety issues, behavior management, information concerning specific special education, and ways to implement services at inclusive educational settings. Further, any training should begin with an assessment of paraprofessionals’ needs. Morgan (1995) reported that the most frequent training courses focused on roles and responsibilities (80%), monitoring, assessment, and evaluation (69%), teaming and collaboration (64%), instruction (64%), and management of behavior (64%). Trautman (2004) found that minuscule preservice training has been available and elaborated that preservice training of paraprofessionals should include school orientation, school schedules, school policies, confidentiality issues, home-school communication procedures, student characteristics, behavior management procedures, instructional methods, and roles and responsibilities.

French (2003), in developing the critical list of the expectations of special education paraprofessionals, had taken into consideration teachers’ perspectives and proposals from the U.S. Department of Education. This list was intended to make the paraprofessionals’ and teachers’ jobs easier. From the perspective of paraprofessionals, these issues provided paraprofessionals with clearly defined roles and expectations. Coxe (T. Coxe, memorandum, February 26, 2003) argued a similar point, providing evidence

that paraprofessionals were required to function under the direct supervision of teachers classified as highly qualified. Therefore, the regulation would be interpreted such that no paraprofessional was to work without close proximity to and supervision from a highly qualified teacher.

French (2003) expressed concerns regarding paraprofessionals and the legal obligations of teachers where paraprofessionals failed in job performance and teachers had not provided written plans, had not specified issues which needed to be addressed, or had failed to document students' progress. Ultimately, the teacher was responsible for what happened in the classroom and would experience difficulty justifying the paraprofessionals' actions, either to the school district or in a court of law, if there was negligence on the part of the teacher working with the paraprofessional (Frith & Mims, 1985). Frith and Mims elaborated that paraprofessionals might experience similar difficulties because of lack of training. Indeed, this fact might account for the high turnover rate in the field or the extent of job dissatisfaction because of the lack of potential career development (Piotrowski & Plash, 2006).

Types of Training

According to Lamont and Hill (1991), paraprofessionals need to appreciate an awareness of what was expected of them. A review of the literature indicated that several different models or strategies have been incorporated in training paraprofessionals. It was believed that the specific needs of paraprofessionals were not being addressed at that time. Causton-Theoharis (2003) argued that training types or models which were legally mandated usually did not correspond to specific goals or needs in the classroom. Shider (1998) found that some of the most effective paraprofessional training and education included modeling, role-playing, feedback, direct in-class training, or a combination of these methods.

According to Pickett et al.'s (1993) view on training, job descriptions needed to be clear, but concise, stipulating that paraprofessionals not be allowed to perform a given job unless it was clear that the paraprofessional was confident in performing the task. In providing the most effective training, both the teacher and the paraprofessional should participate in the program jointly. This training should begin by ascertaining that both individuals are well-acquainted with the structure and function of the school district, followed by training in general competencies and the specific competency needed specifically for the job (Pickett et al., 1993).

French (2003) reported that in high-performing schools, paraprofessionals assumed an integral role, involving both managerial and educational purposes. Further, in the highest-performing schools, a clearly spelled-out job description and responsibilities for teachers and paraprofessionals were in effect and the entire school staff was provided with in-service training in working with paraprofessionals. The in-service training clearly spelled-out job description created an effective partnership between teachers and paraprofessionals.

Part of an instructor's responsibility in supervising paraprofessionals is the necessity to provide instruction to paraprofessionals on the concept of confidentiality. Realizing this responsibility, it was imperative that paraprofessionals had a legal understanding of the concept of confidentiality and had a legal requirement to follow confidentiality procedures (Steckelberg & Vasa, 1988). Along with understanding of laws and regulations, paraprofessionals needed to be made aware that confidentiality procedures were a part of training programs.

Programs utilized in paraprofessional training were as diverse in topics as they were in ways these topics would be presented. Even within special education training programs, there was no absolute consensus as to critical training issues (Morgan & Ashbaker 1994; Trautman, 2004). The roles and requirements varied, both in job description and local mandates. From a list of almost 40 training topics, Morgan

and Ashbaker found that the most frequently endorsed programs were behavior management, monitoring, and evaluation. These programs would best be held before the commencement of the school year.

Preschool workshops and seminars for paraprofessionals would include examining the objectives, considering the needs of young people, and understanding the overall knowledge of schools, as well as behavior management, monitoring, and evaluation (McManama, 1972). Following completion of preschool training programs and after initial exposure in the classroom, further in-depth training was usually addressed on a need to know basis.

According to Edwards (1994), only a small number of State Departments of Education required training or education for paraprofessionals at that time. In the State of Florida, prospective paraprofessionals currently must complete a prescribed course of study and successfully pass a rigorous and objective assessment. This includes Educational Testing Service Praxis Parapro Assessment, College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), The Florida Teacher Certification Examination General Knowledge Test – passing scores earned July 1, 2002, and after Educational Testing Service Praxis I: Academic Skills – passing scores earned prior to July 1, 2002 (T. Cox, personal communication, November 6, 2004).

The roles of paraprofessionals in educational settings continued to expand and became more diverse. “No matter the role of the paraprofessionals, they performed their duties behind the scenes. Yet, you probably realize that, in your school, those who provide instructional support are critical to the functioning of your school programs” (French, 2003, p. 1). These changing roles had been covered in workshops and educational courses, as teachers rarely were sufficiently prepared to interact and supervise the work of the paraprofessional. Research had noted, however, that this training had not been provided in either undergraduate special education coursework or general education programs (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001).

Reetz (1987) suggested that teachers who supervised paraprofessionals would profit from a self-evaluation. This self-evaluation would assist in making a comfortable environment in which the paraprofessional functioned. Further, Reetz elaborated on self-evaluation by teachers, “A self-evaluation of their competence in defining responsibilities, creating a positive atmosphere, and providing training in behavior management and tutoring techniques and recognition for the para-educator can be a helpful process” (p. 24).

Love and Levin (1992) reported that paraprofessionals who received 40 hours of training in reading with two follow-up meetings were rated as being more effective than paraprofessionals who received no training. These investigators found that there is a definite need for either more in-service training or follow-up meetings. In this regard, Frank, Keith, and Stiel (1988) and Lanoux (2007) reported not only did paraprofessionals desire training, but also they felt the training should also be relevant to the skills that paraprofessionals would need as part of their job assignment. Paraprofessionals, in general, had found that their roles and responsibilities had changed over the years. The training and education needed to be addressed through creative approaches.

Causton-Theoharis (2003) noted that “Paraprofessionals have been taught skills through intervention. These interventions, in turn, lead to positive results for the students whom the paraprofessionals supported . . . This supported the notion that paraprofessionals could be taught job-related skills and generalize those skills to the students whom they support” (p. 36). With this in mind, utilization of paraprofessionals had started to be more accepted (Dear, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1987; Pickett, 1986). Studies on paraprofessionals who work with individual students demonstrated that paraprofessionals had a positive impact on both self-esteem and educational progress, i.e., achievement gains were noted in students’ reading, verbalization, and interaction with others (Gartner, Jackson, & Riessman, 1977). On the other hand, in order to understand

why paraprofessionals become unhappy with their occupational responsibilities, it was necessary for educators to explore the issue of job satisfaction in the field.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been an important research topic when investigating development and retention of personnel in education. Moreover, studies on job satisfaction have used varying methods to examine different issues associated with occupational satisfaction in paraprofessionals.

A myriad of conceptual definitions of job satisfaction have been suggested in the literature. Hoppock (1935) provided one of the first definitions stating, “job satisfaction is any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that causes a person to say, ‘I am satisfied with my job’” (p. 47). Argyris (1975) defined job satisfaction as the point at which a worker’s degree of job satisfaction increased as the employee saw his job as meeting his or her expectations. Argyris, in his definition, considered both the worker and the workplace. The work environment and the many facets which involved the job played a major role in workers’ satisfaction. Cavanaugh (1989) defined work satisfaction as the extent to which individuals appear to like their job. Faragher considered job satisfaction in a different light. He defined job satisfaction as to “whether an employee finds his or her job interesting, has good relationships with his or her managers and colleagues, has a high income, is allowed to work independently, and has clearly defined career advancement opportunities” (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005, p. 106). Educators have provided numerous other definitions, but Grunberg (1979) stated “There is no one agreed definition . . . The major difference between definitions is in terms of the different ways in which aspects of job satisfaction are combined” (p. 3). This researcher will refer to job satisfaction as “the emotional reaction to a particular job, which is usually reflected in six areas: pay, promotion, people, supervision, work, and total satisfaction” (Smucker, 2001, p. 6). In order to further understand the concept of

work satisfaction, it is necessary to review the various theories of work satisfaction noted in the literature.

First, it should be noted that most research shows that individuals with a high income tend to be satisfied with their job. Doyle (1995) surveyed elementary school teachers and nurses and found that on average the teachers earned approximately \$14,000 more money in a year than nurses. Moreover, Doyle found that 14.5% of the nurses in his sample viewed pay as an area of concern.

A review of the literature indicates that job satisfaction is a major research area. The most prominent theories on the subject include Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Dual-Factor, and Vroom's Expectancy theory (Lee, 2007; Stamps, 1997). These "theories of job satisfaction contribute to the understanding and further development on the construct [job satisfaction]" (Smucker, 2001, p. 15).

In his research on job satisfaction, Smucker (2001) stated "Most theories of job satisfaction are based on, or can be related to Maslow's need Hierarchy Theory. This theory provides an explanation of human nature based on simplistic needs" (p. 15). Maslow's theory, commonly known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, comprises five stages: self-actualization, esteem needs, social needs, safety needs, and physiological needs (Alderfer, 2008; Stamps, 1997; Van Wagner, 2008). Most of Maslow's hierarchy is based on the premise that the lower the needs in the hierarchy, the more individuals would attempt to meet those needs before they attempted to meet the needs higher on the hierarchy (Petrochuk, 1999).

Maslow further postulated that there were two types of needs: deficiency and growth. These needs play a significant role in motivation. Deficiency needs include physiological, security, and social. These needs are a result of deprivation or a lack of something. Meeting these lower-level needs is important in order to avoid unpleasant feelings or consequences. Growth needs, found on the higher end of the hierarchy, do not result from the lack of something, but rather the desire to have something or to grow as

an individual (Van Wagner, 2008). Van Wagner felt that by examining these two types of needs, researchers would see how Maslow's theory would be useful in the study of work satisfaction. Smucker (2001) summarized the importance of Maslow's theory in conceptualizing job satisfaction.

Relating Maslow's theory to a job context is possible. For instances, the lower ordered needs in a job setting could be pay, job security, safe working conditions, and good relations with co-workers and supervisors. Hence, the higher ordered needs in Maslow's theory might be considered as achievement, recognition, and an intrinsic interest in the work itself. (p. 8)

A study, conducted in April 2004 at the University of Minnesota, examined job satisfaction in a sample of instructors who were distance learning instructors. The Human Resource Department followed both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Both theories were selected since the researchers wanted to examine how the participants sought to satisfy their needs and wants, and in doing so, would be satisfied with their job. The survey instrument chosen was the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) with a reported internal consistency of 0.81. The JDI is the most widely used measure of job satisfaction in the education field. The sample included 284 institutions that had distant learning programs for at least the three previous years (DeMeuse 1985; Gould, 2007). Results of the study showed that 78% of the respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction, 71% would recommend a friend to work at the university, and 75% would seek employment within the university if they had to do it over again (Gould, 2007).

Maslow's human needs theory "can be very useful in better individuals' money attitudes" (Smucker, 2001). From his research, Smucker concluded that physiological needs must be met to find satisfaction in the acquisition of money. The findings could be applied when understanding why pay is an important factor in job satisfaction. Further,

Smucker's research concluded that even when utilizing Maslow's theory, how one individual sees himself may differ from where Maslow would see him in the hierarchy.

In the late 1950s, Frederick Herzberg developed a two-factor motivation theory. Herzberg proposed that there are two dimensions to job satisfaction: motivation and hygiene. Herzberg described hygiene topics as those that included company policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions (Frederick Herzberg-Motivational Theory, 2008).

In a study conducted by Wignall (2004), 450 inmates in 10 different prison industries were administered the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, Long Form. Results showed that on both factors of Herzberg's theory, the inmates were found to be satisfied with their job. Wignall also found that the prison's industries satisfied the inmates intrinsic and some of their extrinsic needs.

Herzberg suggested that a person could be "satisfied and dissatisfied with a work situation, although he theorized that dissatisfaction was more related to the characteristics of the job itself" (Stamps, 1997, p. 14). Herzberg further stated that "Hygiene factors determine the worker's dissatisfaction, and motivators determine satisfaction. The two scales are independent, and a person can be high on both" (Theories of Motivation, 2008).

Smucker (2001) examined job satisfaction in the sport industry. The Job Description Index and the Jobs in General Scales were used to assess the individual elements of work satisfaction as well as work satisfaction in general. Results of the study indicated that administrators were overall satisfied with their job, but maintained a neutral level of satisfaction with regard to pay and promotion.

Parkinson (2008) conducted a study on a sample of home health care nurses. The population originally comprised of 20 home health care nurses, with 17 completing and returning the two instruments. Both the Inventory of Work Satisfaction and Maslach's Burnout Inventory were chosen as the instruments in the study. Based on the results

of the Maslach's Burnout Inventory, none of the home health care nurses experienced burnout. Results from the Inventory of Work Satisfaction indicated there was a significant difference on the subscales of amount of paperwork, lack of control over scheduling, and the job was not seen as important.

