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Shared Decision Making in Individualized Education Program Meetings: A Discourse Analysis

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Elizabeth Price entitled "Shared Decision Making in Individualized Education Program Meetings: A Discourse Analysis." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Educational Psychology and Research.

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Shared Decision Making in Individualized Education Program Meetings: A Discourse Analysis

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Dedication

To the phenomenal educators, caregivers, and students who graciously agreed to the recording of their IEP meetings.

You have my heartfelt thanks for making this research possible.

To the educators, caregivers, and students receiving special education services who attend IEP meetings across our nation year after year.

May we continually improve in our rigorous pursuit of excellence.

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Abstract

In response to federal and state special education mandates, there has been increasing focus on collaboration with caregivers and students in special education planning. Promising approaches include students making decisions about their future academic careers with educators and caregivers in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. However, it is not clear from the research how the presence of the student contributes to decision making interactions. A discourse analysis of 63 middle school IEP meetings compared interactions with or without students present to explore how participants achieved decision making. Specifically analyzed, according to the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and conversation analysis (Heritage, 1997; Sacks, 1992), were how speakers rhetorically constructed talk and managed accountability for reports.

Findings indicated that facilitators arrived to meetings with decisions already made and IEP documents largely completed. The overall structure of the IEP form and legal nature of the meeting accounted for differing modes of participation in decision making. Facilitators rhetorically arranged talk to handle sensitive issues with minimal challenges from participants. They did so by engaging in a presentation format that favored agreement from caregivers and students. Further, facilitators made the state accountable for the IEP procedures, and emphasized their own lack of agency in decision making.

Overall findings demonstrated that discursive constructions limited decision making interactions with and without students present. Contributions to the IEP occurred with some caregivers, and with eighth grade students invited to talk about their career choices and elective coursework for high school. Spontaneous shared decision making with changes to the IEP occurred in only nine meetings. However, where decision making lacked, constructions of

hopeful attitudes toward the future prevailed in all meetings. Participants worked to present students as capable and growing, despite the need for special education services. This study contributes to understandings of how participants achieve shared decision making, and offers suggestions for improving discourse within IEP meetings.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Including students receiving special education services in decision making within Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP) meetings is a long-standing federal priority (Will, 1984; IDEA, 1990). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) indicates that students can attend their meetings at any time, and explicitly instructs educators to invite students when considering: "the postsecondary goals for the child and the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals" (§300.320[b]). For most school districts, this usually means that eighth grade students of fourteen years and older are not only invited to, but also attend their IEP meeting (Martin, Marshal, & Sale, 2004). Because the IEP meeting for eighth graders serves as a planning tool to frame high school course work and further education or vocational training, the interaction in eighth grade meetings has real and long lasting consequences for future opportunities (Cobb & Alwell, 2009).

Including students with dis/abilities[1] in decision making about their future is crucial to later success (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al, 2004; Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale, & Wood, 2004). After high school graduation, teenagers who received special education services[2] struggle more than most to establish themselves in further training or employment. A report from the National Longitudinal

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[1] The term dis/ability is used with a forward slash throughout this paper to make visible the parts of the word that function to create social categories of those with abilities and those opposite, apart from, or separated from, ability. By using the slash in dis/ability, I join others in distancing myself and disagreeing with an interpretation that describes people in terms of what they are not.

[2] Special education services are intended to offer educational support to individuals in the area of need, and may include interventions, therapies, assistive technology, and/or specialized training (IDEA, 2004).

Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)[3] stated that in comparison to graduates in the general population, graduates with dis/ability labels were less likely: (1) to be employed; (2) to stay at jobs for a long period of time; (3) to have gone on to post-secondary education; (4) to live independently; or (5) to provide for a family (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). Many students receiving special education services simply do not graduate; they drop out of school at significantly higher rates than their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2006b). Students leaving school without earning a diploma typically earn much less than those with a high school diploma, and are also at risk for higher rates of incarceration (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Test, Fowler, White, Richter, & Walker, 2009; Wagner, Blackorby, & Hebbler, 1993). Despite attempts to address these issues over a period of thirty years, statistics remain persistently poor.

Published curricula, programs, and models have some success, but perceptions of successful transitioning increases with students involved in the planning and decision making process (Cobb & Alwell, 2009), and leading their own IEP meetings (Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, Greene, Gardner, & Lovett, 2006). Some research has focused on the role of transition programs and models in preparing secondary students for education, employment, and independent living (Cheney & Bullis, 2004; Kochhar-Bryant, Bassett, & Webb, 2009; Whetstone & Browning, 2002). Other studies have concentrated on the role of high school transition planning by students, parents, and educators in supporting positive transition outcomes (Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, & Powers, 2008; Martin, et al, 2004; Newman et al, 2009; Rueda, Monso, Shapiro, Gomez, & Blacher, 2005; Test, et al, 2004; Wagner, Newman,

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[3] The NLTS2 is a ten-year-long study of the experiences and outcomes of a representative sample of about 12,000 youth with dis/abilities who were 13 to 16 years old. Students received special education services in seventh grade or above under the twelve categories of disability in IDEA, beginning in the 2000–01 school year and ending in 2009.

Cameto, Levine, & Marder, 2007). In spite of a plethora of strategies, manuals, programs, community organizations, and national centers to aid the transition process, successful transition from school to post school activities[4] remains elusive for many students.

Most family involvement specific to special education takes place during annual IEP meetings. Because the IEP meeting is viewed by the professional literature as a primary point where professionals meet with students and family members to communicate information and make educational decisions, IEP meetings can be viewed as a rich opportunity to study decision making interactions. If the intent of the IEP meeting is to make decisions about educational needs and supports to prepare the student for transition from high school, then the lack of family involvement in planning likely contributes to wasted resources and persistently poor statistics concerning the transitioning of students receiving special education services. The assumption is that eighth grade students have a role in decisions made about their academic careers, but I could find no research on how students contribute to decision making within the actual talk of IEP meetings.

The purpose of this discourse analysis was to describe how speakers negotiate decision making within naturally occurring talk[5] in middle school IEP meetings with and without students present.

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[4] As defined by IDEA (2004), post school activities include "post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation" (20 USC 1402[34]).

[5] "Naturally occurring" refers to talk that is not initiated by the researcher for the purposes of a research study (Wood & Kroger, 2000).

Organization of Chapter 1

First, I describe IEP meetings in fuller detail, and explore the challenges of team members' participation within IEP meetings. Second, I outline the problem that this study addressed. Third, I include a purpose statement, followed by my research question. Then, I consider delimitations and limitations of the current study. Afterwards, I consider the significance of this study in the field, and share a reflexivity statement with my epistemic assumptions and commitments as a researcher. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a section outlining the organization of the entire dissertation.

Individualized Education Program Meetings

Successful transitioning from high school is the central purpose of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The IDEA[6] of 1990, its amendments in 1997, and reauthorization in 2004, mandated family involvement in special education decision-making practices through pre-referral meetings and annual IEP meetings. The stated purpose of IDEA is to meet students' receiving services "unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living" (20 U.S.C. 14000[d]). In order to achieve this goal, along with other provisions of the law, an IEP team convenes at least once a year to make decisions about goals and services for the upcoming year. In this section, I first emphasize portions of the two educational laws, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), that have bearing on decision making within IEP meetings.

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[6] IDEA has its roots in the landmark Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) of 1975 which mandated a "free and appropriate education" for individuals with disabilities. This legislation also included due process, "least restrictive environment," nondiscriminatory assessment, and the IEP. Renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, the law included a focus on transition planning with students, families, school staff, and community members that was strengthened in 1997, and continues in the current reauthorization of 2004.

Second, I describe IEP meetings. Third, I explain some of the challenges of participation for students and caregivers noted by a few research studies. Fourth, I explore what discourse analysis adds to our understanding of IEP meetings.

Legal understandings. Two educational laws, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), legally dictate how families and IEP team members should engage in decision making. Although NCLB and IDEA mandate parent involvement, there appears to be a gap between the intention of the laws and the application of the laws in the complex interactions between families and schools attempting to establish decision making together. A further look at the definitions of involvement within the laws may prove useful in understanding how policy translates into practice.

NCLB defines parental involvement as:

> the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement). *[Section 9101(32), ESEA.]* (USDE, 2004, p. 9).

An interesting aspect in the NCLB text is the focus on "two-way and meaningful" communication. This implies that both parties are talking and both parties are listening in a way that is valuable to both professionals and families. Likewise, the language of "full partners" within decision-making is stressed, which seems to imply an equal sharing of decision making

power between professionals and families in the education of children. However, full partnership is qualified with “as appropriate” (USDE, 2004, p. 9). Likely, it is the prerogative of the school to decide when and how parents appropriately participate. No mention of students participating in decision making appears in the law. Parents are to be involved and children are to learn. Although the school invites parents to the table as full partners, it is likely the specially trained school professionals who hold the specific knowledge of teaching and learning strategies, as well as school resources. Therefore, whereas parents may be full partners, they presumably will share different knowledge, such as knowledge of home life and past histories. How both parents and educators work as full partners, and how parents are included, “as appropriate, in decision making” is not specified (USDE, 2004, p. 9).

Similar to NCLB, the IDEA (2004) also implies equal power sharing between professionals and families. One of the six principles of IDEA explicitly references professionals’ responsibilities to actively involve parents in relation to the other five principles: (1) zero reject enrollment; (2) nondiscriminatory evaluation practices; (3) free and appropriate education; (4) education in the least restrictive environment; and (5) procedural due process for accountability. Because these six areas are dependent on school resources and responsibilities, when participation does not occur in satisfactory ways, caregivers often respond with lawsuits. Under IDEA, professionals and schools are also required to involve parents in educational decisions such as: (1) identification, evaluation, and educational placement; (2) access to educational records; and (3) opportunities to serve on advisory committees (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2011).

Additionally, professionals must give families notice of IEP meetings. Further, parents can call an IEP meeting at any time to address their concerns. It is interesting to note that meetings are specifically defined in IDEA as excluding:

> informal or unscheduled conversations involving public agency personnel and conversations on issues such as teaching methodology, lesson plans, or coordination of service provision if those issues are not addressed in the child's IEP. A meeting also does not include preparatory activities that public agency personnel engage in to develop a proposal or response to a parent proposal that will be discussed at a later meeting. (IDEA, 34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.501).

The language in the law may serve to position parents outside decision making moments occurring in preparatory activities. It does this by naming “participation” specifically as formal meetings, rather than informal conversations or requests from parents that may not include issues already addressed by the IEP, but nonetheless issues that parents might like to be addressed.

Any team discussions regarding educational placement decisions must include parents. Furthermore, schools must “make reasonable efforts to ensure that parents “understand, and are able to participate in” such discussions (IDEA, 2004, 34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.501). This includes providing parents with language interpreters, where needed, so they are able to understand and participate. When appropriate measures have been taken to include parents within IEP meetings and the school is still unable to obtain parent participation, then the school is able to make placement decisions.

Also included in IDEA law is a focus on transition planning (IDEA, 2004, 1401.34). Once a student reaches sixteen years old, or at age fourteen in most states, students are invited to transition planning meetings. These meetings focus on facilitating transfer from school to post

school opportunities. Transition plans must include student input in regards to their desires and future goals. However, student input may take place as part of the preparatory work for meetings, and not necessarily within meetings. For example, students may complete an interest inventory about their preferences for future employment.

When taken together, the language in NCLB and IDEA both include an emphasis on parent and school partnerships, with emphasis on participation in decision making where appropriate. However, language in NCLB seems to be slightly more explicit in terms of involving families. The emphasis on language and policy is important given the number of due process cases lodged by parents who were dissatisfied with the way educational decisions were made concerning their children. Mueller, Singer, and Draper (2008) reported that in the year 2000 alone, school districts spent approximately $146 million to resolve disputes between families of students receiving special educational services; not including other costs in terms of destroyed relationships and stress. In their qualitative study of factors that escalated family-school conflict, Lake and Billingsly (2000) found that the greatest point of conflict was the discrepant views that caregivers and professionals held about the child's needs. A closer look at how team members share and negotiate differing versions of student needs may prove valuable in understanding how to reduce conflict when making decisions together. Focusing on decision making with professionals and families in the discourse of IEP meetings shows how the language of the law is performed in practice. In the next section, I explain the legal procedures of initial, annual, and tri-annual IEP meetings, and the typical school processes surrounding IEP meetings.

Description of IEP meetings. According to IDEA (2004), within a formal IEP meeting, team members must agree on a written legal document that summarizes the education program for the student receiving special education services. IEPs for each student receiving services

include: (1) details of the responsibilities of the school in meeting educational needs; (2) annual goals and objectives; (3) modifications to instruction and assessments; and (4) service times, types, and locations (IDEA, 2004). Transition planning for secondary students necessitates additional and more in depth discussion of career interests, training, education, and goals for postsecondary activities and employment. Within IEPs, participants negotiate and manage student, family, school, and community discourses as they review strengths, supports, and needs for services.

The IEP team determines the needs for services in initial IEP meetings when identifying the student as qualifying for special education services. As needed, the IEP team reviews service needs, at least annually. It is not uncommon for students to have one IEP meeting a year. In the years following after the IEP team deems a child eligible for services, monitoring and assessing falls on the case manager. The case manager provides goal progress reports at least three or four times a year during grading periods. Monitoring student progress occurs through consultation with general education teachers and/or through directly assessing the student.

