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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

EXPLORING THE VALUE OF TRUST BETWEEN TEAMS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Monica M. Mallet

January, 2017

Kay Davis, Ed.D. - Dissertation Chairperson

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
DEDICATION.....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
VITA.....	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Question	5
Delimitations of the Study	5
Key Assumptions of the Study	6
Significance of the Topic.....	7
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Operational Definitions of Terms.....	9
Organization of the Study.....	12
Summary.....	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	14
Overview.....	14
Trust.....	15
Theories on Trust.....	15
The TORI Theory	16
The Speed of Trust Theory	20
Commitment Trust Theory	23
Communication Accommodation Theory	24
Relational Trust	25
Alternative Forms of Social Trust	27
Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model	30
Cycling Through Trust	32
Building Trust.....	32
Sustaining Trust.....	35
Destroyed Trust	36
Restoring Trust	39

	Page
Paraprofessionals	40
Special Education Teachers Role	43
Historical Background of Special Education Teams	45
Conflict and Trust in Teams	48
Summary	49
 Chapter 3: Methods.....	 51
Research Design	51
Role of the Researcher	52
Sources of Data.....	53
Data Collection Strategies and Procedures.....	54
Interview Protocol	55
Special Education Teacher Interview Questions	56
Paraprofessional Interview Questions	57
Human Subjects Considerations.....	59
Data Analysis Process.....	61
Means to Ensure Study Validity	62
Presentation of Findings and Study Conclusions	64
 Chapter 4: Findings.....	 65
Demographic Findings.....	65
Qualitative Interview Findings	66
Theme 1: Characteristics of a Trustworthy Colleague	67
Theme 2: Importance of Trust	72
Theme 3: Outcome of Trust.....	74
Theme 4: Outcome of a Lack of Trust.....	78
Theme 5: Characteristics that Build Trust	81
Theme 6: Characteristics that Sustain Trust	84
Theme 7: Characteristics that Destroy Trust	87
Theme 8: Characteristics that Restore Trust.....	93
Findings Summary.....	96
 Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations	 97
Background and Significance	97
Theoretical Framework.....	98
Methods	99
Key Findings.....	100
Conclusions and Implications.....	107
Recommendations for Practice and Scholarship	111
Limitations of the Study	112
Study Validity	112

	Page
Closing Comments.....	113
REFERENCES	115
APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol Special Education Teachers	125
APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol Paraprofessionals	127
APPENDIX C: IRB Approval Letter	129
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent No Signature	130
APPENDIX E: Permission for Figure 2	133

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Essential Elements and Descriptions of the TORI Trust-Level Theory	17
Table 2. Disability Type and Description of Special Education Students	46
Table 3. Special Education Teacher and Paraprofessional Participant Demographics	65
Table 4. Characteristics of a Trustworthy Colleague.....	67
Table 5. Importance of Trust	72
Table 6. Outcome of Trust	74
Table 7. Outcome of a Lack of Trust.....	79
Table 8. Characteristics that Build Trust	81
Table 9. Characteristics that Sustain Trust	84
Table 10. Characteristics that Destroy Trust.....	87
Table 11. Characteristics that Restore Trust.....	93

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Environmental quality as it relates to special education colleagues.....	19
Figure 2. Formula depicting the relationship between trust, students' success, and cost.....	20
Figure 3. Sustaining cycle of trust	36
Figure 4. Instances of betrayal	38

DEDICATION

To my daughter Basia: My wish for you is that you have multiple relationships that are filled with love and trust. I love you to the moon and back.

To my parents Charles and Maudra Mallet: Thank you for always being there for me. God gave me the parents that I needed to fulfill my purpose in life! I would not be where I am today without the two of you. I love you both from the bottom of my heart.

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Throughout this dissertation process, Philippians 4:13 served as a constant reminder that I could do all things, through Him who gives me strength. I am grateful for the many people who were present during this journey to encourage and remind me of my strength.

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the value of trust between teams of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The study delves into their lived experiences, focusing on characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy and restore trust between them. There are multiple studies on trust in education, however, there is relatively little literature published on the value of trust among individuals committed to providing support for transition-aged students within various Los Angeles County school districts.

Existing theories and models on trust have similar characteristics that span across diverse industries. As a result, clear-cut guidelines have enabled members of a team to be aware of how trust impacts their working environment. Purposive sampling provided teams of special education professionals who possessed a depth of knowledge of the subject matter and experience in the classroom. Individual face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants focusing on how they make meaning of the role and value of trust with their special education colleagues. As a result, 165 coded passages were grouped into the following eight themes: (a) characteristics of a trustworthy colleague, (b) importance of trust, (c) outcome of trust, (d) outcome of a lack of trust, (e) building trust, (f) sustaining trust, (g) destroying trust, and (h) restoring trust. Two study conclusions emerged. Conclusion one, trust increases communication, respect and collaboration between special education colleagues, as well as enhances student success. Conclusion two, a lack of trust negatively impacts the special education environment, as well as relevant stakeholders, which include: students, parents, special education teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators.

Recommendations include participation in team development trainings, as well as personal and professional development that focus on acquiring the characteristics of a

trustworthy colleague. Additionally, special education professionals benefit from establishing a shared primary focus of student success. Moreover, the onus of setting the tone of trust falls on the special education teacher. Lastly, special education professionals should relinquish the characteristics that diminish trust. This study provides researchers and professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships so that they can effectively serve special needs students.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Trust has been a longstanding topic of discussion within organizational studies, but has only recently been researched in education (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). For this reason, trust can be viewed as one of the foundational elements of having a successful organization, with educational institutions being no different. From an organizational standpoint, trust can be defined as an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to others based on the belief that each person can depend on the individual's competence, character, integrity and ability to demonstrate care in the areas of critical interdependence (Northfield, 2014). Robbins and Judge (2011) assert that producing trust within an organization takes time, however, it is time well spent due to the intrinsic benefits. Trust increases overall productivity, and lowers costs because trust establishes a safe environment where employees can be motivated, creative, and communicate ideas. Trust within an organization begins with having clarity of purpose, and a sense of responsibility towards the customer who is being served (Hollensbe, Wookey, Hickey, George, & Nichols, 2014). Research has shown that individuals, who are motivated by the mission of their organization, typically gain the trust of others, because they execute their duties efficiently (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), or the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandates that all students who are identified as having a disability be entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (Mueller & Carranza, 2011). Moreover, educational professionals known as an Individualized Education Program team (IEP) collaborate to ensure that students with special needs receive educational benefit.

An IEP team consists of the parents or legal guardians of the student, the student with the disability when appropriate, a special education teacher, a regular education teacher, if the student is to participate in general education classes, a representative of a public agency, a school psychologist, and any other member that the parent and agency feel has the expertise regarding the student, more specifically, related services personnel, for example speech and language pathologist, audiologist, interpreting, psychological, and physical services. Lastly, occupational and recreational therapy services, counseling, rehabilitation, mobility, medical services for evaluation purposes, and social work services which include parental training and counseling (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Essentially, every student in a special education program has needs that are driven by an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Although, paraprofessionals are not members of the IEP team, teachers rely on them for daily implementation of the IEP. Collaborative relationships between special education teachers and paraprofessionals are essential to the academic success of special education students (Stockall, 2014).

Special education teachers depend heavily on classified paraprofessionals, also known as instructional assistants, to help deliver instruction and ensure that students obtain academic and social success, based on goals that are written specifically to meet unique needs, per students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals (Rude & Whetstone, 2007). Paraprofessionals can be assigned to work with a student as a one-to-one assistant, or they can be assigned to support a special education classroom where they work with multiple students with disabilities (Rutherford, 2011). Given the nature of these interactions between student and instructor, the need for a trusting relationship is even more critical than what is needed in a typical classroom. Both special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues rely on each other to

provide what students need; in essence they function as a team to provide the necessary support for special education students.

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students qualify for special education services under a variety of disabilities. Students who are labeled as intellectually disabled (ID) and have deficits in cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior account for over 447,000 of the total students served in special education in the United States. The hearing-impaired (HI) students account for 78,000 of the total students served in special education. The emotionally disturbed (ED) students account for 389,000 of the total number served in special education. The autistic (AUT) students account for over 417,000 of the total students served, while the other health impaired (OHI) student account for 63,000, and traumatic brain injury (TBI) account for 26,000 of the total amount served (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

With so many students who are served under special education and related services, the need for paraprofessional assistance is huge. Paraprofessionals not only assist with classroom instruction, they also assist with clerical duties which may include keeping track of data that teachers utilize to make important decisions (Pfeifer, 2001). With over 1.3 million paraprofessionals working as partners in special education settings, numerous researchers have studied the impact and implications of a lack of trust within educational institutions (Shelden, Angell, Stoner, & Roseland, 2010). The subsequent research on exploring the role and value of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues who assist transition aged students from the ages 16 to 22 with post-secondary goals and outcomes in special education is relevant, as a lack of trust between people can breed conflict, which makes special education the largest area of litigation in education to date (Wellner, 2012).

Wellner (2012) suggests that being aware of the nuances of staff members' behaviors that implicitly communicate frustration or satisfaction, can lead to improved practices over time, thus lowering operational costs and efficiency. Moreover, students tend to recognize when adults in the classroom do not get along, or are in conflict. Some students use this knowledge as an opportunity to create further conflict between the adults (McGrath, Johns, & Mathur, 2010).

The literature on the theoretical topic of trust in special education is vast and includes topics depicting the importance of trust between parents of students with disabilities, and school personnel (Angell, Stoner, & Shelden, 2009); as well as the trust between special education administrators, and special education teachers. The research on trust between special education teachers and paraprofessionals in the area of transition education is minimal in the current literature. This dissertation explores the role and value of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague who work with transition-age students, in an effort to help special education transition teachers and paraprofessionals build the relationships that they need in order to effectively serve students.

Statement of the Problem

Special education teachers across the nation are the most thinly stretched educators, and they need to be adept in communicating their need for specific support from paraprofessionals (McGrath, Johns, & Mathur, 2010). However, all too often paraprofessionals are left to deliver curriculum to some of the most challenging students, yet they are questionably prepared, and usually the least qualified member of the staff to do the job they are expected to do (Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron, & Fialka, 2005). Many are left to work alone without the supervision of a credentialed teacher.

Consequently, teachers with little or no experience in supervising adults are reluctant to supervise paraprofessionals and give them the guidance needed to ensure the overall success of their students. As a result, interpersonal and instructional conflict can arise and negatively impede on the working relationships of special education teachers and paraprofessionals (McGrath et al., 2010). Moreover, this lack of trust can potentially slow down student progress and team efficiency as special education team members call in sick to avoid ongoing conflict. A lack of trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague can have a multitude of adverse effects on the working success of their team.

Purpose of the Study

Using a phenomenological research design, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the meaning of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. The study will delve into the lived experiences and focus on characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy, and/or restore trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague. The outcome of the study can provide professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships so that they can effectively serve the students that they work with.

Research Question

The central guiding research question for this study was:
What are the role and value of trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague?

Delimitations of the Study

This study is limited to target groups of Los Angeles County special education teachers and paraprofessionals who work with students who are 16-22 years old. The population of

special education students that the participants work with encompasses a wide range of disabilities, excluding those who work with students who have learning disabilities or who qualify for special education services under the gifted and talented (GATE) program.

Participants must currently work in a special day class (SDC) setting. Participants can work with students who are both enrolled in an academic or functional academics program. Lastly, all participants' of the study work in schools that have an Academic Performance Indicator (API) of 750 or higher, and have worked in special education teams for a minimum of five years.

Key Assumptions of the Study

A key assumption of the study is that participants have had experience in dealing with trust in their current role as special education teachers and or paraprofessionals. Additionally, the researcher assumes that the special education teachers and paraprofessionals are answering questions in a transparent manner that provides feedback from experiences that span their educational career. The researcher assumes that participants who meet participation criteria have worked in many different types of special day classes, and have had experience in working off campus to provide community-based instruction (CBI) and or community based vocational instruction (CBVI) to students who are enrolled in special education programs.

This research study is important to the researcher because, as a former transition specialist who served transition-aged students by working closely with multiple teams of special education teachers and paraprofessionals, she has observed multiple instances where the lack of trust caused conflict in the classroom, thus impacting the delivery of instruction to students. The following is a list of typical situations that the researcher has observed; teams of teachers and paraprofessionals arguing in front of the students and parents, paraprofessionals losing a student in the community and special education teachers being blamed for it, paraprofessionals telling

teachers that they are not going to do what they have been asked to do, gossip, special education teachers and paraprofessionals lying on each other in the hopes that one would be fired, fist fights between special education teachers and paraprofessionals, outside mediators being called in to resolve the working conditions between teachers and paraprofessionals, and lastly special education teachers and or paraprofessionals calling in sick to avoid working with each. These situations often caused the district to lose money because the time spent on resolving conflict meant that students were not having their needs met by the staff.

Significance of the Topic

The study of exploring the meaning of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague is significant for various reasons as it can benefit researchers in special education, various professionals in the field of special education; including special education teachers and paraprofessionals, as well as future and current students who are served in special education programs.

With an increase in the number of students with disabilities who are enrolled and served in special education programs across the United States, (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.) the need to have highly trained, cohesive teams of special education service providers who work closely with students on a daily basis has increased. If educators become more aware of factors that build, sustain, restore and destroy trust within teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague, perhaps they will utilize best practices that can reduce and minimize conflict, and thus improve educational outcomes for students who are served in the special education population (Wellner, 2012). Moreover, trust between education professionals is necessary for effective partnerships as it has a positive effect on student outcomes (Shelden et al., 2010). Exploring the meaning of the role and value of trust

between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague who work with transition-age students is uniquely significant due to the specialized needs of special education students who are educated at the secondary level.

Special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues who work with transition-age students often work off campus teaching community based instruction (CBI), community based vocational instruction (CBVI), providing additional supports to special education students who are enrolled in general education classes, as well as assisting with designated instructional services (DIS) outside of the special day class (SDC) environment. As a result, special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague rely on each other to deliver quality instruction that is legally mandated to students with special needs. Mistakes brought about by incompetence, poor communication and or unreliable behavior on any part can breed conflict between the dyad.

Similarly, special education professionals benefit from establishing trust between parents as well as administrators. For example, trust with parents can improve student outcomes (Shelden et al., 2010). In the same way, schools with a trustworthy administrator are deemed effective (Northfield, 2014). Although exploring the value of trust between special education professionals and parents as well as administrators are important, this study is limited to exploring the gap of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. The findings of this study could potentially save districts money, as time spent resolving conflict can be used on instruction and other practices that make special education teams more effective. This study helps to make special education teachers and paraprofessionals better equipped to function as a trusted member of a team of educators who are passionate about working with a special population of students.

Theoretical Framework

This research study has two theoretical frameworks: trust and special education. Both trust and special education are expansive topics with varied focuses. Trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to others based on the belief that they can depend on the individual's competence, character, integrity, and ability to demonstrate care in the areas of critical interdependence (Northfield, 2014). Special education deals with a vulnerable population of students due to the numerous mental and physical disabilities that qualify students for special education services. As suggested in (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, 2009), "the effectiveness of schools has been linked to the ability to develop trust with staff members and educational stakeholders" (Northfield, 2014, p. 411).

Operational Definitions of Terms

The following are the definitions of the terms that are commonly used in this research study.

- **Community Based Instruction (CBI).** Educational instruction in naturally occurring community environments providing students "real life experiences" and that link to the IEP goals and objectives (Pickens & Dymond, 2014).
- **Community Based Vocational Training CBVT).** A method of providing students with severe disabilities work experience in the community in which they attend school (Pickens & Dymond, 2014).
- **Designated Instruction Services (DIS).** Instruction and services not normally provided by regular classes, resources specialist programs or special day classes. They include speech therapy and adaptive physical education (Understandingspecialeducation.com, n.d.).

- **IDEA.** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
- **IDEIA.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
- **IEP.** Individualized Education Program (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
- **Intellectually disabled.** Formally known as mental retardation, this disorder is characterized by below average cognitive functioning in two or more adaptive behaviors with onset before age 18 (Understandingspecialeducation.com, n.d.).
- **ITP.** Individualized Transition Plan (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
- **LEA.** Local Education Agency (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
- **Paraprofessional.** An employee of an LEA who provides instructional support in a program supported with Title I, Part A funds. Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support, include those who (a) provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher, (b) assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials, (c) provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory, (d) conduct parental involvement activities, (e) provide instructional support in a library or media center, (f) act as a translator, or (g) provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher (California Department of Education, n.d.).
- **Phenomenology.** A philosophical approach in which one studies the structure of life experiences. In phenomenology, the observers use their own voices to express their life experiences and the meaning attached to these experiences (Creswell, 2014).

- **Qualitative research study.** A research approach that utilizes a collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study with data analysis that establishes themes. The final written report includes the voices of the participants, the experience and lens of the researcher, an interpretation of the problem and its contribution to the literature (Creswell, 2014).
- **Special Day Class (SDC).** Term used to describe a self-contained special education class which provides services to students with intensive needs that cannot be met by the general education program, RSP or DIS program. Classes consist of more than 50% of the student's day (Understandingspededucation.com, n.d.).
- **Special education teacher.** Teachers who work with special education students who are ages 16-22.
- **Students with special needs/Special education students.** For the purpose of this study, students with special needs will mean students who qualify for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with multiple disabilities and who are between the ages of 16-22: excluding students who qualify for special education services under learning disabled and the gifted and talented (GATE) program (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).
- **Team effectiveness.** The presence of trust and mutual respect for one another, support in the work environment, chemistry, communication, collaborative problem solving and willingness to compromise (Wilson, 2007).
- **Theme.** The focus or meaning of participant data found in a qualitative study.
- **Transition-age.** Special education students between the ages of 16-22.

- **Trust.** The existence of genuine *care* between special education teachers and paraprofessionals, the courage to show *character* when dealing with challenging situations in the classroom, and the *competence* to do an effective job. (Combs, Harris & Edmonson, 2015).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes an introduction of the study, which includes key aspects of the research, such as the background, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research question. Additionally, it includes the significance of the topic, delimitations of the study, key assumptions of the study, limitations, theoretical framework, and the operational definitions of terms. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on trust. The review includes the lens of various applicable theories on trust, and an analysis of how trust is built, sustained, destroyed and restored. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature reviewed.

Chapter 3 delineates the qualitative methodology of this research utilizing a phenomenological research approach. The sample size, discussions on instrumentation, the method of data collection and an analysis of the findings are presented. Chapters 4 and 5 summarize the results and share the findings from the data analysis. Some conclusions and recommendations that will function to increase team effectiveness are presented.

Summary

The effectiveness of schools has been linked to school leaders who foster and develop trust with staff members and educational stakeholders (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). As the leader of their caseload, special education teachers are required to offer guidance to paraprofessionals to the benefit of special education students academic, social, and employment goals, per their ITP. Many teachers do not feel comfortable supervising other adults. As the

researcher stated above, the special education population is growing at a steady rate, as well as the number of paraprofessionals who support classroom instruction. The aim of this study is to offer useful insight on the role and value of trust that will make special education teachers and paraprofessionals better equipped to function as a trusted member of a team of educators.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.

–Covey, *The Speed Of Trust*

Overview

The absence or presence of trust can impact the effectiveness of teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessionals in a plethora of ways. McGrath et al. (2010) contend that “there are many interpersonal and instructional issues that arise between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessionals” (p. 2) that can make their jobs a challenge. Additionally, Roessingh (2006) contends that “trust is a relational construct that has received a plethora of attention in the literature across academic disciplines” (p. 570). Lastly, the topic of trust in the literature is vast because it involves aspects of how people interact with others, certain criteria must be met for teams to work cohesively and effectively together with trust being the cornerstone of real teamwork.

The purpose of this chapter is to delve into the literature related to the need and relevance of trust between teams of special education teachers and the paraprofessionals who work with them. More specifically, the chapter starts with an exploration of five theories of trust: The TORI Theory, The Speed of Trust, the Commitment Trust Theory, the Communication Accommodation Theory and the Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model. The recurring themes that were discovered in the literature include factors that; build trust, sustain trust, destroy trust, and ultimately restore trust. The chapter concludes with a synthesized review of trust in education, with team trust being at the forefront followed by relational trust, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, transparency, reliability, and consistency.

Trust

Trust signifies “an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to others based on the belief that both parties can depend on the individual’s competence, reliability, character, integrity, as well as the ability to demonstrate care in the areas of critical interdependence” (Northfield, 2014). Trust permeates every area of our lives from the moment that we are born, as evidenced by babies crying with the expectation that someone will attend to their needs. As infants grow, they trust that they will have food to eat, and a safe place to live. As people transition to adults with careers, collaboration becomes a needed skill as many jobs involve working with others while trusting that each member present is competent to do a sufficient job for the good of the team.

The definition and focus of trust in the literature varies. Frederiksen (2014) contends that trust is similar to gambling on unknown outcomes, as people who make a decision to trust do so with great risk involved. The risk stems from the potential loss that can transpire if the person who is trusted to do a task, does not have the needed skills nor follow through to do the job at hand. In Frederiksen’s study of German sociologist Niklas Luhmann’s theory on trust, he states that trust involves not only high expectations but confidence in another person as well. In the special education system, trust plays an important part in the successful implementation of any well-run program, as teams of individuals with varied expertise collaborate to do an effective job for the students they service.

Theories on Trust

This study utilized phenomenological research methods to explore the meaning of the role and value of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague. Creswell (2015) contends that phenomenological research methodology studies the structure of

life experiences, and observers use their own voice to express their experiences and the meaning attached to them. The TORI Theory, the Speed of Trust, the Commitment Trust Theory, the Communication Accommodation Theory, and the Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model provided theoretical concepts for this study.