Vroom's expectancy theory, the third major theory, indicated that work satisfaction is a function of the degree to which a person's needs are met in the work situation (Lee, 2007; Smucker, 2001). If an individual felt like he had a need, he was more likely to be satisfied with his job. Thus, the individual would be more satisfied when this need was met. At the same time, if the individual's needs were not being met, the more dissatisfied the individual would be. One common research finding is that job satisfaction is related to life satisfaction (Lee, 2007). This correlation was reciprocal, meaning that people who are satisfied with life tend to be satisfied with their job and people who are satisfied with their job tend to be satisfied with life. However, other research has noted that job satisfaction is not significantly related to life satisfaction when other variables such as non-work satisfaction and core self-evaluations are taken into account (Lee, 2007).

Expectancy theory considers satisfaction as comprised of three unique parts: valence – the extrinsic benefits (money, vacation and time off, and the chance of advancement), expectancy – individuals possessed different feelings of confidence about what they were able to do, and instrumentally – individuals' interpretations of whether they get what they desire. Individuals are motivated if there is a reward, either intrinsic or extrinsic, for a job well done, if the reward fulfills an important goal in the eyes of the individual, and if the need is strong enough to cause the individual to make the effort to do the job well (Expectancy Theory of Motivation, 2008; Theories of Motivation, 2008).

A study sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers (2001) examined the differences and similarities between nurses completing an accelerated nursing degree program and individuals completing an accelerated nursing degree program. The Inventory of Work Satisfaction (IWS), the Nursing Stress Scale (NSS), and the

Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI) were administered to a population of 326 nurses. The IWS measures expected sources of satisfaction and the current perception of career satisfactions. The NSS seeks to determine the stress level of nurses and doctors. The MBI is the most widely used instrument for determining burnout. The MBI has been utilized across many different jobs, including nurses, teachers, attorneys, police officers, and numerous other occupations. In this study, there was an 84.9% return rate. The findings indicated that there were no significant differences on any of the subtests on the IWS and the MBI. However, there was a small but significant difference between the two groups on the NSS.

Building on these three theories of motivation, researchers have examined the specific issue of satisfaction and dissatisfaction on the job. Smucker paraphrasing Grunberg (1979) noted that it is likely that no one single theory of job satisfaction accounts for all phenomena all the time. Each theory of job satisfaction has added to the base of knowledge and is intertwined in the developing construct (Smucker, 2001). Indeed, this view has been well accepted in contemporary models of job satisfaction.

In a survey of 15,000 employees, Bravendam Research, Inc. identified six factors that predicted job satisfaction:

1. Opportunity – Promote from within when possible and assign jobs with increasing levels of leadership and responsibilities.
2. Stress – Distribute work fairly with work teams and review work procedures to remove unnecessary bureaucracy.
3. Leadership – Team-leader training encompasses empowerment, teamwork, assertiveness, conflict resolution, interpersonal relationship skills, and the team management role.
4. Work standards – Encourage communication, develop meaningful quality measures, and celebrate achievements.

5. Fair rewards – Rewards comprise a variety of benefits and rewards beyond money. Be consistent with reward policies and maintain competitive wages.
6. Adequate authority – Allow and encourage employees' input on methods to achieve them (Bravendam Research, Inc., 2003, p. 4).

Herzberg and his colleagues postulated that components contributing to job satisfaction include “recognition, achievement, advancement, work itself, and responsibility” and components that contributed to dissatisfaction included, “company policies and administration, technical supervision, interpersonal relationship relations with peers, working conditions, and salary” (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959, p. 33). These investigations further concluded that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. That is, people are motivated to do things that they believe will lead to a high probability of a reward (Blevins, 2005).

Spector, as cited in Sterner (2007), suggested that job satisfaction is extremely important to both individual employees and management. She explained that “work satisfaction is a reflection of the psychological health and emotional well-being of each employee. In addition, if employees are satisfied in their jobs, their attitudes and behaviors tend to be reflected in the organization operations, as well as health of the organization” (p. 35).

Research completed at the Mayo Clinic discovered several reasons why individuals may not be satisfied with their job such as conflict between co-workers, conflict with supervisors, not being appropriately paid, not having the necessary equipment or resources to succeed, lack of opportunities for promotion, having little or no say in decisions, or fear of losing their job through downsizing or outsourcing.

The American Nurses Association (2005) concluded from their research, based on a sample of 76,000 registered nurses, that there is a limited amount of satisfaction regarding interactions with peers, physicians, and administration. Moreover, the

lowest level of satisfaction was in the area of lack of input into management decisions, interaction with those in authority, decision-making, and pay.

In a study by the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) of 693 nurses, researchers found that the major reasons for effective recruitment and retention include the factors of increased pay, educational opportunities, improvements in staff satisfaction and participation, bonuses, and a flexible work schedule. In addition, the top reasons for leaving the nursing position was relocation followed by more pay in another position (as cited in Masters, 2007).

Gleaning from the framework of equity theory, Smucker (2001) concluded “theories envision job satisfaction being determined by the nature of the job and its context developed by the nature of the job and its context and also the needs, values, and expectations that people have of the job” (p. 11).

Applying Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy, there are numerous ways to improve workers motivation and, thus, job satisfaction. These include

1. Physiological Motivation: Provide ample breaks for lunch and recuperation and to pay salaries that allow workers to buy life’s essentials;
2. Safety Needs: Provide a working environment which is safe, has relative job security, and free from threats;
3. Social Needs: Generate a feeling of acceptance, belonging, and community by reinforcing team dynamics;
4. Esteem Needs: Recognize achievements, assign important projects, and provide status to make employees feel valued and appreciated;
5. Self-actualization: Offer challenging and meaningful work assignments that enable innovation, creativity, and progress to long-term goals. (Crain, 2000; Stamps, 1997; Straub, 2008)

Summary

The review of the extant literature included two major components, i.e., paraprofessionals and job satisfaction. The first half of the review covered the following topical areas regarding paraprofessionals: (a) background, including descriptions of the myriad of definitions, (b) historical evolution of paraprofessionals, and (c) legislation as it relates to paraprofessionals. Also included were the issues of (a) lack of sufficient training, (b) training needs, and (c) types of training. The other major area covered in the literature review was job satisfaction. Moreover, the review included the historical evolution of the paraprofessional profession over the past two centuries. Early definitions of paraprofessionals were noted. Lynton (1967) provided one of the earliest definitions, defining paraprofessionals as a title used to describe those who work with professionals. The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals summarized paraprofessionals as

Paraprofessionals are employees whose positions are either instructional in nature or who deliver other direct services to students and or their parents and work under the supervision of a special education professional for the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional programs and student progress.

(Pickett et al., 1993, p. 23)

The review of the literature traced the development of legislation, including laws and acts that pertain to paraprofessionals. A critical piece of legislation that impacted the occupational role of paraprofessionals was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed in 1964. In addition, the PL 94:142, Education of the Handicapped Act, provided a free and appropriate education for all students and served to foster the utilization of paraprofessionals (Hammeken, 2003; Maag, 2007).

Further, research in the area of lack of sufficient training, training needs, and different types of training was discussed. Indeed, it is recognized that training has been an important issue with paraprofessionals as early as the 1970's (Schonewise, 2001). However, even after training programs had been developed and implemented, training

remained inadequate (Pickett, Vasa, & Steckelberg, 1993; Stallings 2000). In this regard Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, and Stall (2001) cautioned that if America were to continue meeting the educational goals set by legislation, paraprofessionals would need to be taught or trained in skills necessary to meet the educational demands of the future.

The final area discussed in the literature review was the issue of job satisfaction. The issue of job description included coverage of four unique theories with regard to job satisfaction: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Dual-Factor, Vroom's Expectancy theory, and Adam's Equity theory. Applications regarding the critical issues of turnover, attrition, and occupational stress in the lives of paraprofessionals were noted throughout the literature review.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Overview

Over the past decade, school districts throughout the United States have been experiencing high levels of turnover for special education paraprofessionals. Therefore, there has been a perennial shortage of special education paraprofessionals in the field. The increased need for special education paraprofessionals was heightened by the passage of the No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB) in 2002. The NCLB was designed to close the educational gap among different groups of students (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). Additional federally mandated programs, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), required educational institutions to provide appropriate training for all paraprofessionals, especially special education paraprofessionals (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, 2008). These legislative initiatives placed an immense burden on educational programs and created both financial and educational problems for school districts (Schwandt, 2001). One outgrowth of these problems has been high turnover rates in the field of special education (Piotrowski & Plash, 2006). Specifically, special education paraprofessionals employed by the Escambia County School District in Florida have been experiencing attrition rates over the years that were alarming. (J. Cain, personal communication, October 21, 2005).

Research Design

A mixed method research design was utilized in the current study. Utilization of only one type of data analysis would not provide a clear understanding of the research

questions. Mixed method research design, as defined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), is “a procedure for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, and analyzing and reporting this data based on a priority and sequence of information” (p.

10). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) defined quantitative research as

a research method where the researcher seeks explanation and predictions that will generalize to other persons and places. Careful sampling strategies and experimental designs are aspects of quantitative methods aimed at procedure generalizable results. In quantitative research, the researcher’s role is to observe and measure, and care is taken to keep the researcher from contaminating the data through personal involvement with the research subject. Researcher objectivity is of utmost concern. (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6)

The quantitative research approach is based on representational numerical data, which utilizes a deductive approach to test hypotheses. The results of quantitative research designs are relatively easy for other researchers to replicate, leading some researchers to conclude that quantitative data are more efficient and easier to test hypotheses. An important goal of quantitative research is to take particular events or instances to formulate general ideas or to test given hypotheses.

However, according to Taylor (2000), quantitative research can miss contextual details.

Qualitative research involves an attempt to describe different characteristics, sentiments, and perceptions of people and events. Qualitative research does not attempt to compare attributes of individuals or events without giving consideration or comparing results empirically. Qualitative research can be defined as: multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings

people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical material. (Taylor, p. 69)

Qualitative research is primarily designed to provide real and stimulating meanings to a phenomenon, a fact, or situation that is observed or experienced. Qualitative methods are particularly valuable when the researcher is either directly or indirectly involved in the process. In qualitative research, the researcher is the source of the data collection, with the data usually presented in the form of words, pictures, or objects (Richards & Morse, 2007; Schwandt, 2001; Taylor, 2000). Qualitative research seldom involves dealing with numbers or statistics; rather, it deals with the interpretation of answers to assumptions, research questions, or hypotheses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). In this design, gathered information leads to developing a central theme. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) commented, “by learning the perspective of the participants, qualitative research will illuminate the inner dynamics of situations – dynamics that are often invisible to the outsider” (p. 32). Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (1994) believed that “the findings from qualitative studies have a quality of unreliability” (p. 1).

Creswell (2004) defined mixed method research as a procedure for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study, then analyzing and reporting data based on a priority and sequence of information. A less complicated definition of mixed method design was presented by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) who noted that the multi-method (mixed method) design is one in which more than one method is used. Thus, mixed method research involves using both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. The data collection and analysis would be accomplished through either parallel or sequential phases. In sequential phases, data collection involves collecting either the quantitative or the qualitative data first, followed by the investigation of the other phases.

The current research design sought to explore levels in work satisfaction in a sample of special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers

and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities in Escambia County, Florida. This study was conducted using a stratified purposeful sampling procedure, in which the participative sample adequately represented the subgroups of the total population. The variables, defined by Harris (1995, p. 438) as an “event that takes on more than one value or score” that would be measured, controlled, or manipulated during the research process, were pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational policies, interaction, and professional status.

Target Population

A sample of 214 special education paraprofessionals employed by the Escambia County School District, Florida, served as participants for this research study. Upon the initiation of this project, the Division of Non-Professional Personnel, Escambia County School District, Escambia County, Florida, indicated that the number of special education paraprofessional positions in the school district totaled 286. Prior to the delivery of the survey, school personnel were contacted to verify participation (see Appendix A). At that time, each school indicated the number of potential participants who were available. Thus, the projected population of 225 reflected the number of possible participants. One school with three special education paraprofessionals chose not to participate in the research study. Eight additional paraprofessionals were on sick leave or absent due to family hardships at the time their school completed the survey. Thus, the deduction of these 11 paraprofessionals resulted in a total sample of 214 participants.

Research sites were divided between special education centers and special education programs housed in a regular education facility. Schools that contained more than 50% special education classrooms were considered special education centers. Schools that contained fewer than 50% special education classrooms were considered as special education programs located at regular education facilities.

Three schools were classified as special education centers. Moreover, 33 elementary, 10 middle, and 7 high schools had less than 50% special education programs or classes

and were classified as regular education facilities. One middle and one high school were not included in the total number of Escambia county schools, as neither school employed any special education paraprofessionals.

A demographic questionnaire provided information on the participants' gender, ethnicity, educational level, teaching level (elementary, middle, secondary), the type of special education program where they worked, and the number of years employed as a special education paraprofessional (see Appendix B). The demographic survey was completed by each of the 214 participants. Thirteen or 6.07% of the sample were male, 198 (92.5%) were female, and 3 (1.4%) of the population did not indicate their gender. Based on ethnicity, the population of the participants was 126 (58.88%) Caucasian, 70 (32.71%) African American, 5 (2.34%) Hispanic, 4 (1.87%) Asian, 4 (1.87%) Native Americans, and 5 (2.34%) did not indicate ethnicity. Two (0.93%) of the special education paraprofessional had some high school, 108 (50.47%) had earned a high school diploma, 48 (22.43%) held an associate's degree, 26 (12.15%) had earned a bachelor's degree, 25 (11.68%) indicated "other" for their years of education, and 5 (2.34%) did not answer.