Responsibilities for services are minimized with consultation, where the case manager will monitor grades and check in with the student and/or the teachers. In consultation models, the responsibilities for learning and teaching are largely on the student and general education teachers to follow through with agreed upon accommodations and modifications. In inclusion models, the responsibilities are distributed between school staff because the special education teacher or special education aide acts as a co-teacher in the subject area. Special education staff are also available for direct in-class support. Direct instruction varies in Comprehensive

Developmental Classrooms (CDC)[7] or resource settings. In resource settings, a special education teacher/case manager may teach English, Math and/or other subjects to the student in a smaller group setting. In a CDC setting, the special education teacher/case manager teaches all subjects and life skills to students during the day.

IEP members should include, by law: (1) one or both parents/caregivers; (2) a regular education teacher; (3) a special education teacher; (4) an administrator or supervisory representative; (5) a psychologist or someone who can interpret evaluation results; (6) other individuals who may have helpful knowledge or expertise; and (7) "whenever appropriate, the child with a disability" (IDEA, 2004, Sec.300.321.(a) [7]). Unfortunately, facilitators and caregivers rarely invite students before age fourteen or sixteen (Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997; Martin et al, 2006). For secondary students over age sixteen (or, in many states, age fourteen), the IDEA (2004) mandates a level of student participation as not only appropriate, but necessary. Despite such legislation, several studies have reported that students did not participate in IEP meetings (Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Powers, Turner, Matuszewski, Wilson, & Philips, 2001; Test, et al, 2004). In some reported findings, many students were not even aware of their IEP goals, or the purpose of the IEP, let alone making decisions about their futures (Goepel, 2009; Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Test, et al, 2004; Trainor, 2005).

The IEP meeting has the potential to be a decision-making meeting where all team members participate in discussing and agreeing on the appropriate measurable goals and supports for the student. Yet, in a national longitudinal study, Newman (2005) found that only 33% of

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[7] Comprehensive Developmental Classrooms are self-contained classrooms in which students spend over 50 % of their day outside the regular education setting (32 or more hours a week). This means instruction in a smaller setting (12-15 students is common practice) and usually students have a higher need for academic and/or behavioral support. Additional related services are also offered (e.g., occupational therapy, speech and language therapy).

parents felt that IEP goals were developed by the school and the family collaboratively, with only 21% perceiving that their child also had participated in goal development. What lawmakers and school staff count as participation in IEP meetings may be contributing to parent perceptions of unilateral planning and goal development. According to the IDEA (2004) mandate, the student with a dis/ability label should be invited to the meeting so that his interests and preferences are represented. However, federal commentators on the IDEA (USDE, 2006a), noted that "the child is a participating IEP Team member" when invited to the IEP meeting, because when the student is absent from the meeting the school will "take other steps to ensure that the child's preferences and interests are considered" (p. 46667).

Educators must give families notice of IEP meetings, and make every effort to schedule during a time when one or both caregivers and the student can attend. However, educators can conduct an IEP meeting without a caregiver in attendance, if the facilitator took steps to ensure a caregiver's participation within the IEP meeting and a meeting still could not be arranged (IDEA, 2004, 34 C.F.R. §300.322[d]). This includes opportunities provided for meaningful participation either within the meeting or outside the meeting. Consequently, regardless of caregiver and student presence at the planning table, IDEA considers caregivers and students to be participating IEP members. With such a low bar set for participation, decision making in IEP meetings regarding academic futures can potentially occur without either a student or caregiver in attendance. By law, an IEP meeting convenes with intentions of participatory decision making, but it may not always occur.

For meetings with eighth graders and high school students receiving special education services, there is an emphasis on involving students as much as possible in decisions about their education and future planning (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et

al, 2004; Test, et al, 2004). A three year study of IEP meetings in secondary schools by Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004) indicated that family feelings of meaningful involvement within decision-making were higher when students attended meetings, and lower when students were absent. In their comprehensive review of the relationship between transition planning and transition outcomes for secondary school students, Cobb and Alwell (2009) concluded that including students as meaningful participants within IEP meetings had the greatest promise for creating positive transition outcomes. Despite that finding, there is no research on how secondary students negotiate and manage participation in decisions. Given the purpose of the IEP meeting as planning for the educational services for at least the next year, the meeting can be a delicate social and cultural task for students, families, and educators. Meetings may be fraught with challenges.

Challenges with participation. In previous studies, IEP meetings have been described by students, families, and educators as stressful and uncomfortable (Fish, 2008; Hogansen, et al, 2008; Martin, et al, 2004). Educators detailed frustrations over unrealistic expectations of families and students (Hogansen, et al, 2008; Laluvein, 2007; Laluvein, 2010). Families reported not knowing the purpose of IEP meetings, or how to become involved (Kim, Lee, & Morningstar, 2007; Lo, 2008; Salas, 2004). One early study, 10 years after the enactment of P.L. 94-142, characterized the IEP meeting as one of decision telling, not decision making. (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell, & Lasky, 1988). Caregivers and students reported receiving implicit or explicit messages by educators that their views were not welcome within IEP meetings (Angell, Stoner, & Shelden, 2009; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Fish, 2006; Hogansen et al, 2008; Salas, 2004; Rueda et al, 2005; Williams, 2007). Thus, the structure of meetings appears to offer challenges to family participation within decision making.

As a result of ambivalent feelings, IEP meetings may become a place of conflict between families and schools. Dissatisfaction and disagreements with the needs and supports outlined in the IEP may lead to legal disputes over IDEA implementation. In fact, caregivers of older, secondary students, file more complaints than caregivers of younger students (Zeller, 2010; Zeller, 2011). Also, caregivers of secondary students consistently report less satisfaction with special education services (Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001; Krach, Ochoa, & Palmer, 2005). This may be due to family centered interventions in early childhood special education that have placed an increasing emphasis on family-professional partnerships and family choice within family networks of support (Epley, Summers, & Turnbull, 2010). In the last few years, the number of due process filings to resolve disputes have decreased; in that same time, the number of mediations have increased (Zeller, 2010; 2011). Due process filings and mediations are financially costly. Further, they are costly in terms of said strained relationships between families, schools, and communities (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Mueller, Singer, & Draper, 2008; Nowell, & Salem, 2007). Meaningful participation in educational decision making comes at a price, and does not always result in satisfaction with services.

Individual Education Plan meetings have been studied in kindergarten to secondary settings with a variety of participants and methods. I mention a few key studies here, and examine the literature in more detail in Chapter 2. To ascertain the perspectives of educators, caregivers, and students on the IEP process, researchers have used focus groups (Hogansen, et al, 2008), observations and surveys (Martin et al, 2004; Martin et al, 2006), as well as interviews and surveys (Goepel, 2009; Prunty, 2011). However, few have focused on the actual talk within IEP meetings (Mehan, 1983; Plum, 2008; Rogers, 2002), or on decision making within IEP meetings from a discursive perspective (Mehan, 1983; Mehan, Hertwick, & Meihls, 1986;

Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2003). Researchers (Martin, et al, 2006) counted the percentage of time participants talked within meetings, but even then, there was not attention to how activities were socially managed through the particulars of talk. In addition, although there have been a few studies on the perspectives of IEP team members of student-led IEP meetings (Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Mason, Mcgahee-Kovac, Johnson, & Stillerman, 2002), there were no conversation analysis studies found of actual meeting talk with students present in IEP decision making meetings. Further, although Rogers (2002) included analysis of interviews and field note observations from an IEP meeting with a seventh grader present in her critical discourse analysis study, she did not analyze the actual meeting talk, or discursive interactions. There were no discourse analysis studies of naturally occurring meeting talk with students present found in the review of current literature. Therefore, it is not known how students contribute to decision making within IEP meetings in actual talk. Before going on to describe discourse analysis, I define decision making.

Decision Making. Making a decision involves reaching a conclusion after considering available solutions to a problem. This includes the process of resolving a question with a formal judgment or solution. The key is that there must be a problem or question to be resolved to begin the process of making a decision. The origin of the word "decide" indicates, "a resolving of alternatives or difficulties by cutting through them as if with a knife or a sword—dealing with them 'at a stroke'" (Ayto, 1990, p. 159). Both difficulties and alternatives need to be present. When speakers construct their talk[8] to offer a menu of choices for hearers to select from, then there is no decision making. Without the construction of a problem or question, then a person is

[8] By "construct their talk" I am referencing the belief I share with discursive psychology that speakers build their utterances to accomplish certain social actions. I address this belief more fully in the next section on discourse analysis.

making a choice from available presented options. The distinction is crucial. Making a decision involves choice, but it is a purposeful choice in response to a posed problem. Selecting alternatives is not the same as weighing the merits of possible courses of action and then determining the most appropriate. When speakers construct their talk to highlight a problem or pose a question, then presumably hearers have the opportunity to share solutions and determine the best resolution.

Shared decision making includes others in defining the problem, weighing options, and reaching conclusions. Thus, "making up of one's mind" occurs in interaction with others (Barnhart, 1967, p. 221). Accordingly, when researching decision making in IEP meetings, attention should be paid to how and if difficulties are posed as needing solutions from team members. Thus, the analysis of turn-by-turn sequencing and understanding of the orderly structure of talk is necessary. Of particular importance in understanding decision making in IEP meetings is exploring what discourse analysis adds as a research method in this area of study. I detail this potential in the next section.

Discourse analysis, discursive psychology, and IEP meetings. Discourse analysts study how people construct social realities through talk (e.g., how a psychologist constructs an argument for special education services). Discursive psychology (DP) explains such interactions as doing orderly social psychological work through talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Much like rhetorical psychology, discursive psychology explains social interactions as doing the work of persuading and arguing (Billig, 1996). In contrast, cognitive psychology would explain discursive interactions as reflecting the cognitive or emotional states of participants. Most research on IEP meetings is from a cognitive psychology perspective. Such research focuses on descriptions or reports of *perceptions* of IEP meetings, but *after* they occur. I found only eight

studies that focused on conversational or discursive features in IEP meetings (Dufon, 1993; Harris, 2010; Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008; Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2003). I review these studies in Chapter 2.

Discourse analysts consider talk as situated and produced for the occasion.[9] By orienting psychology within interactions, talk is *constructive* of reality, and reality is *constructed* moment-by-moment (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Edwards (2006) noted that in DP, "psychological interests are relevant analytically only in so far as they are made relevant, topicalized, managed, etc. (but not necessarily labeled) as an integral part of the interaction-oriented work done by talk and text" (p. 42). Thus, the focus is on what participants are doing with language in various contexts.

Focusing on social action allows an analysis of how people purposefully construct their accounts[10] to do certain things. Thus, a discourse study from a DP methodology eschews cognitive states, and focuses instead on how participants dynamically design language to perform a social action with a resultant outcome. Because of DP's concern with language actions, researchers often frame research questions in terms of how participants construct a topic through discursive resources, and what the resulting actions accomplish. For instance, in analyzing the talk and the IEP form in meetings, I reported on how the form and the participants

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[9] I consider this my theoretical rationale for not using self-determination theory to frame my study even though interview studies have emphasized self-determination (Wehmeyer, 1992) as playing a part in helping students contribute to their IEP meetings (Arndt, Konrad, Test, 2006; Test, et al, 2004). Looking at how participants built up self- determination through talk, if at all, is a topic for another study.

[10] The focus on description leads discursive psychologists to describe some utterances as "accounts" or "reports," as participants construct their talk as factual (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

rhetorically sequenced utterances[11] to, at times, make decisions unavailable to certain participants. Recording actual meeting talk at the time it occurs allows for such analysis of actions performed in the meeting.

The rhetorical nature of talk (Billig, 1996) and conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992), connect with DP. Through a close look at language-in-use, discourse analysts examine the complex structure of how participants in interactions criticize and justify claims. Every utterance within interaction is a dynamic opportunity for argument or agreement as, turn-by-turn, participants use language in such a way to co-construct meaning. Consequently, participants' intentions, thoughts, and knowledge are not singularly fixed, but rather "actively managed interactional concerns" (Edwards, 2006, p. 45). Participants interactionally negotiate meanings of definitions, descriptions, and accounts to build versions of events, people, and topics. At any moment, participants manage, arrange, and deploy multiple versions. Thus, in IEP meetings, participants might build versions of students as capable of making their own decisions, and as active contributors to their IEP plan, or as incapable of such.

Discourse analysts (DA) and conversation analysts (CA) study how participants share and challenge each other's versions, and construct the social world through talk. When analyzing how participants negotiated and managed decision making in an orderly manner in IEP meetings, I drew upon Edward's and Potter's (1992) Discursive Action Model, and Heritage's (1997) work on conversation analysis in institutional meetings, which I discuss further in Chapter 2. Studying IEP meetings through this lens affords the careful consideration of what utterances produced what response within a particular situation. Knowing such details may provide educational

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[11] "Rhetorically sequencing" refers to how speakers organize their language to persuade or make their claims believable to hearers (Billig, 1996) within a certain context. "Utterances" refer to a speaker's verbal talk and noises (i.e. laughter) associated with their speaking turn.

practitioners with solid strategies to increase family participation within decision making. Studying how overall talk is rhetorically arranged, affords the potential for changing structures to encourage more participation. Likewise, caregivers and students can be trained in ways to contribute to interactions as decision makers.