The TORI Theory

The TORI theory, also known as the Trust-Level Theory was invented by Jack Gibb and further developed by his wife Lorraine. It is a theory that was designed for application, as well as an instrument of inquiry. TORI is an acronym that derived from combining the first letters of all of the essential elements of the theory together; trust, openness, realization and interdependence. Gibb (1978) contends that teams grow with the presence of trust, primarily because they are moving away from fear based interactions. Moreover, a lack of trust can manifest in ways that promote depersonalization, facades, covert strategies, impositions, persuasions, and high control dependency. However, when trust is present, it will manifest in the following ways among team members; personal, intimate and non-role behavior; open and transparent behavior; self-determining, assertive, and actualizing behavior; and reciprocally-fulfilling and interdependent behavior. Trust is a key factor in an effective classroom (Gibb, 1978). Lastly, trust, openness, realization, and interdependence (TORI) are all aspects that must be present in order for trust to exist within a team (Meinke, 1976). Table 1 represents the essential elements of how the TORI Trust- Level Theory can be used between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues.

Table 1

Essential Elements and Descriptions of the TORI Trust-Level Theory

Elements	Description
Trust	Teachers and paraprofessionals discovering who they are, developing their unique teaching style to service students with special needs. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals focus on their strengths, as well as honing their skills to improve the lives of students and colleagues. A trusting colleague wants to be supportive of all stakeholder relationships so that their colleagues function at their best.
Openness	Discovering and creating ways to be transparent in all communications – essentially, <i>willing to admit shortcomings</i> . The ability to not judge ones colleagues for their lack of experience and or differences.
Realization	Living life with passion and purpose while educating students with special needs.
Interdependence	Discovering and creating with special education teacher/paraprofessional colleagues. Respecting each other’s separate rolls and allowing each other the freedom to do and be their best self.

Note. The data in this table are adapted from *Trust: A New View of Personal and Organizational Development* (p. 21), by J. Gibb, 1978, Los Angeles, CA: Guild of Tutors Press. Copyright 1978 by Guild of Tutors Press.

Multiple assumptions have emerged from TORI that are relevant in organizations, as well as in the field of education, as they pertain to trust with teams. One assumption of the TORI Trust Level Theory is that in order to optimize trust within any organization, environmental forces such as laws, protocol, rules and regulations set by an organization, and its impact on members must be considered (Moskal, 1978). For instance, there are many laws within special education that govern how school systems instruct and interact with students who have

disabilities. These laws can have a direct impact on how teams function to meet the needs of the students. Additionally, organizational outcomes can be enhanced with TORI as it can increase communication. For example, an increase in trust would increase team member's willingness and openness to confront issues because they feel safe to confront problems without the fear of reprisal, thus making the team function more smoothly (Moskal, 1978).

The highest degree of trust stems from having the faith and belief in oneself to create the life, as well as the surrounding environment that he/she was created to live. Based on the TORI Trust-Level Theory, a high quality environment must have six qualities in order to be effective: (a) high trust level as evidenced by low fear, (b) low constraint as evidenced by a low threat environment, (c) optimization of the four TORI discovering processes of being, showing, wanting and interbeing; (d) self-esteem as evidenced by people feeling good about themselves, (e) range of enrichment as evidenced by continued professional and organizational growth, and (f) reduced defensiveness among staff members (Gibb, 1978). For a multitude of practitioners, the TORI ten-phase Environmental-Quality Scale has been a useful assessment tool to evaluate current work climates, promote change, improve lives, as well as relationships within an organization (Gibb, 1978). Figure 1 has been adapted to illustrate the wants hierarchy in the environmental-quality phase as it specifically relates to special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. Additionally, since every environment is different based on factors such as diverse cultures and socioeconomic status; values and wants that are prominent during one phase may be irrelevant during another.

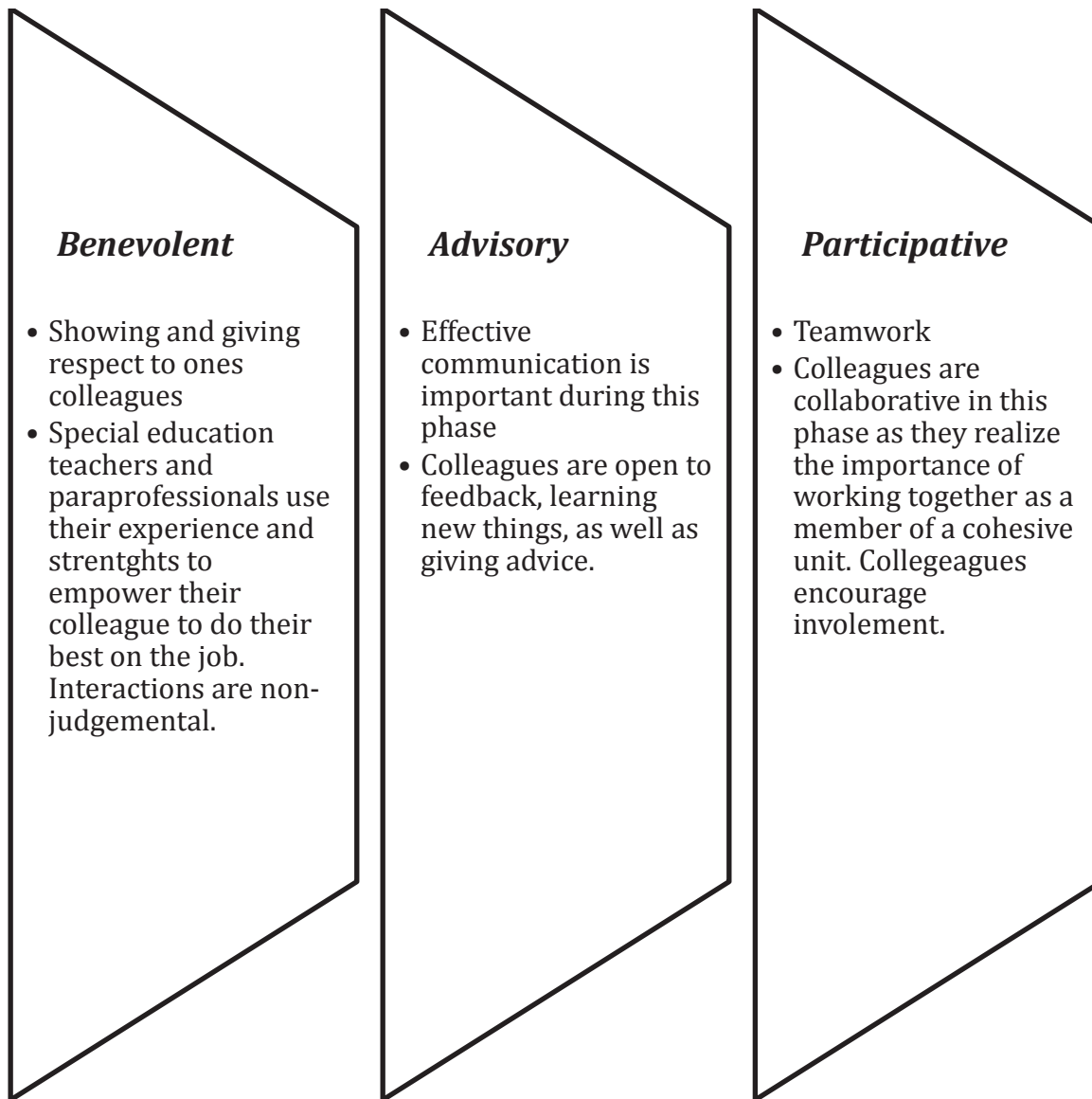


Figure 1. Environmental quality as it relates to special education colleagues. Adapted from *Trust: A New View of Personal and Organizational Development* (p. 58), by J. Gibb, Los Angeles, CA: Guild of Tutors Press. Copyright 1978 by Guild of Tutors Press.

The TORI Trust-Level Theory is an assessment scale with 96 questions to diagnose the trust level of a team. The person taking the scale is scored in eight areas, four of which “depict how the person taking the scale sees themselves on the team in terms of (trusting-being, opening-showing, realizing-growing and interdependence-teaming), and four in the same areas that captures their sense of what the team looks like” (Gibb, 1978, p. 61). For example, a team

member who scores high in the area of trusting-being has a high trust in him/herself as a person, and as a team member. Additionally, he/she sees team members as people who are trusting because they provide an excellent work environment. On the contrary, a team member who scores low in this area is untrusting of both him/herself and his/her team members, additionally he/she tends to feel like his/her environment is negative (Gibb, 1978).

The Speed of Trust Theory

The Speed of Trust theory asserts that trust is not merely a social virtue, it is both a tangible and quantifiable construct that impacts two outcomes: speed and cost. The following formulas presented in Figure 2 illustrate trust as an economic driver in education.

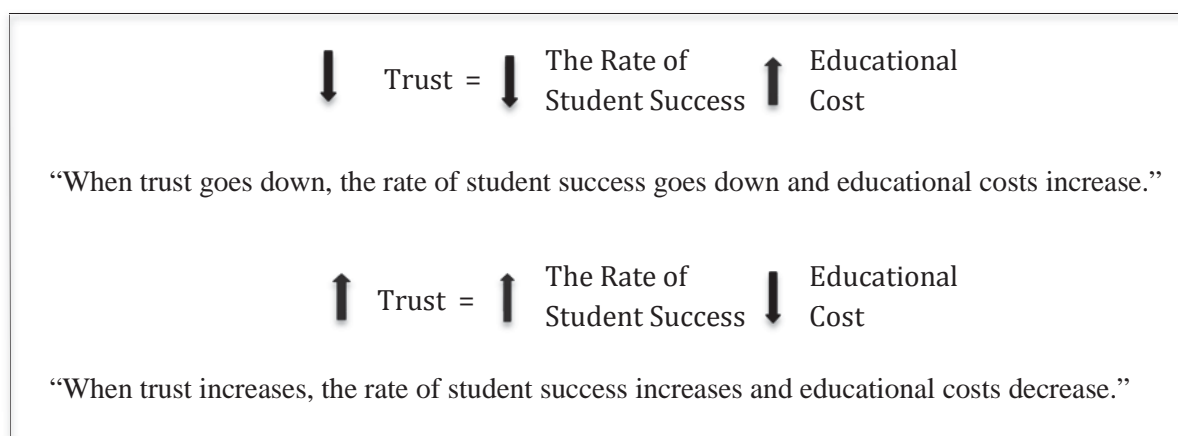


Figure 2. Formula depicting the relationship between trust, students’ success, and cost. Adapted from *The Speed of Trust* (p. 13), by S. Covey, 2006, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. Copyright 2006 by Simon & Schuster.

Having high trust yields great dividends, while low trust produces a tax. Uniquely, trust is learnable and one of the most important leadership competencies’ to date; as a result there is not only an economic aspect to trust, but also a leadership feature to trust (Covey, 2006). Additionally, trust is one of the most important factors that make a company or an organization a great place for which to work (Levering, 2004). In essence, the Speed of Trust theory proclaims

that trust comes in five waves: self- trust, relationship trust, organizational trust, market trust and societal trust, all are important but serve different roles in maintaining and building trust.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, (as cited by Covey, 2006) states, “self-trust is the first secret of success” (p. 46). Similar to the TORI Trust-Level theory, the Speed of Trust theory believes that self-trust is the genesis for building and maintaining trusting relationships. Self-trust is the basis of trust because it establishes how credible a person is to themselves and others. The self-trust umbrella has four cores to credibility which help to determine ones character and competence; integrity, intent, capabilities and results (Covey, 2006). Integrity and intent reflect ones character, capabilities and results reflect ones competence (Covey, 2006). In conclusion, all cores to credibility are important and should be present in order to establish strong trust in relationships.

Relationship trust is filled with a plethora of behaviors that are present in individuals who are highly trusted (Covey, 2006). More than words, a person’s behavior is a clear indicator of his/her character and competence. There are 13 behaviors that must be present in individuals with high trust, the first five are character related behaviors; (a) talk straight, (b) demonstrate respect, (c) create transparency, (d) right wrongs, and (e) show loyalty (Covey, 2006). The following five are competence related behaviors, “(a) deliver results, (b) get better, (c) confront reality, (d) clarify expectations, and (e) practice accountability” The last relate to character and competence behaviors, “(a) listen first, (b) keep commitments, and (c) extend trust, each behavior is validated by experience and research” (Covey, 2006, p. 46). Covey also contends that trust accounts are ways to visually represent how trust can be enhanced with the application of the 13 different trust building behaviors, or diminished by exhibiting counterfeit or the opposite of the trust behaviors.

There are two trust accounts in every relationship, one account is allocated to each person within the relationship as each person has a different perspective on what will add to or diminish trust. Words are typically preceded by behaviors, if a person's behaviors mirror what he/she says then deposits are made to the trust account, however, if a person's behavior does not match his/her words, withdrawals are made to the trust account. Additionally, if the trust behaviors are used in extreme, then withdrawals to the trust account can happen. For example, when considering the create transparency behavior, a person can create a withdrawal if he/she shares confidential information in the name of being transparent. Therefore there must be a balance in exhibiting the trust behaviors because too much or too little can be harmful to relationships.

Organizational trust focuses on trust among various internal stakeholders within an organization. When trust is low in an organization, the stakeholders will experience problems that Covey coined as *organizational taxes* (Covey, 2006). The seven organizational taxes are (a) redundancy or superfluous duplication of efforts; (b) bureaucracy or an overabundance of rules, regulations, and policies set in place that ultimately take away from the productivity of the organization; (c) politics among internal stakeholders; (d) disengagement that manifests as a lack of intrinsic employee motivation; (e) turnover, as people tend to look for more fulfilling opportunities within other organizations; (f) churn, as evidenced by a lack of trust displayed by external stakeholders; and (g) fraud which can negatively impact an organizations bottom line (Covey, 2006). Without a plan in place to increase trust, these seven organizational taxes can impede on an organizations ability to operate efficiently, thus ultimately increasing the cost of doing business.

Contrary to an organizational tax in a low trust organization, a dividend is a benefit that is produced in high trust organizations. The seven dividends are: (a) increased value, which can

manifest as higher returns to shareholders and the ability to deliver more quality of services to customers; (b) accelerated growth, which tend to manifest as higher sales profits that are achieved with lower costs; (c) enhanced innovation as employees tend to be more creative and willing to take risks; (d) improved collaboration which can enhance teamwork; (e) stronger partnering, as evidenced by parties entering contractual obligations, with well-managed relationships based on trust; (f) better execution as trust in the strategies that are in place creates more buy-in when it's time to execute an idea; and (g) heighten loyalty, from both employees and customers (Covey, 2006). Time spent on developing trust can yield dividends that will positively enhance an organization of any size, as well as a family structure.

Commitment Trust Theory

Morgan and Hunt (1994) proposed that relationship commitment and trust are key variables for successful relationships because they advance and promote accommodating behaviors between members of the relationship, and encourage them to maintain long-term associations. They contend that relationships that have trust and commitment are more tolerant of behavior that is deemed as risky because the individuals involved in the relationship believe that each will act in a manner that is beneficial to each party in the long-term. They proved their theory in the automobile tire industry. The data supported the idea that business relationships between retailers and their suppliers benefited from employing the commitment trust theory.

The commitment-trust theory assumes that trust and commitment mediate the relationship between five antecedents; i.e., relationship benefits, relationship termination costs, shared values, communication, opportunistic behavior and five outcomes; that is, acquiescence, propensity to leave, cooperation, functional conflict and decision-making uncertainty (Holdford & White, 1997). Relationship commitment is defined as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued

relationship” (Holdford & White, 1997, p. 250). Relationship commitments can arise between individuals or organizations. Commitment in a relationship is improved when key stakeholders share similar values. Additionally, key stakeholders perceive that terminating or ending the relationship will put them at a disadvantage because staying in the relationship promotes benefits that outweigh the termination of a relationship.

Similar to the Covey’s organizational tax in his theory of the Speed of Trust, relationship termination costs are described as the perception of net losses associated with financial, emotional, or time that may result from the dissolution of a relationship. In addition, a net loss cannot be recovered or replaced by a substitute person. The apparent costs to a teacher for terminating a relationship with a paraprofessional might be the risk that special education students will suffer academically or the loss of a professional friendship. The quality of services and goods relative to other options are known as relationship benefits. Teachers might be more inclined to maintain a relationship with a paraprofessional if students thrive under the relationship or the paraprofessional facilitates the teaching process in a unique way.

Partners that share similar values about appropriate behaviors, goals, and policies are also likely to be committed to a relationship. Teachers that have gone through the process of professional socialization (i.e., when an individual adopts the goals, ideals, and codes of conduct of the profession) might be more likely to maintain a relationship with a paraprofessional who has instantiated the same ideals.

Communication Accommodation Theory

The theory of communication accommodation was developed to account for the general observation that people tend to metaconsciously converge to one another's communicative behavior while in conversations. They coordinate in a variety of dimensions including choice of

words, syntax, pausing frequency, pitch and gestures (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Over the last forty years, this phenomenon has received significant attention and research indicates that such convergence occurs almost instantly across a very diverse set of communication patterns (Niculescu-Mizil, Gamon, & Dumais, 2011). These findings suggest that the communicative behavior of conversational partners reflect coordinated patterns similar to a dance.

The dance is metacognitively choreographed by the verbal interaction between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague. For example, a special education teacher would assume the verbal characteristics of his/her paraprofessional colleague while the paraprofessional would respond in a manner that would reflect the verbal patterns of the teacher. It is assumed that the interaction between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague is enhanced when they build trust and commitment between each other.

Relational Trust

Coleman referred to relational trust as social capital (Coleman,1990). According to Coleman, social capital is an entity that incorporates relational ties among individuals within a social system. In contrast, human capital is a latent construct that is derived from educational endeavors (Putnam, 1995). Like human capital, social capital is an intangible product that is accumulated for productive ends. Whereas human capital is acquired through educational means, social capital is developed and sustained through relationships (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961).

Coleman (1990) identifies two factors that promote social capital: social network closure and trustworthiness. Social network closure refers to the density of relationships that exist within a network. It is easier for members to communicate when interconnectedness among individuals

is high. This interconnectedness between members also facilitates mitigating miscommunications, which if left unaddressed, leads to rifts and a breakdown of trust.

Coleman (1990) argued that social capital serves an important role in maintaining social norms. Dense relational ties in a network with high social capital serve to transmit basic information and, perhaps, act to monitor and enforce mutual obligations among parties; socially desirable norms are advanced while undesirable actions sanctioned. This property of a social network is what Coleman referred to as trustworthiness.

In addition to the discussion of the social trust network, Coleman also considered this topic from the perspective of the actions of individual agents (Coleman, 1990). Coleman drew on the work of rational choice theorists (e.g. Dawes, 1988; Hardin, 1993; Williamson, 1993) who have focused on the conditions and incentives that motivate individuals to trust one another, and on how individuals assess the potential benefits and losses associated with the actions they might take, given this uncertainty. From this perspective, trust constitutes a calculation whereby an individual decides whether or not to engage in an action with another individual that incorporates some degree of risk. In turning to rational choice theory, Coleman (1990) sought to offer an explanation for the micro-level activity that supports social functioning of effective networks. Schneider (1996) views social trust as the collective property of a social institution.

In this regard, Schneider (1996) built on Coleman's (1990) ideas about trustworthiness in social networks. Unlike rational choice theorists, however, who rely exclusively on motives of self-interest and material gain to explain individual actions, Schneider (1996) offered a more individualistic account of this micro-behavior; that is, she paid close attention to how individuals within organizations view the actions of others in the context of a set of mutual obligations,

which frame their relationships. Through a process of *discernment*, individuals lend meaning to the actions of others and ultimately come to some level of trust.

Alternative Forms of Social Trust

As a property of a social institution, trust may take at least three different forms: organic, contractual, and relational (Gambetta, 1988). Organic trust is rooted in faith, and is ascribed to persons or institutions in a more or less unquestioning fashion. This form of trust is characteristic of small-scale societies. In such systems individuals give their trust unconditionally, for they believe in the absolute authority and or character of the individuals with whom they are engaged.

Organic trust creates a broad-based moral bond among members who share an ethical responsibility for the consequences of their behaviors to themselves and others. Fundamentalist religious schools, such as those described by Peshkin (1986), exemplify social systems characterized by organic trust. Here the actions of professionals are supported by a community, which embraces one truth one way. Because the truth is beyond doubt, the community seeks the complete obedience of its members to the doctrine of its faith. This obedience is extended through the school whose objective is to vitalize in its daily life the precepts of the faith. The school is a total institution, created and maintained to achieve the broad purpose of serving the glory of God.

The second type of trust is contractual. A contract explicitly defines the actions to be taken by the parties involved in the transaction. This, in turn, sits within a legal framework, which binds individuals to carry out specified responsibilities. In contrast to organic trust, which can be virtually all encompassing, contractual trust is much more delimited, for example, a scope of work to be undertaken or services to be delivered. Typically, the product to be provided is clearly set out, and appropriate mechanisms for achieving this can also be reasonably well

specified. As a result, it is fairly easy to determine whether all participants have acted in accordance with the agreed upon terms. If one party does not uphold the terms of the trust agreement, legal actions may be taken to seek damages.

The third type of trust is relational. This is formed through mutual understandings that arise from both individuals and institutions, which are expected to behave in a normatively suitable manner. Organic and contractual trust differ from relational trust in that its underlying expectations are founded both on beliefs and explicit expectations regarding obligations. Such trust is well suited for situations where organizational aims may be multi-faceted and or difficult to clarify, and where the possible mechanisms through which these aims might be addressed may be highly varied and situationally specific. Unlike contractual trust, relational trust can only be informally and infrequently monitored, and abrogations of such trust are not easily subject to legal redress. Rather, individuals typically withdraw their trust when expectations are violated, leading to a possible severing of ties with the institution or even to a breakdown in the institution itself. Also, unlike organic trust, which is more likely to be present in closed societies, relational trust is sustainable in the more delimited affiliations that characterize modern social institutions.