The demographic questionnaire also asked about occupational position. Of the total sample, 104 (48.6%) were employed at the elementary level, 45 (21.03%) were employed in the middle school level, and 60 (28.04%) were employed in the high school level. Moreover, 109 (50.93%) worked at a special education center and 102 (47.66%) worked in a special education classroom housed at a regular educational setting, and 1 (0.47%) indicated "other"; 93 (43.46%) had been employed 0 - 5 years, 50 (23.36%) had been employed 6 - 10 years, 28 (13.08%) had been employed 11 -15 years, and 41(19.16%) had been employed 16 or more years (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Data on Study Sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	13	6.1
Female	198	92.5
Missing	3	1.4
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	126	58.9
African American	70	32.7
Hispanic	5	2.3
Asian	4	1.9
Native American	4	1.9
Missing	5	2.3
Education		
Some High School	2	0.9
High School Diploma	108	50.5
A.A.	48	22.4
B.A.	26	2.1
Other	25	11.7
Missing	5	2.3
Level		
Elementary	104	48.6
Middle	45	21.0
High School	60	28.0
Missing	5	2.3
Programs		
Centers	109	50.9
Regular Education	102	47.7
Others	1	0.5
Missing	2	0.9
Years Employed		
0-4	93	43.5
5-9	58	23.4
10-15	28	19.2
16+	41	0.5
Missing	2	0.9

Note: $N = 214$.

Furthermore, 18 special education paraprofessionals, 3 from each educational level (elementary, middle, and secondary) from the two program types (special education centers and special education programs housed at regular facilities), resulted in a total of 12 being selected randomly from those who expressed interest in participating in individual interviews. Three names were selected to ensure that two individuals from each group would agree to the interview.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the current study was obtained from the Escambia County School District (see Appendix C) and The University of West Florida Institutional Review Board for Human Research Participant Protection (IRB; Appendix D). All three educational divisions (elementary, middle, secondary) were asked to participate in the study. The office of non-instructional personnel for Escambia County School District selected and approved the schools participating in the study. For the exclusive purpose of this research study, special education centers were defined as schools where over 50% of the classes were special education classes housed in regular education facilities.

Participants employed by the Escambia County School District in Florida completed the Inventory of Work Satisfaction (IWS) questionnaire (see Appendix E). All questionnaire administrations occurred early in the 2006-2007 school year. With the schools principals' permission, the researcher attended a prearranged staff meeting at a designated time and location with the special education paraprofessionals. During the designated meeting time, the researcher provided the special education paraprofessionals with an overview of the research project (see Appendix F) and an informed consent form (see Appendix G) after permission was given by each participant, the IWS questionnaire was completed (see Appendix E). At schools with few paraprofessionals, the questionnaire was given to the principal to administer to the paraprofessionals and later returned to the researcher.

Paraprofessionals were told of the need to interview a few of their members and volunteers were requested. Once permission had been acquired from each of the selected special education paraprofessionals, a mutually agreed upon location and time was established for the interview. Permission was also obtained to record the interviews (see Appendix H). Following the 20 to 30 minute in-person interviews, a gift certificate was presented to the individuals participating in the interview as a token of appreciation.

An interview guide approach (see Appendix I), in which the interviewer had specific topics to pursue specific open-ended questions written out before the interview, served as the basis for the interviews. The topics and questions were asked in a non-specific order with as many probes as the interviewer deemed necessary to obtain a clear understanding of each participant's response. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were developed in order to obtain a thorough picture of the participant's feelings and beliefs. An open-ended question was one wherein the participant was allowed to provide as much information as they choose; conversely, a closed-ended question offered only a prescribed selection of choices for each query (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The collected qualitative data were analyzed through a stratified analysis of the composite individual interviews. Johnson and Christensen (2004, p. 178) stated, "A strength of interviews is that a researcher can freely use probes . . . prompts used to obtain response clarity or additional information."

Instrumentation

The IWS Questionnaire was selected for use in this research study for several reasons. First, it is a widely recognized instrument and has been utilized in research based on nearly every service occupation. Second, the instrument has a high reliability estimate and has been deemed valid. Lastly, the instrument consists of two parts. Part A deals with how participants feel about the components of pay, autonomy, tasks requirements, organizational policies, interaction, and professional status in relation to which

component of each pair they feel is more important to them. Part B of the instrument examines how satisfied the paraprofessionals are about their present placements.

The IWS, developed by Stamps and Piedmonte (1986), was utilized to assess job satisfaction. Written permission was obtained to utilize and to modify the instrument designed by Stamps (see Appendix J). The modifications involved changing the term “nursing” to “special education paraprofessional” and changing the word “hospital” to “school.” Stamps, in a personal conversation, stated that the integrity of the IWS would not be sacrificed by modifying the IWS (Stamps, personal communication, June 6, 2006).

The IWS was developed for a research project conducted by Stamps in 1972. Originally it was designed to measure job satisfaction among nurses working in hospitals and outpatient settings. The IWS comprised two parts: Part A, an attribute section describing the respondent’s expectations; and Part B, an attitude section which measures the current level of satisfaction of the six components (task requirements, interaction, professional status, organization policy, autonomy, and pay). Stamps explained the reason for having a two-part design in the IWS.

The two-part design allowed flexibility in analysis and is one of the reasons that the scale is particularly useful. Since each of the six concepts is a conceptually separate dimensions of satisfaction, each component yields a separate score. Thus, the rankings of level of current satisfaction (based on Part B, the Likert Scale) may be compared with the rankings of the relative importance (derived from Part A). . . . This IWS score reflects both level of importance and actual satisfaction.” (Stamps, 1997, p.190).

The overall purpose of the IWS was to suggest ways of improving communication and work satisfaction of special education paraprofessionals within an organization. A second purpose of the research was to enable revision and validation of the instrument, based on an analysis of the data obtained in the current sample.

Initially, the IWS contained 60 items, 10 statements for each component (pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational policies, professional status, and interaction) that was later increased to 75 items. Following initial research, the items were reduced to 48 which represented the current form of the scale. A factor analysis on the initial items accounted for 59% of the variance for Part B. Results of this factor analysis provided validation for selecting the strongest 48 items. These 48 items were to become the basis for conducting of the four factor analysis procedures. The final version of 48 items, published in 1978, resulted in the current instrument and utilized by all researchers thereafter. Prior research studies and extensive communications with nurses and administrators supported the six components found to be important to occupational satisfaction: pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational requirements, interaction, and job prestige (Stamps & Piedmonte, 1986).

Three major design decisions were made following the initial research:

1. Arrange statements randomly by content area throughout the scale, so participants would not be aware of which component was being tested. (see Appendix K).
2. Phrase half of the statements positively and half negatively (see Appendix L and Appendix M), and reverse the scores in such a way that a higher summed score represented a higher level of satisfaction. The responses of persons highly satisfied with their job situation should be evenly divided between “strongly agree” to a positive statement” and “strongly disagree” to negative statements.
3. Utilize a 7-point Likert scale format to allow participants to make fine distinctions which allows researchers to collapse the data for presentations. The numbers on the *left* side of the Likert scale indicated the magnitude of agreement. The numbers on the *right* side of the Likert scale indicated the magnitude of disagreement.

Following the major design decisions and the development of the 7-point Likert scale, an attribute measurement, Part A, was added to the IWS. The attribute measurement sub-scale consisted of 15 forced choice items which sought to measure participants' perception concerning each of the six work components (pay, autonomy, tasks requirements, organizational tasks, interaction, and job prestige). Part A examined at the six components and measured how respondents felt about their work environment. Each component represented a select aspect of job satisfaction. Respondents selected the one which they felt meant the most to his or her feeling of job satisfaction. Part B, the attitude section, comprised of 44 items designed to indicate how satisfied the respondents were in his or her present position. A Likert scale response format ranged from 1 *strongly agree* to 7 *strongly disagree*.

Through repeated factor analysis procedures, the integrity of the IWS was demonstrated. The result of the first factorial analysis produced seven factors which accounted for 50% of the variance among the 72-item version Part 2 of the IWS. Based on these results, 48 items were selected to be the final formal utilized in the subsequent studies.

The second factor analysis produced 13 different factors, accounting for 70% of the variance. Two further factor analyses were completed later in the validation process. The validation procedure during the 1985 validation yielded 12 factors, accounting for 62% of the variance. Although these two later analyses resulted in some minor variations, the variances were determined not to be a significant finding. Seven methods for determining the validity of the IWS were employed, including proper identification with each of the six components: pay, task requirements, organizational policies, professional status, interaction, and autonomy. A two-part design was developed to allow for the most accurate result of the IWS:

The two-part designs allowed flexibility in analysis and was one of the reasons the scale is particularly useful. Since each of the six components was a conceptually

separate dimension of satisfaction, each component yields a separate dimension of satisfaction, each component yields a separate score. Thus, the rankings of level of current satisfaction (based on Part B, the Likert Scale) may be compared with the rankings of relative importance (derived from Part A). This component helps in identifying the areas in greatest need of organizational or structured change. (Stamps, 1997, p. 190).

The IWS was reviewed using two analytical procedures: The Kendall's Tau and Cronbach's *alpha*. The Kendall's Tau measured the strength of correlation between the weighted scores on the total instrument and the unweighted score obtained from the attitude section (Part B) only. The reliability estimated from early studies was 0.860 and the final validation study reported a reliability estimate of 0.920. (see Table 2). The high reliability on both scoring procedures indicated that the items on the IWS Questionnaire were consistently measuring the six unique job components.

Table 2

Reliability Estimates of the Inventory of Work Satisfaction (IWS)

Subscale	Reported	Current Study
Pay	0.85	0.77
Autonomy	0.69	0.81
Tasks Requirements	0.69	0.62
Organizational Policies	0.83	0.75
Professional Status	0.76	0.48
Interaction (para-para)	0.82	0.74
Interaction (para-teacher)		0.79
Overall	0.91	

Note: Data are from Stamps and Piedmonte (1986).

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Research Question 1 (Is there a statistical difference in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction based on the IWS between special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular educational facilities?) was analyzed through utilization of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure. The ANOVA was used to make conclusions about the differences in the means of two or more groups. Specifically, an analysis of variance tests the null hypothesis that the groups were chosen from a random sample of populations with identical means.

The independent variables for Research Question 1 were the two different groups, for example, special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusive special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities. The dependent variable was scores on the job satisfaction scales from the IWS satisfaction with pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational policies, professional status, and interactions.

To address Question 1, an ANOVA was performed. The ANOVA was utilized to draw inferences about the differences in the means of two or more groups (Harris, 1995, p. 341); for example, testing the null hypothesis that the groups represented random samples from populations with the same means. The assumptions of choosing an ANOVA statistical test were (a) it tests the null hypothesis that all means come from the same population, yet lessens the chances of rejecting H_0 , (b) it requires only one test to do what would take a large number of t -tests, (c) the data should be from a normally distributed population, (d) the variances for each experimental condition are fairly similar, and (e) the independent and dependent variable should be measured on at least an interval scale (Table 3).

Table 3

Results of the One-way ANOVA for IWS Subscales Based on Type of Special Education Setting

IWS Subscales	Means		F	p value
	Centers	Regular		
Pay	35.59	32.63	3.02	0.03
Autonomy	26.23	23.60	1.46	0.23
Tasks Requirements	20.04	18.78	0.88	0.45
Organizational Policies	32.08	28.51	3.66	0.01
Professional Status	47.45	18.50	0.95	0.41
Interaction (para-para)	13.93	13.80	0.34	0.80
Interaction (teacher-para)	15.80	15.11	0.23	0.87
Overall	32.60	42.30	1.33	0.27

Note: N of Centers = 109; N of Regular Facilities = 102.

The level of significance ranged from .01 (organizational policies) to .87 (interaction) with an overall score of .27 (see Table 3). The overall mean was 32.6 for the special education centers and 42.3 for the regular education facilities, with the range for the centers from a low of 13.8 (interaction) to a high of 32.63 (pay) and a low of 13.96 (interaction) to a high of 47.45 (professional status) for the special education programs housed in a regular setting.

Research Question 2, (Is there a statistical difference in the attitudes towards work satisfaction between special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular educational facilities relative to age, gender, ethnicity, and years employed?) was addressed utilizing a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The MANOVA examined the factor of pay, autonomy, organizational

policies, task requirements, interaction between paraprofessional and paraprofessional and interaction between paraprofessionals and teachers at special education centers and special education programs located in regular education facilities. A MANOVA analysis was selected due to its ability to detect whether the groups differed along a combination of dimensions (Field, 2005). A “MANOVA incorporates information about several outcome measures and, therefore, informs us of whether groups of participants can be distinguished by a combination of scores on several dependent measures” (Field, p. 572). Finally, a MANOVA lessens the chance of a Type 1 error, for example, rejecting the null hypothesis when it should not be rejected.

Qualitative

Central Question: (What factors may inhibit or enhance special education paraprofessional’s perceptions and attitudes concerning their roles as special education paraprofessionals employed in either exclusively special education centers or employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities?).