Statement of the Problem

By law, students and caregivers are specifically invited to an IEP meeting so that they can contribute to meeting interactions (IDEA, 2004). Research has not provided a great deal of insight into how participants achieve decisions through the social actions and the functions of talk in meetings with and without students present. Most of the IEP meeting research focuses on re-formulations, re-workings, and reflections of the meeting through observations, surveys, interviews, and document analysis. This includes studies specifically on transition planning (Angell, et al, 2009; Fish, 2006; Hogansen et al, 2008; Kim & Morningstar, 2005; Kim, et al, 2007; Lo, 2008; Martin, et al, 2006; Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Powers, et al, 2001; Rueda et al, 2005; Salas, 2004; Test et al, 2004; Trainor, 2005; Williams, 2007), or on students leading their own IEP meetings (Branding, Bates, & Miner, 2008; Kelley, Bartholomew, & Test, 2013; Woods, Sylvester, & Martin, 2010; Woods, Martin, & Humphrey, 2013). Although valuable, we need to know specifically what the presence and participation of students within meetings does to interaction. It is not enough to know only student perceptions after the fact (Agran & Hughes, 2008) or the effects of certain programs to teach participation to students (Neale & Test, 2009; Test, et al, 2004). Armed with knowledge of different ways to increase interaction, participants could perhaps find ways to change the nature of decision making within IEP meetings.

Even though studies have reported on perceptions of greater satisfaction and feelings of meaningful contributions in meetings where students are present at and/or facilitate their IEP

meeting (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Branding, et al., 2008; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al, 2004; McKay, 2014; Test, et al, 2004; Valenzuela & Martin, 2005), we know little about the actual talk in the meetings themselves (Dufon, 1993; Mehan et al, 1986; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008; Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2003). Little is known about participant practices, in general, and decision making, in particular, when students are present. No conversation analysis or discourse analysis studies of actual moment-by-moment meeting talk have been conducted with students present. A greater understanding of such may help to understand how students achieve greater participation in the decision making process about their post school future opportunities.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this discourse study was to describe how participants negotiate decision making within middle school Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with and without students present. Naturally occurring talk of caregivers, educational staff, and students receiving special education services, demonstrates how speakers manage and construct decision making. Identifying the dominant arguments, how speakers managed descriptions, who made claims, and how participants received or challenged each utterance, demonstrates how participants performed decision making within IEP meetings as a situated practice. This study also highlighted the social construction of students', caregivers', educators', and researchers' understandings of decision making, and their roles within the meeting. Comparisons between middle school meetings with and without students, serves to highlight how a student's presence changes decision making interactions. A better understanding of the discursive practices around decisions can provide needed information to teachers, administrators, and policy makers about the structure and function of the IEP meeting. Further, reconsidering how an IEP meeting might

be structured to make decision making roles available to certain participants will help caregivers, students, and general educators become more involved.

Research Question

How do participants in middle school IEP meetings negotiate decision making with and without students present?

Delimitations

The topic of Individualized Education Programs is quite extensive in special education literature. Therefore, the following delimitations restricted this study. First, it was not relevant to this study to analyze the IEP forms for each student. Although I noted the overall structure of the form as guiding interactions, my focus remained on the talk produced within meetings. This focus allowed me to attend to the negotiation of decision making through talk, rather than primarily through written records.

Second, although I acknowledge the extensive research on perceptions of IEP meetings, and choice of some researchers to interview IEP meeting participants, I chose to focus this study on how naturally occurring talk within actual IEP meetings led to moment-by-moment decision making. Interviews of participants conducted after the meeting would co-construct another type of interaction altogether, and were not used here. For this study, I was only interested in the multiplicity of discourse, rather than the multiplicity of perspectives of meeting participants. In both Ruppar and Gaffney (2011) and Mehan et al (1986), researchers found that what participants did not express in the meeting, they often expressed in individual interviews. For instance, in Ruppar's and Gaffney's case study of an elementary IEP meeting with ten participants, only the mother and psychologist shared views on whether Aaron could be diagnosed with autism. Everyone else remained silent on the issue, except in individual

interviews. Although interviews add valuable insights to understandings, I wanted my claims to be grounded in actual talk within IEP meetings, and not participant perceptions after the fact. Thus, I did not seek such views in this study. By not gathering perceptions of participants, but rather the actual talk, guidelines for increasing decision making come from actual instances that increased participation in planning.

Third, I further narrowed this study to middle school students, rather than all K-12 public school students. The primary rationale for this decision was in the availability of sixth to eighth grade meetings that included meetings with and without students for comparison. Such a delimitation afforded two different schools from two different school districts, with six different facilitators leading meetings. This provided rich variability, as well as consistency of context. Along with these delimitations, certain limitations also bounded this study.

Limitations

I was limited to willing educators, and likely not invited to possibly contentious meetings. It is likely that only teachers who felt comfortable inviting me into their IEP meetings responded to my invitations. For the few teachers who responded, I was limited to the meetings they chose, and did not choose from a list of possible meetings. It is important to note that while school administrators acted as gatekeepers, in the end, all school districts who agreed to participate did so because teachers agreed first.

A further limitation was the status of IEP meetings as legal meetings where decisions take place. In three school districts, I had teachers who agreed, but the administrators or lawyer then refused consent. Multiple administrators in the districts who refused to participate referred to IEP meetings as “sensitive” meetings. Because the IEP is a legal document, fears of families taking legal action abounded in some districts. In such a climate, gaining access proved difficult,

but not impossible with continued persistence. Therefore, the orientation to IEP meetings as legal and sensitive limited my access to entire school districts.

Some district administrators expressed fear that participants would not speak freely with recording in progress, and thus not participate fully. The lawyer in one large school district refused to grant permission for the study largely on the assumption that caregivers would not want me recording the meeting. However, caregivers agreed to recording in 77 out of 79 meetings. It is possible that caregivers agreed based on my perceived authority, or that refusals are harder to interactionally manage (Sacks, 1992). It is impossible to determine if the presence of a recorder changed the interaction. In my data set, I did not specifically ask participants whether the recorder changed their discourse so that they chose not to speak freely. There were references to the recorder in some meetings in side conversations, or as part of the main interaction in a joking manner. Thus, although some might consider the presence of the recorder as a study limitation, I do not. Rather, I consider it necessary in order to conduct analysis of naturally occurring talk.

Delimitations and limitations bounded the overall scope and reach of this study. I explain the importance of this study to our understandings of IEP meetings in the next section.

Significance of the Study

One of the advantages of this study was that the findings revealed ways that participants encouraged and limited interaction. Comparing meetings with and without students showed how students meaningfully contributed to interaction, and the elements that produced increased interaction. Language construction varies according to the purpose or function of the talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Therefore, how participants orient to the IEP meeting as a decision making meeting can demonstrate which individuals participated the most in decision making, and how

they contributed. Outlining the rhetorical structure of talk in the IEP meeting, demonstrates how different versions and roles contribute to decisions, and what participants attended to as relevant.

One of the ways caregivers contribute to their child's education is through making decisions about their child's future within IEP meetings. It is important that caregivers feel that they are a valuable and contributing member of the IEP team. In an increasingly litigious society, it is important to understand how participants handled disagreements. Studying decision making interactions, draws attention to how participants negotiated and managed conflict. This allows examples and non-examples for IEP meeting participants. The findings displayed alternative versions of decision making interactions, reported on rhetorical strategies, and demonstrated how students contributed to interactions. Each participant used language to make their point believable and acceptable to the group (Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986), and excerpts from this data demonstrated how this was done.

A practical application of the findings is in education of practitioners or IEP team members (Willig, 1999). The discourse in these meetings may help to shape a professional development seminar for facilitators of IEP meetings. In this way, facilitators may make applications to their own facilitation of IEP meetings and so transform their interaction to encourage shared decision making. It may also be useful when training parents about their roles within meetings. Studying participants' naturally occurring constructions within IEP meetings contributes to a richer understanding of how IEP team members design decision making moments.

My own past experiences framed how I approached this study. I discuss these experiences in a reflexivity statement in the next section.

Reflexivity Statement

I come to the study not only as a researcher, but also as a special educator in public and private settings, a special education administrator, an instructor of pre-service teachers, and as a sibling of an adult who I watched with interest and, at times, with sadness go through the special education system from age four to twenty-two. These stated membership categories cannot reveal the complexity of my emotions, wonderings, and questions about a system in which I am deeply connected as both an insider and an outsider. As a special educator, I met with parents, usually mothers, of my students to discuss current progress and future goals. Caregivers and I discussed our expectations and hopes for the future based on the believed capabilities of their child within formal IEP meetings or in day-to-day talk. Whereas mothers of younger children tended to be focused on more immediate short term goals, one of the frequent concerns I heard from mothers of adolescents and young adults was about their child's future post-schooling opportunities. Such conversations were both fraught with fears and bright with hope.

My status as an educator, formerly in public and private school settings, means I am familiar with facilitating IEP meetings, including those with students present. Therefore, I was careful to make what was familiar unfamiliar by actively constructing a multiplicity of versions instead of a singular story (Pillow, 2003). For example, although I noted similarities between the ways I facilitated meetings and how special educators in this study facilitated meetings, I also noted differences, and what we might both be missing. When observing, I focused on the action in the room, and I worked to construct what I was seeing as unfamiliar so that I was open and available to hear the stories of participants. Likewise in analysis, I assumed that others might interpret data differently. As a social constructionist, I believe truth claims are co-created. The

researcher does not trump interpretations of others, so I was careful to include excerpts in detail so that readers could form their own interpretations, perhaps different than my own.

As a sibling of an adult with multiple dis/ability labels, I am also concerned with transition planning and support. As a witness to my brother's schooling and transition from formal schooling to adulthood, I have understandings and experiences. I believe that students should have increasing opportunities starting from a young age to understand and plan for their future. These opportunities should honor individual, family, and school concerns with a primary focus on student interests and aspirations. When observing meetings, I dispassionately took notes on non-verbal interactions, but starred areas in my notes that I considered interesting moments. Because of my stance as an interested other, I worked hard to remain reflexively aware of my own reactions in the moment of taking notes. Later, in listening, transcribing, and analyzing, I made note of intense anger and disgust when I disagreed violently with how a participant constructed a student. Also, I made note of times when I cried with joy or shouted with triumph when a participant made a particularly beautiful discursive turn to result in positive constructions filled with hope. My bias towards championing students, caregivers, and educators remained present and visible as I wrote my responses to data in the form of researcher memos. I consider such transparency necessary to display my honest and continually changing engagement with the data.

The present research topic reflects my interest on collaboration within IEP meetings and how participants talk about future goals and dreams. In talking to parents about IEP meetings, they often roll their eyes in derision, and then go on to share their stories of stressful IEP meetings. Looking back over my experiences as a teacher and researcher, and the many stories that I have heard, I find it striking that even though the IEP is for the individual child, the student

is often not at the meeting or represented in research on IEP meetings. This disturbs me. I view it as a lack of honor. We honor people when we listen and value their viewpoints. I believe that the talk and/or the text of the IEP meeting should create opportunities for all participants to describe dreams and challenges. The importance I place on honoring the individual is found in many qualitative research approaches, including discourse analysis.

The post-cognitivist, or cognitive agnostic, stance of discursive psychology (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 2005) first attracted me to discourse analysis. Both discursive psychology (DP) and discourse analysis are emic, in that analysts care about what the participant cares about (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). I found it appealing that I need not pretend to sit in my participant's head and explain their intentions through my chosen external theoretical framework. With discourse analysis, I do not explicitly overlay my theories onto participant words. Neither do I label participant words into specific coding categories that I created and deemed relevant themes. As a discourse analyst, I attend to what the participant attends to as important within the interaction. I also make transparent what I find interesting within the interaction, and how my construction includes that for which I care (Richardson, 1997; Watt, 2007). Further, as a detail oriented person, I enjoyed the meticulous transcription, recurrent readings, and repeated listening to identify discursive features and functions. Without question, the discourse I focused upon in this study emanates from my background, interests, and experiences, as well as my research questions.

Now that I have described my background, assumptions, and interests in the topic of study, in the next section, I turn to a description of the organization of the study.

Dissertation Organization

In this chapter, I introduced the purposes of IEP meetings and the challenges associated with such meetings. Secondly, I argued how conversation and discourse analysis contributes to our understandings of IEP meetings. Third, I highlighted the lack of research from a discursive perspective on how students contribute to interactions, and the purpose of this study as exploring how speakers negotiate decision making with and without students present. Then, I stated the research question guiding the proposed study, and outlined the limiting factors. Finally, I provided the significance of this study, as well as my personal connection to it.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature in order to place the proposed study in relation to what has already been reported in the relevant research. Throughout the review, I identify specific problems or gaps in our understandings of participation in decision making within IEP meetings. Next, I describe the methodology of discourse analysis I used in detail. In Chapter 3, I describe the methods of data collection and analysis. Then, in Chapter 4, I explain some of my findings about decision making moments at length. Finally in Chapter 5, I provide a discussion of the implications of the findings on practices within IEP meetings, and our understandings of decision making with students present or absent.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

The purpose of this discourse analysis was to describe how speakers negotiate decision making within naturally occurring talk in middle school IEP meetings with and without students present. In this literature review, I show contemporary theoretical understandings and methods related to decision making within IEP meetings. I also examine current research studies with particular attention to findings about decision making between team members. I pay particular attention to how conversation analysis and discourse analysis studies contribute to our understandings of decision making within IEP meetings. Although the history of family and school collaboration in special education settings would complement this review, it is not central to the purpose of this review of current perspectives on decision making within IEP meetings[12].