For this reason, it seems particularly relevant for analyzing the nature of relationships among special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague in schools. Judgments about the intentionality of others play a central role in relational trust. As social interactions transpire, participants attend not only to surface behavior, but they also seek to understand others motivations and underlying intentions that create the observed behavior and how these behaviors can be views and understood in the context of the mutual responsibilities; for example, a parent may trust his/her child's teacher even if the outcome falls short of one's expectations, such as the child being the top reader in the class, if the parent perceives that the actions taken by the teacher

are professionally appropriate and well-intended. The same can be said about instances between special education teachers and paraprofessionals; a special education teacher may trust a paraprofessional that deviates from a student's daily schedule without having a discussion with the special education teacher first, if the special education teacher perceives that this action was done in a manner that was both professionally appropriate and the student receives academic and social benefit.

This focus on intentions contrasts with organic trust, where it is simply presupposed that individuals and institutions will consistently act in ways believed to be right and good. In these contexts, there is typically little need for discernment. Interestingly, intentions also play only a minor role in contractual trust relations where expectations are primarily outcome-based. In these cases, if the desired products are produced, the individual motives of participants are largely irrelevant, although trust can be destroyed if the desired outcomes are not met and or delivered.

Relational trust, however, is grounded in a personalistic account of action, where normative judgments are also made about how and why individuals go about the process of addressing their obligations. If desirable outcomes are advanced, but the processes by which they are addressed leave participants uncertain as to the real intentions of others, trustworthiness may not be achieved. For example, whether paraprofessionals embrace curriculum reform/schedule changes or not depends in part on how they perceive their special education teachers motives in advocating change. Is the intent really to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for the students, or rather to bring the special education teacher public acclaim or perhaps a career advancement out of the classroom?

In conclusion, relational trust entails a dynamic interplay of actual behavior and a discernment of intentions in the context of the obligations that are shared by various parties. Trust is reduced when individuals perceive that others are not acting in ways that manifest these common commitments. Thus, the fulfillment of obligations on which relational trust rests involves not only doing the right thing, but also doing it for what is perceived to be the right reasons.

Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model

Patrick Lencioni (2002) created a framework for understanding dysfunctional team dynamics. He argues that most teams are dysfunctional, at some level, and suggests that awareness of this fact can lead to better team member engagement. While his framework was initially developed for executives it has also been effective for managers and employees at all levels and across organizational types.

There are five common themes associated with a dysfunctional team. These themes interrelate and build off one another to either hamper or improve team performance. The five themes are: (a) absence of trust, (b) fear of conflict, (c) lack of commitment, (d) avoidance of accountability, and (e) inattention to results (Lencioni, 2002).

Absence of trust. Trust is the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. Teammates must get comfortable being vulnerable with one another and be confident that their respective vulnerabilities will not be used against them. Teams that lack trust waste time and energy interpreting behaviors and managing interactions within the group. Team members that perceive low trust tend to avoid meetings, take fewer risks, exhibit low morale, and are more likely to leave the team (Lencioni, 2002).

Fear of conflict. Relationships that persist over time require productive conflict to grow (Lencioni, 2002). Lencioni identified two types of conflict: Destructive fighting via interpersonal politics and ideological conflict that thrives from interaction. Ideological conflict is limited to concepts and ideas that avoid personality-focused attacks. For example, a paraprofessional may be fearful of being embarrassed by a special education teacher in the classroom. In contrast, to engage in productive conflict, team members aspire to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time. Teams that avoid ideological conflict often do so in order to avoid hurting one another, but end up encouraging tension. Ideological conflict among team members is a time saver and can often facilitate finding solutions.

Avoidance of accountability. Avoidance of accountability is the unwillingness of team members to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt their feelings. The essence of this dysfunction is rooted in an unwillingness of team members to tolerate the interpersonal discomfort. Members of productive teams improve their relationships by holding one another accountable, thus demonstrating that they respect each other and have high expectations for one another. Peer pressure is the most effective means for maintaining high standards of performance. An absence of accountability is an invitation to team members to shift their attention to areas other than collaboration and collective results.

Other focuses than results. A functional team must focus on the collective results of the group and make the focus more important than individual members' goals (Lencioni, 2002). Many teams are simply not results focused. They focus more on the here and now rather than the goal defined by the collective team. That is, meaningful long-term objectives are sacrificed by day-to-day minutia and interpersonal tussles (Lencioni, 2002). For example, teachers and

paraprofessional may concentrate on their relationship with each other at the expense of student learning. Additionally, bureaucracy may impact trust within organizations.

O'Neill (2013) asserts that in some instances, organizations and schools have set up systems of accountability by imposing rules, and voting in new legislation in an effort to enforce or impose a culture of trust in low trust societies. For example, schools that are performing poorly may have the state step in and take over, require employees to do extra data collection, require multiple formal examines and assessments, all in the name of increasing trust in the workplace and in the community. These systems of accountability can have an adverse impact on trust as employees change their focus from achieving their initial results of student success, to keeping up with a multitude of tasks, watching over their backs, and engagement in menial tasks, just to name a few.

Cycling Through Trust

The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.

—Ernest Hemingway

The ebb and flow of trust can be distinguished by one of four trust stages; (a) building or establishing trust, (b) maintaining or sustaining trust, (c) destroyed or broken trust, and (d) restoring trust (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015). Each stage of trust plays a significant role in the behavior and interactions of people within an organizational team (Adams, 2008). Some relationships experience each stage during their course of interaction, while other relationships start and end on one trust stage. Therefore, recognizing characteristics and behaviors that are in alignment with each stage provides valuable insight into the intricacies of trust.

Building Trust

Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, and Wilcox (2015) state that the research on trust in education has expanded into a complex construct. As a result they contend that without trust, educators

cannot meet important goals, as a lack of trust inhibits communication between relevant stakeholders as well as impede on student goals. The best teachers have a challenging time accomplishing their goals in the absence of trust. Tschannen-Moran (2004), believe that time and patience are required to build trust, moreover trust is built on the foundation of the five facets of trust: (a) benevolence as evidenced by as caring, extending good will, having positive intentions, supporting teachers, expressing appreciation, being fair, guarding confidential information; (b) honesty as evidenced by having integrity, telling the truth, keeping promises, honoring agreements, having authenticity, accepting responsibility, avoiding manipulation, being true to oneself; (c) openness as defined by engaging in open communication, sharing important information, delegating, sharing decision making and sharing power; (d) reliability as defined by having consistency, being dependable, demonstrating commitment, having dedication, and being diligent; and (e) competence as defined by setting an example, engaging in problem solving, fostering conflict resolution, working hard, pressing for results, setting standards, handling difficult situations, being flexible.

The facets of trust would benefit teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues in many instances. For example, having open communication whether it is verbal or nonverbal enriches classroom success as it helps to openly discuss and address any issues that arise (Liebhaber, 2000). Moreover, competent special education teachers and paraprofessionals can enhance the safety of staff and students. For example, if a special education student has a crisis as evidenced by exhibiting behaviors that impede on the learning of themselves or others, having a teacher that is flexible in quickly resolving this sort of conflict, while relying on their paraprofessional colleague to react in a supportive role in assisting the remaining students in the classroom can further facilitate building trust.

In addition to the five facets of trust, Tschannen-Moran (2004) states that the primary factor that plays a role in the building of trust is one's disposition to trust which includes a person's values, attitudes, moods and emotions. Moreover, a person's attitude about diversity plays a significant role in their disposition to trust because many people trust what is familiar and similar to them in terms of values, beliefs and experiences Tschannen-Moran (2004). Thus making it harder to establish trust in situations where there are multiple differences in cultural norms and experiences.

Tschannen-Moran (2004), contends that building trust can also be impacted by a person's mood, whether good or bad, people are always in a mood. Furthermore, moods are developed by thoughts. When people are in bad moods, their thoughts tend to reflect thoughts that are counterproductive to building trust. For example, thoughts of despair and confusion may impact the culture of an organization, Tschannen-Moran (2004). As mentioned in one of the five facets of trust, having open dialogue can help to turn bad moods around by assisting those in bad moods to revise and reset their negative perceptions of doom and gloom.

In conclusion, there are several key points to remember when in the stage of building trust: (a) reputation is important and includes factors such as credibility, disposition to trust, values and attitudes, (b) those in leadership roles (special education teachers) should have the qualifications and commitment to maintaining a culture that supports the cooperation of each member of the team, (c) developing a sense of care for other people and predicting how they may react to a given situation, (d) trust goes through different levels, (e) trust develops when members of a team endure disappointments, and (f) there are dangers in trusting too much and in trusting too little (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Sustaining Trust

Sustaining trust can be a difficult balancing act, but the most effective way to maintain and or sustain trust is through communication (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015). Effective communication depends on the receiver hearing the message as intended by the sender, with a feedback loop that enables both the sender and the receiver to check for understanding (Goodman & Truss, 2004). Organizations do not run with one person acting as a soloist. Therefore, maintaining open communication is vital to the bloodline of any successful organization as helps to promote trust between management and employees. Communication opens the door to organizational collaboration. When employees feel as if they are valued, they are more prone to opening up and sharing creative and innovative ideas that will benefit the organization.

Everybody talks, everybody communicates, but few people connect (Maxwell, 2010). Perhaps people fail to connect with others because they do not build trust. Leadership trust is one of the most important elements in having a successful organization. The true power to influence and persuade people stems from the ability to connect and build trust with them. One of the greatest challenges in communication is assuming that it has taken place (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015).

Communication is also a vital part in the sustaining cycle of trust model, which derived from the literature on trust, as well as family businesses (Sundaramurthy, 2008; see Figure 3).

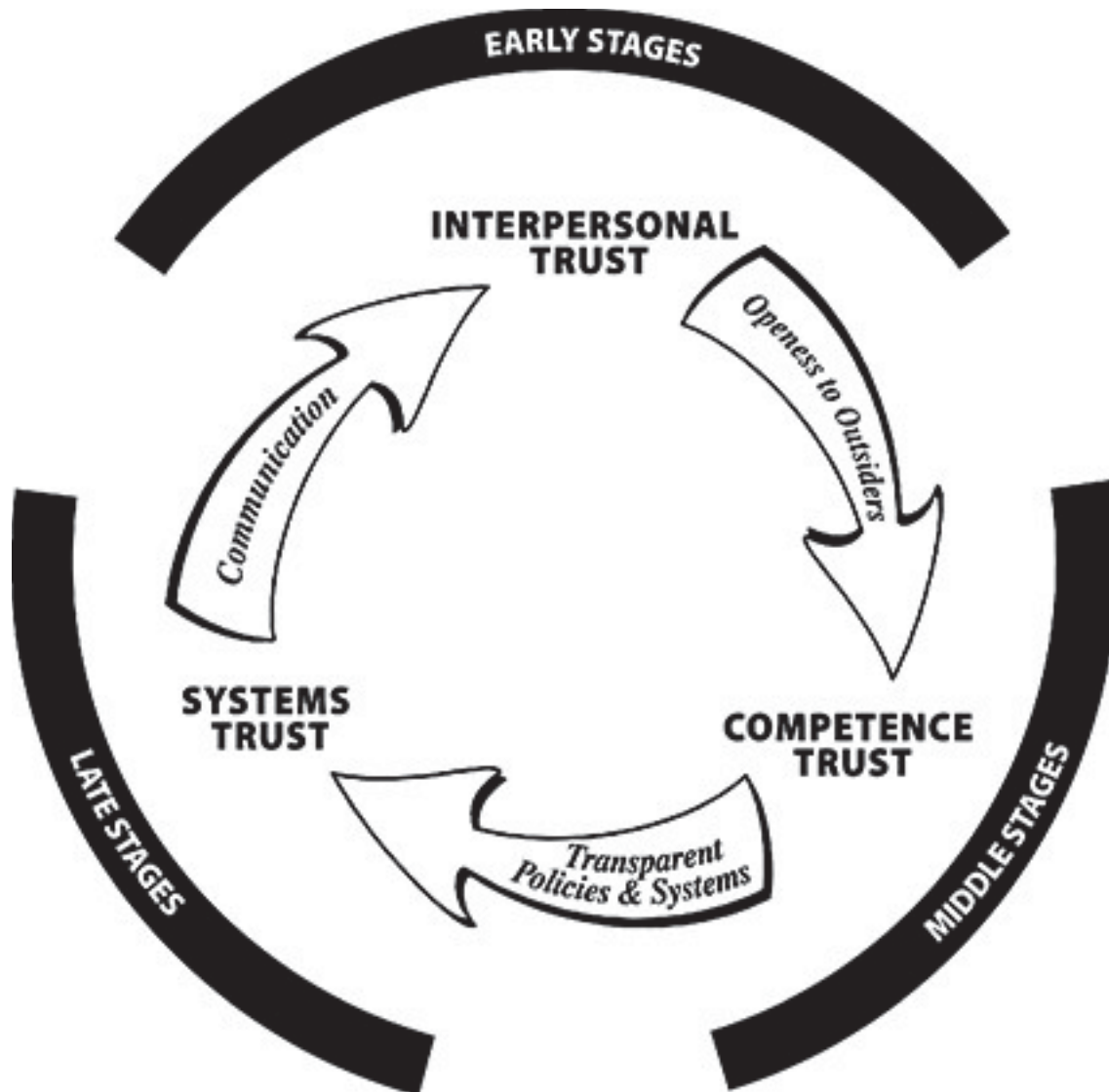


Figure 3. Sustaining cycle of trust. From “Sustaining Trust Within Family Businesses” by C. Sundaramurthy, 2008, *Family Business Review*, 21, pp. 89–102. Copyright 2008 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission.

Similar to the five facets of trust, openness is a recurring characteristic that can be modeled by leadership in order to sustain trust. Lastly, transparency plays an important role in sustaining trust, as members of a special education team cycle through the stages of trust.

Destroyed Trust

Key stakeholders within a school district rely on each other to accomplish their professional objectives in educating and enhancing the lives of students. When a member of this

interconnected team acts in a manner that disappoints the other; for example, when their words are out of alignment with their actions, trust can be destroyed, and their working relationship strained (Burt & Knez, 1996). In some instances, lost trust can never be restored. The following actions and characteristics consistently break down trust between people (a) betrayal, (b) breach of confidentiality, (c) deception, (d) dishonesty, (e) breach of integrity, (f) corruption, (g) coercion, (h) over use of power, (i) exclusion of others, and (j) divisiveness among staff (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Betrayal, unintentional or intentional is the number one factor that can cause destroyed trust (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Kutsyuruba and Walker suggest that intentional betrayal is a narcissistic act that serves to damage the trust of others, on the other hand, unintentional betrayal results in people being adversely impacted. Some betrayals can be minor; yet the implications of such behaviors can have a long lasting impact, especially if the betrayal is not addressed (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015).

The willingness to be vulnerable with colleagues in inevitable stressful situations can be daunting for many professionals in the field of special education. Consequently, decisions are made daily in the field of education that violates ones expectations of their professional colleague; as a result, a betrayal occurs (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Instances of betrayal include, lying, gossiping, withholding information, breaking promises, and stealing ideas or credit from others. As suggested by the five facets of trust model, the anatomy of betrayal model impedes on many facets that build trust such as openness, benevolence and integrity; as a result, trust is destroyed (see Figure 4).

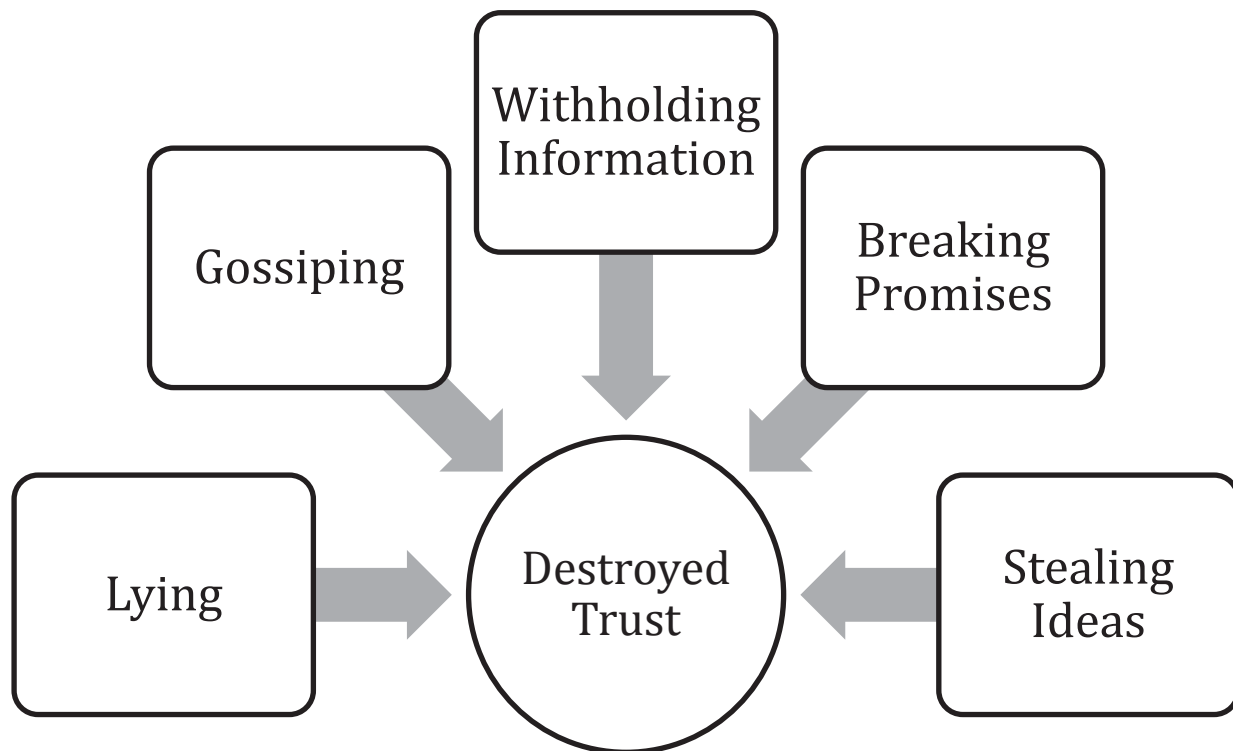


Figure 4. Instances of betrayal. From *Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools* (p. 74), by M. Tschannen-Moran, 2004, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass. Copyright 2004 by Jossey Bass.

In some instances betraying a colleague is morally and ethically the correct thing to do (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). For example, a teacher is made aware of a close colleague giving students access to statewide testing materials prior to the testing date. Sharing the knowledge of this information is ethically the correct thing to do, however, it can be viewed as betraying the trust of a colleague; thus destroying trust and exposing the workplace to the other characteristics that destroy trust. This resulting lack of trust presents a challenge when working in industries such as special education that require interdependence of colleagues to achieve desired outcomes. Govier (as cited in Tschannen-Moran (2004) suggests that in relationships where trust has been destroyed, time and energy spent on working with students is wasted on covering all

basis, and wondering about the motives of the person who had destroyed the trust. Although a hard task to conquer, the redeeming factor in relationships of destroyed trust resides in the possibility of reversing the negative impacts to that of restored trust.

Restoring Trust

Schools function in a manner that is similar to that of an ecosystem; people come and go yet all parts act in an interrelated fashion that cannot be described linearly. Moreover, when trust is broken within the ecosystem, it is not easily restored to its original form; it requires both humility and effort (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Carr (2006) contends that in order to restore lost trust and gain credibility, educators should consider transparency. On the other hand Tschannen-Moran, (2004) suggests engaging in a four-step model to restore lost trust called the four A's of absolution: admit it, apologize, ask for forgiveness, and amend your ways. Both are reasonable steps in the right direction to begin the stages of restoring trust.

Rebuilding trust is the start of rebuilding relationships with people who matter the most (Carr, 2006). In considering transparency, educators should be open, own the truth, and be willing to discuss both the good and the bad (Gross, 2015). An example of the concept of transparency at play can be seen in business organizations that have access to their customer's personal information, for example their medical information as well as their government identification numbers. Companies who were upfront and transparent about the use of customer's sensitive information were considered more trusted by their customers. Facebook has had many challenges in the area of earning customer trust because of previous business practices of not being forthcoming with what they were doing with customers personal information (Morey, Forbath, & Schoop, 2015).

The four A's of absolution is an effective way to begin the process of rebuilding trust. Tschannen-Moran (2004) contends that one must: (a) admit it, even if the violation was unintentional as it shows that the violator is willing to begin the process of rebuilding as well as validating the victims feelings; (b) apologize, which does not erase the wrongdoing, however, this is essential to restoring lost trust; (c) ask for forgiveness, which is primarily initiated by the violator and ultimately determined by the victim, who must be willing to be vulnerable and work with the violator. Forgiveness entails releasing the negative feelings that are affiliated with the betrayal that has been done. Circumstances may never be restored back to original conditions, as people do not easily forget what has happened. Lastly, (d) amend your ways, which is determined by the victim, however, the violator must make steps to rebuild the relationship. The victim must be willing to trust again which takes vulnerability. If they decide not to trust, the relationship may suffer from a lack of communication, tension and lowered productivity (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Discounting any step in this process is counterintuitive to the rebuilding process.

There are multiple factors that contribute to building, sustaining, destroying and restoring trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. Special education teachers, paraprofessionals, students, parents and others in the special education community are impacted by the presence or lack of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues.

Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals come from all cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses. The average paraprofessional is 44 years old, female, and has approximately 7.9 years of paraprofessional experience (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.). Paraprofessional

educators generally assist teachers in the classroom, supervise students outside of the classroom, or provide administrative support for teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Some jurisdictions offer or require certification for some paraprofessionals while others may require a contracted paraprofessional to pass an examination. Some require none of the above

A paraprofessional certificate is typically a certificate that an educator has obtained by passing an exam, which allows him/her to perform a task requiring specific knowledge and expertise. Subject areas could include any areas of education such as a GED Teacher, Alternate School Teacher, ISS Teacher, After School Tutor, Home School Teacher, Credit Recovery Teacher, Continuing Education Teacher, and any Special Education area which could be but is not limited to CML, tutoring, and providing any needs to an individual student (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Paraprofessional job duties range from filling teaching positions to supplementing regular classroom curriculum with additional enrichment activities for students. Other positions include classroom aides, special education aides, school library technical assistants, and tutors. Some paraprofessionals work directly with students, in which case they may listen to students practice reading aloud, help students understand and complete their assignments, or assist students with special needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Many paraprofessionals are assigned to supervise groups of students who are eating, playing outside, or on fieldtrips. They may be assigned to perform clerical work for a teacher, in which case they may grade assignments, type up records for attendance or grades, set up equipment, and help prepare materials for instruction, for example, by making photocopies of worksheets.

Some paraprofessionals work for the school district, rather than for a school. For example, 58% percent of paraprofessionals are supervised by a special education teacher or related service provider; 37% are supervised by a school or district administrator, and 3% are supervised by a non-special education teacher (US Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.).

Paraprofessionals are tasked by school districts to work in other programs identified by school district administrators, such as school aged childcare and recess/lunch duties, work experience; where paraprofessionals are tasked with the job of taking students to and from work, off campus, to a local community business where they shadow students as they learn job skills. The role of the paraprofessional educator is constantly evolving. Currently, paraprofessionals assist teachers with teaching lessons, working with small groups for remediation, and leading extracurricular clubs/sports (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Many teacher assistants (i.e., paraprofessional) work primarily or exclusively with students who have special educational needs. Their duties vary according to the needs of the student, and may include physical care for students who are unable to care for themselves (such as feeding, lifting, moving, or cleaning), behavioral management, or academic assistance.

Paraprofessionals have provided essential support for students with disabilities for more than 50 years. Traditionally, such support was primarily in the form of clerical and one-on-one student assistance. Today's paraprofessionals play an increasingly prominent role in the instruction of students with disabilities. Today, there are more than 250 thousand paraprofessionals registered in the United States (US Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.).

Special Education Teachers Role

Historically, one teacher has been in charge of a classroom of students. As children with disabilities entered the public schools in the 1970s, they were taught in separate classrooms with their own teachers. Over the past 25 years, disabled students have slowly mainstreamed into the regular classroom (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Students were originally mainstreamed for selected subjects or parts of the day and were not formally considered part of the typical class. Now the current philosophy is to include all students in the same class, which has brought about teams of general education and special education teachers working collaboratively or cooperatively to combine their professional knowledge, perspectives, and skills (Ripley, 1997).

The biggest change for educators is in sharing the role of teacher that has traditionally not been shared. Under the new paradigm, teachers must now share the goals, decisions, classroom instruction, responsibility for students, learning assessment, problem solving, and classroom management (Ripley, 1997). The modern special education teacher must now think of the classroom as *our* class rather than *my* class.

In a collaborative teaching model, the general education and special education teachers/paraprofessional each bring their skills, training, and perspectives to the team (Bauwens et al., 1989). These resources are theoretically combined to seamlessly strengthen teaching and learning opportunities, methods, and effectiveness.

Typically, the primary responsibility of general education teachers is to use their skills to instruct students in curricula dictated by the school system. The primary responsibility of special education teachers is to provide instruction by adapting and developing materials to match the learning styles, strengths, and special needs of each of the students (Bauwens et al., 1989). In

special education situations, individual needs of the learner often dictate curricula and instructional technique.

General educators bring content specialization while special education teachers bring assessment and adaptation specializations. Both bring training and experience in teaching techniques and learning processes. Special education teachers rely on paraprofessionals to provide additional supports in academics, socialization, data collection, and overall support to students that are on their caseloads. Their collaborative goal is that all students in their class are provided with appropriate classroom and homework assignments so that each is learning, challenged, and participating in the classroom process.

In addition to on campus responsibilities, special education teachers of transition aged students are required to monitor both students and paraprofessionals in off campus work assignments at various community businesses, and non-profit organizations known as community based vocational instruction, (CBVI). Students learn jobs in the areas of food services; janitorial services, office and hospitality (Pickens & Dymond, 2014). Unfortunately, with so many other responsibilities to contend with, special education teachers often have little time and experience in providing students with disabilities community based vocational instruction, as a result they tend to rely on their paraprofessionals who are also inexperienced in knowledge of and implementation of community based vocational instruction (Pickens & Dymond, 2014). The implications of working with inexperienced staff in the area of community-based instruction can yield trouble for a special education team who must rely on the competence and credibility of each other to do a proficient job for the benefit of their students.

Historical Background of Special Education Teams

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require schools to provide equal educational opportunities to all students (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Many schools are utilizing special education teachers and paraprofessionals to provide access and equal opportunity educational opportunities for special education students in both general education classes as well as special education classrooms. However, many special education students are not privy to equal educational opportunities because they miss opportunities to receive daily instruction from a credentialed special education teacher (Giangreco et al., 2005).

Special education teachers must trust and rely heavily upon paraprofessionals to deliver quality instruction under their guidance. The overreliance on paraprofessionals can create conflict because they are often unsure of what to do, and at times, they are not paid according to what they are expected to do (Giangreco & Broer, 2007). Special education teachers of transition-age students have the added responsibility of being responsible for academic, social and emotional goals, as well as the employment goals of the students they serve (Samuels, 2015). Moreover, students are not the sole focus of special education teachers' as they are required to provide guidance to their staff of paraprofessionals (Giangreco & Broer, 2007). Many special education teachers of transition-age students oversee numerous paraprofessionals who accompany students to a general education classroom so that they can offer added support and ensure student success. Teachers do not have the luxury of leaving paraprofessionals unattended, without proper guidance and support, as they are ultimately responsible for educating all students on their caseload, regardless of the disability (Giangreco, 2003).

Special education teachers are highly qualified and are required to have a four-year college degree, as well as a teaching credential in their specified area of service. According to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2016), teachers are required to possess a credential that enables them to work in different areas of specialization within the special education system (see Table 2).

Table 2

Disability Type and Description of Special Education Students

Disability Type	Description of Disability
Mild/Moderate Disabilities (M/M)	Includes specific learning disabilities; mild to moderate mental retardation; other health impairment; serious emotional disturbance; and authorizes service in grades K–12 and in classes organized primarily for adults through age 22.
Moderate/Severe Disabilities (M/S)	Includes autism; deaf-blindness; moderate to severe mental retardation; multiple disabilities; serious emotional disturbance; and authorizes service in grades K–12 and in classes organized primarily for adults through age 22.
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)	Includes deafness; hearing impairment; deaf-blindness; and authorizes service to individuals ages birth through 22.
Visual Impairments (VI)	Includes blindness; visual impairment; deaf-blindness; and authorizes service to individuals ages birth through 22.
Physical and Health Impairments (PHI)	Includes orthopedic impairment; other health impairment; multiple disabilities; traumatic brain injury; and authorizes service to individuals ages birth through 22.

Note. From “Special Education Credentials,” by California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2016 (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/sr/tq/paraprofessionals.asp>). Copyright 2016 by California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. In the public domain.

Paraprofessionals have very different qualifications than special education teachers. They are required to have a high school diploma or the equivalent, and two years of college (48 units), or an A. A. degree (or higher), or pass a local assessment of knowledge and skills in assisting in instruction. (California Department of Education, n.d., para. 2).

With so much at stake in the special education or general classroom, interpersonal and instructional issues arise and challenge special education teachers (McGrath et al., 2010). Trust is associated with enhanced cooperation, information sharing, problem-solving, better communication and support between educators to provide academic benefit to special education students (Webb, Repetto, Seabrooks-Blackmore, Patterson, & Alderfer, 2014). Trust can reduce uncertainty in the interdependent relationships (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) of a special education teacher and paraprofessional. Distrust can increase the cost of doing business, as it produces anxiety and insecurity, and overall feelings of discomfort, which can translate to the students and cause unwarranted behaviors (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Students with disabilities are faced with more challenges in learning academically, socially, and psychologically; therefore, the need for timely and appropriate transition intervention by a team of individuals before a student leaves high school is critical (Cummings & Maddux, 2000). Special education teachers of transition-age students' with special needs are charged with assisting students with achieving their post-graduation goals. Based solely on students' individual needs from the ages of 16-22, transition goals facilitates pupil movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (Wrightslaw, n.d., para. 2).

Essentially, every special education student who is 16 years old has needs that should be driven by an additional component of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) called an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) transition plan. With students and parental input, an ITP is written based on an assessment of the student's individual interest and needs. Additionally, ITP's serve to inform the teacher of what goals the student should accomplish throughout the year, which will assist them in having a smooth transition from the public education school system to adult life. Lastly, the ITP assists in coordinating the efforts of outside service providers and students' independent living, employment and educational programs.

Some students may choose to pursue a vocational certificate while others choose to obtain a job or go to college. For example, students who are on a path to transition into a work program can receive vocational, social and financial benefits from obtaining either paid or unpaid work experience (Samuels, 2015). Special education transition teachers educate students in the areas of academics, independent living and with transitioning students into employment and careers that might fit with a student's desires (Webb et al. 2014). They rely heavily on paraprofessionals to assist them with making contacts in the community, data collection and drawing on support from state training and community job coaches (Samuels, 2015).

Conflict and Trust in Teams

Conflict and trust are both considered important aspects of team functioning. Studies on the role of conflict in teams have typically focused on how various types of conflict in team interaction influence effectiveness (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). This conflict research has shown that the perception of interpersonal incompatibilities among team members (i.e. relationship conflict) negatively influences team effectiveness (Jehn, 1995). Moderate levels of perceived differences relating to the task at hand (i.e. task conflict) have been

found to influence team effectiveness positively (Jehn, 1995). Intra-group trust has been acknowledged as facilitating cooperation among people (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995) and forms an important element of the interpersonal and groups dynamics in teams. Trust exists when team members in an exchange believe that they will not be taken advantage of by other people who are involved in the same exchange (Zucker, 1987). As such, trust leads to expectations among team members about how the other team members will behave.

Moreover, researchers have found that team effectiveness changes over time as a function of trust. Using a longitudinal research design with six time intervals over a period of 10 months, Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, and Roe (2014) collected data on 41 teams. Findings suggested the existence of two distinct temporal patterns. One pattern developed in a stable manner and was characterized by high levels of trust and relatively low levels of task and relationship conflict. The other pattern was unstable with low, deteriorating levels of trust and high, amplifying levels of task and relationship conflict. The patterns were associated with significant differences in team effectiveness. On a self-perception as well as a stakeholder measure of team effectiveness, teams with stable patterns outperformed teams with unstable patterns. Since teachers and paraprofessionals usually collaborate over a long period of time, trust may be even a greater factor for them compared to teams that have predefined life spans.

Summary

The value of trust in an organizational team cannot be denied as the interrelatedness and dependence on members have been found to impact outcomes. The lack of trust impedes both relational and economic factors of an organization. Moreover, current theories on trust possess similar characteristics that span across diverse industries. There are several clear models of characteristics that highlight how trust is built, sustained, destroyed, and restored between

practitioners in varied industries. As a result, clear-cut guidelines have enabled members of a team to be aware of how trust impacts their working environment. Communication, benevolence and transparency are a few of the characteristics that enhance trust, whereas betrayal of expectations is a common theme in the decline of trust. This study explores the lived experiences of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Using a phenomenological study design, the focus was on making meaning of the characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy and or restore trust between special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The outcome of the study can provide professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the meaning of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. The study delved into the lived experiences and focused on the characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy, and/or restore trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague. The outcome of the study provides professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships so that they can effectively serve the students that they work with. The central research question that guided this study was:

What are the role and value of trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague?

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was the most appropriate way to gain an in-depth perspective of the meaning of peoples' lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon, with the intention of describing the experience or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this research study explored the lived experiences of special education teachers and the role of trust with their paraprofessional colleague. Experiences specific to the building of trust and how it is sustained, destroyed, and restored were all part of the exploratory process in an effort to make meaning of the educators' perceived value and role of trust. Target groups with a minimum of four special education teachers and eight paraprofessionals were studied. This study provides insights that will improve current practice, so that teams of special education teachers and paraprofessionals can effectively serve the students with whom they work.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is metaphorically similar to that of a bridge, because the researcher has the responsibility of developing a description of the perceptions of several individuals' common experience of a concept or phenomenon. Moustakas (as cited in Creswell, 2013) states that the essence of a phenomenological study "consists of what they, (the researcher) experienced and how they experienced it" (p. 76). As researcher, I have an affinity towards this topic because of professional work experience.

As a former transition specialist who served transition aged students by working closely with multiple teams of special education teachers and paraprofessionals, I have observed multiple instances where the lack of trust caused conflict in the classroom, thus impacting the delivery of instruction to students. Examples include teams of teachers and paraprofessionals arguing in front of the students and parents; paraprofessionals telling teachers that they are not going to do what they have been asked to do; gossip, fist fights, outside mediators coming in to resolve the working conditions between teachers and paraprofessionals, and lastly special education teachers and or paraprofessionals calling out sick to avoid working with each other. These situations often cause a district to lose money because the time spent on resolving conflict meant that students were not having their needs met by the staff.

The researcher currently works as an education specialist for transition aged students in a Los Angeles County school district. The researcher services students who are transition-aged in an intellectually disabled, special day class. It is the researcher's responsibility to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) for all of the students on her caseload, and see to it that they are progressing towards and meeting their educational, vocational, independent living skills and social and emotional goals and

benchmarks. In addition, the researcher is responsible for supervising a team of seven paraprofessionals, developing classroom goals and guidelines, administering standardized tests, and developing and writing curriculum that aligns with the California State Content Standards in the areas of English Language Arts, Math, and Social Science.

I have first-hand knowledge of the benefits of having good working relationships with paraprofessionals. Moreover, I know how challenging work can be when a teacher has an antagonistic relationship with their paraprofessionals. I have witnessed multiple teachers complain that they do not personally hire, nor evaluate the paraprofessionals who are assigned to their perspective classrooms, however, teachers are charged with managing paraprofessionals workday. I have over 17 years of experience in the field of special education and after communicating with multiple colleagues on this topic; I am passionate about presenting solutions that will make numerous teams of special education teachers and paraprofessionals more effective.

Sources of Data

The groups that were targeted for this phenomenological study consisted of four special education teachers and eight paraprofessionals who work with transition aged students within various Los Angeles County school districts. Teachers had five years or more of experience and currently work with transition-aged students in a Special Day Classroom (SDC) setting. Additionally, all teachers hold a mild/moderate or a moderate/severe teaching credential. Given that this research study targets a very specific population who is well versed on the phenomenon of trust, and its role and value in teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague, purposeful sampling and maximum variation sampling was the best sampling approach.

Purposeful sampling was utilized because the researcher intentionally selected individuals based on their depth of knowledge of the subject matter, in an effort to learn and understand the role and value of trust between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague. Moreover, the researcher used the purposeful sampling, snowball approach which allowed the researcher to ask participating special education teachers and paraprofessionals to recommend other professionals after the study began to ensure that an adequate sample size was used.

Lastly, the researcher used maximum variation sampling to differentiate the criteria for participant selection based on the geographic location that participants work in, as well as the years of experience. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals in each of the following groups were targeted: five to ten years of experience, eleven to twenty years of experience, and thirty plus years of experience. Although no specific school district or school was identified in the study, special education teachers and paraprofessionals who work in different geographical areas of Los Angeles County were targeted. More specifically, the researcher targeted special education teachers and paraprofessionals who work in school districts on the Westside of Los Angeles, in South Central Los Angeles, in the Wilshire District of Los Angeles and in East Los Angeles.

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

Special education teachers were initially identified to participate in the research study; subsequently two paraprofessionals per special education teacher interviewed were recruited. The data were obtained through individual semi-structured interviews with the target groups of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Face-to-face interviews was the best method of data collection to gain insight into the meaning of the lived experiences of the role and value

of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague. Furthermore, open-ended questions allowed participants to best voice their varied experiences in the form of personal stories.

Interview Protocol

A semi structured interview process was used to guide the exploration of the individual's lived experience and to ensure the desired topics were included within the interview process. Members of each target group were interviewed on an individual basis via face-to-face. Additionally, interviewing each member of the target groups separately enabled each participant to freely express varied perspectives on how they make meaning of the role and value of trust with their special education colleague, in a confidential forum. Each interview started off by thanking the participants for their willingness to participate in this research study. Then I described the purpose of the study, the time needed to interview them, my plans for utilizing the data, as well as offered them a copy of the transcribed interview. Every participant declined a copy of the transcribed interview.

In an effort to maximize anonymity, I only referred to the participants by their title and or pseudonym during all interviews so that their legal names were not included in the audio recordings. Participants who were recruited were asked to explain the type of classroom and population of students that they currently work with, as well as their years of experience. A script guided the researcher through of a brief description of the research study, as well as reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was asked thirteen open-ended questions that are specific to their job title of special education teacher or paraprofessional. At the end of the interview process, the researcher sought out additional participants from each special education teacher and paraprofessional. Lastly, I thanked each

participant, reminded him/her of the confidentiality measures that were in place to secure his/her identity as well as his/her responses, and informed him/her of potential future interviews to fill in missing information. The researcher did not need to secure future interviews.

The specific interview questions were developed by the researcher based on an extensive review of the literature about trust. To ensure validity of the interview questions, two experts in the field of special education reviewed the questions through a content validation process. The following two sets of questions guided the interviews and provided the relevant information to gain insight into the lived experiences of the special education teachers and paraprofessionals.

Special Education Teacher Interview Questions

1. Consider your current classroom setting, student needs, and the working relationship with your current paraprofessional; tell me a story about a time that you have experienced trust with a paraprofessional?
2. Tell me a story about why is it important to have trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional colleague?
3. Tell me a story about a time when you have observed characteristics and behaviors of a competent paraprofessional?
4. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to build trust with a paraprofessional?
5. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have destroyed your trust with a paraprofessional?
6. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to sustain trust with a paraprofessional?

7. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to restore lost trust with a paraprofessional colleague?
8. What are some characteristics that a trustworthy paraprofessional has?
9. Tell me a story about a time when you had to rely on your ability to trust a paraprofessional?
10. Tell me a story about an instance where you have felt trusted by a paraprofessional?
11. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with past paraprofessional colleagues impacted your ability to trust current and future paraprofessional colleagues?
12. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with a current or past paraprofessional colleague, influenced your ability to do your job?
13. Tell me a story about a time when having trust with a current or past paraprofessional colleague, influenced your ability to do your job?

Paraprofessional Interview Questions

1. Consider your current classroom setting, student needs, and the working relationship with your current special education teacher; tell me a story about a time that you have experienced trust with a special education teacher?
2. Tell me a story about why is it important to have trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional colleague?
3. Tell me a story about a time when you have observed characteristics and behaviors of a competent special education teacher?
4. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to build trust with a special education teacher?
5. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and

- characteristics that have destroyed your trust with a special education teacher?
6. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to sustain trust with a special education teacher?
 7. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to restore lost trust with a special education teacher?
 8. What are some characteristics that a trustworthy special education teacher has?
 9. Tell me a story about a time when you had to rely on your ability to trust a special education teacher?
 10. Tell me a story about an instance where you have felt trusted by a special education teacher?
 11. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with past special education teacher impacted your ability to trust current and future special education teachers?
 12. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with a current or past special education teacher, influenced your ability to do your job?
 13. Tell me a story about a time when having trust with a current or past special education teacher, influenced your ability to do your job?

Experts who are special education professionals with a minimum of ten years in the field were targeted for the content validation panel. The special education teacher possessed a mild/moderate and a moderate/severe special education credential. The special education teacher had over twenty years of experience working in a special day class with a paraprofessional for a minimum of five years. Both the special education teacher and the paraprofessional had experience working with students who are sixteen years old or older. They each had an opportunity to review the proposed set of interview questions and offer feedback on whether or

not they believed that the protocol was valid and that the interview questions would lead to an answer of the research question. The paraprofessional did not have any feedback on the interview questions; however, the special education teacher stated that the last three questions were extremely relevant. None of the questions were altered as a result of the expert feedback.

Sampson (as cited in Creswell, 2014) asserts that “pilot testing helps to develop and refine research instruments, assess the degrees of observer bias, frame questions, collect background information, and adapt research procedures” (p. 165). A pilot study with at least one teacher was conducted to ensure reliability of the interview protocol (see Appendix A and Appendix B). The special education teacher who participated in the pilot process possessed a mild/moderate special education credential with an autism authorization. This process gave the researcher valuable practice and feedback that was incorporated into the actual study interviews.

Human Subjects Considerations

This study presented no more than a minimal risk to participants and involved adult subjects only. An application for exempt research status was submitted to the Pepperdine University Graduate School’s Institutional Review Board (GSP IRB) and approved prior to the start of data collection (see Appendix C). According to Bailey (as cited by Kumar, 2011), causing harm to a research participant can include, “such things as discomfort, anxiety, harassment, invasion of privacy, or demeaning or dehumanizing procedures” (p. 245). There is minimal risk to the special education teachers and paraprofessionals who partook in this study, because they had the option to withdraw if they felt discomfort without any repercussions, moreover, the researcher only used participants who volunteered and agreed to participate in the study. During the recruitment phase, multiple prospects stated that they were uncomfortable talking about trust with the researcher. Those prospects were not used and their statements were

kept confidential. This study qualifies for exemption under CFR 46.101(b), category two because the research was conducted in an established educational setting. Moreover, the research explored the role and value of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague. Interviews with special education teachers and paraprofessionals explored their experiences regarding characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy and/or restore trust in their work with special education students.