In order to answer the central question, a task analysis needed to be completed: “The task of analysis, which makes interpretation possible, requires researchers first to determine how to organize and use it to construct an intact portrait of the original phenomenon under study and second, to tell readers what that portrait means” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 13). Data analysis then became “the researcher searching, and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and the other materials that you accumulated to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you had discovered to others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 153). The data for the current study were collected through document analysis and individual interviews. The collected data were organized and interpreted to provide an understanding about the views of special education paraprofessionals. To fully answer the research question, “one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have *directly* experienced the

phenomenon of interest; that is, they have 'life experience' as opposed to secondhand experience" (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Analysis of the data began early in this researcher's experience. During the interviews, the location of the interview, the body language of the interviewee, and the behavior of the interviewee were noted. At the commencement of the interview, each interviewee provided written permission to have the interview tape recorded. Rich field notes were made by the researcher. As soon as possible following the interview, a write-up was completed and a contact summary sheet was compiled. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a contact summary as "a single sheet with some focusing questions about a particular field contact. The field-worker reviewed the written-up field notes and answers each question briefly to develop an overall summary of the main points of the contact" (p. 51).

Miles and Huberman (1994) further commented that "the contact summary sheet is a rapid, practical way to do a first run data reduction . . . It pulls together the data . . . and makes them (field notes) available for further reflection and analysis . . ." (p. 52). Along with completing the summary sheet for each of the interviews, the field notes were coded to provide further reduction of the data set. Schwandt (2001, p. 26) defined coding as, "a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments," and "Coding forces the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of contiguous blocks of texts." According to Creswell (1998) and Trochim (2000), coding is a three-step procedure: open, axial, and focused. Open coding involves taking the data collected, writing it out, and then attempting to define the data by examining each line of the data and defining actions within it (Charmez, 2000). The next step in the process is axial coding. In axial coding data are rearranged in various ways to create different categories and subcategories. The purpose of axial coding is to attempt to make associations between categories (Charmez, 2000). Beside or below the categories or labels, the data are reviewed, and then, typically,

a slightly more abstract category is attributed to several incidents or observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final state of coding, selective or focused would create more abstract categories and observing the patterns. The results of the coding are then placed in a cognitive map. Miles and Huberman (1994) described a cognitive map “as displays the person’s representation of concepts about a particular domain, showing the relationships among them” (p. 134). The cognitive map is developed by taking the coded words or phrases and sorting them in a way that showed what the researcher thought about the term. The researcher then draws six circular shapes that demonstrate where words and phrases appear to be related. In the current study, the six areas were thoroughly examined, divided, and labeled into six major areas: pay, autonomy, interaction, organizational policies, tasks requirements, professional status according to which group best fit across all of the six major areas.

Summary

This chapter presented a detailed overview of the research design, sample, setting, instruments, procedures, and types of data analyses used in the current study. Particular attention was given to the development of the IWS instrument; scores on the IWS subscales served as the dependent variable and outcome measure in addressing the research questions posed in this investigation.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This researcher was employed in special education for 15 years prior to conducting this study. During that time, the researcher worked with a diverse array of paraprofessionals (teacher aides). In working with paraprofessionals, it had become evident that there existed some level of dissatisfaction among the special education paraprofessionals in their employment. As a novice researcher attempting to explore this issue, the current research project has become a sincere and passionate desire to discover the reasons for high levels of job dissatisfaction among paraprofessionals.

It is hoped that the findings from this enterprise should provide educational policy makers useful data which, in turn, would lead to increased levels of occupational satisfaction for special education paraprofessionals. There were 214 special education paraprofessionals from Escambia County School District, Florida, that participated in the current study. Thirteen (6.1%) of the sample were male, 190 (92.5%) were female, and 3 (1.4%) of the participants did not indicate their gender. Ethnically, 126 (58.9%) were Caucasian, 70 (32.7%) were African American, 5 (2.3%) were Hispanic, 4 (1.9%) were Asian, 4 (1.9%) were Native Americans, and 4 (1.9%) did not indicate their ethnicity. Two (0.9%) of the special education paraprofessionals had some schooling, 108 (50.5%) held a high school diploma, 48 (22.4%) possessed an associate degree, 26 (12.1%) had earned a bachelor's degree, 25 (11.70%) indicated "other" for their years of education, and 5 (2.3%) did not answer the question. Further, the demographic survey asked for information about their occupational position. Of the sample, 104 (48.6%) were employed at the elementary level, 45 (21.0%) were employed at the middle school level,

and 60 (28.0%) worked at the high school level. Of the participants, 109 (50.9%) worked in a special education center, 102 (47.7%) worked in a special education classroom housed in a regular education setting, and 1 (0.5%) indicated other; 93 (43.5%) had been employed 0-5 years, 58 (23.4%) had been employed 6-10 years, 28 (13.1%) were employed 11-15 years, and 41(19.2%) had been employed 16 or more years (see Table 4).

Table 4

Results of the One-way ANOVA by Program (special education centers, regular education facilities)

IWS Subscales	Means		F	p value
	Centers	Regular		
Pay	35.59	32.63	3.02	0.03
Autonomy	26.23	23.60	1.46	0.23
Tasks Requirements	20.04	18.78	0.88	0.45
Organizational Policies	32.08	28.51	3.66	0.01
Professional Status	47.45	18.50	0.95	0.41
Interaction (para-para)	13.93	13.80	0.34	0.80
Interaction (teacher-para)	15.80	15.11	0.23	0.87
Overall	32.60	42.30	1.33	0.27

Note: N of Centers = 109; N of Regular Facilities = 105.

Work satisfaction in special education paraprofessionals was the major focus of this investigation. Numerous paths were explored in this study. Directly asking the participants is one approach utilized in an attempt to understand individuals' behavior. In order to preserve confidentiality, the names of the interviewees have been changed. During the first two in-depth interviews, there was reluctance on the part of the interviewee to be very open. A fear of reprisal and uncertainty of the researcher's motive permeated these initial interviews. However, by the end of the first 30 minutes, each of

these interviewees had become more conversational and revealed their candid attitudes. It was at this time that each of the interviewees admitted that they had felt reserved about expressing their true feelings. It was not until a trusting rapport had been established that each of the two interviewees realized what they revealed would not be shared with anyone else; thereafter, they began to express their true feelings. About 35 minutes into the interview, the second interviewee indicated, "I think I can talk honestly now. I am convinced you will not tell my principal what I say." In both cases, the first two questions were re-addressed. Because of the perceived fear of reprisal, the information provided from the first two in-depth interviews was taken with some skepticism. During the remaining 10 in-depth interviews, the approach was altered and more time was spent establishing rapport. Interviewees were encouraged to provide more information about themselves and their personal lives. All of the interviewees had become more relaxed and less rigid by the time the second question had been asked. (Please explain how satisfied you are about working as a special education paraprofessional).

The researcher reported the findings individually based on each survey question. In addition, the findings reflected the overall themes. In order to adequately document the responses to each of the questions, the exact words of the interviewees were used. The quotes from the interviewees were ones which best portrayed the interviewees honest and passionate feelings. Every attempt was made not to utilize the same quote for numerous questions. However, in a few instances, a quote was duplicated, as it was felt the quote provided the most exact portrayal of the paraprofessional's feelings in both instances. In a procedure such as this, it was impossible to include all the remarks noted by each interviewee. In choosing which quotes to use from the interviews, the ones which addressed each question in the clearest and most concise manner were selected. Ellipses were included when the research did not utilize the entire quote from the interviewee. The use of ellipses was to indicate that words or phrases had been eliminated. The intent of the answers did not change or distract from the actual responses of the participants.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Research Question 1

Is there a statistical difference in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction based on the IWS between special education paraprofessionals at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in regular education facilities?

Findings Regarding Question 1

The independent variables for Research Question 1 were the two different groups, for example, special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusive special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities. The dependent variables were the scores obtained on the job satisfaction scales from the Index Work Satisfaction (IWS), e.g., satisfaction with pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational policies, professional status, and interactions.

To address Question 1, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. The ANOVA was utilized to draw inferences about the differences in the means of two or more groups (Harris, 1995, p. 341), testing the null hypothesis that the groups represent random samples from populations with the same means. The assumptions of choosing an ANOVA statistical procedures are (a) it tests the null hypothesis that all means come from the same population, yet lessens the chances of rejecting H_0 , (b) it requires only one statistical test to do what would take a large number of t -tests, (c) the data should be a normally distributed population, (d) the variance in each experimental condition are fairly similar, and (e) the independent and dependent variable should be measured on at least an interval scale.

The results of the ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in scores obtained on the Index of Work Satisfaction subscales of autonomy, tasks

requirements, professional status, and interaction at the .05 level. However, a significant difference was noted for the subscale pay (.031) and organizational policies (0.15), at the .05 level.

Research Question 2

Is there a statistical difference in the attitudes toward work satisfaction, as measured by the IWS, between special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs located in regular educational facilities relative to age, gender, ethnicity, educational levels, and years employed?

Findings Regarding Question 2

The independent variables for Research Question 2 were the two groups, special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed at special education programs housed in regular education facilities based on the demographic and employment variables: age, gender, ethnicity, education, years employed, and educational level (elementary, middle, secondary). The dependent variables were scores from Part A and Part B of the IWS.

To address Question 2, a MANOVA, a statistical procedure that allows for drawing conclusions about the difference of means where more than one outcome variable is measured, was calculated. Results of the MANOVA were not significant for any of the IWS subscales except for years and tasks requirements (.048); educational level and programs with interaction (.38); education plus program plus professional status with autonomy (.009); professional status (.25) and interaction (.45). Further items that proved significant were ethnicity and years with interaction (.033), ethnicity plus years and education with professional status (.39), and finally, education plus level, plus years with autonomy (.038).

Summary for Question 2

It appeared that the least qualified paraprofessionals tended to remain in their jobs the longest. This appeared to have been based on assumptions regarding the positions made prior to the enactment of certification standards.

As most school system's policies and procedures regarding paraprofessionals were developed during the time the older employees functioned as teacher's aides, the newer and more educated paraprofessionals tended to become dissatisfied and leave the school district at a higher rate than the older paraprofessionals. These findings appear to indicate that many paraprofessionals remained no longer than nine or ten years in their position.

Qualitative Data Findings

Interview Question 1

"Please tell me something about yourself."

Pedros: I am 31years-old. I have a BA in guidance counseling. My major was interpersonal communications and I have a minor in Spanish. I began working on my master's degree. I became discouraged because the world kept saying I couldn't do it [Pedros has a physical handicap]. I worked for 10 years as an assistant and decided to work in a school district as a guidance counselor. I have not been able to get a full-time job in guidance counseling, so I took a job as a special education assistant. That was 10 years ago.

Ester: I am married with 2 grown children, both who are married. I have 4 grandchildren. I have worked for Escambia County for 30 years as a special education paraprofessional. I love working with the younger special education student. I don't really like to work with the middle school age students. They don't want to learn and will not listen to anyone, not even the teacher.

- Diane: I have worked for 7 years as a paraprofessional. I worked for 2 years in a self-contained emotionally handicapped middle classroom. I did not like the way the boys treated me . . . I transferred to the middle school resource room and I do not have as much trouble. I love to read and I use my love for reading to encourage the girls to read. The boys won't read.
- Karen: This is my first year working in a special education classroom. I graduated from high school in May and I had to work so I could make money to attend PJC. I go to school at night and am majoring in business.
- Joan: I have 21 years experience working in schools. When I first started working in the schools, I worked as a clerk in the office. I saw many children in my school who could not do the work and were always in trouble . . . I have now worked for 15 years as a paraprofessional . . . I went back to school [P.J.C.] and have gotten an associate's degree.
- Steven: I have a Teach AA from P.J.C. but I do not want to teach . . . I have worked for four years in a self-contained high school classroom . . . The students are great to work with because they really want to learn, but, no one believes in them.
- Jennifer: I am working as a teacher's aide in an elementary resource classroom . . . I am attending U.W.F. [The University of West Florida] and will graduate in August [2008] with an elementary education degree . . . I have worked for three years as a teacher's aide.
- Olivia: I have worked as an aide for 21 years. I began working as an aide after my children got married because I was bored being at home. My hobby is cooking and my teacher lets me cook with the children . . . I

have my own [student] groups and I do all the preparation [for all the groups].

Rebecca: This is my second year as an assistant teacher. I help the teacher teach reading. I work in a class that has 16 students. It is hard work . . . I have to teach reading to the lowest reading group . . . The seven students I teach are the best. They love me.

Chris: I have taught special education students for 25 years . . . The class has 55 students at different times during the day. They all are great . . . I have two grandchildren living at my house. They make working in [the school] very hard. I do love my work . . . I want to stop working in the next two years . . . The work is not the same as it was . . . I like to work outdoors. It gives me a chance to relax after being with all those students every day.

Tanya: I have a BA in psychology. I could not get a job in psychology because I do not have a master's degree. I don't want to go back to school . . . I needed a job and this was all I could get . . . I have worked in the school for 18 years . . . I did not change jobs because I love working with the students and I do not want to go back to school.

Quiana: I work in a class of different [minority] students in downtown Pensacola. I have worked there for 12 years . . . I have done everything from change student's clothes to grade papers, and teach the class when there was a substitute in there . . . I enjoy working with the students. They remind me of my four children when they were younger. I am going to have to go back to school and get some college or I won't be able to continue teaching my children. I think I am too old to go back to school [she is 37 years old].

Interview Question 2

“Please explain how satisfied you are about working as a special education paraprofessional. Can you expand on your satisfaction/dissatisfaction?”

Throughout the individual interviews, it became obvious that all the special education paraprofessionals, regardless of assignment, loved working with their students. Not one of the interviewees indicated a dislike for working with students.