Organization of Chapter 2

First, I detail the search methods that I used to locate texts. Second, I explore some of the contemporary theoretical approaches related to decision making within IEP meetings. Third, I focus more specifically on research studies addressing decision making within IEP meetings. I organize the research by IEP studies in three categories: (1) IEP forms; (2) student, caregiver, and educator experiences; and (3) caregiver and educator experiences. Although the categories overlap, I separate them for organizational purposes. Fourth, I outline my methodology. Specifically, I describe underlying assumptions of discursive psychology. Then, I detail the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and features of conversation analysis that I used in analysis (Heritage, 1997; Sacks, 1992). I conclude the chapter with a summary.

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[12] I refer the reader to Erwin and Soodak (2008) and Turnbull and her colleagues (2011) who provide a historical perspective of family and school collaboration in special education.

Search Methods

A multi-phase search method directed the location of the theoretical articles, empirical studies, and texts found for this dissertation. In the first phase, I searched computerized databases (Academic Search Premier, Dissertation Abstracts, Education Full Text, Education Index Retro, Education Source, ERIC, Humanities and Social Sciences Index, and PsychInfo) for full-text, peer-reviewed articles. Initially, the search was unlimited by year of publication in order to locate early theoretical perspectives on the topic, as well as classic studies. Because various cultural perspectives may inform how special education meetings in the United States are understood, I included international texts in the search. I used the key search terms "individual education plan" and variants such as "IEP," "individual educational program," and "IEP meeting." To find special education conferences and articles addressing schools making decisions with students or talking with parents, I also used the secondary terms "parent teacher conference," "decision making," "collaboration," and "student conference." For methodological articles related to IEP meetings, I paired "IEP" and it's variants with "discourse analysis," "discursive psychology," and "conversation analysis." This served to delimit my search so as not to include the vast body of general research and theory on special education methods, interventions, policies, and procedures. Further, I chose to focus on K-12 elementary and secondary IEP research, and thus did not reference articles from preschool or adult special education decision making.

During the second phase, I located texts associated with my methodology of discourse analysis specifically within discourse related journals. Using the key terms described in phase one, I searched the following journals: (1) *Language in Society*; (2) *Text & Talk*; (3) *Journal of Pragmatics*; (4) *Linguistics & Education*; (5) *Discourse Studies*; (6) *Discourse & Society*; (7)

Critical Discourse Studies; (8) *Research on Language and Social Interaction*; (9) *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*; (10) *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*; and (11) *British Journal of Social Psychology*. Phases one and two resulted in over 194 articles, dissertations, book chapters, and books from 1986 to 2014.

Two questions guided the third phase in order to narrow to current research between 2008 to 2014: (1) What *evaluations and research studies* exist that contribute to our understanding of IEP meeting decision making talk between families and schools? and (2) What *theoretical perspectives* of decision making within IEP meetings contribute to our understanding of talk between families and schools? I included only articles, handbooks, and texts that answered these two questions within the years specified, with exceptions for articles that were either landmark studies, or the only text found on a given sub-topic (Galvan, 2006). During this phase, I also searched the references of texts to find further articles that fit my parameters. With de-limitations, I located two books, ten dissertations, and 99 articles describing aspects of families and schools working together with K-12 students receiving special education services. Many of the texts referenced decision making as part of their overall findings or as a sub- topic, with only a few considering decision making directly, as I discuss later in the chapter. Table 1 provides a description of the themes and contexts of the 111 texts. The category “theoretical texts” includes position papers as well as proposed strategies, approaches, and models of decision making between families and schools. The category “participants of studies” includes five literature reviews that addressed caregivers and families working together.

Table 1: Texts by Theme, Methodology, and Context

Theme	**Number of Findings**	**Methodology/Context of Study**
Total number of texts	N = 111	
Theoretical texts	N = 47	
Literature reviews	N = 7	
Empirical studies	N = 57	
	7% (4)	Conversation Analysis
	7% (4)	Discourse Analysis/Critical DA
	47% (27)	Qualitative (non-CA/DA)
	19% (11)	Mixed Method
	19% (11)	Quantitative
School Settings of Studies	N = 57	
	21% (12)	K-12
	2% (1)	K-8
	30% (17)	Elementary Schools
	47% (27)	Secondary Schools
Participants of Studies	N = 62	
	19% (12)	Students, Caregivers, and Educators
	13% (8)	Educators
	18% (11)	Caregivers and Educators
	31% (19)	Caregivers
	19% (12)	Students

About 80 % of the empirical studies found on the topic employed a qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) or mixed methodology approach to interpret how participants made sense of

families and schools working together. Of the quantitative studies, four were experimental designs and seven were surveys. I found no evaluation studies on the topic. It is important to note that this literature review related to peer-reviewed theoretical papers and empirical studies. Due to a focus on peer-reviewed literature, I necessarily have privileged the perspectives of researchers. I ignored important areas of scholarship in popular literature that privileged perspectives of caregivers and parent organizations. Likewise, I did not include the perspectives of policy makers and lawyers because I excluded research on special education policies, compilations of legal cases, and special education legal issues. In addition, I selected studies for further review that referenced decision making as a research question or making decisions to some extent in their findings, specifically studies that included multiple IEP team members (N=19). Therefore, this review may have made the topic look more uniform than it actually is.

In the next section, I provide a brief overview of a few theoretical perspectives as well as methods related to families and schools working together to make decisions within IEP meetings.

Theoretical Perspectives and Decision Making Methods in IEP Meetings

The primary theoretical perspective dominating IEP meetings, as driven by the IDEA (2004) law and persistent educator practices and policies, is a deficit or medical model of dis/ability. The medical model of dis/ability highlights student deficits. This perspective drives the IEP form, and provides the backdrop for how participants talk about special education services in IEP meetings. In response to the deficit perspectives of IDEA, some professionals and families have turned to strengths-based and collaborative methods of working together within IEP meetings. Because both deficit and strengths based perspectives contribute to how participants frame decision making within IEP meetings, in the following four sections I describe the IDEA deficit perspective framing decision making, and highlight three contemporary

strengths based methods in IEP meeting literature: (1) community of practice planning; (2) person-centered planning; and (3) student-directed IEP planning. As such, this section provides a background for some of the perspectives driving IEP meetings and the empirical research reviewed in this chapter.

Deficit perspectives and decision making. The IDEA (2004) law (and by extension the IEP form) follows the medical model, which pathologizes dis/abilities. This means viewing dis/ability as a condition inside the individual requiring remediation of impairments by experts such as physicians, educators, and therapists (Gabel, 2006). The medical model ignores how people socially construct notions of dis/ability with institutional procedures and policies, and how such practices result in negative and persistent stigmas. In IDEA's (2004) definition, dis/ability is synonymous with impairment[13]; a child with a dis/ability is someone evaluated as "having" one of thirteen conditions that cause the need for special education services (34 C.F.R. Sec. 300A.300.8). This places the dis/ability within the child. Such a placement necessarily privileges the knowledge of psychologists and doctors who diagnose, and educators who assess and present results of assessments. As an example of the deficit perspective working in IEP decision making interactions, the information shared by educators may be considered more relevant to the IEP than information shared by the student or caregiver. In another example of the deficit mentality displayed on the IEP form, the present levels of performance on the IEP forms in this study by EasyIEP™ included the instruction: "Levels of functioning, should when applicable, include norm referenced and/or criterion referenced data, as well as descriptive

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[13] Thomas (2002) defines impairment as "restrictions for activity" from "loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function" (p. 42). In dis/ability theory, individuals and society may socially and culturally construct impairments as adversely affecting what is considered to be a quality of life issue, and construct identities based on impairments (Siebers, 2008).

information of the student's deficit areas" (p. 2). The performance tables that organize information ask for details of these deficits, and include a check box for the educator to indicate whether the results were: "exceptional yes/no" (p. 2). By "exceptional," the meaning is whether the areas are in need of remediation. Such meanings are externally imposed on the student by others.

Determined by the state and the availability of school resources, schools decide how to address deficits. The location of deficits within individuals, the focus on "exceptional" deficits in present levels of performance, and the listing of school determined goals and services lead to an institutionalized deficit model for IEP meetings. For example, the 62 IEP forms reviewed for this study included one or two sentences on student strengths and caregiver concerns, and numerous pages listing student assessment results from a deficit perspective, and goals to remediate. As such, IEP forms may reflect and foster a deficit perspective, rather than emphasizing student strengths or caregiver concerns. Therefore, the deficit perspective may act as the primary perspective in the IEP meeting. Of interest is how participants negotiate and take up the deficit perspective in their discourse, and how deficit talk works within IEP team member rhetoric in relation to making decisions on the IEP form.

Many approaches exist that emphasize student strengths and focus on all IEP team members sharing information to define difficulties and problem solve together. I show three such approaches to decision making in the next section.

Strengths based perspectives and collaborative decision making. Strengths based approaches acknowledge the unique talents and skills of every individual and family unit, and work together with families to highlight both strengths (Weishaar, 2010) and needs (Rashid & Ostermann, 2009). Some of these approaches, specifically person-centered planning frameworks,

are based on communications outside the official IEP meeting. However, Test and his colleagues (2004) reviewed sixteen studies where students were involved in the IEP process *before* IEP meetings or *within* person-centered meetings, and concluded that the reviewed programs were effective in increasing student involvement.

Likewise, in their review of 31 studies involving 859 youth, Cobb and Alwell (2009) found that including students as meaningful participants *within* IEP meetings had the greatest promise for creating positive transition outcomes. Further, other research showed increased academic achievement (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2009), and increased parent involvement (Martin, et al, 2004) when students participated in IEP planning. Strengths based approaches have been commonly used in counseling and in early childhood education (Weishaar, 2010). Like the name suggests, team members intentionally work against the "pervasive and potent" fascination of the educational and medical community for negative assessments of skills and abilities (Rashid & Osterman, 2009, p. 488). In doing so, interventions not only come from deficit based educational assessments, but family and educator perceptions of holistic strengths.

Given the importance and outcomes of involving students in IEP meetings, and because of my focus on how students contribute to IEP decision making interactions, all collaborative theoretical perspectives discussed here include the student in decision making. Strengths based approaches show the potential for meaningful IEPs. Yet, such approaches take time, and it is unclear how models would work practically with busy professionals and active families. Strengths based models may explicitly show families how to become involved in decision making meetings, a barrier noted by Kim and Morningstar (2005) in their review of five studies

on transition with culturally and linguistically diverse[14] families, Lo's (2008) two year case study with five Chinese families, and Salas' (2004) study with ten Latina mothers. Moreover, strengths based approaches (Weishaar, 2010) address barriers to shared decision making noted in other studies by caregivers who felt that they received implicit or explicit messages by professionals that their views were not welcome in IEP meetings (Angell, et al, 2009; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Fish, 2006; Salas, 2004; Rueda et al, 2005; Williams, 2007). These perceived barriers are of interest for this discourse analysis because of how professionals may have constructed their discourse to show caregivers, whether culturally and linguistically diverse or not, that their participation was not needed in decision making.

Theoretical perspectives that incorporate strengths based approaches to decision making within IEP meetings include: (1) community of practice planning; (2) person-centered planning; and (3) student-directed planning.

Community of practice planning. Mortier and her colleagues (2009, 2010) applied the communities of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) to IEP meetings. The communities of practice model, used in conjunction with IEP meetings, systematically includes caregivers at all levels of educational decision making and service implementation. IEP team members form an intentional community of practice, a group committed to learning together about how to best work with students in need of educational supports. Although I found only two published peer reviewed articles (Mortier,

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[14] Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) is a common term used in special education literature, and refers to students who come from families that differ from the school staff in areas of race, ethnicity, culture, language, or socioeconomic status (Harry, 2008). While CLD students are not addressed specifically in this study, no literature review is complete without reference to CLD families due to the persistent overrepresentation of CLD students in special education (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002).

Hunt, Desimpel and Van Hove, 2009; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy, Van de Putte, & Van Hove, 2010) on communities of practice within IEP meetings, Lave and Wenger's (1991) social learning framework is a well-researched foundational theory in education and business. Further, the approach is unique in its perspective in many ways. The community of practice approach to IEP meetings includes students and caregivers in shared decision making interactions as equal partners. This is similar to person-centered planning approaches, but Mortier and her colleagues' approach is distinctive in that problems and supports are not externally imposed nor pre-defined by system resources.

Mortier and her colleagues (2010) noted the simplicity within which the communities of practice model was carried out by stakeholders: small groups of stakeholders met together regularly to ask and answer "two natural, open questions, 'How is the child doing?' and 'How can we support him/her better to participate and learn in school?'" (p. 352). Effective group problem solving and group reflection occurred in response to these questions. Within the communities of practice framework, participants engaged in a dynamic learning process where caregivers were equal partners and everyone kept a positive focus on the child. Mortier's and her colleagues' (2009, 2010) model shows the potential in framing the need for a legal IEP as a continual long-term, shared learning process. Person-centered planning shares the perspective of educator decision making with parents as a long term process.