During the interview process, participant names were not utilized. Moreover, the data were kept in confidential files under anonymous names. Also the benefits of participating in this study outweighed the risks. One risk that could have potentially happened is that the participants may have felt discomfort or anxiety talking about their perception of the role and value of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague if there was limited trust between the two of them, or if they have had disagreements in the past. Yet, participants of this study worked in various school districts across Los Angeles County so no specific school district or school site was named in the study. As a result, permission from a specific school district and or site was not needed and participants will remain anonymous.

Individual participants were provided with informed consent though no signature was obtained to ensure no document with identifying information was gathered (see Appendix D). Additionally, each participant remained anonymous in the data storing process, as each one was assigned an aliases name. Data collected in the interviews were put into a data collection matrix under alias names and stored on a locked computer. All audio recordings of the interviews were stored on a locked computer hard drive. All files will be deleted three years after the anonymous findings were reported.

Lastly, the researcher has a longstanding work history in the field of special education in Los Angeles County and assumes that the participants trusted the researcher to maintain confidentiality with their responses by not using the information to adversely impact their working relationships within the district. Participants were offered a copy of their transcribed interview so that they could strike any comments they consider to place them at risk of employability or professional standing. None of the participants wanted to see a copy of their transcript.

Data Analysis Process

Creswell (2014) presents a simplified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of narrative analysis that was utilized for this study as it provided a general template and structure in phenomenological analysis and representation. Through bracketing, the researcher emphasized biases and experiences with the role and value of trust between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague, yet set them aside so that the researcher could fully engage in the research process. The researcher's experiences and biases are included in the final research paper so that readers are fully aware of any personal bias as well as professional experience that the researcher brings to the table. All interviews were transcribed and any personal identifying information was removed. Individuals were given a pseudonym, and a master list linking the coded transcripts to the individuals was maintained and stored separately to ensure confidentiality.

A thematic analysis was conducted on the verbatim words expressed by participants about the role and value of trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional. An initial codebook which included themes identified from the literature was made. Other themes emerged from the data. The coded data were grouped by thematic categories. Next, the

researcher analyzed various instances on how trust was experienced. The final step included instances from the data on how the role and value of trust was experienced; Creswell (2014) refers to this as a composite description of the phenomenon that incorporates both textural and structural descriptions. To support a reliable process, qualitative software (HyperResearch) was used to document the coding process and support the interpretation process.

Means to Ensure Study Validity

Several validation strategies suggested by Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Kumar, 2011) provided trustworthiness in this qualitative study as determined by four indicators: “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (pp. 184-185). Furthermore, Kumar (2011) asserts that these four indicators reflect validity and reliability in a qualitative study.

Credibility. Kumar (2011) asserts that credibility is to qualitative research, what validity is to quantitative research. The researcher took several steps to ensure credibility with the research study. The researcher has years of experience in the field of special education, thus knows the culture of special education teachers working with paraprofessionals in a SDC setting. Stating and clarifying researcher bias that helps to shape the interpretation of the data was one way to establish validity. Before conducting interviews, the researcher validated the interview protocol with experts in the field of special education; one special education teacher and one paraprofessional assisted in this process.

The researcher also engaged in a pilot of the interview as well as had a reliable interpretation process. During the interview process, the researcher asked for clarification to confirm the understanding of what participants stated during their interview session. This process is one of four that assisted in giving my findings validity.

Transferability. Trochim and Donnelly (as cited by Kumar, 2011) describe transferability as “the degree to which the results of a research study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings” (p. 185). Transferability usually takes place when a researcher comprehensively describes his/her research process in a way that the study can be easily duplicated (Kumar, 2011). The step-by-step processes of this research study are described in in-depth detail so that others would be able to easily replicate the study, if they wished.

Dependability. Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Kumar, 2011) assert that dependability in a qualitative study is similar to what reliability is in a quantitative study (p. 185). To ensure the reliability and dependability of this study, the expert panel evaluated and ranked each interview question in one of the following categories: (a) valid, (b) modify, or (c) remove. One member of the expert panel asserted that the last three interview questions were extremely relevant, however, neither member of the expert panel suggested modifications or removal of any questions.

Confirmability. Creswell (2013) states that Guba and Lincoln’s (as cited by Kumar, 2011) perspective on validation and reliability in a research study is one of the most popular perspectives used in qualitative studies to date. Kumar (2011) asserts that confirmability in qualitative research is similar to reliability in quantitative research and it only possible if both researchers follow the process in an identical manner for the results to be compared” (p. 185). I have clearly defined my unique sample population, and I gathered ample data to the point of saturation so that the likelihood of having similar results with other participants who are special education teachers and paraprofessionals is high.

Presentation of Findings and Study Conclusions

The findings from the data are presented thematically using descriptive language, and verbatim quotes from the participant interviews. Tables also provide graphic representations. Interpretation of findings and study conclusions are presented in the final chapter of the manuscript. Implications for the field of special education are discussed, along with recommendations for further studies. It is the researcher's hope that the lessons learned from exploring the role and value of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleague will translate to team dynamics in other industries.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the meaning of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. The study delved into the lived experiences and focused on the characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy and or restore trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague. This chapter presents the demographic findings, as well as the analysis of the face-to-face interviews responses of four special education teachers and eight paraprofessional participants.

Demographic Findings

Twelve individuals participated in the study. Each worked within a Los Angeles County school district and had at least five years of experience working in special education and in a special day class setting (see Table 3).

Table 3

Special Education Teacher and Paraprofessional Participant Demographics

Participant Code	Title	School Location	Years of Experience	Gender	Educational Level
T1	Teacher	South LA	12	Female	Doctorate
T2	Teacher	East LA	16	Male	BA
T3	Teacher	West LA	35	Female	BA
T4	Teacher	West LA	27	Male	Masters
P1	Paraprofessional	West LA	22	Female	BA
P2	Paraprofessional	West LA	5	Male	BA
P3	Paraprofessional	West LA	6	Female	BA
P4	Paraprofessional	South LA	24	Female	High School Graduate
P5	Paraprofessional	East LA	31	Male	BA
P6	Paraprofessional	South LA	18	Female	AA
P7	Paraprofessional	Wilshire District	7	Male	Masters
P8	Paraprofessional	South LA	7	Female	Masters

Of the four special education teachers participating, two work in West Los Angeles, one works in South Central Los Angeles, and one works in East Los Angeles. Of the eight paraprofessionals participating, three work in West Los Angeles, two work in South Central Los Angeles, two work in the Wilshire District, and one works in East Los Angeles.

The years of experience and educational levels varied among the participants. The special education teachers had a range of 23 (12-35) years of experience, with paraprofessionals also having a wide range of 26 (5-31) years of experience. The educational levels of the special education teachers ranged from holding a baccalaureate degree to a doctorate. The paraprofessionals' educational level ranged from being a high school graduate, to two of them having master's degrees. Two male and two female special education teachers were interviewed, while five female and three male paraprofessionals participated in the study (see Table 6).

Qualitative Interview Findings

This qualitative phenomenological study focused on the following central research question that guided the study:

What are the role and value of trust between a special education teacher and his/her paraprofessional colleague?

Both special education teachers and paraprofessionals participated in semi-structured face-to-face, recorded interviews that consisted of thirteen questions. Participants expressed their varied perspectives on how they make meaning of the role and value of trust with their special education colleagues. The twelve interviews produced 165 coded passages that were grouped into the following eight themes: (a) characteristics of a trustworthy colleague, (b) importance of trust, (c) outcome of trust, (d) outcome of a lack of trust, (e) building trust, (f) sustaining trust, (g) destroying trust and (h) restoring trust. Subthemes were identified within each theme with

some themes having common subthemes. Each theme with associated subthemes are presented below including some participant quotes. Tables 9-16 list the themes and significant subthemes emerging from the data.

Theme 1: Characteristics of a Trustworthy Colleague

The special education teachers were asked, “What are some characteristics that a trustworthy paraprofessional has?” Similarly, the paraprofessionals were asked, “What are some characteristics that a trustworthy special education teacher has?” Seven subthemes emerged: (a) communication, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) supportive, (e) trusting, (f) consistent, (g) honest (h) team player and (i) student centered learning. Table 4 lists the themes and subthemes.

Table 4

Characteristics of a Trustworthy Colleague

Characteristics of a Trustworthy Colleague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Reliable • Competent • Supportive • Trusting • Consistent • Honest • Team Player • Student Centered Learning

Communication. Many participants shared that communication was a characteristic of a trustworthy colleague. Colleagues who were better communicators were viewed as more competent and trustworthy. One paraprofessional participant reported:

You need to know that things are clearly communicated, and that what you're doing, there is a mutual understanding between everyone in the classroom and the lead teacher is the one, the special education teacher, is the one that runs the ship. (P7)

A special education teacher participant stated:

And then you know the basic things of any good employee. Be on time. If you're going to be out, let me know. I don't care if you're going to go on a date, or if you're ill. But if you're not coming in, let me know. If you disagree with me, or with what the teacher or whatever is doing, then say so and don't bottle it in. (T3)

Reliable. All of the special education teachers noted that they are often out of the classroom and therefore they must have a reliable paraprofessional that they can depend on in their absence. One special education teacher participant stated: “ Just one that’s there on time, one that you can trust not only with the students, maybe the data collection.” (T2) Another special education teacher participant discussed how she depends on one of her paraprofessionals in her absence:

So I know that if I’m out, like I’m going to be out tomorrow at a training, and if I don't have a good sub even though I wrote all the things I want done tomorrow, and I talked to all my paras, I know that she will make sure that they're working. I know that she, because I’ve seen her do that. She does not, even if I’m busy doing something, she'll make sure that each student has something to work. So I really do depend on her quite a bit. (T3)

None of the paraprofessional participants discussed reliability as a characteristic of being trustworthy.

Competent. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals both indicated that being competent is a necessary characteristic of being trustworthy. Comments from paraprofessionals include, “Yes by working with a competent special education teacher. (P6) Another paraprofessional stated, “They're knowledge-based of the children that they're teaching. They go beyond the textbook. A really good teacher knows their product and they know how to deliver to their product. (P5) Similarly the special education teachers stated, “Know when something needs to be done, how it needs to be done. (T2) Competency, meaning both the master teacher and the instructional assistant need to be competent at what they're doing. (T4)

Supportive. Responses from both special education teachers and paraprofessionals declared that being supportive is a necessary characteristic in being trustworthy. One paraprofessional highlights the importance of the special education teacher being supportive.

...if the teacher hadn't witnessed me doing the restraint holds correctly and then being there to support me by saying yes he is doing these restraints correctly, and yes they're warranted, that was actually hugely important because some parent says that you injured my kid because you were restraining him and the teacher doesn't have my back, then I could be in a lot of trouble. (P2)

Echoing similar sentiments, another paraprofessional stated:

You know often times we have say, disruptions during class, and things happen between you and the student, not so much as a major thing, but just sort of when you're reprimanding a child, you have to write up a child and you're totally dependent and relying on the teacher and how they convey it to an administrator and things are portrayed. (P3)

Special education teachers shared: "I see that they are very supportive of me. (T3)

My first year here, I had the most wonderful instructional assistant who had been here for 19 years. And one of my students had got up in her face. And she was an older woman and I don't want to say I came to her rescue but I supported her wholeheartedly. And her comments to the student were appropriate and fitting and what have you, and I think he was looking to split staff, and when the student didn't get that, I felt that she trusted me from that day on for the rest of her life. (T4)

Trusting. Multiple paraprofessional participants urged that being trusting is a characteristic of a trustworthy person.

And there's got to be a certain amount of trust to do the job. Special education is very intricate. A lot of things are out of the norm because you're dealing with children that have problems that you don't see on a daily basis. You really have to search your resources to accomplish a positive result. And because you're a teacher, it's not going to mean you are going to have all of the resources. But if you have the characteristics where you can trust, you can delegate, you can acquire those through learning with people who have those skills and you can incorporate those skills where they become your skills and make you a better teacher. (P5)

I think it shows trust if the teacher tries to help a paraprofessional be better at their job before just writing the person off. Like giving them pointers and feedback on how to improve what they're doing. I think that shows a lot of trust. (P2)

I can't really go in specific because there have been a number of incidents, like say a child on a phone, child on a computer, a student disrespecting you, saying vulgar words, so those are kind of certain things. I mean you have one kid where when you come up and say do you need help? And they just turn around and say get out of my effing face, and then you know the teacher has to write it up and you kind of try to settle that kid down saying that's really inappropriate and then the teacher will step in and then you know have to write it up, and then, I have to trust this teacher to convey that because obviously he's going to report that to administration because the child is getting reprimanded for it. So I have to trust that person to convey to the right things. (P3)

One special education teachers echoed similar thoughts:

But I think, trust actually, that's what it is. I have to have trust to know that every article that in here is going to stay in here. That the camera that I have in the bottom drawer and my label maker isn't going to disappear. That the money that we have in the file cabinet, in a calendar, my old calendar, is going to remain there. (T3)

Consistent. Having the ability to be consistent is one subtheme that emerged when participants were asked to identify characteristics of a trustworthy colleague. Participant P3 declared, “Someone who doesn't say one thing, turns around does another, or tries to get information from you and use it against you.” Yet participant (P7) stated, “consistency is very important.” In addition, one special education teacher participant declared, “All the adults that I have in my room are all pretty consistent, focused on instruction.” (T4)

Honest. Multiple participants noted that being honest is a necessity when one is considering characteristics of a trustworthy special education colleague. One paraprofessional mentioned:

Well the first thing is you just tell the truth to the person you're working with. Not to a superior or some other paraprofessional just talking to the person face to face about anything that is an issue or even if it's not an issue and it's something that you see that you like. It's just telling the truth to that person's face. (P2)

Another paraprofessional listed being honest as a characteristic. Participant (P5) stated, “Not so much to be honest with you, but to be honest with themselves, to know their strengths and their

shortcomings.” Likewise participant (T1) shared, “honest.” While participant (T3) stated, “I think being open. I think mostly being honest.”

Team player. Both paraprofessionals and special education teachers believe that being a team player is a characteristic of being a trustworthy special education colleague. Participant (P2) stated, “Try to help you get better at so we can function as a unit.” While participant (T2) declared, “Working with the community.” Additionally, another teacher stated:

When it's trust, it's a team. You need a team, especially in special needs. There are so many different cognitive levels, but emotional levels and they're just all over. And I can't reach all of them. So again, it goes back to teamwork and everybody trusts. I let them tell me. I said this is what we normally do, what would you like to do just in case? And I think that all comes with the teamwork. The person who spoke up the most is the one person that I trust the least, and she was the one that said the most. And I want to go by what she wants to do because then I know that she'll be engaged and an even more active participant with them. (T3)

Student centered learning. Participants from both groups expressed that student centered learning is a characteristic of a trustworthy special education colleague. One paraprofessional stated, “A trustworthy special education teacher is somebody that knows the strengths and weaknesses of the students and doesn't group them all, force them all together knowing that they might have different behavior outlets.” (P1) Two additional paraprofessionals expressed:

But the kids were still challenged, so she kind of knew each student's limitations but she still pushed them. So every day we had one through six, so if a student had a, say they went to a general ed elective, that would be one of the times she didn't have the student but it was consistent every day. So like after snack they could leave but then as soon as they got back from their general ed class, ok I'm working on this skill. And she had like thirteen kids in her classroom and somehow managed to keep each kids' needs and skill levels separate and pushing them forward. (P2)

I just liked the fact that he would get up in front of the class and actually teach as opposed to showing a video, an educational video, or understanding that in order to gain skills and knowledge you have to teach the skills so that's why he was one of the most competent teachers that I've worked with. One of! He's just a strong teacher. I believed the kids learned with him. (P4)

When discussing her paraprofessional, Participant T3 mentioned, “She does not like to see that the kids are not doing something.” Lastly, one special education teacher stated, “...focused on instruction, always here, always available, or as much as we possible could in a high school setting.” (T4)

Theme 2: Importance of Trust

The following questions; “Tell me a story about why is it important to have trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional colleague? Tell me a story about a time when you had to rely on your ability to trust a special education teacher? Lastly, tell me a story about a time when you had to rely on your ability to trust a paraprofessional?” produced one theme with four subthemes: (a) communication, (b) safety, (c) impact on students, (d) teachers are liable and (e) student centered learning (see Table 5).

Table 5

Importance of Trust

Importance of Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Safety • Impact on Students • Teachers are Liable • Student Centered Learning
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Communication. One paraprofessional mentioned communication as being important to trust. Participant (P7) stated, “You need to know that things are clearly communicated.” Another mentioned:

I think the teacher and the para ed should be on the same page when it comes to providing services for the kids that we take care of. If there’s no stress or if we don’t communicate it won’t work out. (P8)

Paraprofessionals were the only participants to mention communication when asked about the importance of trust.

Safety. Paraprofessional participants felt that trust was important when a student is physically attacking their colleague. Two noted:

I remember there was on particular incident, I believe it was my second day in the classroom and I wasn't really familiar, with um the ILS population because I had been working more in the SDC and RSP. So it was a little bit different, but I wasn't quite aware of their um extent of behaviors and I believe it was my second day here and a student started biting the teacher and the teeth were drawing blood from her arms. And my first reaction was to take this child off but I didn't because she gave me a signal to just back off, hold off and to just call admin while he was still attacking her. So I had to develop that trust that she knew what she was doing, where my reaction was going to be like to help her first. (P1)

There was a situation where it was only a student and I. We had to evacuate the classroom. And the special education teacher was a long-term sub. I was trusting in her to help me because it became a physical situation where the student was very combative. Having to maintain the safety of the teacher, myself, and obviously the student. Having to trust that the special education teacher would understand what our goals were and that it was common. It was imperative that I could trust that she would make the decision that would be best suited for whatever the child's needs were. (P7)

Impact on students. Responses from one paraprofessional participant highlight the belief that trust is important because students can pick up on staff conflict.

I believe that the students benefit when it's a team effort. Because the students can feel and see that you are working as a team. And they can see the trust and they can see and hear in conversation and the overall daily duties. So I think it's important for the students' growth, not personally, just for the students. (P4)

Teachers are liable. The response from one special education teacher participant illustrates the lens of teachers being liable for everything that happens in their classroom.

It's important because when it comes down to it, you're responsible for everything that goes on in the classroom. So you need to rely on your paras or paraprofessionals in order once again to continue running the program if you're not there, to provide support and kind of like be the eyes and the ears to classroom as well when you're not there or when you're set up in small groups for them to continue education with the kids. (T2)

Student centered learning. Both paraprofessional and special education teacher participants indicated that student centered learning is important when it comes to their ability to trust. One paraprofessional stated, "...having that trust actually alleviates a lot of stress off of the student."(P1) Another paraprofessional stated, "I think the most important reason is, the goal is to educate the child."(P5) One teacher shared, "But in this situation now, you have some students that maybe cannot speak for themselves, or that maybe are nonverbal, so my assumption is that all my paraeducators are here because they want to do well." (T3)

Theme 3: Outcome of Trust

The participants were asked the following questions as they relate to the outcome of having trust, "Tell me a story about an instance where you have felt trusted by a paraprofessional? Tell me a story about an instance where you have felt trusted by a special education teacher? Tell me a story about a time when having trust with a current or past paraprofessional colleague, influenced your ability to do your job? Additionally, Tell me a story about a time when having trust with a current or past special education teacher, influenced your ability to do your job?" The following theme with six subthemes emerged: (a) communication, (b) student success (c) using others strength (d) learning from each other (e) pleasant environment and (f) valued (see Table 6).

Table 6

Outcome of Trust

Outcome of Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Student Success • Using Others Strengths • Learning From Each Other • Pleasant Environment • Valued
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Communication. Participants noted that one outcome of trust is communication. One paraprofessional participant stated:

I think when you're in a situation, if you have a child who is constantly having certain issues and the teacher will say hey, you know I think this would work out better for you this way and that way, and it seems to work, and then will communicate to you in a manner where it's sort of giving you advice instead of trying to take over the situation, or even taking over the situation and just trying to give you advice on how to correct the situation without completely criticizing you in a way where you're not doing your job right, or what not. But if someone says hey let me show you this is a better way to do it, I think a lot of it always has to do with the tone and how you express yourself or execute what you want to say. (P3)

Student success. Over ten participants indicated that student success is an outcome of trust. One paraprofessional stated, "...you can get that student to do a lot more if the teacher just trust that the best placement for that student is with you."(P1) Another mentioned, "Well I think the most important reason is, the goal is to educate the child." (P5) Lastly two special education teachers declared, "It makes the students more relaxed also." (T2) "As long as the trust is that they are here to help build the program, build the students...." (T3)

Using others' strengths. Responses from two special education teachers reflected their belief that one outcome of having trust is that they use the strengths of their paraprofessionals in the classroom.