Rebecca: As far as working with our children, I would not trade them for anything. The children I have worked with have been great.

Diane: . . . enjoyed every minute working with my class.

Joan: . . . love working with ESE students.

Olivia: I would not trade a single day for anything else . . .

Pedros: I simply love children.

Quiana: I love working with special needs children! This was my first year working with middle school children . . . this year was the best . . . middle school students are the best!

During the individual interviews, several of the paraprofessionals commented on the role their supervising teacher and the administration played on whether the paraprofessionals were satisfied or dissatisfied. The paraprofessional’s level of job satisfaction appears to be influenced by the school where they are employed.

Chris: The people who’s sitting high (administration) need to come work in our place at least for one full day to see what we have to deal with each day and everyday all day.

Joan: I have wonderful teachers I work with. I have nothing negative to say in reference to my teachers.

Jennifer: The teacher I have been with the last 2½ years has been great. She is very outgoing, willing to listen to my ideals, and [they are] helpful.

Ester: I have worked with three different teachers in a self-contained classroom and they have all treated me with respect. They have made me feel like a vital part of the children's classroom experience. . . The administration has always been available for my questions and the faculty is supportive.

Another issue revealed through the interviews was the concern expressed by the interviewees for the students they work with. Nine of the twelve individuals interviewed expressed a very deep concern for the exceptional education students. Several of the paraprofessionals expressed negative comments about the exceptional education program.

Olivia: The special education students would be able to get more help if the students were screened and sent to their correct school. We have too many students who should not be here The time spent with them takes away from the students who do belong [here].

Steven: Sometimes you have to wonder if it's really about these special students or politics and money.

Joan: The special education classes, in many instances, are treated as outcast. Little effort is made by the regular education teachers to include learning disabled students as equal to other students in my school.

Rebecca: As a new paraprofessional, I have not been provided support by the district. I do not feel like I have been provided enough information concerning county policies.

Three of the paraprofessionals expressed grave concern over students being required to take so many tests each year. The interviewed paraprofessionals believed that with so much testing students are not benefitting from optimal education time. In addition, the paraprofessionals felt that the testing causes undue stress and anxiety.

Rebecca: So much testing and not enough time to teach them what they really need to know. Our special education students are required to take the

FCAT and other tests that compare them with regular education students – incomprehensible! . . . I feel this is because our educational system is trying to play a “catch-up game” with our students.

Karen: I believe we are wasting our children’s time by requiring them to take so many tests . . . We need to be teaching these children life skills, basic educational needs, . . . the simpler skills in order to perform at jobs they can be self-sufficient at.

Tanya: I think I have to test my students too much. It is like all I am supposed to do is drill students so much that they begin to dislike coming into the room to see me.

Other paraprofessionals were very empathic regarding the need to be able to spend more time in the classroom assisting students and not working as a clerk in the office or a substitute teacher. According to the interviewed paraprofessionals, their working outside the classroom with the students created a hardship for teachers. Students were unhappy not having the assistance provided by the paraprofessionals.

Quiana: I have had to work in so many departments in the school that the students in my department are beginning to make comments about being unhappy because I am never there to help them [students] . . . if I [student] could stay with my friend [paraprofessional, I would do more work. No one else knows about me and how to help me.

Joan: We [paraprofessionals] must be allowed to spend more time in the classroom. Paraprofessionals are made to work outside their classroom. We [paraprofessionals] have to work in the office when a secretary is gone. On top of working in the office sometimes, we have to work in the lunchroom or on the playground with other classes. We [paraprofessionals] were hired to work with the special education students and that is what we should be doing.

A further issue for the paraprofessionals was the need for more and better training dealing with the special education student and the special education program. Joan, Pedros, Chris, and Diane all expressed a need for more workshops in order to allow for increased professional development.

Ester: I think there should be more training classes available for paraprofessionals.

Jennifer: I feel programs geared for ESPs [special education paraprofessionals] would be welcomed . . . and the in-services and education opportunities could be applied to the classroom situation.

On the other hand, other paraprofessionals felt vehemently about the two-year degree requirements. Ester and Tanya who have worked as a special education paraprofessional for 30 and 18 years, respectively, felt that their experience should have counted for something. Moreover, they felt it unfair to have to take an exam to continue working with special education students.

Steven: If we have to have additional education, then the classes should be about what we need to know to do our job better. For example, a course on classroom management or motivating students would certainly be of more help. To do our job, we don't need to know algebra or literature. Courses like that will not help us deal with the problems the students have.

The final major point, with the exception of pay, elaborated on by the participants was the need to have benefits. Specifically, 10 out of the 12 individuals interviewed believed sick leave should be separated from other types of leave.

Tanya: We are given sick leave that we have to use for spring break, Christmas break, fall break and summer. After using our time for that, if we ever had an emergency, we do not have time left.

Chris: Sick leave for staff should be separated from other types of leave, so that we aren't faced with having to come to work sick or lose pay.

Karen: Paraprofessionals had to use personal leave for spring and fall break. We are not given the chance to work during the breaks.

Interview Questions 3 and 4

“Are you considering leaving your position as a special education paraprofessional? Yes ____ No ____ . Please indicate your reasons” and “What factors do you believe are assisting/hindering your decision?”

Four of the twelve paraprofessional's interviews indicated that they were actively seeking other employment. Two indicated that if circumstances were different, they would seek other employment. The remaining six all stated if they were not as old or had already worked for so many years, they would be searching for a different job or a different profession.

Tanya: I am looking for a job in a different county, one where the benefits are better and paraprofessionals are treated like they have an important role in the children's education. I love the children and our administration, but . . . we are only paid approximately \$11,000 . . . I have to support my two children and cannot do it on what I am paid . . . because of this I am being forced to look elsewhere for work.

Diane: I cannot afford to live on my own [She lives with her parents]. I am unmarried and I have no children. I would like my own house, but then I would not be able to afford a car, insurance, gas, electricity, water, groceries, etc. Everything is going up in Pensacola, but our wages are not. The reason they cannot keep these jobs filled is because they can make more money elsewhere.

Karen: The job market in Pensacola is poor. But, I think I can find a job that pays more, even without a degree.

Jennifer: After working as a teacher's assistant [paraprofessional] for three years, I am going to have to look for another job. I am not treated as I know anything I spend more time working with my group of students, but I am not even asked about how they are doing when it comes time to write the I.E.Ps.

Pedros: I will be looking for a job as a teacher as soon as I pass my Florida Teacher's Exam. . . . I hope to get a job teaching Spanish in a high school.

Interview Question 5

“What factors did you consider when deciding to become a special education paraprofessional?”

Pedros: I could not find a job as a guidance counselor and a principal called me and asked me if I would want to work as a teacher's aide [paraprofessional] in a high school program.

Joan: I love little children. My children are grown . . . I wanted a job where I could work with small children . . . I didn't want to stay home all the time now that my children were grown.

Quiana: I needed a job and I saw an advertisement in the newspaper. . . . That was 12 years ago.

Steven: I had been working as a janitor in a middle school and the principal asked if I would like to work in the special education classroom. I thought I would give it a try. I did not want to be a janitor for the rest of my life.

Interview Questions 6

“Describe your feelings, both positive and negative, as you see your employment as a special education paraprofessional.”

When writing the responses to this question, the researcher chose not to re-iterate any answer that was discussed in previous questions.

Quiana: The special education students would be able to get more help . . . [if] students who should not be here were sent to their correct school . . . the time spent with them takes away from the students who belong [here].

Tanya: We are not invited to school functions [assemblies].

Diane: This year was my first year working with middle school children, although it was an adjustment for me . . . this year was the best!

Karen: I have wonderful teachers I work with . . . I have nothing negative to say in reference to my job. . . I feel as though I have gained a great deal of knowledge working with the special education unit here. *Most importantly* the children are learning. One thing for sure if I stayed in the same class all day the children will benefit more.

Olivia: I think the job I do is very important. . . I feel like the kids get to know me and trust me more than the teachers. . . In a lot of cases, we are the ones that correct the children when the teachers can't do anything with them. I think we [paraprofessionals] should be included in IEP meetings, meet with parents . . . and I am not even ask for my opinion, especially when I have my own groups I plan, prepare, and teach with very limited help from the teacher I work with . . . I feel like an idiot.

Chris: Special education paraprofessionals have little or no input on student's academic plan. . . Paraprofessionals are more sympathetic to our students as we spend more 1:1 involved time with our students. . . Paraprofessionals are also aware of students' emotional needs. We also tend to blend over into our student's home life.

Jennifer: Interpreters for the deaf should have been included in The No Child Left Behind Act pay increase.

Ester: I have over 30 years in the system. I am treated as if I have no knowledge of how to educate a child. Tell me how can you do a job for 30 years and be treated as if you are a student yourself. I feel if my experience was used more. I could be of greater benefit to the children I work with.

Joan: I think for all the hands-on work . . . all the cleaning and bathroom we do, I think we should have a different title and a different pay.

Rebecca: I love my job and have always been treated as a professional. . . . I wish we had a way for advancement.

Steven: There are many, many negative things about being a paraprofessional . . . the biggest one is being treated as if I knew nothing and not being included in the social activities at the school. The positive side is I learn from my students as much as they learn from me and the rewards in the gains students make are priceless.

Diane: I believe our educational system has been trying to play a “catch-up game” with all of our students! So much testing and not enough time to teach them what they really need to know. . . . It makes my job more depressing.

Pedros: We are trained as inclusion aides and instructed to be an advocate for our students. Many teachers are unaware of what and why we are in the classroom. We are instructed to take a proactive part in our student’s education . . . our guidance people give us conflicting information and we are not included in the IEPs. This does not make for a good working relationship.

Interview Question 7

“Overall, are you pleased with your decision to become a special education paraprofessional? Yes ____ No ____ . Please elaborate.”

- Diane: No – The working attitudes towards aides are less than professional . . . The school district does not encourage us to further our education.
- Quiana: No – The most disappointing aspect of being a paraprofessional is the student’s behavior . . . they are not disciplined by the deans and the principals. . . . students know this and they continue to misbehave . . . I thought I would be more recognized for my skills and my experience.
- Olivia: No – We are not invited to the meetings which involve the students we work with I teach my own reading and math group and I am expected to make the lesson plans and teach the lesson and I am not even included in conversations which involve the students in my group.
- Karen: This is my first year I thought I would be part of a team . . . only the teacher I work with feels like I am important, but I do love the students.

Interview Question 8

“Overall, are you satisfied with your life as a member of the educational community? Yes ____ No ____ . Please elaborate.”

- Diana: No – There is very poor communication between the regular education teachers and the paraprofessionals when we work with them. . . I had at least two teachers this year that didn’t know I was going to be in their classroom and they didn’t know what I was there for.
- Steven: Yes – Teamwork is imperative. I am very fortunate to have great administrative support and teacher support working for me. Not every paraprofessional may have the same team-based working environment as I do in our school.
- Tanya: No – I feel as though special education paraprofessionals are forgotten about. We have a lot of responsibility . . . I love my job, but, sometimes I feel as though we are forgotten about.

Joan: In part – The administrators [of the school] . . . are great. They make me want to come to work . . . On the other hand, our county makes us feel as if we are at the bottom of the barrel.

Quiana: No – There’s not enough teamwork. Most teachers do not appreciate good workers . . . I think there should be more training classes available for paraprofessionals that give us [paraprofessionals] practical information.

Jennifer: Yes – I have a wonderful teacher I work with. I have nothing negative to say in reference to my job.

Survey Question 9

“Additional Comments.”

Nearly every paraprofessional made a statement considering the pay scale. Diana, Quiana, and Pedros stated that they felt the pay was too low for the work and the responsibility they had. The following statements were representative of the entire group.

Olivia: It is pretty sad when a person with 21 years experience is barely above the poverty level at \$13,000.00 a year. . . I still won’t change what I do . . . I just wish we were paid based on what we do.

Tanya: There should be more consideration given to paraprofessional’s pay, depending on education and experience, job expectations, and requirements, working conditions, for working with special education students.

Chris: I have been a paraprofessional for 25 years . . . things have changed a lot . . . we have been ask to do more and more without raises.

Rebecca: I feel we need more money for the jobs we do to help students, especially when you have more experience in a classroom with the difficult student.

Joan: I feel we are under-paid and have sorry benefits.

Other additional comments provided further insight into the feelings of the special education paraprofessionals. These comments were very divergent. Nevertheless, many of the comments were expressed by more than one paraprofessional.

Joan: Something needs to be done about the way we are evaluated . . . a perfect evaluation should show up in our paycheck . . . Florida is looking for a program to reward teachers [STAR Program]. What about us? I teach the same math, science, social studies, language arts, and writing . . . I help the classroom teacher look good, but reap none of the rewards.

Steven: It seems to me they [Escambia County School District] would be trying to find a way to help qualified teacher assistants get a teaching degree . . . and still work full-time.

Karen: I work full-time and go to school full-time; yet, the working attitudes towards aides are less than professional. . . . there is a major discrepancy between the workshops we attend and the implementation in our schools.

Question: Can you elaborate more?

We [paraprofessionals] are required to attend workshop, most of which don't teach skills we can use in the classroom . . . when we do learn a new skill we [paraprofessionals] are not encouraged to implement it.

Quiana: We are not invited to the IEP meetings, yet we are expected to help the students . . . we need to be included in meetings which involve the students . . . we are trained in workshops, but we don't get to implement the training in the classroom.