Person-centered decision making. Like the community of practice model (Motier et al, 2009; 2010), person-centered planning views the whole individual as a starting point for creating collaborative supports (Claes, Van Hove, Vandevelde, Van Loon, & Schalock, 2010). Inherent in the approach is a value for respecting and prioritizing the preferences of the individual and the family (O'Brian, O'Brian, & Jacob, 2002). As such, person-centered planning is part of a wider

political movement pushing back against the idea that “able” people are responsible for planning and acting on behalf of dis/abled people. Foremost models include: (1) Making Action Plans (MAPS, Forest & Lusthaus, 1989); (2) Group Action Planning (GAP, Turnbull & Turnbull, 1996); (3) Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH, Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest, 1993); and (4) Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children (COACH, Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 2011). These approaches take place *prior* to the IEP meeting because of their emphasis on long term holistic vision planning with the family and student rather than present educational needs (Meadan, Shelden, Appel, & DeGrazia, 2010). All approaches include a stated intention based on a long range goal or dream that is usually (but not always) holistic in nature. All approaches involve shared understandings of the problem, as well as shared solutions and supports not necessarily under the control of educational systems.

Although person-centered planning approaches have been predominately used with adults with developmental disabilities (Claes, et al, 2010); they are also used in K-12 educational planning (Chambers & Childre, 2005; Keyes & Owens-Johnson, 2003; Kim & Turnbull, 2004; Meadan, et al., 2010). Person-centered planning has been used in the transition planning process with students with severe dis/ability labels (Kim & Turnbull, 2004), and in IEP meetings to emphasize the importance of creating IEP goals that plan for the long term (Meadan, et al, 2010; Miner & Bates, 1997).

Person-centered planning is presently implemented as a compliment to the official IEP meeting, and not as a replacement for it (Meadan et al., 2010). However, such frameworks emphasize student and caregiver participation within decision making. Of all the approaches listed here, COACH’s focus on goals and objectives (Wehmeyer, Abery, Mithaug, & Stancliffe, 2003) was the only person-centered approach with the most potential for incorporating student-

directed planning within IEP meetings. Students involved in creating and monitoring their own goals were key in building motivation through self-regulation and self-efficacy (Staab, 2010). Of interest is how such goal creation is already taking place within meetings with students present, and how goals are negotiated and created within actual talk.

Student-directed IEP planning. Although IEP meetings are usually directed by a special education professional, student-directed IEP meetings may include facilitation by the student with varying degrees of support from the special educator (Thoma & Wehman, 2010). Unlike person-centered approaches, student-led approaches take place both outside and within the official IEP meeting. Also, unlike communities of practice and person-centered planning, the student acts as lead facilitator and presenter of information for certain sections of the IEP, or the whole meeting, if they so choose. Teachers prepare students ahead of the meeting to lead IEP sections or the entire meeting (Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Thoma & Wehman, 2010).

Childre and Chambers (2005) discovered that when students led their own IEP meetings, family satisfaction with meetings increased, and more comprehensive viewpoints were shared as future goals were formed in partnership with all team members. The benefits of student participation occurred with elementary age students leading IEP meetings (Danneker & Bottge, 2009), as well as with secondary students leading IEP meetings (Cobb & Alwell, 2009). A meeting format like self-directed IEP meetings may provide all IEP team members with an interactional framework in which to negotiate participation of members, particularly students, in more meaningful ways. However, it is not known how decision making takes place within educator-student meetings preparing students for their presentation. Further, because of the combination with the legal purposes of the official IEP meeting, student-led IEP meetings continue to provide a narrow view of educational purposes and services, and may not reflect long

term holistic type planning available in other person-centered and strengths based approaches.

Summary of strengths based approaches. Community of practice approaches, person-centered planning, and student-led IEP meetings provide the potential to involve parents and students in meaningful ways in special education meetings. In addition to the programs cited above, there are a multitude of articles and books with suggestions for educators about how to facilitate communication within IEP meetings (Cheatham, Hart, Malian, & McDonald, 2012; Diliberto & Brewer, 2012; Edwards & Da Fonte, 2012; Lo, 2012; Mueller, 2009; Weishaar, 2010). In particular, position papers provide tips for educators to encourage parent participation in decision making (Capizzi, 2008; Clark & Flynn, 2011; Goldfarb, et al, 2010; Moore, 2009; Thurlow, Quenemoen, & Albus, 2013; Turnbull, et al, 2010; Van Haren & Fiedler, 2008), and student participation (Wells & Sheehey, 2012), especially within student-directed meetings (Hart & Brehm, 2013; Konrad, 2008; Martin et al, 1996; Valenzuela & Martin, 2005). The papers listed above represent a small selection based on the many resources urging educators to become better informed about encouraging student and caregiver participation in decision making. There was no shortage of theoretical articles and methods informing and training educators about including students and caregivers in decision making.

In this section, I briefly reviewed the primary deficit perspective framing decision making within IEP meetings, and three strengths based methods. What is not known is how, or if, participants interactionally negotiated deficit and/or strengths based theoretical perspectives within talk. Further, whereas no middle school IEP meeting in this study included an explicit strengths based approach following one of the three described methods described, it is not known how participants emphasize or negotiate student deficits or student strengths in connection with such perspectives. In the next section, I explore selected studies related to IEP forms and

participants of IEP meetings, including how students contributed to their IEP development.

Research on Decision Making within IEP meetings

Because my study purpose included both meetings with and without students, I focused this review on current and seminal studies that included student, caregiver, and educator experiences together in one study. I also included studies that examined educator and caregiver experiences without students. As an overview, I provide a table of these 19 studies in Appendix A, along with specific participant characteristics and relevant findings. Although I include some studies that address only experiences of one IEP participant (e.g., caregiver experiences), I do so in a general way, and my focus remains on the 19 studies that included caregivers and educators, either with or without students present.

In this review, I pay particular attention to IEP studies that included a discourse analysis or conversation analysis approach. In addition, I include studies specifically on IEP documents, or studies solely related to student experiences within IEP meetings. Within each section, I review selected studies according to themes, and note how the literature informed the present study. To organize this section, I share findings from current and selected studies in three categories of research on decision making in IEP meetings with and without students present: (1) IEP forms; (2) student, caregiver, and educator experiences in meetings with students present; and (3) educator and caregiver experiences in meetings without students present. Then, I provide interpretations and implications for this study from the reviewed literature for educators, caregivers, and students.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) forms. Here I discuss four studies that include a review of student IEP forms (Geenen & Powers, 2006; Lovitt, Cushing & Stump, 1994; Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Trainor, 2005). All studies involved either middle or high school students,

with two focusing specifically on transition plans. While students were present some of the time in each of the four studies, the research did not always include student perspectives about the IEP forms (Geenen & Powers, 2006; Trainor, 2005). All studies revealed the insufficiency or absence of written language on the IEP form reflecting the intentions of IDEA (2004) in meaningfully involving students within IEP decisions. I organize the studies by two sections of the IEP form: (1) IEP transition plans, and (2) IEP goals. Then, I discuss the implications of these four studies in conjunction with a case study that employed conversation analysis (Peters, 2003) that also included IEP forms as part of the research. Finally, I summarize and connect to areas informing this study.

IEP transition plans. Two studies reported how the IEP transition plans of students in foster care (Geenen & Powers, 2006), and culturally and linguistically diverse students (Trainor, 2005) demonstrated critical transition components. Even though the student population does not reflect the goals of this study, because there are so few studies examining written IEP forms, these two studies proved valuable background for how some educators record decisions on the IEP form, in general.

Geenen and Powers (2006) quantitatively compared 45 IEPs that contained transition plans of students, ages 16 to 21, receiving special education services with 45 IEP transition plans of students in foster care who also received special education services. With a revised and modified version of the Statement of Transition Services Review Protocol (STSRP), the researchers evaluated the 90 documents addressing: (1) twelve goal areas under IDEA mandates; (2) effective strategies or model transition programs; (3) diploma options; and (4) IEP meeting participants. Overall, Geenen and Powers found that the transition IEPs for foster care students fell short of criteria far more than their special education only counterparts. In particular, IEP

goals of foster care students had significantly fewer detailed descriptions than special education only students. Their findings pointed to the prevalence of IEPs that reflected “perfunctory paperwork” regardless of whether the student was in foster care or not (Geenen & Powers, 2006, p. 13). However, lack of clear comparisons between the foster care group and the special education only group on critical criteria made it difficult to determine the pervasiveness of poor transition goals, ineffective transition training strategies, and limited IEP meeting attendance across groups.

Of importance to this study regarding decision making with students was that approximately 29% of foster care students were absent from their transition meeting. Additionally, a foster care advocate (i.e., foster parent, educational surrogate, family member), was absent in 57.8% of meetings with foster youth. In comparison to the special education group, foster care youth were much less likely to have an advocate present (x^2 =8.43, df = 3, $p<.05$). This is a significant amount of foster care students and their caregivers who were not present in decision making meetings; a disturbing finding when considering IDEA law regarding shared decision making. The presence of a caseworker appeared to have an impact on the quality of the transition plan (i.e., 42.9% reference on the IEP form to independent living when caseworker present vs. 16 % when caseworker absent). Therefore, the authors suggest appointing and training educational surrogates to act as advocates, increasing the likelihood of developing meaningful, feasible transition plans. Of interest is how transition plans may vary in detail and scope in comparison with students present or absent.

Another study by Trainor (2005) described a qualitative examination of 15 Individualized Transition Plans using eight transition components (e.g., employment, independent living, transportation etc.), as well as frequency counts of compliance domains (i.e., signatures). In

addition, Trainor observed four IEP meetings, but it was unclear how these four meetings informed her data set of 15 IEPs from African American (N=4), European American (N=6), and Latino (N=5) students with learning dis/ability labels. Trainor found that not only were plans minimally compliant with IDEA mandates, but also there was no indication of individualization of goals, with many plans so similar across students that the likelihood of student input based on their cultural identity was highly unlikely.

Similar to Geenen and Power's (2006) study, Trainor's study revealed that plans were largely meaningless because of the vagueness of language on the IEP in eight goal domains (e.g., post school employment: "discuss vocational programs to support employment" p. 118), or missing goals altogether (N=10 out of 15 total) for independent living. Little evidence of documentation of gathering student interests and preferences existed to show that such activities occurred on a regular basis for all three groups. For instance, four students had "student interview" checked on their form, but there was no evidence in the special education folder. While Trainor's stated intention was to determine the cultural relevancy of IEP transition plans, she found that the generic goals for all students meant few of the plans were relevant to students, let alone culturally relevant. Of interest to this study is how participants talk about transition in relation to what is written on the form. For instance, perhaps participants talk in much detail, but the written form reflects more generic transition information. Without studying the talk and the form together, it is impossible to know.

In summary, both studies demonstrated how traditionally marginalized groups, such as foster care youth and culturally and linguistically diverse youth, have transition plans that reflect minimal student involvement. Trainor (2005) noted no significant difference based on cultural identity, and Geenen and Powers (2006) noted differences between foster care youth and non-

foster care youth. Geenen and Power's study demonstrated the importance of caregivers being present in order to increase the likelihood of transition plans meeting criteria critical to a robust transition plan. Both studies revealed the difficulty in involving students in meaningful ways on the written IEP form. Of interest is whether the student presence, like the caregiver presence in Geenen and Power's study, also contributed to a robust written IEP transition plan. Given that these two studies indicated the lack of detailed written descriptions on most IEP forms, it would be interesting to see how detailed the talk around the IEP forms is within meetings, in general, not only around transition plans.

IEP goals with students present. In two studies on IEP goals, researchers used interviews of students, and examined IEP forms with middle school students (Pawley & Tennant, 2008) and high school students (Lovitt, et al, 1994) present at their meetings.

Pawley and Tennant (2008) interviewed 19 twelve year old students from England with learning dis/ability labels, and examined ten of their completed IEPs. The 19 interviews showed that two students could share their IEP goals because they had participated in meetings where goals had been set and reviewed; the majority of students could not recall their IEP goals. Pawley and Tennant followed a similar structure to Lovitt, Cushing, and Stump's (1994) study, fourteen years earlier. Lovitt and his colleagues interviewed 29 high school students with mild to moderate dis/ability labels and examined their IEPs. The interview data showed that even though most students shared opinions about a variety of topics within the interviews, when asked about their experiences in IEP meetings, most of them reported that they simply sat there with little understanding. Student comprehension of the IEP meeting was summed up in this representative quote from a student: "I just know that teachers fill it out and they talk to my parents or something" (Lovitt, et al, 1994, p. 36). Examination of the goals in IEPs showed a lack of

individuation, lack of student friendly language, and an overwhelming number of goals and objectives. These three factors likely led to the student not knowing their IEP goals.