I have a great staff that, what I try to do is, I try to talk to different people. Different people have different interests. I work in a transition class. So I myself do not know how cook that well. I find out what staff has different skills, either with baking, or just mixing, or just making meals. And I work with those staff to talk to them about maybe giving a lesson. So as they're agreeing or as they're volunteering, the students for one, get a lesson on a certain meal or a snack, or whatever they're doing. I myself pick up on different techniques or different things in order to duplicate that lesson maybe later on in the future. One of my paraprofessionals is doing a Zumba class right now. The students enjoy it. They love it. I put it sometimes in the place of APE (adapted physical education) or just to add it on to APE so that's a skill that allows me to give the students something they wouldn't have in other settings or maybe in other classes. So I try to work with the skills that my staff have. If somebody knows how to be artistic, decorating, a lot of that goes on in our classrooms whether you're in preschool all the way to transition. (T2)

I'm dry and boring. And especially for my lower functioning students, they don't need dry and boring. They need somebody more animated. And she's the perfect person. Some of them want that immature giddy person, so having that para, that somebody that they can relate to or feel more comfortable with while they build a rapport with me. She's just gifted with writing. I'll even ask her to help me. (T3)

Learning from each other. Some of the participants felt that one outcome of trust is that colleagues learn from each other. Participant T2 shared, "Brainstorming helps the whole classroom, helps develop lessons, helps develop maybe even behavioral plans. Students doing something bad, I can't come up with something, one of my paras might have a good idea. So interchanging information." Similarly, Paraprofessional P4 suggested that one outcome of trust is that they learn from the special education teacher. "And just learning from good motivational teachers."

Pleasant environment. A few paraprofessionals declared that a pleasant environment is one outcome of trust between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague.

I worked with such a happy perky teacher and I used to always say how to do you come to work every morning so perky and you drive so far. And she's like [redacted] it's just me. And when you're in an environment where somebody is happy and doesn't bring their baggage to work, it makes you that way. So it just made, when I worked with this particular teacher it made our days better because she was always happy to be there. No matter what was going on in her own life, she came and she didn't show it. It just makes you want to work harder for someone like that. (P4)

It just magnifies everything in a positive way. It's like watching something grow from seed to a bud to a full plant. It creates a certain amount of elation. It drives you to get up in the morning and smile like the sun's on your face. It's almost magic, it's spiritual because you feel good. (P5)

Also, Participant P6 stated, "It makes me not have to second guess, like am I making the right decision. Or should I do this or should I do that and all this other stuff." Lastly, special education teacher Participant T1 shared, "It just makes the atmosphere in the classroom more pleasant to work. And when you can trust somebody you're just more relaxed."

Valued. Multiple paraprofessional participants expressed that being valued was an outcome of trust.

...and then also in a sense of your opinion being valuable to them as well, which is really important. So oftentimes when you handle a certain situation like kids where especially when teachers aren't around and they basically trust you with the child because they know that you're going to do what you're supposed to. (P3)

Participant P4 shared, "When somebody says they appreciate you, because it's hard work mentally. It might not be physical all the time but it's mentally hard work." Similarly (P5) said, "What was important is I learned how to be human and to speak to people as if they matter, as if they are valued, not as if they are test tube cases for some sort of research."

When the teacher was out for the day, she gave us all of the information and gave us the lesson plan and told us everything that was going on rather than just leaving a note for the substitute teacher. And she gave us a lot of information. (P6)

Having trust? Well I think the teacher that allowed me to start the little planting, giving me that trust and then um allowing me to just take students without being monitored, it was just you know the bell would ring, we would get our cans, the students already knew what they were doing, and we went from one planter, to two planters, and it became like a really big thing. Because they planted so many plants that one season we had such an abundance that on Friday's we would pick the amounts that we were going to use, they would go and take a basket to the administration building and then they could ask people to pick like their carrots and corn and everything else so I think having that trust of knowing that I could lead an activity, week to week without having to say like, hey it's time for the farm it was just like automatic that she just gave that to me in my hands. It's very important because there are many times when the teacher is actually not with the student or maybe your in an individual setting such as recycling or you're on the track and there's different activities going on or you're like on a fieldtrip... (P1)

There's been a few times recently actually. Last year when I was trusted to be alone dealing with a student who was having, let's say a bout of stubbornness and was not willing to cooperate. I was trusted that I could do my job in keeping the student safe and in a calm environment. I can't remember the specifics why the student wasn't behaving but it just felt good to know that I was trusted to do my job efficiently. And then the other thing is just letting the person do their job. I feel like if I got hired to do this job, I got hired for a reason. It means I can do it, and I feel like it should be allowed to do it until something is wrong, maybe you see something specific that you want changed but it's like, let me do my job. Recently a student was unwilling to do a particular task, and I was able to have the student do the task after several different types of prompting, whether it was verbal, gestural, full physical with hand over hand, and the teacher allowed me to use

overcorrection, which I basically made the student do the task several times in a row because she refused to do it the first time, and the teacher is in the room, she witnessed me using overcorrection procedure, which I know some people don't like but frankly I think it's incredibly effective, so and the teacher didn't intervene on my using overcorrection, which makes me think that the teacher trusts me to do my job and knows what I'm talking about and knows how to do my job. The interesting part about that is I had to work with each individual teacher that the kid had in class and kind of be like well how much do you want me to intervene and how much discipline did you want me to handle and that kind of thing. But the case manager knew that I was capable and trusted me to handle those things in a professional way. (P2)

Similarly to the paraprofessional participants, some of the special education teachers expressed comparable sentiments.

Yeah I was caught in Europe and I couldn't get back. I was out for ten days, unplanned. We got caught when the volcano went off so I was out of my class for ten days. I had to ultimately trust them. I think for them, for the instructional assistant, they have to be able to trust the master teacher to allow them to be paraprofessionals. Not to micromanage or not do everything themselves. (T4)

So I miss a lot of time with IEPs so I'm leaving the class frequently at least 3 to 4 times each month, sometimes for an hour, sometimes for three hours. And I just rely on my paras to continue working with the students. (T2)

Theme 4: Outcome of a Lack of Trust

The following questions, "Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with a current or past special education teacher, influenced your ability to do your job? Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with a current or past paraprofessional, influenced your ability to do your job?" These questions produced the following themes and subthemes: (a) disagrees with how a colleague handles a situation, (b) hostile environment, (c) negatively impacts students, (d) passive aggressive and (e) drains energy (see Table 7).

Table 7

Outcome of a Lack of Trust

Outcome of a Lack of Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagrees With How a Colleague Handles a Situation • Hostile Environment • Negatively Impacts Students • Passive Aggressive Behavior • Drains Energy
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Disagrees with how a colleague handles a situation. Three paraprofessionals believed that a lack of trust causes them to disagree with how a special education teacher handles a situation.

I think that as a special education teacher, I think that you should have the knowledge of certain disabilities. I think there are some times that some teachers can address kids in a way where you kind of go, wait that doesn't make sense. Or comments that have been made like, I don't know why this student's still here, why the student is taking this class again. You're the one (the paraprofessional) who's creating her grade to be inflated, and the fact that there would be more room for other kids, instead of having this child in there. So to hear something like that, it just, for me it's hard to trust that person's view and opinion of people to make that kind of comment on someone who is not quite to par with the other kids. I think that sometimes when you come in to an environment, some teachers think that they have a certain way to get info from a child or make a child do what they want them to. But in fact I think you know the student better, and that teacher will do a certain way to the point where actually that child becomes frustrated with that teacher and sometimes you just got to set aside after the fact and try to correct what had happened and tried to change the situation per say. Certain teachers will kind of push at kids and doing certain things and it's not the way they perform. (P3)

I've worked in a room where the adult was clearly not prepared for the students that were in there. And the lack of judgment calls that they had done on multiple occasions made me feel insecure about when something would happen because that threw off the whole chain of the way we handled the situation. (P7)

Hostile environment. The special education teachers were the only participants that stated that a hostile environment was an outcome of a lack of trust.

Well I've had a few staff in the past where we've had conflicts, either I had a problem with the way they worked with the students, or a problem on the delivery of the materials or the task; and we've had words. Sometimes it comes to the point where you do your

seven or eight hours, you go home, and there's not too much interaction with the paraprofessionals. (T2)

Special education participant (T3) mentioned, "You could feel there was tension in the air."

While (T1) stated, "The paraprofessionals can make your job easy or difficult."

Negatively impacts students. Both special education teacher and paraprofessional participants indicated that a lack of trust negatively impacts students. One teacher stated:

And then what ends up happening is that it does carry on with the kids. It goes to a point where if we were reprimanding a particular kid, then they would find a way to reprimand someone else. If they knew that we, maybe there was some kids that maybe we talked more to, or what not, or they thought we did. Then they would find fault in what they did. We saw a lot of that going on. It was weird. At some point, they were with the Mexican kids. They really did everything for the Mexican kids. And they kind of ignored my black kids. And then it kind of turned where all of the sudden they would pick one of two of the black kids that they were close to. (T3)

Similarly one paraprofessional participant declared:

I think that these kids, although they have disabilities, they can feel that there would be like that tension or that sense of superiority, that sense, um and I think that in many occasions I could tell right away that maybe these students have like an inner fear of certain personalities, and they cannot flourish because even though they have a bond with someone else, this person will always dictate who they can socialize with and I think that's very oppressive. (P1)

Passive aggressive behavior. Participants from both groups declared that passive aggressive behavior is an outcome of a lack of trust. One paraprofessional shared:

The only teacher I've ever lost trust with while I'm working with, I still kind of have to work with and I still don't really trust, which makes it kind of, I don't want to say, it's not hostile, there's no arguing or anything, but there's a certain amount of passive aggressive behavior towards me, which makes it even harder to trust this person. (P2)

The special education teacher stated:

So instead of her being very intuitive, which she is very intuitive about my needs, she's choosing to be very passive aggressive in regards to her behavior. Now she will just sit there in the classroom, let the kid AWOL, and not do a thing. Or she will sit at her desk and not do anything. She will not comment to me. She will not say hello. She will not direct a conversation in my direction. So things like that have made it very uncomfortable

for me in my own classroom. So therefore, it makes it difficult for me to perform my duties sometimes. (T1)

Drains energy. One paraprofessional stated on multiple instances:

Having a lack of trust can drain you. It makes you work harder and then it stresses you out. It makes you work harder for the kids but at the end of the day it makes your days go by longer. (P4)

Theme 5: Characteristics that Build Trust

The special education participants were asked, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to build trust with a paraprofessional?” The paraprofessional participants were asked, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to build trust with a special education teacher?” The following theme and subthemes emerged: (a) communication, (b) being treated like a competent professional, (c) build relationships (d) learning from each other and (e) seeking input from paraprofessional (see Table 8).

Table 8

Characteristics that Build Trust

Characteristics that Build Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Being Treated Like a Competent Professional • Build Relationships • Learning From Each Other • Seeking Input From Paraprofessional
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Communication. Many of the participants declared that communication is vital when building trust. Paraprofessional participant (P8) stated, “*I think communication is an important part of it. Communicating what you want, what you don't want from the instructional aide, where the lines are drawn.*” Another stated:

Very few paras are given the ability to communicate one on one with the parents so what happens at the house has a big effect on what happens in the classroom. So if the kid either had a very difficult weekend, say on a Monday, and the parent knows about it and the teacher knows about it, because usually the parents will communicate back and forth via email or to have a teacher explain to us the little things that they know can make our job much easier. If I know that one of my kids who didn't have enough sleep that evening or something traumatic happened, that they are going to need extra, maybe extra breaks, they may become a little extra aggressive. So in order to perceive possible issues, it's nice to have background, and the only way that you know is by someone telling you what they know. Or if something's happening, we are on our cell phones a lot, just texting each other, letting people know that, especially for a gen ED classroom with our kid, if there's an issue that's going on so that way if I bring my kid back to the class, when I leave to go on a break or lunch, then all the other adults know that there was an issue somewhere else, and to keep an eye out because that will trickle down for the rest of the day. (P7)

Similarly (P8) stated, "Communicate with your team." A special education teacher echoed similar sentiments:

To build trust, I think in my classroom and having five paras, I knew it would be hard and I knew I could not, I would not function well in here if I didn't have some kind of better rapport with them, so what I started doing last year is, I started having meetings on Fridays towards the end, about 20 minutes before schools out and the students are going home. (T3)

Being treated like a competent adult. Participants felt that in order to build trust, their colleagues should treat them like a competent adult. One paraprofessional stated:

I think it was, he just wasn't in the mood to go clean up the cafeteria with the rest of his classmates and I was asked, what do you think? Should we push him on this or should we wait out his stubbornness? I don't remember exactly remember the outcome, but just the fact that I was asked my opinion on the situation makes me think that I'm trusted. (P2) When there's no ego in the room because you have a title of, just as there's many gifted teachers, there are many gifted paraeducators. And maybe teachers come from being a paraeducator. So I think when you're not titled-inclined, you can put aside egos, and you can learn from each other. (P5)

One special education teacher stated, "I don't stand on a pedestal. I keep saying that over and over and over." (T3)

Build relationships. One special education teacher participant shared a story of why building relationships, supports building trust with their special education colleague:

I just sat down with the paras and said, ok this is what's going on, do you have any issues in the classroom? Do you have any issues with any particular student? Are you having any issues with any parents? Are you having any with me? And then I asked the one on ones, can you tell us how we can help you make your job better? What are you doing for [redacted] so that she can walk better or that she doesn't do inappropriate gestures. So we can see what her behavioral plan is and how we can help her and not distract the kid or mess it up in any way. Because I wanted to build that rapport with them and build the trust. (T3)

Learning from each other. Two paraprofessional participants declared that they build trust with their special education colleague when they have the ability to learn from each other. They shared the following:

I think what helps you to build trust when each person knows they have something to offer and you can draw from somebody's strength as well as they are willing to draw from your strength. Everybody learns. Not just the student. But as an adult, as an educator, you also continue to learn. (P5)

Well when I first started working at [redacted] I didn't know anything. So I started working at different sites to gain knowledge of how [redacted] ran, what different special ed classroom, working with different populations of disabilities and working with a couple of different teachers, I just kind of observed them, observed them to see what they were doing and picked up on a few traits, not traits but a few things that helped me to be a better paraeducator. (P8)

Seeking input from paraprofessional. Most paraprofessional participants and one special education teacher participant expressed their belief that when a teacher seeks input from their paraprofessional, they help to build trust. Paraprofessional (P1) stated, "...she would ask opinions like who would like to lead this activity or who would like to be in charge." Other paraprofessionals stated:

Well the first thing, when I'm asked my opinion about something, which has happened before. Dealing with [redacted] last year, he was not willing to leave to go do something. I think it was, he just wasn't in the mood to go clean up the cafeteria with the rest of his classmates and I was asked, what do you think? Should we push him on this or should we wait out his stubbornness? I don't exactly remember the outcome, but just the fact that I was asked my opinion on the situation makes me think that I'm trusted. (P2)

I think that again, asking your opinion of certain situations. A teacher asks you what do you think about this situation or asking your opinion. I think it builds trust that this

person basically wants your opinion and not just their own to find another person's opinion. (P3)

Helping to build trust is having a new teacher coming in to the classroom that is currently been going on, that the classroom has been self-running for a very long time. The adults that are already in there are already sufficient in what they're doing. And having a new teacher come in and not completely obliterating everything that has already been going on. (P7)

One special education teacher stated similar thoughts:

I allow them to say what they are feeling, I let them know that if they think there's a different way to maybe even on teaching, if there is a different way that we should do things or they think a different routine is better or maybe we should have math before. You know, whatever it is. I told them I'm really open. (T3)

Theme 6: Characteristics that Sustain Trust

The special education teachers were asked the following question, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to sustain trust with a paraprofessional?” The paraprofessional participants were asked, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to sustain trust with a special education teacher?” The following theme and subthemes emerged: (a) communication, (b) being treated like a competent professional, (c) trusting colleague will comply with legal and ethical requirements as it relates to students, (d) emotional control, and (e) consistent (see Table 9).

Table 9

Characteristics that Sustain Trust

Characteristics that Sustain Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Being Treated Like a Competent Professional • Trusting Colleague to Comply with Legal and Ethical Requirements as it Relates to Students • Emotional Control • Consistent
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Communication. Communication was prevalent in both groups of participants as an important factor in sustaining trust. Participant (P3) stated, “I think most people just as in any relationship that you communicate in confidence.” Participant (P4) mentioned, “Communication, just plain communication.” Paraprofessional (P8) declared, “So like I said before, when working with a special education teacher, communication is key.” Similarly, special education teacher (T1) stated, “I think the best way to do that is to have open communication.” While (T3) stated, “I think it's just always talking to them. I really do.”

Being treated like a competent professional. Participants from both groups stated that being treated like a competent professional helps to sustain trust. Paraprofessional P1 stated, “She put trust in that I could handle, even though she stood at the outside just to see if I would have problems, but I didn't have problems and I was very happy that she trusted my judgment.”

Another mentioned:

Sustaining trust, actually working with one of our students in class this year who has been causing trouble for a little while and I guess I sustain trust, or I feel like trust is sustained because I am asked to help when I'm needed but also when the teacher feels like she can handle it on her own without me, I just deal with it, and that way I just feel like we have an understanding. I guess that if I'm needed I'll be called, and if I'm not I'll stay out of it and not overstep my bounds as a paraprofessional with the teacher so that way it's like mutual understanding that I'm not going to get in your way unless you want me to help, kind of let me do my thing. I also respect the fact that she knows how to do her job so I'm not going to just step in without being asked. (P2)

Paraprofessional (P4) declared, “Treating me like I'm a valuable employee.” Lastly, special education teacher (T4) acknowledged, “Allowing them to be professionals.”

Trusting colleague to comply with legal and ethical requirements as they relate to students. One paraprofessional participant felt that having the ability to trust that his colleague would comply with the legal and ethical requirements, as it relates to student's, assists him in

sustaining trust with a special education teacher. He shared his experience by stating the following:

.....or as legalese it's not right. So when people say let's do what's right and they're willing to do things maybe you shouldn't do. Let's say it's a situation where you're trying to save a child's life. Maybe you do CPR, maybe you put the kid in your own car and rush him to the hospital because that's faster than the paramedics. Protocol says you wait for the paramedics, but morally it's to get that child to a hospital, to a medical facility. So when people say okay you know what I don't care what the consequence by coming to me, but morally what's right is to save this child, do what's best for this child. (P5)

Emotional control. One paraprofessional participant felt that that the ability sustain emotional control is a characteristic that helps to sustain trust. Participant (P7) declared, “Because sometimes we just have to put on our happy face because that rubs off on our kids.” One special education teacher participant declared, “I noticed a specific time where a paraprofessional seemed unhappy in the classroom but she was not expressing why. And I had thought hard about whether I have done anything to create that atmosphere.” (T3)

Consistent. One special education teacher and two paraprofessional participants thought that being consistent help's to sustain trust. One paraprofessional declared:

Consistency is probably for me the most important. Our day is up and down. We could have a great morning and a really difficult afternoon, or vice versa. The day is sporadic, the kids are on their own wavelength and it's stressful on both parties, for both the paras, and for the lead teacher. To have a teacher that's consistent when you wake up in the morning and come in the work to know that their attitude is going to be the same, they are going to run the classroom the same, even if they're tired, even if they had a rough day, a rough night, they come in and they are not clearly dragging. (P7)

Participant P6 stated, “Ok because basically then the teacher never switches up.” The special education teacher participant shared the following scenario:

Sometimes also lunchtime, I myself need a lunch, take lunch. I'm out of the classroom for my lunch. And of course education needs to continue. I try to take it at the time where my students are having their own lunch but I do have behavioral, well students with behaviors. And when I'm gone, I need to rely on the staff to make sure nothing happens as far as students hitting other students, students getting out of the classroom, or just

students having too much free time. So I try to encourage staff to work with them, keep them busy, and just follow through with the schedule. (T2)

Theme 7: Characteristics that Destroy Trust

The special education teachers were asked the following question, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have destroyed your trust with a paraprofessional? Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with past paraprofessional colleagues impacted your ability to trust current and future paraprofessional colleagues?” The paraprofessional participants were asked, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have destroyed your trust with a special education teacher? Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with past special education teacher impacted your ability to trust current and future special education teachers?” The following theme and subthemes emerged: (a) betrayal, (b) unreliable, (c) not putting fragile students’ needs first, (d) not treated like a competent adult, (e) gossip, (f) incompetent/inept, (g) personal issues in the workplace, (h) unethical practices and (i) lack of communication (see Table 10).