Pedros: I would love to be able to use my knowledge and expertise in the classroom and in the school . . . principals don't treat us like we know anything . . . they look at us [paraprofessionals] as though we don't

exist . . . they [principals] treat us like fifth graders and they act like we [paraprofessionals] can not do anything except grade papers and make copies of materials.

Tanya: Special education paraprofessionals have little or no input on the students' academic plan . . . most of the teachers I have worked with don't even ask my opinion . . . sometimes we know more . . . we are around the students more frequently and they [students] come to us first when they [students] have any type of problem.

Diane: We are not invited to school functions [assemblies, faculty parties] . . . no one seems to want us to be part of the team.

Ester: I would like to see us getting more working hours in a week. Right now we only get 35 hours and if we could get 40 hours a week we would also get annual leave. . . . why not let paraprofessionals work as custodians or food service workers and work 4 hours each week . . . would help the school board by having workers [school district] already on their payroll.

Summary

In summary, the findings of *A Study on Work Satisfaction of Special Education Paraprofessional Based on the Index of Work Satisfaction Questionnaire* were addressed through reporting on the two quantitative and nine qualitative questions. The results indicated that there were no significant statistical differences in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction, based on the IWS, between special education paraprofessionals at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in regular education facilities, except for the pay and organizational policies subscales.

In addition, there were no significant statistical differences in attitudes toward work satisfaction between the special education paraprofessionals employed at either

facility, except on the following subscales: years and tasks requirements, educational level and programs with interaction, education plus program plus professional status with autonomy. Additional factors of significance were ethnicity and years with interaction, ethnicity plus years and education with professional status, and finally, education plus level, plus years with autonomy.

Based on the responses to the interview questions, it appeared that the majority of special education paraprofessionals were quite dissatisfied in their present job. The major issues of contention were responsibility, lack of respect, employment issues, and low pay.

The following comments expressed the general feelings of the paraprofessionals.

- Joan: I would not start over [has been employed for 21 years] at the current pay scale without a chance to advance in pay.
- Pedros: I know I don't have a say in the pay, but I think special [education] paraprofessionals should be a step higher on the pay scale than two regular paraprofessionals as our job is more demanding and stressful at times and in some cases can even be dangerous.
- Ester: I have been working as a teacher aide for 18 years and make \$10.75 an hour. The pay is so low, but I think this is the county's fault because they think we aren't important.
- Diane: An increase in pay would be a nice incentive and help me remember why I am still here . . .
- Steven: First of all, we're *underpaid*.
- Karen: We need more money for the work that we do.
- Quiana: If the district would only consider giving us 40 hours a week . . . we could get annual leave.
- Rebecca: We need to know all their [students] ways of behaving, but we don't have any workshop to learn those skills . . . it is the principal's fault for not giving us more training.

Jennifer: We don't get any time to work one on one with the kids.

Diane: I feel paraprofessionals are forgotten about by the administration.

Olivia: The administration treats us like we have no knowledge of how to educate a child.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The critical problem that Escambia County, Florida, and other school districts experience regarding the retention of special education paraprofessionals guided the design and focus of the current study (J. Cain, personal communication, October 15, 2005). Specifically, the study examined the issue of work satisfaction based on scores on the IWS of special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education programs located in regular education facilities.

The mixed method research design, a procedure for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, was chosen as this researcher did not feel that a comprehensive picture of the research design would be possible if only one approach was utilized (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Quantitatively, the deductive approach allowed the researcher to test the hypotheses (and address research questions) in an efficient and straightforward manner. Qualitatively, this research focused on the interpretation of themes generated from semi-structured interviews of a sub-sample of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). This final chapter discusses the general findings and offers suggestions for future research in the area. Implications for paraprofessional's work satisfaction and recommendations to reduce job stress and turnover were also presented.

This study examined and explored the attitudes and views of special education paraprofessionals on issues related to work satisfaction. The sample comprised special education paraprofessionals employed at an exclusive special education facility and special education paraprofessionals working in special education programs located in regular education facilities. Each of the three educational levels (elementary, middle,

and secondary) were examined to determine whether there was a significant statistical difference between these groups on attitudes toward work satisfaction, as measured by the IWS.

Further, perceptions and attitudes concerning work satisfaction issues based on age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level of special education paraprofessionals employed at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities were examined.

A second focus of the study was to determine whether the factors of pay, autonomy, task requirements, organizational policies, professional status, (or interactions of these variables) made a significant difference with regard to job satisfaction issues between special education paraprofessionals at the two different settings based on age, gender, ethnicity, and educational levels as a function of the number of years employed as a special education paraprofessional.

Demographic Information

The demographic information on the 214 participants indicated that a majority were female ($N= 198$), Caucasian ($N= 126$), and had earned a high school diploma ($N= 108$). No further statistical analysis was conducted on the category of gender. The demographic distribution reflected the overall profile of paraprofessionals employed in the Escambia County School District. A sharp drop-off was evident in the number of special education paraprofessionals who remained on the job after a nine-year period. Approximately two-thirds of the current sample ($N = 140$) remained in special education no longer than nine years. Moreover, one-third of the special education paraprofessionals had remained in employment for 10 or more years. The educational level showed that less than half of the special education paraprofessionals had not obtained a high school diploma and one-fourth possessed a plethora of academic certificates. Reviewing these factors, the data reflected that nearly two-thirds of the sample did not meet the current qualifications

to function as a special education paraprofessional. Noteworthy, the results indicated that paraprofessionals with the most years of employment had the least amount of education.

Quantitative Findings

Research Question 1

Is there a significant statistical difference in the perceptions and attitudes toward work satisfaction, based on the IWS, between special education paraprofessionals at exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in regular education facilities?

To address Question 1, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. The results of the ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in the IWS subscales of autonomy, tasks requirements, professional status, and interaction at the .05 level. However, a significant difference was noted for the subscale pay (.031) and organizational policies (0.15), at the .05 level.

The level of significance ranged from 0.01 (organizational policies) to 0.87 (interaction) with an overall score of 0.27. The overall mean was 32.6 for the special education centers and 42.3 for the regular education facilities, with the range for the centers being a low of 13.8 (interaction) to a high of 32.63 (pay) and a low of 13.96 (interaction) to a high of 47.45 (professional status) for the special education programs housed in regular education facilities. Based on the findings, paraprofessionals are often treated like hired help and not as part of the educational team. At the same time, salaries have not kept pace with those of other occupations that require an associate's degree and state certification.

Recommendations Based on Question 1

1. Review administrative policy to consider including paraprofessionals in discussions regarding student performance and future planning on individualized programs for students.

2. Consider recommending that paraprofessionals sign-off or provide comment regarding students' Individualized Education Program and academic progress report.
3. Review the budget with consideration for providing step pay increases for fully qualified paraprofessionals as they gain years and experiences.

Research Question 2

Is there a significant statistical difference in the attitudes toward work satisfaction between special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in regular educational facilities based on age, gender, ethnicity, and years employed?

Results of this analysis indicated that there were no significant differences on the IWS subscales of autonomy, tasks requirements, professional status, and interaction at the .05 level. However, a significant difference was noted for the IWS subscales of pay and organizational policies at the .05 level.

Results of the MANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences across all subscales of the IWS, except the following: years and tasks requirements, educational level and programs with interaction, education plus program plus professional status with autonomy, professional status and interaction. In addition, the following factors were found to be significant: ethnicity and years with interaction, ethnicity plus years and education with professional status, and finally, education plus level, plus years with autonomy.

The in-depth individual interviews corroborated these empirical findings. As was previously noted, every special education paraprofessional commented on the low pay as a factor in work satisfaction. Based on the tone of interview responses, special education paraprofessionals accepted the reality that they have limited control over their pay; however, the respondents did not consider their pay as adequate.

Summarizing the interview data with the 12 special education paraprofessionals, a consensus view emerged. Special education paraprofessionals, regardless of program (special education centers or special education programs housed in regular education facilities) believed their pay to be too low for their job responsibilities. Special education paraprofessionals in Escambia County, Florida, are one of the lowest paid paraprofessional groups in the state. Further, a second emerging theme was the paraprofessionals' view that they were not treated as key figures in promoting students' learning. These special education paraprofessionals felt left out of the camaraderie found in a majority of other schools. Third, respondents felt underpaid and were very emphatic about the need for employment benefits. Finally, the special education paraprofessionals felt that they needed to be part of the development of the IEP (Individualize Education Program) team and other programs available to students at their educational settings.

Qualitative Findings

Interview Question 1

“Please tell me something about yourself.”

The answers to Question 1 were very diverse. The responses were directly related to the educational climate and background of each individual.

Interview Question 2

“Please explain how satisfied you are about working as a special education paraprofessional. Can you expand on your satisfaction/dissatisfaction?”

Throughout the responses to Question 2, there was ample verification that the paraprofessional loved working with their students. Many of the interviewees indicated they would not trade “their” students for any other students. Other responses reflected concerns about the students and their treatment, too much testing for the special education students, and not enough time with the students. Personal issues alluded to in the responses noted that job satisfaction has a lot to do with the influences from the

school where paraprofessionals were employed, the need for better training, the need for benefits, and the new requirement of a two-year degree to work with students in Title 1 schools.

Interview Question 3 and 4

“Are you considering leaving your position as a special education paraprofessional? Yes ____ No _____. Please indicate your reasons.”

“What factors do you believe are assisting/hindering your decision?”

Regarding the responses to Questions 3 and 4, many of the special education paraprofessionals were either actively seeking other jobs or would be if their circumstances were different. Reasons stated for seeking other positions included the inability to support themselves on their salary, poor job prospects in Escambia and surrounding counties, lack of respect and belief in paraprofessionals knowing the job, and low salary levels.

Interview Question 5

“What factors did you consider when deciding to become a special education paraprofessional?”

The factors considered by the paraprofessionals when deciding to become a special education paraprofessional were quite diverse. Some of the reasons include limited job options, love of children, self-development, and supplemental income.

Interview Question 6

“Describe your feelings, both positive and negative, as you see your employment as a special education paraprofessional.”

Overall, respondents felt that they are not treated as an integral part of the staff, are treated as if they did not know anything about education or working with students, and are not invited to attend meetings and other functions dealing with academics. On the positive side, the paraprofessionals believed that sometimes they knew the students better

than the teachers, sometimes they had outstanding teachers to work with, their job was very important and necessary, and some felt that they were treated as professionals.

Interview Question 7

“Overall, are you pleased with your decision to become a special education paraprofessional? Yes ____ No _____. Please elaborate.”

The overall impression was that the paraprofessionals are not pleased about their career selection. Many respondents felt that they are not a part of the staff and are not treated as an important component of the school system.

Interview Question 8

“Overall, are you satisfied with your life as a member of the educational community? Yes ____ No _____. Please elaborate.”

A theme which developed from this question was almost identical to the answers to Question 7, “Overall, are you pleased with your decision to become a special education paraprofessional?” Unfortunately, there was a consensus that the educational system treats paraprofessionals with little respect.

Interview Question 9

“Additional Comments.”

A majority of the paraprofessionals, both those completing the IWS Questionnaire and those involved in the personal interviews, commented on the pay scale, even though several of the paraprofessionals did state that they knew they had no control over the pay.

Other comments offered by a majority of those interviewed were that additional training/workshops were urgently needed. The curriculum for these workshops should focus on didactic information, techniques, and skills critical to student learning. Another significant theme was the belief that the paraprofessionals need to be included in meetings dealing with issues regarding the students they work with.

Recommendations Based on the Interview Findings

1. Explore the possibility of establishing a paraprofessional association where paraprofessionals would have the opportunity to interact with other paraprofessionals.
2. Include paraprofessionals in all activities that regular teachers participate in.
3. Consider providing in-service training for both teachers and support staff on the importance of paraprofessional to learning objectives.
4. Consider publishing a paraprofessional newsletter for the purpose of disseminating information central to all school activities, policies, and programs.
5. Consider developing a recognition program for the paraprofessional of the year, similar to the Golden Apple award for the teacher of the year.

Limitations of the Study

Several important limitations were noted in this study. These limitations would limit the ability to generalize the findings to other settings and populations. Specific limitations are listed below.

Geography

The target population in the current study was limited to special education paraprofessionals employed in exclusively special education centers and special education paraprofessionals employed in special education programs housed in regular education facilities located in Escambia County School District, Pensacola, Florida. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to other school systems and academic populations in the United States.

Self-Reporting Considerations

Brofenbrenner (1979) cautioned about the validity of self-report data when examining people's beliefs and feelings. Brofenbrenner suggested that when examining one's experiences, responses may be biased. Brofenbrenner's contentions clearly illustrate the major limitation of the current study. Participation by the special education paraprofessionals was voluntary. Therefore, the findings are only significant to the degree that the special education paraprofessionals were willing to be candid and honest in their responses to the self-report questionnaire and interview queries.

The current findings indicated that special education paraprofessionals value organizational policies. Secondly, participants viewed pay as a major issue of concern. A MANOVA, an analysis selected for its ability to detect whether groups of participants can be distinguished by a combination of scores on several dimensions (Field, 2005), was utilized to examine the impact of pay, autonomy, organizational policies, task requirements, interaction between paraprofessional and paraprofessional and interaction between paraprofessionals and teachers in special education centers and special education programs located in regular education facilities.

Contributions and Implications

The findings of the current study have the potential of providing seminal data on the factors and reasons for high attrition rates and work dissatisfaction levels of special education paraprofessionals in Escambia County, Florida. The specific findings on job satisfaction may provide opportunities to other researchers to consider replicating this study in another setting. The implications of the current findings should provide insight and potential readdressing of job dissatisfaction issues, thus, potentially extending paraprofessionals' career satisfaction and tenure in special education settings. Critical factors such as administrative policies were identified as a key component of job dissatisfaction. This issue has been recently addressed by educational consultants (see Piotrowski & Plash, 2006).