What is disturbing about Lovitt's and his colleagues' (1994) and Pawley and Tennant's (2008) studies is the persistence of student's inability to talk about their IEP goals with understanding, across cultures and across a number of years. The persistence of meaningless IEPs, is especially concerning given the large number of resources with tips, suggestions, programs, and models encouraging special educators to involve students, as previously noted. When such difficulties persist, it behooves a look at how facilitators involved students in their IEP meeting, specifically around goals and decision making. Particularly important is the understanding of how participants form goals together in shared decision making, or whether educators choose and present goals. The presence of generic goals on IEP forms may indicate a lack of decision making within meetings. However, a study of the IEP meeting talk alongside the IEP form is necessary in order to ascertain if perhaps detailed talk around goals is simply not translating to the written form. I discuss interpretations and implications of these four studies further in the next section.

Interpretations and implications of IEP forms. All four studies indicated a lack of meaningfulness connecting written IEP goals, whether transition related or not, to student interests and vocation choices, as well as a lack of relevancy. Unfortunately, such lack of individuation persisted whether the student was present (Trainor, 2005) or absent (Geenen & Powers, 2006), although the quality of transition plans improved with foster care students who had an advocate in the meeting (Geenen & Powers, 2006). Missing from the four studies was an emphasis on understanding the relationship between IEP goal formation and student presence.

No discourse or conversation analysis studies were found that showed how goal formation or transition information written on the IEP connected with the talk. However, in an ethnographic case study that used thematic analysis and a limited application of conversation analysis, Peters (2003) noted that IEP forms acted as a script for the talk. Scripted IEP meetings may indicate the lack of individualization noted in three of the studies examining IEP forms (Geenen & Powers, 2006; Lovitt, et al, 1994; Trainor, 2005). Similarly, in another conversation analysis, Harris (2010) noted that all educators showed up to the meeting with an already completed IEP. Showing up with an already completed IEP indicated the lack of shared decision making (Spann, Kohler, & Soenksen, 2003), and may corroborate the generic goals reported on IEP forms in three of the reviewed studies (Geenen & Powers, 2006; Lovitt, et al, 1994; Trainor, 2005).

In summary, the occasion of an IEP necessitates a formal, legal, written agreement of educational goals and supports signed by all team members. As such, IEP meetings may be viewed by participants as a school institutional concern rather than a place for all participants to share knowledge and make decisions together (Lo, 2008). What has not been considered is how the institutional purposes of the IEP might drive decision making interactions, and how participation is negotiated and achieved in an institutional setting, especially in relation to the written IEP form. No conversation analysis or discourse analysis of the relationship specifically between the written IEP forms and the verbal interactions were found. Knowing how such interactions occurred can reveal current practices, and possibly contribute to involving students and caregivers in more meaningful ways in decision making.

Student, caregiver, and educator experiences. In the next section, I review seven studies involving student, caregiver, and educator experiences studied together. No studies included a discourse analysis or conversation analysis approach, but rather studies employed both quantitative and qualitative measures including: observations, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. I divide these studies into two themes related to decision making within IEP meetings: (1) experiences of limited caregiver and student involvement and (2) experiences of increased involvement with students present.

Experiences of limited involvement in decision making. I found four current studies with students, caregivers, and educators that pointed to limited family involvement in decision making: (1) Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, and Powers' (2008) study of secondary female student transition; (2) Prunty's (2011) study with Irish students with autism labels; (3) Goepel's (2009) study with middle school students; and (4) Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, Gardner, Christensen, Woods, and Lovett's (2006) study of secondary student transition. Before I review each of the four in detail here, I acknowledge the number of research studies done solely with caregiver perceptions of IEP meetings. The majority of such studies indicated the marginalization of caregivers in decision making (Fish, 2006; Geenen, et al, 2001; Kim & Morningstar, 2005; Kim, et al, 2007; Krach, et al, 2005; Lo, 2008; Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Powers, et al, 2001; Rueda et al, 2005; Sheehey, 2006; Williams, 2007; Zeller, 2010; Zeller, 2011), especially mothers (Ryan & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Salas, 2004). Of particular interest for this study, Vaughn, Bos, Harrell, and Lasky (1988) observed and interviewed parent involvement, and one of their findings summed up the IEP meetings as one of decision telling, not decision making. Of interest is whether such a finding remains persistent after thirty-six years of resources allotted to increasing parent and student participation in decision making.

Studying perceptions of one team member, although valuable in showing the marginalization of caregivers and how educators can improve their practice, does not reflect the interactions within meetings themselves, and how caregivers and educators might interpret the same meeting. IEP meetings are complex, content specific and culturally situated. IEP meetings are formal institutional practices with legal demands on educator time and resources in addition to teaching duties, concerns that are lost in research solely addressing caregiver perceptions. Similarly, student perceptions are sometimes subsumed under "family" perceptions, and so lose individuality. Thus, although I acknowledge the valuable contribution to the research of caregiver studies in showing barriers and suggesting improvements[15], I now turn to reviews of four studies that examined student, caregiver, and educator perceptions all involved in the same meetings.

In the first study using a qualitative case study approach, Goepel (2009) found a lack of shared understandings among team members about student needs in three out of four middle school meetings. This led to limited partnership between students, parents, and educators. She found from her interviews and surveys that where there was lack of clarity over student needs, there was corresponding confusion and false impressions amongst all team members. Goepel reported that all students shared moments where they had raised issues of need that were not acknowledged by parents or educators. In three meetings, the teachers and parents shared common views with the student sharing different views that were unsupported or unacknowledged by other team members. What remains to be studied is how students express differing views in meetings, and the resulting actions from other participants in actual talk.

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[15] For further reading, I refer the reader to a literature review on caregiver perceptions of IEP meetings by Reiman, Beck, Coppola, and Engiles (2010) sponsored by the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE).

Knowing how participants negotiate differences is important to understanding how final decisions include a multiplicity of perspectives or represent one opinion.

Similarly, in a second study, Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, and Powers' (2008) noted a difference in the expressed expectations and goals between youth, parents, and professionals. Hogansen and her colleagues gathered data from 146 participants in focus groups of professionals, caregivers, and female youth with dis/ability labels (including two individual interviews). The researchers concluded that caring relationships between educators and youth were critical in successful transition. Although the young women and parents sometimes had similar goals, professional goals were unspecific with assumptions of deficits, and reflected lower expectations. For example, one professional shared of a student: "My goal is that they are able to have choices in life" (Hogansen, et al, 2008, p. 221). Most professionals saw parent and youth goals as "unrealistic," and their professional roles in decision making as the "realistic" ones to "burst bubbles" of the dreams of the young women and parents (Hogansen, et al, 2008, p. 221). Many of the students in Hogansen's and her colleagues' (2008) study reported dissatisfaction with their IEP meeting. They cited their lack of voice within meetings, and the gap between their interests, IEP academic goals, and programming. Parents and professionals blamed each other for the lack of involvement, but young women and parents also pointed to professionals who actively built caring relationships with them as integral to successful transitioning. Overall, the young women in this study wanted to be more involved in decision making in IEP meetings, although many reported that they did not know what IEP meetings were, and still others reported that IEP meetings were meaningless. Yet, even when students were present in meetings, many of them shared that they did not talk much. There may be a disconnect between desire to be involved, knowing how to be involved, and being allowed to be

involved. Both parents and students pointed to negative educator assumptions as limiting the opportunities for young women and their families to share their input in the transition planning process. What is not known is how young women who want to be involved become involved in IEP transitioning planning meetings. Studies of actual talk would show how educators might limit involvement, and how caregivers and students resist or challenge limitations to sharing information, if at all.

A similar finding of limited student talk occurred in a third study by Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, Gardner, Christensen, Woods, and Lovett (2006). Observations of 109 middle and high school meetings showed that special education teachers talked 51% of the time, family members 15% of the time, students 3% of the time, and 31 % other members, including silence. Interestingly, Martin and his colleagues (2006) reported that in spite of the observation that special educators dominated interactions, 40% of special educators surveyed after meetings perceived that students participated “a lot” (p. 196). There was a marked mismatch between teacher beliefs and observed talk time.

Despite limited talk time, family feeling of meaningful involvement within decision-making was higher when students attended meetings, and lower when students did not attend meetings (Martin, et al, 2006). Martin and his colleagues (2006) found that while there were frequent opportunities where students could have engaged, the teacher dominated structure of the meeting discouraged these. Even when the IEP form prompted for interests, many special educators skipped over it. Overall, students in the majority of meetings discussed their skills, needs, and future goals on a limited basis, and passively participated in meetings. What has not been examined is how holding the floor is managed and achieved by special educators, and how and when family members and students make bids for the floor. In addition, although Martin and

his colleagues did frequency counts of speakers, they did not study the actual interactions in turn-by-turn speaking as a discourse and conversation analysis does. Studying the turn-by-turn actual talk can show the quality of how speakers achieved specific social actions, and not merely the quantity of who spoke the most. Further, it is unclear how educators deliberately constructed talk to limit participation, or how they accounted for time constraints or other institutional limitations.

In the fourth and final study in this section, Prunty (2011) pointed out the importance of involving parents and students in decision making as not only an educational concern, but a concern of the United Nations Rights of the Child mandate. Using Article Three on child focused services, Prunty (2011) created a survey, of an unspecified number of items, asking 213 Irish teachers about cooperation and supports amongst IEP team members with students with autism spectrum diagnoses. The author worked with focus groups of teachers, parents, and students to develop indicators for the survey. Teacher and school staff focus groups reported that parent input on the IEP might relate more to self-care and home life rather than academics. However, parent focus groups desired more active participation with IEP assessment, planning and reviewing, and felt excluded from decision making. In particular, parents desired: “greater consideration accorded to information that they provide in relation to their child’s IEP” (Prunty, 2011, p. 31).

The 213 teachers in the survey expressed frustration with their role as facilitator, noting the difficulty in getting all relevant parties to the meeting. Teachers stated that insufficient time for meetings was the main barrier to success. Also, teachers expressed that the IEPs were curriculum based rather than child based. However, teachers observed that IEP plans needed to be short, and relevant to the school’s mission. Teachers offered their concerns that an alternative

way of practice might, in the words of one participant, become: “an exercise in creative writing rather than practical strategies for teaching” (p. 37). However, Prunty (2011) reported that all participants noted the importance of parent involvement on surveys and in focus groups. As Prunty found, how that involvement looked for parents and teachers differed. What is not known is how greater consideration of parental inputs would look in an institutionalized meeting, with prescribed goals to complete the IEP within constrained time limits.

Summary of limited involvement in decision making. The four studies reviewed above included the perceptions of caregivers, educators, and students in response to IEP meetings attended together. Everyone acknowledged the importance of parent and student involvement (Goepel, 2009, Hogansen, et al. 2008; Martin, et al., 2006; Prunty, 2011). Parents felt more involved when their child was also present (Martin, et al., 2006). Even when students were present in meetings, they were neither observed to talk much (three percent of the time; Martin, et al, 2006), nor did they report talking much (Hogansen, et al. 2008). Many of the young women in Hogansen’s and her colleagues’ study (2008) wanted to be more involved in IEP transition meetings, and both parents and educators blamed each other for lack of involvement. Teachers expressed frustration over creating IEPs that fulfilled school purposes while also needing to engage parents (Prunty, 2011). In addition, teachers cited difficulties in getting everyone to the IEP meeting that needed to be there, as well as difficulties finding sufficient time to conduct meaningful meetings (Hogansen, et al, 2008; Prunty, 2011). Overall, differing perceptions and teacher led meetings led to limited involvement for caregivers and students in decision making. However, when students were present, participants reported a different experience.

Experiences of increased involvement in decision making. Where students were present, students, caregivers, and educators reported increased involvement from families. Three studies noted variations of increased involvement: (1) Martin, Marshall, and Salle's (2004) study on secondary transition IEP meetings; (2) Childre and Chambers' (2005) study of student centered IEP planning; and (3) Danneker and Bottge's (2009) study of student led IEP meetings. I review each of the three studies, and also highlight other empirical studies and literature reviews emphasizing the importance of student-centered or student led-planning in increasing involvement in decision making.

Student involvement in transition planning. First, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004) found significant differences between how students, parents, and school professionals responded to survey questions about the same IEP meeting. Ninety-five significant pair-wise comparisons were found, and 45 of them showed students responding differently than all other participants. Of all participants, students were less likely to know the reasons for the IEP meeting and what they needed to do in the meeting. Students had the lowest scores 70 % of the time, reporting less meaningful involvement. This finding is similar to other studies in this review regarding the knowledge of the IEP process and it's relevancy (Hogansen, et al., 2008; Lovitt, et al, 1994, Pawley & Tennant, 2008), as well as previous research showing that many students are unfamiliar with the content of an IEP, and its purpose (Lehmann, Bassett, & Sands, 1999; Powers, et al, 2001; Test, et al, 2004).

Specifically with decision making, although general educators reported the lowest scores on helping make decisions, students ranked second lowest. Not surprisingly, given later research (Martin et al, 2006), although students reported talking about their interests, special educators and parents reported talking about student interests significantly more than students. Overall,

when students were present in IEP meetings, parents: (1) better understood the purpose of the meeting; (2) clearly understood more of what was being said by professionals; (3) felt more comfortable speaking; and (4) felt more confident about their roles in helping their child achieve his/her goals (Martin et al, 2004). That finding remained consistent when students were trained in student centered approaches to the IEP meeting.