Table 10

Characteristics that Destroy Trust

<p>Characteristics that Destroy Trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betrayal • Unreliable • Not Putting Fragile Students Needs First • Not Treated Like a Competent Adult • Gossip • Incompetent/Inept • Personal Issues in the Work Place • Unethical Practices • Lack of Communication
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Betrayal. Participants in both groups felt that betrayal was the cause of destroyed trust with their special education colleague. Three special education teachers conveyed the following stories:

When the paraprofessional goes behind your back and makes statements about you that are incorrect, inaccurate, and untrue. Falsify information basically. Also when they've gone to parents without authorization to state information that they don't have the authority to state. (T1)

I have had an issue in the past where I lost a little bit of respect or a little bit of trust towards a para because conversations between both of us were spread among other staff. The information that's given is supposed to be between you two or maybe an administrator and that's where it should stay. It shouldn't be high school types of problems where something instead of being confidential is spread throughout. (T2)

Because somebody I knew for ten years, ten, twelve, fifteen years, did that to me. And I thought wow, somebody that's known me that long, and someone that I allowed to come in late because she had to drop this person off or that person off, and you know had to leave early sometimes or somebody was ill and had, so we gave those, not legal, but we gave her those breaks, and then to do that it was very very hurtful. It's tough. Because I think we were more than just paraeducators and teachers. We thought we were friends. But you don't expect friends to do that. It was such a deep one because she had gone so high. It really impacted our feelings. (T3)

Similar to the special education teachers, the paraprofessionals were also vocal about the betrayal they have experienced with their special education teacher colleague. Two paraprofessionals disclosed the following stories:

Well there was a particular incident with a teacher because I was with her for a couple of years, and the one-year that I had a conflict was because she had me her historian of sorts. I was the one who would photograph when they were recycling, when we were planting, when we were on field trips, when they were doing activities such as cooking, when we were on the track; and the trust was destroyed when at the end of the year it was noted that I was on my phone too much. She was the one who asking me to always document everything so that was a big destruction of trust right there. Because at the same time when she's saying, oh can you text me the best way to get there by bus, or can you look up the bus? And then at the end of the year it's like, well you're on your phone too much, and it's just like wait a minute but you're the one who's telling me to look up directions and to take pictures. (P1)

When your teacher goes to other people to tell them dislikes that they have for you. Things that they don't like, instead of just coming straight to you and say hey, I noticed you did this, can we talk. (P4)

Unreliable. Participants from both groups stated that when they see an unreliable colleague it destroys their trust. One paraprofessional shared:

There are teachers who have been there so long that they are cemented in bad behavior and know that they cannot be removed for their behavior because they are well versed in the rules and regulations that will aid them in escaping responsibility. There are teachers that don't want to be there. They're really not there for the children. They have kind of timed themselves out. They're looking in the distance towards their own retirement fulfillment. And they have bypassed the sight of what they need to be doing within the classroom. (P5)

Two special education teachers shared:

Destroyed trust? I'll give you one or two stories. One being, once again when you're away with IEPs, I've had it where I come back to the classroom and either the paras are on the phone, not paying attention to the students, or just nothing's going on as far as educational-wise. When I'm talking about nothing's going on, when my staff's not working as well as they should be. Just trying to make them look busy or just putting them into the corner. That's bad. (T2)

So then now when it comes to her I don't trust her. I don't know that she will be here. She knows I'm going to be out tomorrow. Will she be here on time? She is one of my one on ones, she has to go and get my wheelchair kid. So it's like, is she going to be here? Is she going to be an hour and a half late? Does she expect my other baseline to go pick her up? You know? And I don't. It created that mistrust in her. (T3)

Not putting fragile students' needs first. Participants from both groups expressed that trust is destroyed when their colleague does not put the needs of fragile students first. One paraprofessional stated:

Oh Yes and that was the example earlier when I said the teacher, I really needed him to call the paramedics because my student was having a seizure more than 5 minutes. Actually it was for 12 minutes and after 5, this teacher was just standing there looking at me. (P6)

One special education teacher shared:

Maybe the kids are just put in front of the TV to watch something or put in front of the computer to just look at either YouTube or some kind of program. Just busy work instead

of hands on. My students are really severe. We're talking about four of them are wheelchair bound, vision problems, hearing problems. A lot of physical problems, so they need a lot of hands on, or hand over hand assistance. (T2)

Another special education teacher shared, "Teaching the community as if they are general pop and not special or not in an alternative setting." (T4)

Not treated like a competent adult. Only paraprofessional participants declared that their trust is destroyed when they are not treated like a competent adult. Three of them shared the following stories.

I've been in an instance where a teacher, where she has a specific way of teaching a child, this was with a computer, and so the fact is that the child that I had, you're trying to keep up with the plans for the day, and sometimes I would go in there and just type, or not just type but backspace so that the child will be able to type. So I'm kind of, how would you say this? Trying to get it to where instead of the child backspacing or what not, taking that time so that we are on task with the rest of the class, and being addressed like no, let that child do the job, I don't want you touching the computer whatsoever. There has been instances where again the same teacher, that child is not there that day and so you kind of sit and try to help the other students of the day and that teacher tells you, please don't help the kids, it's kind of their job so basically you kind of just focus on your own child or what not. So I think from that point, it's kind of, you don't know where that teacher is coming from, or to sort of diminish as a person, and as a colleague in front of a classroom and sort of address those situations in front of the rest of the class. So I think with that factor, that I think trust is taken away or even respect, per say. (P3)

Here was one particular uh incident in which to this day it just wrenches my gut. In which this teacher, um we would do recycling all year long and at the end of the year the students put that money together to buy a whole bunch of treats to go bowling, and buy whatever they wanted at the snack bar. This one particular special education teacher always had a personal conflict with one particular student. And the day that all of the treats were bought, and we went bowling, she did not allow that student to have one cookie, one crumb, she did not allow her to bowl, she completely secluded her, away from everybody, and I felt like I was reprimanded for talking to her. In front of that student and yea in front of other aides, (the teacher stated) I should be bowling with everybody else. I felt that my job was to comfort that child because obviously it was very upsetting; it's very upsetting now to know that they were secluded. So I felt like I couldn't do my job in interacting with the students that should have been interacted with. (P1)

Recently I was dealing with a student who was misbehaving himself in a manner that made it so he needed to be moved from the classroom, and I had shown that I was capable of handling these behaviors without any assistance and the teacher decided to call in a school psych who in my opinion just made things worse every time she got involved.

And she called her anyway after I asked her not to even though it had already been shown that calling the school psych didn't help anything and in fact made matters worse. So that was really frustrating because I had already proven that I could handle behaviors from the students and I was still kind of overlooked. (P2)

Gossip. One paraprofessional participant mentioned gossip when asked about what destroys trust by sharing the following:

Because you're talking to my coworkers about things that you don't like that I do, instead of coming to me as a woman and just saying hey I noticed this. So I think it loses, it makes the classroom environment kind of tense. Because you're not comfortable with that person because you don't trust them, so that's what's going on. (P4)

Incompetent/Inept. Participants from both groups mentioned that an incompetent/inept special education colleague destroys trust. One paraprofessional stated:

Yes. No I've worked with a special education teacher that was very incompetent. And she didn't know what she was doing. And um, actually it was a male teacher. And he basically was just doing his own thing. He wasn't following procedures. (P6)

I didn't trust that if anything happened that I would be safe if I had to do a hold or anything that had to do with anyone's safety. I didn't feel like if they don't have the ability to know what we are doing, then you can't help me if I am asking your help. You can't offer me anything. And that makes me question...I then I have to change what I'm doing to put myself in a position to where I'm going to take care of myself. Or I have to make sure that another adult is near that can help because the lead teacher can't. (P7)

I feel as if the teaching factor is missing. There is a teaching element that's missing. Morally it bothers me, and I bring it up quite often. But this teacher is tenured so they basically, to me, my personal opinion, they're kind of allowed to do things that shouldn't be done. (P4)

Special education teacher participant (T3) stated, "She just doesn't do know what to do. She's just not mature. Doesn't have those qualities." Another shared:

And often paraprofessionals don't have special education pedagogy that they've gone through so sometimes it can be new for them or just they look at the kids and think oh that's a regular kid. Not realizing that the kid has ADHD or the kid has seizures or the kid is blind. They don't always see what we. They're not always made privy to the information that we are made privy to through the IEP or through colleagues and stuff like that. (T4)

Personal issues in the workplace. Special education teacher participants expressed that when paraprofessionals bringing personal issues into the workplace can destroy trust. Two shared the following:

She has issues with her parents. You know she's had a lot of different things happen, living out of her car, finding an apartment, getting kicked out. You know, just a troubled individual. So it's kind of hard to build trust because I don't know if she knows how. And it may not even be in some ways even her fault. She just doesn't do know what to do. (T3)

In the past I've had a paraprofessional who was just too emotional for the setting, too emotional for the group that we were working with and it just wasn't a match. And it made it very difficult for me to do my job because I ended up having to do her job. (T4)

Unethical practices. Participants from both groups mentioned instances where unethical practices of a special education colleague caused destroyed trust. They shared the following:

I have been in a situation where I felt my teacher faked injury. It was just hard to work with him after that because it seemed everything was a complaint or he found reasons to get out of work. No matter how much wrong he seemed to have done, he never took responsibility for his actions. So when you work with somebody who is so lackadaisical, it makes you work harder and then it stresses you out and you don't really want to be bothered with that type of person. You just see that they are kind of taking advantage of the situation. (P5)

One recent issue that we just had, that we were just dealing with, is we had one student who was working on a ticket system. The student would, after 25 tickets would get a reward. We clearly have a mutual understanding between everyone in the classroom that the tickets cannot be given out during recess or lunch because the student will give up their lunch or recess in order to do something to earn an extra ticket. We can't do that. The teacher clearly allowed the student to come in and allowed the student to miss their lunch to earn their ticket. And when the teacher was confronted about it, while there was another paraeducator in the classroom that let us know what was happening, the teacher said that that didn't happen. And it trickled down to the other employees in the classroom because then we are like, there was a breakdown in what each of us are saying. So we didn't know who's pointing the finger, it was a natural trickle down. And then you no longer trust anything that the teacher is saying. There is no reason to lie about something like that, especially in our classroom. It's easy to make a mistake. You just own it and move on. (P7)

One special education teacher participant shared:

I think the worst one that I had, as far as the ability not to trust somebody, was when I was working a few years ago at [redacted]. One of my paras would take my students out and one of my students was wheelchair bound, cognitively maybe 6 months, real low functioning. But when the phone would ring, I came to find out that my para would leave the student in the hallways to answer the phone. (T2)

Another declared, “I have one of my one on ones that was looking at inappropriate things on her phone, and I wasn't aware of it.” (T3)

Lack of communication. One special education teacher mentioned a lack of communication as a characteristic that destroys trust. Participant T4 stated, “I won't give a specific situation but I will say this. If the teacher is vague or not clear in instruction or clear in directive, that can break down trust.” The special education teacher was observed backing away in his seat from the researcher as he answered this question.

Theme 8: Characteristics that Restore Trust

The special education teachers were asked the following question, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to restore lost trust with a paraprofessional?” The paraprofessional participants were asked, “Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to restore lost trust with a special education teacher?” The following theme and subthemes emerged: (a) communication, (b) advocate for classroom colleagues and (c) apologize for breaking trust/time heals (see Table 11).

Table 11

Characteristics that Restore Trust

Characteristics that Restore Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Advocate for Classroom Colleagues • Apologize for Breaking Trust/Time Heals
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Responses from some participants reflected their belief that trust cannot be restored once broken. One teacher shared the following analysis:

I'm Dutch. Trust is the tough one for me. If you break that trust, I'll give you a bottle of glue. I'm hard pressed on that one. And I'm assuming they are too. I mean if I broke their trust I assume it would be very difficult for them to trust me again. So I guess I look for antecedents so we don't get to that point first. So that trust doesn't get broken because I don't know what I would do if I had to like make someone trust me again or if I had to find trust in someone else. (T4)

Paraprofessional participant (P2) shared, "Well so far the only teacher I've ever lost trust with while I'm working with, I still kind of have to work with and I still don't really trust." Yet many participants did concede that trust can be restored with effort and the following characteristics.

Communication. Participants from both groups declared that communication was a big part of restoring lost trust. One paraprofessional stated:

Again, communication is a big part. Again, along with that same teacher, I addressed my concerns. I expressed the fact that the things that she had done, and just going about and saying if I had understood to begin with that you had certain rules that again I respect her for the fact that certain things that she didn't want, but the problem was she never conveyed it to begin with. So I always say that when you talk into a classroom, teacher's that's sort of their home. Every home has rules. And I think if a teacher conveys those rules then, me as a paraeducator, I know how to conduct myself in that class. So had she expressed that to begin with, said you know, please focus on your own student, I will handle the rest of the kids, and if they need assistance I will do that and it's not your job to do that, so had that been conveyed to begin with, then I think for me, then it would have been understood. So with that, I did get the opportunity to communicate that her and I kind of told her that these are things that I was not happy with. It was kind of disrespectful, you sort of took away the fact that I'm also, we are coworkers and you made me feel like I was one of the students. She apologized for that. So from that day forward I think she understood where I came from, and I think the fact that I did address that, it was respect that was gained and trust again from that. So today we communicate nicely and I say hello. (P3)

Another stated, "Communication. Because I think it's so important, if you can't communicate with the person, you really don't have anything." (P4) Another declared:

There was a breakdown last year for me. And there was a breakdown in communication. That's probably for me the most vital part of working in a classroom. And clearly the breakdown of communication, the trust was. Things were not handled from what my

view was, appropriately, and some kind of ill feelings went toward the teacher, and they clearly got ahold of me and wanted to sit down and talk about it. And just lay everything flat, they got a new level playing field, and not necessarily apologize but let me know where they're coming from, that we found out where the breakdown of the communication was. And there was no finger pointing. It was just that there was a better way to maintain our communication because sometimes we are out of the classroom a lot so we came up with a new way so the situation wouldn't occur again. (P7)

All except one of the special education teachers spoke about communication being essential in restoring trust. One of the special education teacher participants mentioned:

Well there were a few times with this particular paraprofessional where we did restore trust after having no trust. An example was the paraprofessional wanting to bring an additional table or desk into the classroom. I was not wanting to do that because I did not want the paraprofessional sitting at a desk and not dealing or focusing on the students' needs. So she went behind my back and went to an administrator even though she knew what my response was. So after that, we did discuss it. I did allow her to keep it in there, and based on that conversation she thought that I did not want her to have it because I did not like her. And I told her it had nothing to do with whether I liked her or not. It had to do with attending to the students' needs and not sitting at a desk. So once she understood that, then we had a very long run for about four months of no issues or very minor issues. And we got along very well. And she worked very well and was able to basically just understand my needs in the classroom. (T1)

Participant (T2) stated, “And once again, with time and a little bit of communication, you're able to gather it back.” An additional special education teacher stated:

And I have to say that being open with them, when I need to talk to her when she was coming in late, I just walked outside with her and told her, you know you're coming in a little too late you need to be on time. You're a one on one now. You need to be here to take her off the bus. I shouldn't be taking her off the bus. No one else should be taking her off the bus. That's your job. And I'll give them a little grace period but when the kids are here they need to be physically be here. But I take her outside, I don't say it in front of anybody. And I think it's from trying to always be open and trying to listen and trying to be sympathetic and empathetic for their own individual situations. (T3)

Advocate for classroom colleagues. One special education teacher participant shared that advocating for classroom colleagues can restore lost trust by sharing:

And I think handling it that way, I see that they are very supportive of me. And they try to take care of me. In the sense of, oh well look who's coming (the teacher next door), she's coming again. Don't, you do too much work, why do you have to do all of it. You should have her do some of it. Like when we are trying to do like the graduation. Why

doesn't she take a bigger part of it? You're doing everything, you're ordering everything, you're buying everything. (T3)

Apologize for breaking trust/time heals. Paraprofessional participants expressed that if teachers apologized for breaking their trust, it could be restored. Two paraprofessionals stated:

I think that if there were a sense of trust to be rebuilt I think it would be a sense of ownership on the part of that teacher to apologize or acknowledge the predicament that I was put in but I think that it would be a long time before that trust can ever be rebuilt. (P1)

When an education teacher comes to say I blew it, or I didn't know that, or I see how you handle it. And how can you help me handle it say if you're not here. How can I take your skills, incorporate them into what I need to do in your absence or even in your presence to make this teamwork balanced? It's a shared responsibility. It's not based on title, on paper it is based on title but in the real world it's not based on title. What's based on title is you're delivering the best product and doing what's right for the child. (P5)

Participant (P3) stated, "She apologized for that." However a special education teacher highlighted his belief that time heals by stating, "And once again, with time and a little bit of communication, you're able to gather it back." (T2)

Findings Summary

The twelve qualitative interviews with four special education teachers and eight paraprofessionals provided a comprehensive overview of the lived experiences of the participants. The findings produced eight major themes, each providing insights into the meaning and value of trust between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague. Several themes and subthemes emerged from the data. Discussion of implications of the findings will be presented in Chapter 5 along with conclusions and recommendations for practice and scholarship.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter presents what was learned from the study about the value of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. It discusses key findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for both practice and scholarship. The researcher has 17 years of professional experience, and is currently a special education teacher who works with transition-aged students. Additionally, the researcher has eight paraprofessional colleagues who currently work in the classroom with her. Potential personal bias is possible due to the researcher's own experiences with trust and a lack of trust with paraprofessional colleagues. Yet, the researcher believes that all personal biases were sufficiently bracketed to support the integrity of the research conclusions.

Background and Significance

Trust can be seen as the basis for all successful relationships, as it is defined as a measure of the quality of a relationship between two individuals, between groups of individuals, or between a person and an organization (Hurley, 2006). In special education settings, teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues must rely on and trust each other to successfully educate students with special needs. Although intangible, the implications of the presence or absence of trust can be seen and felt throughout the special education community. Unlike a lack of trust, the presence of trust has positive effects on student outcomes; furthermore, it is associated with longer lasting gains in student achievement (Shelden et al., 2010). In 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics noted that 12.9% of America's student population receives special education services with the assistance of over 1.3 million paraprofessionals. Moreover, the paraprofessionals who work in a special day class setting (SDC), work under the guidance of a credentialed special education teacher. However, often conflict arises, therefore

negatively impacting the working relationships of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues (McGrath et al., 2010).

Coupled with the increasing job demands and bureaucracy, special education teachers are often challenged with an inability to effectively communicate a need for specific support from paraprofessionals. This inability to effectively communicate can leave paraprofessionals without clear guidance on how to work with a student with special needs (McGrath et al., 2010). Special education teams who work with transition-aged students 16-22 years old have multiple additional stressors to contend with. Both special education teachers and paraprofessionals work hard to integrate students into their surrounding communities via off campus community based instruction (CBI), community based vocational instruction (CBVI), as well as provide additional supports to special education students during designated instructional services (DIS) and general education classes. Misunderstandings of educational and program expectations can cause conflict to arise between the team. Thus, exploring the value of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues can benefit researchers in special education, various professionals in the field of special education; including special education teachers and paraprofessionals, as well as future and current students who are served in special education programs. This study assists with making special education teachers and paraprofessionals better equipped to function as a trusted member of a special education team.

Theoretical Framework

This research study has two theoretical frameworks: trust and special education. Both trust and special education are expansive topics with varied focuses. For the purposes of this study, trust is defined as an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to others based on the belief that they can depend on the individual's competence, character, integrity and

ability to demonstrate care in the areas of critical interdependence (Northfield, 2014). Trust is a theoretical framework that can permeate every relationship, both private and professional alike.

Special education deals with a vulnerable population of students due to the numerous mental and physical disabilities that qualify students for special education services. This population of students depends on a team of individuals to deliver curriculum and instruction based on their individualized needs. As suggested in Northfield, (2014)) “the effectiveness of schools has been linked to the ability to develop trust with staff members and educational stakeholders” (p. 411).

Methods

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was chosen to gain insight into the lived experiences of the meaning and value of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. For every special education teacher who participated in the study, two paraprofessionals were interviewed. In total, four special education teachers and eight paraprofessionals who work with transition-aged students in various Los Angeles County school districts participated in the study. Experiences that centered around making meaning of how trust is built, sustained, destroyed, and restored were a central part of the study. Purposeful sampling and maximum variation sampling were used to select participants based on their varied knowledge and experience in the field of special education within Los Angeles County school districts. Lastly, the snowball sampling method allowed the researcher to recruit potential participants by seeking referrals from both special education teachers and paraprofessional participants.

Based on an extensive review of the literature on trust, the researcher developed the interview questions. Experts in the field of special education validated the interview questions.

All participants partook in a face-to-face, recorded, semi-structured interview. They were asked 13 similar open-ended questions that were specific to their job title of special education teacher or paraprofessional. The interviews lasted between 12-48 minutes. Lastly, the interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis was conducted on the verbatim words spoken by the participants. The qualitative software (HyperResearch) was used to document and support the coding process.

Key Findings

Multiple findings emerged from the data on the value of trust between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. Specifically, the analysis of the interviews produced 165 coded words and or phrases that were grouped into eight themes: (a) characteristics of a trustworthy colleague, (b) importance of trust, (c) outcome of trust, (d) outcome of a lack of trust, (e) building trust, (f) sustaining trust, (g) destroying trust and (h) restoring trust. Upon further examination, subthemes were identified within each theme. Several of the subthemes were categorized into multiple themes.

Key finding 1: Trustworthy special education colleague. Special education teachers and paraprofessional participants communicated that trustworthy special education colleagues are proficient at and/or possess the following nine characteristics: (a) communication, as evidenced by expectations being clear and transparent; (b) reliable, staff will show up and do what is expected of them; (c) competent, all staff know what they are doing and they do it with excellence; (d) supportive, which is substantiated by backing up a colleague during times of conflict with students and administrators; (e) trusting, as evidenced by ones ability to delegate; (f) consistent, doing what you say you are going to do; (g) honest, as evidenced by being transparent in all interactions; (h) team player, as evidenced by a colleague jumping in when there is a need;

and (i) student centered learning, as evidenced by colleagues making decisions with the best interest of the students in mind. These characteristics are the building blocks of establishing trust between special education colleagues. As a result, both the working environment and student productivity appeared improve when a special education colleague exhibited characteristics of a trustworthy colleague.

These characteristics are similar to Covey's (2006) 13 behaviors that must be present in individuals with high trust. Participants noted that these characteristics are observed between special education teacher and paraprofessional colleagues, as well as interactions between both students and other special education stakeholders: parents, administrators, school psychologist, general education teachers, and other designated service providers. Many of the characteristics that participants discussed aligned with a finding from Tschannen-Moran's (2004) five facets of trust model that theorized that the best teachers would have a hard time in the absence of trust, as trust must be built on the foundation of certain characteristics. However, Gibb (1978), TORI Trust-Level Theory believed that realization is an essential element that is needed for trust, this does not coincide with the findings.

Key finding 2: Importance of trust. Trust is important in multiple situations both in and outside of a special education classroom. The importance was duly noted among several participants; communication as evidence by colleagues being on the same page in regards to instruction of students, safety as many special education students have behaviors and will attack staff, the impact that is caused on students, as students sense when staff members have conflict, teachers are liable, and can loose their livelihood due to a lack of trust, and lastly student centered learning is the driving force of all interactions. These elements are essential in running a successful special education, special day class due to the interconnected nature of the job.

The significance of having trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional cannot be ignored as time spent on developing trust can produce countless benefits. This finding supports Covey's (2006) theory that states that dividends are benefits that are the result of high trust within organizations. The seven dividends he shared are: (a) increased value, (b) accelerated growth, (c) enhanced innovation, (d) improved collaboration, (e) stronger partnering, (f) better execution, and (g) heighten loyalty (Covey, 2006).