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the current findings, the following recommendations serve as suggestions for future research investigations.

1. Replicate a work satisfaction research study on special education paraprofessionals based on the IWS, comparing random samples of diverse groups of paraprofessionals in Escambia County, Florida.
2. Replicate the current research design on a sample of special education paraprofessionals in another county or school district.
3. Replicate the study based on a sample of educational paraprofessionals in another state or country.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A
Letter to the Principals



Division of Teacher Education
 College of Professional Studies
 11000 University Parkway
 Pensacola, FL 32514-5750

November 15, 2007

Warrington Elementary
 ATTN: Peggy Tucker
 220 N Navy Blvd.
 Pensacola, FL 32507

My name is Peggy Akerman. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of West Florida working on my dissertation, *A Study of Work Satisfaction of Special Education Paraprofessionals*. Mr. Jerry Cain assisted me in obtaining Escambia County School Board permission to conduct the research.

The purpose of my research is to examine possible reasons for the high attrition rates of special education paraprofessionals.

There are two components to my study. The first is a survey of all special education paraprofessionals in Escambia County. The second is to conduct in-depth interviews with 12 special education paraprofessionals from six schools selected by Mr. Cain.

I will be contacting you in the near future to set up a convenient time to meet with you, explain my research study, answer any questions, and establish a convenient time to meet with your special education paraprofessional(s) to complete the ten minute survey.

If your school is selected to participate in the 30 minute in-depth interview(s), I will contact you to obtain the name(s) and contact information of possible interviewees. The in-depth interviews will be conducted with the paraprofessionals at a convenient time and location for each paraprofessional.

Thank you for your willingness to assist me in my research.

Sincerely,

Peggy L. Akerman, MEd., EdS.
 Doctoral Candidate
 University of West Florida
 11000 University of West Florida
 Pensacola, FL 32514

850 484-3946 home
 850 232-8591 cell

EdsSpec@aol.com

Dr. Wally Holmes-Bouchillon
 College of Professional Studies
 11000 University Parkway
 Pensacola, FL 32514

850 474-2890 office
 850 291-9245 cell
 850 474-2844 fax

Wholmesb@uwf.edu

Appendix B
Demographic Information Survey

Demographic Information

Please complete the following demographic information. Remember all this information is confidential and will be made available only to myself and my dissertation chair, Dr. Wally Bouchillon.

Gender: Male _____ Caucasian _____
 Female _____ African _____
 Ethnic Background: American Hispanic _____
 Asian/Pacific Basin _____
 Native American _____
 Other (please specify) _____

1. What was the highest educational level which you have completed?

Some High School _____
 High School _____
 Diploma/GED _____
 Associates _____
 Bachelors _____
 Other (specify) _____

2. In which grade level are you employed?

Elementary _____

Middle _____

High School _____

3. Which type of special education program are you employed at?

Exclusive special education center _____

Special education program housed within a regular educational facility _____

4. How many years have you been working as a special education paraprofessional?

0 - 5 _____

6 - 10 _____

11 - 15 _____

16 + _____

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in the completion of my dissertation, *A Study of Work Satisfaction of Special Education Paraprofessionals*.

Additional Points

5. Please do **not** put your name on **the survey or the demographic page**.
6. The demographic information will not be shared with anyone other than myself.
7. On the raffle ticket, please make certain I have a good contact point.
8. Any additional information you need, feel free to contact me at the phone number or email address on the letter.
9. Please provide me with your name and contact point at the bottom of this page if you are willing to participate in the individual interview. Thank you.
10. Place the completed raffle ticket in the envelope with the survey and demographic page.

Peggy Akerman

Appendix C

Agreement from Escambia County School District

Subj: Request
Date: 3/9/2006 7:36:16 A.M. Central Standard Time
From: jcalne@escambia.k12.fl.us
To: EDSSpec@aol.com

Ms. Akerman, this is to confirm our agreement that participation by the district will be beneficial in all respects for your dissertation purposes and for the benefit of district understanding and strategies in recruitment and retention of our Teacher Assistants in the ESE area.

I look forward to working with you soon.

Jerry.

Jerry Caine, Manager,
Educational Support Personnel
Human Resources Management
(850) 469-6170
(850) 469-6180 (fax)
jcalne@escambia.k12.fl.us

Thursday, March 09, 2006 America Online: EDS Spec

Appendix D
Institutional Review Board Consent Form



February 28 2006


Ms. Peggy Lou Akerman
4315 Roxborough Pl.
Pensacola, FL 32514

Dear Ms. Akerman:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Research Participant Protection has completed its review of your proposal titled "Comparison and Factors Effecting Special Education Paraprofessionals Employed at Special Education Centers and in Regular Educational Facilities" as it relates to the protection of human participants used in research, and has granted approval for you to proceed with your study. As a research investigator, please be aware of the following:

- You acknowledge and accept your responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants and for complying with all parts of 45 CFR Part 46, the UWF IRB Policy and Procedures, and the decisions of the IRB. You may view these documents on the Office of Research web page at <http://www.research.uwf.edu>. You acknowledge completion of the IRB ethical training requirements for researchers as attested in the IRB application.
- You will ensure that legally effective informed consent is obtained and documented. If written consent is required, the consent form must be signed by the participant or the participant's legally authorized representative. A copy is to be given to the person signing the form and a copy kept for your file.
- You will promptly report any proposed changes in previously approved human participant research activities to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. The proposed changes will not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participants.
- You are responsible for reporting progress of approved research to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at the end of the project period. Approval for this project is valid for one year. If the data phase of your project continues beyond one year, you must request a renewal by the IRB before approval of the first year lapses. Project Directors of research requiring full committee review should notify the IRB when data collection is completed.
- You will immediately report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to human participants.

Good luck in your research endeavors. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at 857-6378.

Sincerely,

 Dr. Keith Whinnery, Chair
 IRB for Human Research
 Participant Protection

Ms. Sandra VanderHeyden, Director
 Research and Sponsored Programs

cc: Dr. Wally Bouchillon

Appendix E

The Index of Work Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Index of Work Satisfaction Questionnaire ©

Part A (Paired Comparisons)

Listed and briefly defined below are six terms or factors that are involved in how people feel about their work situation. Each factor has something to do with "work satisfaction". We are interested in determining which of these is **most important** to you in relation to the others.

Please carefully read the definitions for each factor as given below:

- **Pay** – dollar remuneration and fringe benefits received for work done
- **Autonomy** -- amount of job related independence, initiative, and freedom, either permitted or required in daily work activities.
- **Task Requirements** – tasks or activities that must be done as a regular part of the job
- **Organizational Policies** – management policies and procedures put forward by the school and administration of this school
- **Interaction** – opportunities presented for both formal and informal social and professional contact during working hours
- **Professional Status** – overall importance or significance felt about your job, both in your view and in the view of others

Instructions: These factors are presented in pairs on the next page. A total of 15 pairs are presented: this is every set of combinations. No pair is repeated or reversed. For each pair of terms, decide which one is *more important* for your job satisfaction or morale, and check the appropriate box. For example, if you feel that Pay (as defined above) is more important than Autonomy (as defined above), check the box for Pay. It will be difficult for you to make choices in some cases. However, please do try to select the factor which is more important to you. Please make an effort to answer every item; do not go back to change any of your answers.

Part A (Paired Comparisons, Continued) Please choose the one member of the pair which is *most important* to you.

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 1. | Professional Status | or | Organizational Policies |
| 2. | Pay Requirements | or | Task Requirements |
| 3. | Organizational Policies | or | Interaction |
| 4. | Task Requirements | or | Organizational Policies |
| 5. | Professional Status | or | Task Requirements |
| 6. | Pay | or | Autonomy |
| 7. | Professional Status | or | Interaction |
| 8. | Professional Status | or | Autonomy |
| 9. | Interaction | or | Task Requirements |
| 10. | Interaction | or | Pay |
| 11. | Autonomy | or | Task Requirements |
| 12. | Organizational Policies | or | Autonomy |
| 13. | Pay | or | Professional Status |
| 14. | Interaction | or | Autonomy |
| 15. | Organizational Policies | or | Pay |

Part B (Attitude Questionnaire)

The following items represent statements about how satisfied you are with your current special education paraprofessional position. Please respond to each item. It may be very difficult to fit your responses into the seven categories; in that case, select the category that *comes closest* to your response to the statement. It is very important that you give your *honest* opinion. **Please do not go back and change any of your answers.**

Instructions: Please circle the number that most closely indicates how you feel about each statement. The *left* set of numbers indicates degrees of *agreement*. The *right* set of numbers indicates degrees of *disagreement*. For example, if you strongly agree with the first item, circle 1; if you agree with this item, circle 2; if you moderately agree with the first statement, circle 3. The middle response (4) is reserved for feeling neutral or undecided. Please use it as little as possible. If you moderately disagree with this first item, you should circle 5; to disagree, circle 6; and to strongly disagree, circle 7.

Part B (Attitude Questionnaire, Continued)

Remember: The more strongly you feel about the statement, the further from the center you should circle, with agreement to the left and disagreement to the right. Use 4 for neutral or undecided if needed, but please try to use this number as little as possible.

	Agree			Disagree			
1. My present salary is satisfactory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Paraprofessionals are not widely recognized as being an important profession.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. The special education paraprofessional personnel on my service pitch in and help one another out when things get in a rush.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. There is too much clerical and "paperwork" required of special education paraprofessional personnel in this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. The special education paraprofessional staff has sufficient control over scheduling their own shifts in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Teachers in general cooperate with the special education paraprofessional staff on my unit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I feel that I am supervised more closely than is necessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. It is my impression that a lot of special education paraprofessionals at this school are dissatisfied with their pay.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Most people appreciate the importance of special education paraprofessional's service to the special education student.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. It is hard for new special education paraprofessionals to feel 'at home' in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that what I do on my job is really important.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. There is a great gap between the administration of this school and the daily problems of the special education paraprofessional service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I feel I have sufficient input into the program of study for each of my students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Considering what is expected of special education paraprofessionals at this school, the pay we get is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I think I could do a better job if I did not have so much to do all the time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part B (Attitude Questionnaire, Continued)

Remember: The more strongly you feel about the statement, the further from the center you should circle, with agreement to the left and disagreement to the right. Use 4 for neutral or undecided if needed, but please try to use this number as little as possible.

	Agree				Disagree		
17. I have too much responsibility and not enough authority.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. There are not enough opportunities for advancement of special education paraprofessionals at this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. There is a lot of teamwork between special education paraprofessionals and teachers at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. At my school, my supervisors make all the decisions. I have little direct control over my own work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. The present rate of increase in pay for special education paraprofessionals at this school is not satisfactory.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I am satisfied with the types of activities that I do on my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. The school personnel at my school are not as friendly and outgoing as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I have plenty of time and opportunity to discuss student problems with other educational personnel.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. There is ample opportunity for the special education paraprofessionals staff to participate in the administrative decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. A great deal of independence is permitted, if not required, of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. What I do on my job does not add up to anything really significant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. There is a lot of "rank consciousness" at my school: teachers seldom mingle with those with less experience or different types of educational preparation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I have sufficient time for direct student contact.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I am sometimes frustrated because all of my activities seem programmed for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I am sometimes required to do things on my job that are against my better special education paraprofessional judgment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part B (Attitude Questionnaire, Continued)

Remember: The more strongly you feel about the statement, the further from the center you should circle, with agreement to the left and disagreement to the right. Use 4 for neutral or undecided if needed, but please try to use this number as little as possible.

	Agree				Disagree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. From what I hear about special education paraprofessionals at other schools, we at this school are being fairly paid.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Administrative decisions at this school interfere too much with student's educational program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. It makes me proud to talk to other people about what I do on my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I wish the teachers here would show more respect for the skill and knowledge of the special education paraprofessional staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. I could deliver much better assistance if I had more time with each student.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Administrators at this school generally understand and appreciate what the special education paraprofessionals do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. If I had the decision to make all over again, I would still go being a special education paraprofessional.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. The teachers at this school look down too much on the special education paraprofessional staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I have all the voice in planning policies and procedures for this school that I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. My particular job really doesn't require much skill or "know-how".	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. The school administrators generally consult with the paraprofessionals on daily problems and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I have the freedom in my work to make important decisions as I see fit, and can count on my supervisors to back me up.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. An upgrading of pay schedules for special education paraprofessionals is needed at this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F

Letter to and Permission by Paraprofessionals

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in my research efforts. I am a doctoral student in education at the University of West Florida working on my dissertation entitled, "Comparison and Factors Effecting Special Education Paraprofessional Employed at Special Education Centers and in Regular Educational Facilities in Escambia County School District.