Student centered IEP planning. In the second study reviewed here, Childre and Chambers (2005) used Student Centered IEP planning (SCIEP) with six students and conducted pre and post interviews with six families that they corroborated with educator discussions after the IEP meeting. Throughout their findings, the authors used the generic "families," which was a drawback in determining specifics in terms of how many participants they interviewed, and how many participants reported a particular perception. Before using the SCIEP, the six families in this study noted that the IEP meeting was focused on the school goals and short term planning, and that they did not consider their lack of involvement a weakness in the planning process, but overall were satisfied with planning. They assumed they were supposed to take passive roles in the IEP meeting. Families felt they participated, but this participation was listening to facilitators and answering questions from school staff. Before the SCIEP, families acknowledged the importance of students being involved in decision making, but three families shared concerns about overseeing and maintaining control over final decisions. Three families also reported pressure from educators to agree to previously made decisions for placement and goals. Two families shared that they used repeated IEP meetings to ask questions and educate themselves about educational jargon and technical terminology, and programs.

After the SCIEP process, post interviews showed that families saw themselves and their children as active participants, and were more satisfied with their involvement within meetings.

In two meetings, students shared information about their educational strengths and their future dreams. Three students shared information related to goals and their future before the meeting that educators shared in the meeting on behalf of the student. Regardless of their passive or active participation, families reported that by their very presence in the planning process, students learned adult expectations for them. In addition, two teachers reported that two students who were present in the goals discussion, actively pursued activities for the discussed goals after the meeting. The next reviewed study by Danneker and Bottge (2009) reported on a student-led IEP orientation in which students shared goals and accommodations in IEP meetings.

In the third and final study in this section on increased IEP interactions, Danneker and Bottge (2009) conducted a multiple case study describing the experiences of four rural elementary students in communicating their goals and identifying accommodations within their IEP meetings. The study included student training in six 20 minute teacher developed lessons focusing on understanding the purpose of the meeting, examining IEPs and developing goals and accommodations, and creating and rehearsing a script for leading the meeting. Before and after training, the authors interviewed parents, teachers, and students. Danneker and Bottge also observed the lessons, observed the student led IEP meetings, and examined previous and present IEP plans. Their findings revealed the benefits of student led meetings in increasing the collaborative problem solving of adults, centering the meeting on the student, and providing students an authentic opportunity to practice self-determination skills. Persistent barriers included the view of the special educator as being in charge of the IEP form, limited awareness of the significance of self-determination skills for students with dis/ability labels, and the lack of special educator understanding on how to train students to participate in IEP meetings.

Danneker and Bottge (2009) drew attention to the fact that all IEP documents remained in compliance, and that responsibilities for covering legal information, and creating and filing forms remained with the special educator. In this study, the IEP form did not change as a result of student participation. Pre interviews with students revealed findings similar to other studies (Lovitt et al, 1994; Pawley & Tennant, 2008) in that students were unaware of their goals, even though special educators said they had discussed goals. In post interviews after the student led conference, all students stated their goals, and shared the importance of their participation in meetings. From observations and interviews, the authors noted that special educators' varying understanding and beliefs about the importance of self-determination showed how they managed meetings to value students (e.g., invited students to sign), or dismiss students (e.g., take over descriptions of goals when students hesitated, and telling students how to solve problems rather than inviting ideas). These four students showed that even with training of students, teacher training also needed to occur because of continued teacher management of the meeting framework and IEP forms. Other studies that do not focus on student, caregiver, and educator perspectives all together also reported benefits of student led IEP planning, as I discuss in the next section.

Connections to other studies involving student centered IEP planning. Both Childre and Chambers' (2005) study and Danneker and Bottge's (2009) study were part of several studies where students were provided instruction about having an active role in their IEP process using self determination skills (Neale & Test, 2009; Woods, et al, 2010; Woods, et al, 2013), or programs to increase transition related outcomes (Cobb & Alwell, 2009). Cobb and Alwell (2009) reviewed 31 studies of transition programs intervening to improve transition related outcomes. Using the ecological model of social functioning as a conceptual framework, the

authors reported on “what works” (Cobb & Alwell, 2009, p. 71), or the measured effects of what type of programs, with what students, resulted in what change. They also used a meta-analysis for the 17 quantitative studies, and reported that student-focused transition planning demonstrated the greatest outcomes for success. Because of this, Cobb and Alwell concluded that effective transition planning should include ways to make student voices heard in meaningful ways within IEP meetings.

Similar studies involving a student led IEP approach report the effectiveness of self-directed IEP approaches in increasing achievement. In a multiple probe experimental design study with three secondary students, Kelley, Bartholomew, and Test (2013) reported a functional relationship between participation levels in meetings and the *Self-Directed IEP* curriculum, as well as follow up data that showed students generalized and maintained the skills learned in the curriculum. In another mixed method case study of one secondary student, Woods, Martin, and Humphrey (2013) examined the *Self-Directed IEP* curriculum across two years. Results indicated an overall increase in the student’s word count and speaking rate, increased meeting leadership, and focus on employment after graduation. Additionally, Woods, Sylvester, and Martin (2010) reported the effectiveness of the *Student-Directed Transition Planning* curriculum using a pre-post experimental design with randomly assigned secondary age students. Results showed that students receiving the intervention experienced a statistically significant gain in understanding of their IEP, as well as increased self-efficacy.

Although these studies were limited by their small sample sizes, other research reviewed by Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale, and Wood (2004) included descriptions from 309 participants across 16 studies. From their review of empirical studies, Test and his colleagues indicated that students with a variety of disabilities participated and received benefit from being

actively involved in meetings. In addition, the authors noted that published curricula and person centered planning strategies demonstrated effectiveness in increasing student involvement. Concluding their review, the authors called for increased training for educators to include students in the IEP process, specifically in pre-service teacher training. They also suggested that the impact of student IEP participation on their daily lives should be measured. Although student IEP participation resulted in a positive association with academic outcomes over time with elementary students (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2009) and secondary students (Cobb & Alwell, 2009), the impact of student participation on other outcomes has yet to be determined.

Without training to participate, students exhibited limited participation within IEP meetings (Staab, 2010; Danneker and Bottge, 2009). Agran and Hughes (2008) noted that 96 % of 56 junior high students, and 80 % of 17 high school students reported that they had not been trained to lead their own IEP meeting. Also, Agran and Hughes found that 50% of junior high, and 80 % high school students reported that they were not taught to read their IEP progress. Given the reports of these students and others (Lovitt et al, 1994; Pawley & Tennant, 2008) indicating the lack of training, it would be interesting to learn if IEP teams who have not been trained in self-directed practices engage in spontaneous student-led moments, if any, and how this relates to decision making together.

Summary of increased involvement in decision making. In summary, including students as meaningful participants within IEP meetings has the greatest promise for increasing positive transition outcomes (Cobb & Alwell, 2009), increasing academic achievement (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2009), and increasing parent involvement (Martin, et al, 2004). Family feeling of meaningful involvement within decision-making was higher when students attended meetings and lower when students did not attend meetings (Martin, et al, 2004). The active participation

and positive perceptions of caregivers and students when students were involved in IEP meetings (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al., 2004; Test, et al, 2004) stands in contrast to the trend of decreasing parent involvement and dissatisfaction with services as students age (Geenen, et al, 2001; Krach, et al, 2005). Although perspectives from participant reflections on IEP meetings have been explored, what has not been considered is how moment-by-moment talk serves to construct expectations of participation, or privilege certain participants' goals over other IEP team members.

In the next section, I review studies that examined the perceptions of caregivers and educators together, without students present.

Caregiver and educator experiences. I first review findings from four current quasi-experimental and qualitative studies. Then, I review eight conversation and discourse analysis studies from 1983 to 2010. I organize these research studies around two themes: (1) *perceptions* of caregivers and educators of decision making meetings, and (2) *interactions* between caregivers and educators within decision making meetings.

Perceptions of caregivers and educators. I review four studies on the perceptions of caregivers and educators regarding the same IEP meeting they attended together: (1) Jones and Gansle's (2010) quasi-experimental study of satisfaction after one group received a pre-IEP communication training; (2) Laluvein's (2007) study examining perceptions of a community of practice framework; (3) Laluvein's (2010) study of teachers and parents working together; and (4) Ruppar's and Gaffney's (2011) case study of a referral meeting for a five year old transferring to Kindergarten.

First, Jones and Gansle (2010) examined parent involvement and satisfaction as determined by parent and professionals' responses to an 11 item survey, and time-sampling of

IEP meetings. The authors found from their 41 meeting observations that the higher socioeconomic status (SES)[16] of parents positively related to offering more input in IEP meetings. The experimental group of parents (N=20) received a pre-IEP training conference that addressed communication strategies within IEP meetings. Observations of parental input per minute in the meeting showed no difference between the control group and the treatment group in terms of participation. Similar to Martin and his colleagues (2006) study, even though the researchers *observed* differences in participation, parents of all SES domains in Jones and Gansle's study *reported* meaningful involvement and satisfaction with meetings. Likewise, parents, teachers, and administrators reported that the mini-conferences were helpful in increasing participation.

In addition, both teacher and administrator surveys showed a statistically significant difference in educator perceptions of parent participation. Teachers involved in mini conferences reported higher parent participation, and administrators reported significantly higher perception of the involvement of higher SES parents. Both results suggested that whereas mini-conferences did not result in observed increased interaction, educator positive *perceptions* of parent involvement increased with the mini-conference. Given this study and similar findings (Martin et al, 2006), it therefore becomes important to separate *perceptions* of involvement from actual *interactions*. Parents and educators may be entirely satisfied with a limited level of participation that researchers consider unacceptable. Of interest is how such satisfaction is actively maintained through the actual meeting talk in meetings that do and do not involve training. While this study

[16] As based on parent education level and free/reduced lunch rates (Jones & Gansle, 2010).

did not examine such issues of satisfaction displays with and without training, further discursive research in the area may prove fruitful, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

In the second reviewed study of caregiver and educator perceptions, Laluvein (2007, 2010) interviewed ten parents and ten teachers of ten primary students in the United Kingdom regarding their perceptions of working together. In Laluvein's (2007) first report from this data set (see also Laluvein 2010), she examined perceptions of IEP meetings for their potential for shared decision making practices in community of practice formats (Wenger, 1998). Her study revealed differential decision making power between parents and teachers. Laluvein (2007) reported that four teacher parent dyads shared information and stories in a way similar to community of practice frameworks. For these four dyads, participants influenced decision making, even if parents did not make specific decisions. Both parents and teachers reported that sharing information either increased or decreased over time as trust or mistrust grew.

Similar to Hogansen and her colleagues (2008) findings with young women, the teachers in Laluvein's (2007) study also shared that parents had unrealistic expectations for students. Teachers shared negative views of alternative strategies and programs as well as negative assumptions of some students. Further, teachers expressed that parents failed to understand how they worked with the child, and did not trust them to do their job well. Parents described moments of confrontation with teachers over contrasting views, negative assumptions, or other areas of conflict that resulted in alienation and marginalization within decision making.

In particular, mothers noted a change in teacher attitudes whenever their interaction with teachers did not include absolute acceptance and support for everything the school was doing for their children. For instance, parents reported that after bringing advocates to meetings or taking notes during meetings and having everyone sign, their relationships with the school teachers and

administrators were noticeably less warm. Teachers reported feeling undermined and disrespected when parents questioned their practices or made suggestions. Of interest is how and if these feelings of respect and trust are expressed within the talk of the meeting, rather than in perceptions afterward. Also of interest is how participants confronted assumptions and handled contrasting views within actual talk.

In the third study reviewed in this section, Laluvein (2010) reported on the same data set as above (Laluvein, 2007), but this time looked at working partnerships between parents and teachers. She reported that some teachers seemed to value parent expertise more than others. In one working partnership, the teacher remarked that the mother's frequent sharing of information "enhanced our understanding rather than changed our opinion" (Laluvein, 2010, p. 198). With this quote, the teacher shared how parents contributed without necessarily changing the school's education plan.

Laluvein found that teachers and parents did not report the same value for information that came from parents or from sources outside the school. One parent commented: "'there should be much more respect for what people know'" (Laluvein, 2010, p. 197). How participants negotiate respect within their talk is of interest, but perceptions from parent interviews after IEP meetings indicated little negotiation occurred after parents shared information. Some teachers negotiated with parents more than others, and the author shared two instances in which shared decision making was attempted. Both failed. In these two instances of shared decision making, the first failed due to lack of teacher follow-through on agreed supports, and the second failed due to lack of parent follow through on school demands. It is unfortunate that the two instances of shared decision making did not result in success. More study is needed to track how participants achieve shared decision making, and the long term outcomes of such. Of interest to

this study is how shared decision making moments occurred within the meeting as caregivers and educators managed and negotiated the sharing of decisions, if at all.

In the fourth and final study reviewed in this section on perceptions of caregivers and educators, Ruppar and Gaffney (2011) observed lack of shared decision making interactions in one IEP meeting. In a case study with team members for one initial IEP meeting, Ruppar and Gaffney found that team members held different opinions about decisions, but mainly remained silent during the meeting, and shared their opinion only afterwards in interviews. The facilitator used the IEP form as a guide to lead the meeting, which induced the beginnings and endings of conversation points. Ruppar and Gaffney observed that this prompted a turn-taking interaction that reduced decision making opportunities for discussion of assessment information and IEP goals. Informal communication prior to the meeting also affected the decisions, but how these informal conversations did so was impossible to determine with their study. The special educator showed up to the meeting with the majority of the IEP already completed.