Key finding 3: Outcome of trust. Participants confirmed that there are six outcomes of having trust between special education teachers and paraprofessional colleagues. One significant subtheme was communication. For example, paraprofessional participants emphasized how special education teachers communicated to them. Essentially, they noted that when trust is present, the special education teacher communicated personality or instructional differences in a manner that was similar and reflective of how a paraprofessional would communicate. This aligns with the communication accommodation theory, which is how a person joins to another's communicative behavior and they coordinate in choice of words, syntax, pitch and gestures (Giles et al., 1991). Communication is done in a way to accommodate colleagues and to enhance trust.

Other subthemes that emerged were (a) student success, as students appear more relaxed causing them to flourish; (b) using others strengths, as some people are gifted in different areas; (c) learning from each other, mostly by being open to learn from the expertise of a colleague; (d) pleasant environment, as people are happier and did not bring person issues into the classroom, and lastly; (e) valued, as evidenced by colleagues valuing varied opinions, and special education teachers trusting that a paraprofessional will be successful when left alone with a student.

Key finding 4: Lack of trust. Several trends were obvious in the responses on the outcome of a lack of trust. Many of the participants shed light on underlying issues that impact multiple special education classrooms across Los Angeles County. The most prevalent subthemes to emerge were: (a) disagrees with how a colleague handles a situation, participants communicated that a lack of trust often caused them to question the competency and decisions of their colleagues; (b) hostile environment, as evidenced by arguments or few words spoken between colleagues; (c) negatively impacts students, as many would display fear or engage in behaviors that would impede the learning of self or others; (d) passive aggressive as evidenced by covert put downs or by allowing students to run go absent without leave (AWOL) and lastly; (e) drains energy, as it made colleagues work harder and days seemed longer.

This finding aligns with a segment of Patrick Lencioni's (2002) framework for understanding team dysfunction. The Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model suggests that most teams are dysfunctional, but an awareness of this fact can lead to better team engagement. He specifically delves into the absence of trust. When low trust is perceived, team members display many of the behaviors that were common among special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. Additionally, Covey's (2006) Speed of Trust Model adds a slightly different lens as he contends that when trust goes down, speed will go down and costs will increase. Participants did not share that cost would increase, however, they did communicate that what when trust goes down the day seems longer thus decreasing speed.

Key finding 5: Building trust. Participants felt strongly about what characteristics their colleagues should possess in order to build trust, yet the responses indicated that there is a distinct perceived difference in how trust is built between the two roles. According to participants, communication is one of the most important things that can be done to build trust.

For example, paraprofessional participants expressed that teachers built trust with them when they communicated information that as a paraprofessional they were not privy to. Recalling other responses from paraprofessionals, trust is also built when colleagues are willing to learn from each other as well as when teachers treat them like a competent professional. Teachers responded with a clear observation that trust is built when they take time out to intentionally build relationships with their paraprofessional. Lastly, several participant responses from mostly paraprofessionals clearly indicated that trust is built when special education teachers seek input from them on daily instruction, as well as behavioral issues.

Responses from participants echoed the importance of communication in building trust, as lack of trust inhibits communication. Similar to Tschannen-Moran's (2004) model of the five facets of trust, openness encompasses many of the behaviors that were shared among participants. Openness in the five facets of trust model is defined as; engaging in open communication, sharing important information, delegating, sharing decision making and sharing power. It appears that special education teachers and paraprofessional colleagues who exhibit these characteristics are better at building trust with their colleagues.

Key finding 6: Sustaining trust. Participant responses reflected five common subthemes of characteristics that sustain trust: communication, being treated like a competent professional, trusting colleague to comply with legal and ethical requirements as it relates to students, emotional control and being consistent helped them to sustain trust with their colleague. Paraprofessional participants primarily stated that being treated like a competent professional helped them to build trust, while one teacher acknowledged that teachers should treat their paraprofessionals as such, as they are the leaders of the classroom. However, only paraprofessionals reported that in order to sustain trust, they must trust that their teacher will

comply with legal and ethical requirements as it relates to students. Special educators deal with a multitude of stressful situations that involve students, parents, administrators, and bureaucracy to name a few. Participants noted that the ability to maintain emotional control assists them in sustaining trust. Lastly, multiple participants note that being consistent, in attitude and when interacting with students and staff assist them in sustaining trust.

Participant responses echoed similar findings to the Sustaining Cycle of Trust, which indicates that communication is a vital part of sustaining trust (Sundaramurthy, 2008). Some participants indicated that communicating in confidence was the most important while others felt that just “*plain communication is key.*” Comparable to the assertion from Maxwell (2010), everybody talks, everybody communicates, but few people connect, additional reflection on the characteristics noted support that these characteristics help to foster a solid connection among special education colleagues, thus sustaining their trust.

Key finding 7: Destroyed trust. An in depth analysis of the responses pertaining to characteristics that destroy trust resulted in an extensive list. Participants were eager to share instances of when they experienced destroyed trust with a special education colleague. Both groups shared that betrayal was the number one cause of destroyed trust. Occurrences of their colleagues making false accusations against them, or sharing confidential information that was shared in confidence with third parties were paramount among the respondents. Participants of both groups also shared that being unreliable as evidenced by consistently not showing up for work, or by being disengaged when they were present, ultimately destroyed trust as well as well as impede student progress.

Additional responses reflected that participants felt that colleagues who did not put fragile students’ needs first, destroyed trust. Special education colleagues who pacified

students by putting them in front of a television set, or not attending to their specialized educational, behavioral or medical needs destroyed trust. Paraprofessional participants were the only group who shared that their trust is destroyed when they are not treated like a competent adult. Some paraprofessionals shared stories of being reprimanded by a teacher in front of students and other staff members. Additional concerns included instances of when teachers did not allow a paraprofessional to do their job by calling in other staff members to take over. Gossip was on the top of one paraprofessionals list of characteristics that destroys trust. However, participants from both groups shared that being incompetent/inept destroys trust. Instances of destroyed trust in this area include not following proper procedures or a lack of subject matter knowledge.

Only special education teacher participants mentioned the following two characteristics that destroy trust; personal issues in the workplace, and lack of communication. With the escalating cost of living, special education teachers empathized with the financial stress that many paraprofessionals deal with on a daily basis. However, when personal issues enter into the workplace and cause the paraprofessional undue emotional stress, trust is destroyed. Additionally, special education teacher responses reflected the belief that teachers should take the onus of communicating effectively to their colleagues, as a lack of communication destroys trust. Lastly, participants from both groups felt that unethical practices exhibited by colleagues destroyed their trust. Several instances were cited ranging from teachers faking injuries, lying about mistakes that were made, talking on the phone and looking at inappropriate materials on the Internet during work hours. Surprisingly, participants had the most to say about characteristics that destroy trust.

Multiple studies highlighted comparable findings of betrayal, whether intentional or not, as being the number one cause of destroyed trust. Additionally, similar to the findings from participants on the characteristics that destroy trust, researchers also found that instances of gossip, unethical practices, withholding information, and a lack of communication all destroy trust (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). In short, infractions large or small can chip away at and destroy the foundation of trust.

Key finding 8: Restored trust. The responses regarding characteristics that restore trust were limited among the participants. In fact, two participants stated that trust cannot be restored or that it has never been restored for them. Further analysis of the data produced three characteristics that the participants felt would restore trust (a) communication is a recurring characteristic among all findings and is essential to restoring trust, (b) advocating for classroom colleagues helps to make educators feel supported when administrators, other teachers or paraprofessionals overwork or verbally attack them, and (c) apologize for breaking trust sets the stage for making amends with a colleague but some people need time to heal.

Rebuilding trust requires effort. The Four A's of Absolution by (Tschannen-Moran, 2004) have similar elements to the findings on characteristics that restore trust. Not only does the Four A's of Absolution suggest that one apologize to begin to restore trust, people should amend their ways, ask for forgiveness and admit what they did wrong. It is possible to restore trust, however, trust may not be restored to where it was originally.

Conclusions and Implications

This study proposes two conclusions based on an analysis of findings. Following a description of each conclusion, the implications for both scholarship and practice are discussed.

Conclusion One: Trust increases communication, respect and collaboration between special education colleagues, as well as enhances student success. The first conclusion of this study is that trust increases communication, respect and collaboration between special education colleagues as well as enhances student success. Trust is an essential element in an effective classroom (Gibb, 1978), specifically a special education classroom. Many educators who work in special education report feeling fulfilled, yet it is recognized as a demanding career due to multiple interpersonal and instructional issues arise between special education teachers and their paraprofessionals (McGrath et al., 2010). Educators who work with transition-aged students have the added stressors of mainstreaming students into other classrooms, as well as participating in off campus community based instruction. Achieving trust under these circumstances can be a challenge, however, the most effective way to obtain trust is through communication (Kutsyruba & Walker, 2015). Communication in this study was reported as the number one characteristic of a trustworthy colleague and as a result trust enhances communication, respect and collaboration.

One of the essential elements in the TORI Trust-Level Theory is interdependence. Collaboration and interdependence go hand in hand. Gibb (1978) contends, “Proactive energy is focused on interacting, participating, and cooperating.” Additionally, improved collaboration enhances teamwork (Covey, 2006). This aligns with the conclusion of collaboration being strengthened by trust. Participants in both groups suggested that trust allows special education teams to work together to accomplish the common goal of student success. Other qualities highlighted in order to have an effective and trusting environment in the TORI Trust-Level Theory did not align with study conclusions. For example, (a) self-esteem, as evidenced by people feeling good about themselves, (b) range of enrichment, as evidenced by continued

professional and organizational growth, and (c) reduced defensiveness among staff members Gibb (1978) were not mentioned by participants.

Similar to Covey (2006), participant responses reflected that respect was enhanced by trust. Special education teachers enhance trust when they show respect by treating paraprofessionals like competent adults. For example, paraprofessional participants felt that special education teachers exhibited respect when they asked their opinion, allowed them to lead activities, as well as not reprimand them in front of students or other professionals. On the other hand, special education teachers suggested that paraprofessionals illustrated respect when they follow their lead on curriculum and instruction and not question their authority.

Student success is ultimately the collective purpose of special education colleagues. Participants noted that there are numerous personality differences, as well as varied competency levels between special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. Despite these differences, both groups indicated a common vision of student success strengthens their ability to trust their colleague.

Conclusion Two: A lack of trust negatively impacts the special education environment, as well as relevant stakeholders, which include: students, parents, special education teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators. The second conclusion suggests that a lack of trust can wreak havoc on the special education environment, as well as damage the educational and working relationship of students, parents, special education teachers, administrators and school psychologists. A lack of trust is not a tangible object that can be seen; however, its impact can be felt throughout the special education community. As noted in Patrick Lencioni's (2002) Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model, due to the fear of conflict, the topic of a lack of trust is often left unspoken; yet, the knowledge of how and why a lack of trust can

negatively impact the special education community, students, parents, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators stands to improve daily practice.

With a strong emphasis on employee actions and characteristics, multiple theories on trust discuss how a lack of trust can negatively impact an organization. Participant responses for this study aligned with previous research from (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2004), which contend that betrayal whether intentional or not is the number one factor of a lost of trust. Participants of the study discussed how betrayal impacted their working environment.

Govier (as cited by Tschannen-Moran, 2004) suggests that in relationships where trust has been lost, time and energy spent on working with students is wasted on wondering about the motives of the person who had destroyed the trust and covering all basis. Multiple teachers discussed how betrayals from their paraprofessional left class work undone, and as a result their students suffered. Additionally, paraprofessionals discussed how teachers lied on them to the special education administrators, thus impacting their employee performance evaluations. These behaviors often brought about feelings of defensiveness among colleagues who ultimately questioned every decision that was made by their special education colleague.

This aligns with Covey (2006) who contends that when trust is low in an organization, the stakeholders will experience problems that are known as taxes. One of the taxes noted in Covey's organizational taxes is disengagement, which manifests as a lack of intrinsic employee motivation. The taxes noted by Covey are different then the ones noted by participants of the study. Among other things, participants noted that a lack of trust produced a hostile work environment, passive aggressive behavior as well as drained employee's energy.

Recommendations for Practice and Scholarship

There are various recommendations for practice and scholarship that were realized from this study. Professionals in the field of special education would benefit from having a shared primary focus of student success. The onus of establishing and communicating the expectations for student success, as well as setting the tone of trust in the classroom falls on the special education teacher.

It is recommended that special education professionals participate in continuous personal and professional development to focus on acquiring the characteristics of a trustworthy colleague. Moreover, special education teachers and paraprofessionals would benefit from continuous training in the area of team development to help them to build, sustain, and restore trust with their colleagues. Team development trainings should emphasize how participants can communicate and develop relationships with each other by establishing genuine, personal and professional connections. Communication is noted as the most prominent characteristic of a trustworthy special education colleague. Reliability, honesty, being trusting of others, being a team player, displaying consistency, exhibiting support for students, and colleagues, and lastly being competent and knowledgeable about ones job are all required characteristics of a trustworthy colleague. Moreover, special education professionals should relinquish the characteristics that diminish trust. The number one characteristic to avoid is betrayal. Other characteristics to avoid include unreliability, not putting student needs first, not treating a colleague like a competent adult, gossiping, incompetence as evidenced by not being knowledgeable about ones required job duties, bringing personal issues into the workplace, engaging in unethical practices, and a lack of communication.

Responses reflected that additional research is needed in the area of exploring trust between special education administrators and special education teachers, among special education administrators and paraprofessionals, as well as school psychologists and special education teachers and school psychologists and paraprofessionals. There is also an opportunity to add research in the area of exploring the role and value of trust between paraprofessionals and students, as well as special education teachers and students.

Another area of added research can be investigating the role and value of trust between parents of special education students and paraprofessionals and between parents of special education students and administrators. Lastly, although participants of this study did not deal with budgetary concerns in their current position, there is an opportunity to add research in the area of the economic impact of a lack of trust between special education colleagues.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to special education teachers and paraprofessionals who work with transition-aged students in various Los Angeles County school districts. The sample sizes for both groups were small and special education professionals who work outside of Los Angeles County school districts and with infant through middle school aged students are not represented in this study. Therefore, the study participants experience with the role and value of trust cannot be generalized for the entire population of special education teachers and paraprofessionals.

Study Validity

To ensure the validity of a qualitative study, Guba and Lincoln suggest using the following four indicators: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (as cited by Kumar, 2011, pp. 184-185). With years of experience in dealing in the field of education, the researcher has worked with multiple paraprofessionals as a special education teacher. The

researcher has experience working in relationships with paraprofessionals that had trust and a lack of trust. Although there is extensive literature on trust and trust in education, this study identified findings that can specifically help special education professionals. Through bracketing, all researcher biases were placed to the side so that the researcher could fully engage in the research process and offer solutions to professionals in the field of special education. One special education teacher and one paraprofessional validated the interview protocol. A pilot interview was done with a special education teacher to establish reliability.

The explanation of the step-by-step process ensured transferability so that other researchers can duplicate this study. Additionally, the researcher conducting rigorous analysis of the data provided ensured the dependability of the study. With the help of the HyperResearch software, themes were coded and recoded to ensure proper groupings throughout the analysis phase. Data was gathered to the point of saturation and a veteran teacher who recently obtained a doctorate degree served as a peer examiner.

Closing Comments

The field of special education is rewarding, yet stressful. Special education professionals work in an interrelated field; however, special education teachers and paraprofessionals have distinct and varied job descriptions. The focus of special education should always be to achieve success for a special population of students. This focus can be obtained if special education teachers and their paraprofessionals colleagues have the tools needed to establish and sustain trust.

Trust ultimately enhances student success and increases communication, respect and collaboration between special education colleagues. On the other hand, a lack of trust negatively impacts the special education environment, students, parents, special education teachers,

paraprofessionals and administrators who much take out valued time to deal with the resulting conflict from a lack of trust. There is a need for continuous personal and professional development to enhance and build the characteristics of a trustworthy colleague. It was invigorating to interact with special education professionals who rarely have the opportunity to articulate how they were adversely impacted by a lack of trust or on the other hand how having trust enriched their work life and that of the students that they serve. This study solidified the researcher's belief that trust is indeed a valuable trait to possess between special education colleagues. The outcome of this study provides professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships so that they can effectively serve the students with whom they work.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol Special Education Teachers

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Monica Mallet

Participant code #:

Do you mind if I start the recorder?

I'm going to start the recorder now. [Start recorder]

Today is _____ and this is participant code number _____.

I'm going to ask you a series of 13 open ended questions. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions. However, if a question is not clear, I encourage you to ask for clarification. Is there anything you need before we start?

1. Consider your current classroom setting, student needs, and the working relationship with your current paraprofessional; tell me a story about a time that you have experienced trust with a paraprofessional?
2. Tell me a story about why is it important to have trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional colleague?
3. Tell me a story about a time when you have observed characteristics and behaviors of a competent paraprofessional?
4. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to build trust with a paraprofessional?
5. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have destroyed your trust with a paraprofessional?
6. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to sustain trust with a paraprofessional?
7. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to restore lost trust with a paraprofessional colleague?
8. What are some characteristics that a trustworthy paraprofessional has?
9. Tell me a story about a time when you had to rely on your ability to trust a paraprofessional?

10. Tell me a story about an instance where you have felt trusted by a paraprofessional?
11. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with past paraprofessional colleagues impacted your ability to trust current and future paraprofessional colleagues?
12. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with a current or past paraprofessional colleague, influenced your ability to do your job?
13. Tell me a story about a time when having trust with a current or past paraprofessional colleague, influenced your ability to do your job?

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your time. [Stop recorder]

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol Paraprofessionals

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Monica Mallet

Participant code #:

Do you mind if I start the recorder?

I'm going to start the recorder now. [Start recorder]

Today is _____ and this is participant code number _____.

I'm going to ask you a series of 13 open ended questions. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions. However, if a question is not clear, I encourage you to ask for clarification. Is there anything you need before we start?

1. Consider your current classroom setting, student needs, and the working relationship with your current special education teacher; tell me a story about a time that you have experienced trust with a special education teacher?
2. Tell me a story about why is it important to have trust between a special education teacher and a paraprofessional colleague?
3. Tell me a story about a time when you have observed characteristics and behaviors of a competent special education teacher?
4. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that help you to build trust with a special education teacher?
5. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have destroyed your trust with a special education teacher?
6. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to sustain trust with a special education teacher?
7. Tell me a story of a time when you have experienced or observed behaviors and characteristics that have helped you to restore lost trust with a special education teacher?
8. What are some characteristics that a trustworthy special education teacher has?
9. Tell me a story about a time when you had to rely on your ability to trust a special education teacher?

10. Tell me a story about an instance where you have felt trusted by a special education teacher?
11. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with past special education teacher impacted your ability to trust current and future special education teachers?
12. Tell me a story about a time when a lack of trust with a current or special education teacher, influenced your ability to do your job?
13. Tell me a story about a time when having trust with a current or past special education teacher, influenced your ability to do your job?

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your time. [Stop recorder]

APPENDIX C
IRB Approval Letter



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: April 11, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Monica Mallet

Protocol #: 16-03-226

Project Title: Exploring the Value of Trust in Special Education Teams

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Monica Mallet:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chairperson

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent No Signature

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**Exploring the Value of Trust in Special Education Teams**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Monica Mallet, MFA under the direction of Dr. Kay Davis at Pepperdine University, because you are a special education teacher or paraprofessional with five years or more of experience working in a Special Day Class (SDC) with transition-aged students, in a Los Angeles County school district. You are a special education teacher with a mild/moderate or moderate/severe teaching credential. Or you are a paraprofessional who has worked in a (SDC) setting in the past 12 months. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research study is to explore the meaning of trust between teams of special education teachers and their paraprofessional colleagues. The study will delve into the lived experiences, and focus on characteristics and behaviors that build, sustain, destroy and or restore trust between a special education teacher and their paraprofessional colleague. The outcome of the study can provide professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships so that they can effectively serve the students that they work with.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face or Skype interview that consists of about a dozen open-ended questions. You will be asked to respond with your own insights, personal experiences and opinions. Follow-up questions may

be asked by the researcher for clarification purposes. The questions focus on characteristics that build, sustain, destroy and restore trust between colleagues. It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete the interview. Due to the length of the interview, you will have the right to request rest periods or breaks at any time. All of your responses will be audio taped. Once the interview has been completed, you may request a copy of the transcript of the interview for your own personal records. The researcher will provide you with this information after the study has been completed.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include may include boredom, mental fatigue and exhaustion due to the length of the interview. Participants may also feel discomfort of anxiety talking about the role and value of trust between their colleagues if there is limited trust between them or if they have had disagreements in the past. If you feel discomfort, you may withdraw from the interview at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to you for participating, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include: providing researchers and professionals in the field of special education with insight into the tools needed to have better working relationships so that they can possibly effectively serve the students that they work with.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will keep your records for this study *confidential* as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigators place of *residence*. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will use coding techniques and store all digital files on a password-protected computer in the principal investigators place of residence. Hard copy files will be stored in a safe only accessible by the researcher. When the research is completed, I may save the tapes and notes for use in future research done by others or myself. I will retain these records for up to 3 years after the study is over. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Dr. Kay Davis kdavis@pepperdine.edu if I have any other questions or concerns about this research. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at Pepperdine University, via email at gpsirb@pepperdine.edu or at 310-568-5753.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

APPENDIX E

Permission for Figure 2

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**Title:** Sustaining Trust Within Family Businesses**Author:** Chamu Sundaramurthy**Publication:** Family Business Review**Publisher:** SAGE Publications**Date:** 03/01/2008

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