In order to fulfill these objectives, I am asking for your participation by completing the questionnaire, either through use of a computer or the utilization of a hard-copy of the questionnaire. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and your participation is completely voluntary. I will also be conducting a limited number of follow-up interviews in the near future to obtain a clearer picture of your attitudes and beliefs concerning your employment as a special education paraprofessional. If you choose to complete this questionnaire and are asked for an interview, you are in no way obligated to participate. Interviews will be conducted at a mutually convenient location and time. They will take 15-30 minutes to complete. All information provided is completely confidential. The interview will be taped for my purpose to make certain I correctly remember your response. Participation is entirely voluntary.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (850)484-3946 or email me at plal@students.uwf.edu. You may also speak with my committee chair, Dr. Wally Holmes Bouchillon (850)474-2083, or by email, wholmesb@uwf.edu. If you have questions about participant rights, feel free to contact the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, Office of Research & Graduate Studies, University of West Florida, 11000 University Parkway, Pensacola, Florida 32514, phone (850) 474-2824. Please be aware of the fact that you have the right to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time. If you agree, please, sign, date, and return the enclosed materials to me. Please keep a copy of the informed consent form for your records. I greatly appreciate your time and cooperation. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Peggy L. Akerman, M.Ed. Ed.S.

I, _____, agree to become a participant in the study,
A "Comparison and Factors Effecting Special Education Paraprofessional
Employed at Special Education Centers and in Regular Educational Facilities
in Escambia County School District". I understand I have the right to
withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time.
I further understand that any information I provide will be entirely
confidentially.

Name

Date

Appendix G
Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A Study of Work Satisfaction of Special Education Paraprofessionals

- 1. Federal and university regulations require us to obtain signed consent for participation in research involving human participants. After reading the statements in this information, please indicate your consent by signing and dating this form.*
- 2. Statement of Procedure: Thank you for your interest in this research project being conducted by Peggy Akerman, a doctoral student at The University of West Florida- Hopefully, the introductory letter, enclosed with this consent form explained the research project. This stage of the research project involves collecting survey data and the completion of a limited number of follow-up interviews. Fewer than 10% of those who complete the survey instrument will be asked to participate in follow-up interviews, and participation is completely voluntary. Interviews will take place at The University of West Florida, Pensacola Junior College, or another mutually convenient location. Carefully read the information provided below. If you wish to participate in this study, sign your name and write the date. Any information you provide to us will be kept in strict confidence. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please contact Dr. Wally Holmes Bouchillon in the College of Professional Studies at The University of West Florida at (850) 474-2890 or wholmesb@uwf.edu.*

I understand that:

- 1. I will be asked to disclose information concerning my involvement in an alternative education program and limited demographic information to be used for analysis purposes.*
- 2. Some individuals will be asked to participate in a 30-minute interview, conducted at the University of West Florida, Pensacola Junior College, or another mutually convenient location.*
- 3. Participation in any portion of this research is completely voluntary, and participation in the survey portion of this research in no way obligates me to participate in an interview.*
- 4. I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalties or repercussions.*

5. *Potential Risks of the Study: There are no foreseeable risks involved with the study.*
6. *Potential Benefits of the Study: Data obtained from this study may provide information regarding stakeholder preferences for a specific alternative education program.*
7. *Statement of Consent: I certify that I have read and fully understand the Statement of Procedure given above and agree to participate as a subject in the research described therein. Permission is given voluntarily and without coercion or undue influence. It is understood that I may discontinue participation at any time. I will be provided a signed copy of this consent form.*

Participant's Name (Please Print)

Participants Signature

Date _____

Appendix H

Acknowledgment of Interview/Audio Recording

Date: _____

Acknowledge of Interview/Audio Recording

I acknowledge that this interview is being tape recorded.

I acknowledge that the recorded interview will be utilized for the sole purpose of extracting information concerning my job and opinions as a Special Education Paraprofessional.

I acknowledge that this interview will be listened to only by the researcher and the transcriber.

I acknowledge that the recorded tape will be destroyed as soon as the information has been utilized.

I have no objections to the recording of this interview.

Printed Name

Signature

Appendix I
Individual Interview Guide Sheet

Individual Interview Guide Sheet

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Description of the environment in which the interview is being conducted.

This interview is part of a study concerning the degree of work satisfaction as special education paraprofessional. Please respond to each question openly, honestly, and to the best of your ability. All results of this interview will be confidential and your name will not be included in the final report. This interview will be recorded. All data collected at the end of the study will be shredded and destroyed. The results of this interview will be correlated with results from the other individual interviews and an analysis of the compiled information completed. This interview will be utilized as a partial fulfillment of an advanced degree at The University of West Florida. Thank you, in advance, to allowing me to interview you and participate in my research study.

16. *Please share with me something about yourself.*

17. *Please explain how satisfied you are about working as a special education paraprofessional. Can you expand on your satisfaction/dissatisfaction?*

18. *Are you considering leaving your position as a special education paraprofessional?*
 Yes _____ No _____
Please indicate your reasons.

19. *What factors do you believe are assisting/hindering your decision?*

20. *What factors did you consider when deciding to become a special education paraprofessional?*

21. *Describe your feelings, both positive and negative, as you see your employment as a special education paraprofessional.*

22. *Overall, are you pleased with your decision to become a special education paraprofessional.*
 Yes _____ No _____. *Please elaborate.*

23. *Overall, are you satisfied with you life as a member of the educational community.*
 Yes _____ No _____. *Please elaborate.*

24. *Additional comments:*

Appendix J

Letter of Approval of the IWS Questionnaire



UNIVERSITY of
MASSACHUSETTS
Arnold House
Box 30430
Amherst, MA 01003-0430

School of Public Health
and Health Sciences

Department of
Community Health Studies

voice: 413.545.1312
fax: 413.545.6536

October 10, 2005

Peggy L. Akerman
4315 Roxborough Place
Pensacola, Florida 32514

Dear Ms. Akerman:

I appreciate receiving your request for permission to use the Index of Work Satisfaction (IWS) in the very interesting research project described in your recent letter. It seems you probably have the second edition of my book *Nurses and Work Satisfaction: An Index of Measurement, 2nd Edition* (1997), which gives the most recent version of the IWS, along with the statistical description of the scale itself. In case you do not, the book may be ordered by you or your school's library from Health Administration Press (US \$43.00) by mail, telephone or fax:

Health Administration Press
P.O. Box 401
Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-0401

Phone orders: 301-362-6905
FAX # 301-206-9789
ISBN #1-56793-061-1

The IWS questionnaire is a copyrighted measurement tool, with the copyright held by myself and Market Street Research, Inc., a full-service marketing research and evaluation firm located in Northampton, Massachusetts. If you wish to use the IWS questionnaire, a fee of \$30.00 payable to Market Street Research covers permission to use the questionnaire, a print-ready hard copy formatted for use in your study, and an IBM-compatible floppy diskette which you can use in the event you wish to add questions of

interest to your particular area of research. You are free to make the changes you noted in the copy of the scale you sent to me. Other services available from Market Street Research include:

- A step-by step instruction manual so you can score the IWS yourself
- Data entry services; scoring assistance and basic data analysis
- Technical assistance in modifying or expanding the questionnaire

I have enclosed a complete description of these services as well as a price list. Please send any checks directly to Market Street Research, using the order form I have included. If you do decide to use the IWS in your study, you will need the scoring manual unless you would like for Market Street Research to do the scoring for you. This scoring service comes with a basic analysis and results are available quickly. If you have any questions about the IWS or any of the support services available for users of the IWS, please call either myself or Market Street Research. Market Street Research does not need a separate letter from you.

I would very much appreciate hearing about your experience in using the IWS with the group of teacher aides you described in your letter. I am in contact with several others who are modifying the IWS for use with other groups of professionals and I am interested in how well the IWS does in such a situation. Good luck with your study and feel free to contact me for any additional information.

Sincerely,



Paula Stamps, Ph.D.
University of Massachusetts
Phone: (413) 545-6880
Fax: (413) 545-6536
Email: pstamps@sover.net

Appendix K

Index of Work Satisfaction by Components

Items of the IWS Component

Professional Status

- 4. Most people do not sufficiently appreciate the importance of nursing care to hospital patients.
- 17. Nursing is a long way from being recognized as a profession.
- 35. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that what I do on my job is really important.
- 16. What I do on my job doesn't add up to anything really significant.
- 29. It makes me proud to talk to other people about what I do on my job.
- 46. If I had the decision to make all over again, I would still go into being a paraprofessional.
- 26. My particular job really doesn't require much skill or "know-how".

Tasks Requirements

- 27. There is too much clerical and "paperwork" required of paraprofessionals in this school.
- 32. I think I could do a better job if I didn't have so much to do all the time.
- 8. I am satisfied with the types of activities that I do on my job.
- 27. I have plenty of time and opportunity to discuss students' problems with other school personnel.
- 41. I have sufficient time to work with students.
- 43. I could deliver much better care if I had more time with each student.

Pay

- 1. My present is satisfactory.
- 8. Excluding myself, it is my impression that a lot of special education paraprofessionals at this school are dissatisfied with their pay.
- 12. Considering what is expected of special education paraprofessionals at this school is not satisfactory.
- 35. The present rate of increases in pay for personnel at this school is not satisfactory.
- 39. From what I hear from and about special education paraprofessionals at other schools at this school is not satisfactory.
- 4. An upgrading of pay schedules for special education paraprofessionals is needed at this school.

Interaction

Paraprofessional-Teacher Subcomponent

- 17. Teachers in general cooperate with the special education paraprofessional staff on my unit.
- 7. There is a lot of teamwork between special education paraprofessionals and teachers at my school.
- 20. I wish the teachers here would show more respect for the skill and knowledge of the special education paraprofessional staff.
- 38. Teachers at this school generally understand and appreciate what the special education paraprofessional staff does.
- 39. The teachers at this hospital look down too much on the special education paraprofessional staff.

Paraprofessional-Paraprofessional Interaction

- 3. The special education paraprofessional staff at my school don't hesitate to pitch in and help one another out when things get in a rush.
- 10. New employees are not quickly made to "feel at home" at my school.
- 16. There is a good deal of teamwork and cooperation between various levels of paraprofessional personnel at my school.
- 23. The paraprofessional personnel at my school are not as friendly and outgoing as I would like.
- 28. There is a lot of "rank consciousness" at my school, with paraprofessional.

Appendix L
IWS Positive Items

IWS ITEMS

PAY

1. My present salary is satisfactory.
14. Considering what is expected of special education paraprofessional personnel at this school, the pay we get is reasonable.
32. From what I hear about special education paraprofessionals at other schools, we at this school are being fairly paid.

AUTONOMY

13. I feel I have sufficient input into the program of study for each of my students.
26. A great deal of independence is permitted, if not required, of me.
43. I have the freedom in my work to make important decisions as I see fit, and can count on my supervisors to back me up.

TASK REQUIREMENTS

22. I am satisfied with the types of activities that I do on my job.
24. I have plenty of time and opportunity to discuss student problems with other teachers.
29. I have sufficient time for student interaction.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

5. The special education paraprofessional staff has sufficient control over scheduling their own hours in my school.
25. There is ample opportunity for special education paraprofessionals to participate in the administrative, decision-making process.
40. I have all the freedom in my work to make important decisions as I see fit, and can count on my supervisors to back me up.
42. The principal generally consults with the staff on daily problems and procedures.

PROFESSIONAL STATUS

9. Most people appreciate the importance of the special education paraprofessional work at my school.
11. There is no doubt in my mind that what I do on my job is really important.
34. It makes me proud to talk to other people about what I do on my job.
38. If I had the decision to make all over again, I would still become a special education paraprofessional.

INTERACTION: PARAPROFESSIONAL TO PARAPROFESSIONAL

3. Special education paraprofessionals personnel in the school pitch in and help another out when things get in a rush.
16. There is a good deal of teamwork and cooperation between various special education paraprofessional personnel at my school.

INTERACTION: PARAPROFESSIONAL TO SUPERVISOR

6. Teachers in general cooperate with the special education paraprofessionals at my school.
19. There is a lot of teamwork between special education paraprofessionals and teachers at my school.
37. Teachers at this school generally understand and appreciate what the special education paraprofessional does.

Appendix M
IWS Negative Items

IWS ITEMS

PAY

2. It is my impression that a lot of special education paraprofessional personnel at this school are dissatisfied with their pay.
15. The present rate of increase in pay for special education paraprofessional at this school needs to be improved.
32. An upgrading of pay schedules for special education personnel is needed at this school.

AUTONOMY

13. I feel that I am supervised more closely than is necessary.
26. I have too much work and not enough authority.
43. At my school, my supervisors make all the decisions. I have little direct control over my own work.
22. I am sometimes frustrated because all of my activities seem programmed for me.
23. I am sometimes required to do things on my job that are against my better judgment.

TASK REQUIREMENTS

24. There is too much clerical and “paperwork” required of special education paraprofessional personnel in this school.
29. I think I could do a better job if I did not have so much to do all the time.
5. I could deliver much better services if I had more time with each student.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

25. There is a great gap between the administration of this school and the daily problems of the special education paraprofessionals service.
3. There are ample opportunities for advancement of special education paraprofessional personnel at this school.

16. Administrative decisions at this school interfere too much with student interaction.

PROFESSIONAL STATUS

33. Special education paraprofessionals are widely recognized as being an important profession.
14. What I do on my job does not add up to anything really significant.
27. My particular job really doesn't require much skill or "know-how."

INTERACTION: PARAPROFESSIONAL TO PARAPROFESSIONAL

44. It is hard for new special education paraprofessionals to feel "at home".
24. The paraprofessionals at my school are not as friendly and outgoing as I like.
25. There is a lot of "rank consciousness" at my school. Teachers seldom mingle with those with less experience or different types of educational preparation.

INTERACTION: PARAPROFESSIONAL TO TEACHER

30. I wish the teachers here would show more respect for the skill and knowledge of the special education paraprofessionals.
6. The teachers at this school look down too much on the special education paraprofessional staff.

Appendix N

Computing the Inventory of Work Satisfaction Questionnaire