Ruppar and Gaffney (2011) did observe an unfortunate result of lack of communication between educators in that the special education teacher had written an IEP goal prior to the meeting that was inappropriate given the evaluation results shared in the meeting. Although this goal changed, it did not change at the request of a mother, but rather the educator's coordinating assessment results to align with goals. Therefore, Ruppar's and Gaffney's case study showed, once again, the unfortunate lack of a mother's involvement with IEP decisions that matter for her child's education.

Summary of perceptions of caregivers and educators. All four meetings pointed to the successes and difficulties of negotiating decisions within IEP meetings. Jones and Gansle's (2010) study, showed how participant perceptions of involvement differed from researcher

observed perceptions of involvement. Laluvein (2007/2010) noted how IEP meeting frameworks that involved sharing information resulted in perceptions of better partnership. Ruppar and Gaffney (2011) showed how the IEP form was used as a guide to talk, and structured the meeting to limit decision making of parents. All four studies highlighted the limitations of examining caregiver and educator perceptions.

Perceptions of involvement in decision making did not agree with time-sampling of participation rates (Martin et al, 2006; Jones & Gansle, 2010); with educators perceiving parents to be more involved than researchers observed in speaking turns. Further, in Childre and Chambers (2004) study, parents perceived themselves as involved until they were exposed to student centered planning processes and realized the potential for their children and themselves to be actively involved in planning. These studies reveal the instability of using perceptions to gauge the extent and quality of parent participation. Conversation analysis and discourse analysis studies, however, show how participants negotiate participation with the actual talk of the meeting. Because of the study of interactions in naturally occurring talk, in the next section, researchers made claims about meeting structure and participant talk, claims unavailable to researchers studying perceptions.

Interactions between caregivers and educators. Interactions between caregivers and educators within IEP meetings have been studied from a conversation analysis approach (Dufon, 1993; Harris, 2010; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008) and discourse analysis approaches (Mehan, 1983; Mehan Hertweck, and Meihls, 1986; Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2003). I review all eight studies here with particular attention to findings, and how this particular study contributes to the small body of literature.

Conversation analysis studies. I found four conversation analysis studies examining IEP interactions: (1) Harris' (2010) study of rural, urban, and suburban IEP discourse; (2) Peter's (2003) study of impression management within IEP meetings; (3) Dufon's (1993) study with psychologists and Spanish interpreters in referral meetings; and (4) Plum's (2008) collective case study focusing on psychologists within referral meetings.

First, in the nine IEP meetings in Harris' (2010) study, all educators showed up to the meeting with an already completed IEP. Harris videotaped meetings between the special educator and parent, and also interviewed each parent. He then compared transcript data to parent perceptions from interviews. Harris did a word count, and also counted the number of speaking turns between parents and educators in nine IEP meetings across three different settings (rural, suburban, and urban). He compared the numbers to ascertain equal participation and found that although there were an equal number of turns of talk amongst the two speakers, 50 % of parent turns were confirmation of the special educator's previous utterance. In general, parents did not use their turns to provide novel or additional information about their child. However, all parent participants did at some point attempt to provide novel or additional information. That information was never factored into the previously written IEP.

Harris' (2010) results indicated that all meetings followed a similar structure, irrespective of rural, urban, or suburban settings, and that parents assumed passive roles while educators actively presented information. Harris found that even when there were opportunities for parents to take a more active role, they remained "willingly passive" (p. 172) receivers of the special educator's presentation. These nine parents did not show evidence of decision making, although they did make comments approximately every two minutes within the meetings to show that they understood. Harris concluded that the meeting structure eliminated participation, because

regardless of the length of time the parent spoke, educators did not include that information on the already completed IEP. No IEP had any changes from the beginning of the meeting to the end of the meeting. In the three initial meetings in a rural setting, parents spoke more than their suburban and urban counterparts. Harris attributed this to the fact that parents had not yet established their role in the meeting, because this was their first time experiencing an IEP meeting. In all meetings across contexts, parents eagerly agreed to and signed the IEP.

Similar to other findings (Martin, et al, 2004; Jones & Gansle, 2010) that showed that perceptions did not always match meeting observations, Harris (2010) found that 66 % of parents felt that they were an equal partner in the meeting, 55% indicated that they "fully" participated in decision making, and 33% were active in contributing to goals (p. 179). A number of parents (44%) indicated preference for the IEP written ahead of time. Discrepancies between parent perceptions of participation and their observed participation led Harris to conclude that parents had a differing view of participation in decision making than he did, and that further research needed to be done examining how parents define participation. This also points to the importance of further studies that supplement what we know of perceptions by including a focus on the naturally occurring talk within meetings. Like the majority of research that made claims and suggestions for improvement based on perceptions of meetings after the fact, further conversation analysis studies that ground their claims and suggestions within actual talk are needed.

In the second conversation analysis study reviewed, Peters (2003) conducted an ethnographic case study of four elementary school IEP meeting observations. She used Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, Sacks' (1992) conversation analysis, and Goffman's

(1959) ideas of impression management and face-saving techniques[17] to frame her analysis. Peters observed IEP meetings, observed classroom lessons, and interviewed three parents and one CDC special education teacher. However, in a considerable limitation to conducting a conversation analysis, which studies "recorded, naturally occurring talk-in- interaction" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 14), Peters did not audio or video the meetings. Instead, she scripted them by hand, and, as she admits, she filtered information and could not record everything. As a study of interactional order, I believe that analyzing notes rather than actual talk limited her claims, and therefore findings should be interpreted with caution.

Peters' (2003) findings indicated that IEP team members used the IEP form as a script, and performed ritualized and routinized social interactions to smoothly conduct meetings. Everyone assumed appropriate roles, which included impression management to minimize disruptions to the social order. The director of the meeting held the floor with "directive dominance" (p. 281): (1) maintaining control from the beginning of the meeting; (2) facilitating routinized interactions (introductions, ending exchanges); (3) allocating speaking turns; and (4) unilaterally changing topics or bringing talk back to the institutional purpose of completing the IEP form. Peters found that because of this dominance, the director performed a number of reoccurring negative face-threatening acts[18] that inhibited freedom. Other performers tolerated these acts, and accepted the social convention that one person held the floor. In addition, to avoid

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[17] Goffman (1959) theorized that participants in social interactions worked to manage their impressions with others through face work. By face-saving techniques, individuals regulated and constructed their positive social value within interactions.

[18] Face threatening acts include any social action that compromises a person's self-image, dignity, and freedom to act within social interactions (Goffman, 1981). Brown and Levinson (1987) noted that positive face includes desires for appreciation and approval of one's self image, and negative face includes desires for freedom to act without restrictions from others.

threats to face, Peters' reported that other performers attended to the IEP form and both resisted and rejected news in ways that steered clear of disagreements.

As part of director dominance, directors spoke "on behalf of the entire IEP team (i.e., using the "we of co- presence" [Speigelberg, 1973, p. 131 as quoted in Peters, 2003, p. 275]). In contrast, other team members performed "dramatic dominance" (p. 275), when interacting with the director and/or another team member. Although parents did not have directive control, they had power to change the nature of the dramatic action. Interviews with both parents and teachers showed that they were aware of their dramatic roles. For instance, one special education teacher expressed fear that she would mess up and parents would get angry with her. However, no one performed dramatic dominance to challenge the director's control, or the IEP form. Although all participants resisted or rejected news from others by not using receipt markers[19], they did so with attention to impression management and to avoid conflict. Professionals limited the parent sources of information to "home," thus rejecting other areas of information. Parents resisted or rejected professional news by constructing continuers, or second assessments that functioned as continuers that professionals then did not acknowledge. Peters noted that when professionals became aware of a possibility for disagreement with a parent, they quickly backed away. Yet, parents were much more willing to disagree than professionals. When they did disagree, parents did so with such subtlety that professionals gave no response or attention to it. This finding is extremely important when considering the number of lawsuits in special education with parents who feel unheard within meetings (Lake and Billingsly, 2000; Mueller et al, 2008). Of interest is

[19] Receipt markers, indicate that the hearer has heard the information (Sacks, 1992). For instance, "oh," "uh huh," and "really" commonly function as receipt markers.

comparison to meetings where educators allowed or took up disagreements, and discussions and negotiations ensued.

Additionally of interest methodologically, is that Peters began her analysis of the four elementary IEP meetings with thematic domain analysis. In doing so, she noticed that parent contributions were completely covered by themes. Whereas parents spoke as many times as professionals (similar to Harris, 2010), their turns were markedly different in content, and thus domain analysis did not show the social structure of the meeting, which actually showed that parents contributed to social interactions in meaningful and productive ways. Given this finding, it is possible that previous research using thematic analysis or observational analysis of IEP meetings may show undue attention to professional discourse as dominating and parents as passive. As an example, observations of parental input per minute in 41 IEP meetings showed limited participation in Jones and Gansle's (2010) study, but perceptions of participation were high.

In a similar study to Peters (2003) involving impression management, a third conversation analysis study by Dufon (1993) noted the dominance of psychologists, but also saw that they performed politeness strategies[20] to mitigate their dominance. In her study of 14 observed and audio recorded referral IEP meetings with interviews of Spanish speaking parents, six psychologists, and special education teachers, Dufon (1993) focused on psychologists delivering the diagnosis through an interpreter. She found that a clear style with short turns, fluid turn-taking, non-professional vocabulary, and language to mitigate face threats with the delivery of the diagnosis, was the most polite. In addition, interpreters more accurately interpreted the

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[20] Face saving techniques (Brown & Levinson, 1987) which involve such actions as praise, humor, highlighting commonalities, and hedging (Myers, 1989).

four psychologists who used a clear style, and they were perceived as the most polite in post interviews.

Comparable to Dufon's study, the fourth and final conversation analysis study reviewed, focused on psychologists in referral meetings as they delivered diagnoses to parents. Plum (2008) videotaped 13 IEP meetings from K-8 schools and analyzed them using a traditional conversation analysis approach. Plum paid particular attention to how IEP participants: (1) structured the talk; (2) allocated turns; (3) asked and responded to questions (4) negotiated membership categories; and (5) oriented to power asymmetries. His findings indicated that collaboration of participants looked like everyone maintaining a deliberate social order. Plum reported that when this order was disturbed, for instance, by a parent asking a question in the middle of the assessment presentation, the psychologist was "visibly thrown off" (p. 172). In the subsequent turns to repair and reframe[21], the psychologist noted humorously that he had a script he followed that the parent was inhibiting. Similar to other studies (Peters, 2003; Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011; Harris, 2010; Mehan, 1983; Mehan et al, 1986), the psychologist held the most interactional power, and drove the talk with everyone agreeing to the asymmetric power order of him holding the floor.

Of interest for decision making, IEP team members asked questions and presented opinions until it was clear that the decision was not a shared decision, but rather the psychologist recommending a pre-determined placement. At that point, participants negotiated agreement. Plum (2008) found that psychologists and special educators *shared* relevant information to *pre-made decisions* before signing, and after signing any ascriptions were no longer relevant. For

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[21] Repairs in conversation occur as speakers address problems of understanding , speaking, and listening (tenHave, 2010). These repairs can be self-initiated or other initiated and are a consistent part of the organizational order of turn-by-turn speaking (Sacks, 1992).

instance, a general education teacher and parent interacted with differing opinions over retention, but other team members were disengaged because the IEP paperwork showing the child had not qualified for services had already been signed.

When delivering a diagnosis, Plum (2008) found that, like Maynard's (1991) and Maynard's and Heritage's (2005) work with doctors, the psychologist first asked the mother a series of questions to gauge her stance on placement. He did this so that he could construct his delivery of the diagnosis as a response to her concerns. Further, like the other three conversation analysis' studies (Dufon, 1993; Harris, 2010; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008), Plum's findings revealed that everyone participated in the agreed upon social order, with the educators as dominant within the interaction. Of interest is how a discursive look at the rhetorical structure of the delivery of the diagnosis occurs in initial IEP meetings.

Summary of conversation analysis studies. As shown in these four conversation analysis studies (Dufon, 1993; Harris, 2010; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008) parents actively contributed with agreement to the school facilitator holding the floor. In these four studies, findings indicated the structure of talk within the meeting produced educators who made decisions and presented them. As a result, parents were excluded from making decisions. What is not known is how the overall structure of the IEP form contributed to interactions when students were present. Likewise, what is not known is how specific lexical choices and turn-by-turn taking moments may have differed with students present. Studies involving observations and perceptions (Jones & Gansle, 2010; Martin et al, 2006) pointed to student presence as increasing involvement, however a conversation analysis would show how this is achieved in actual talk.

Similar studies of interaction occurred in four studies utilizing a discursive and critical discourse approach. I explore these four studies in the next section.

Discourse analysis studies. I found two IEP meeting studies using a combination of ethnography and discourse analysis (Mehan, 1983; Mehan et al., 1986), and two studies utilizing a combination of ethnography and critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2002; 2003). I first describe Mehan and his colleagues two studies, and then I discuss Rogers' (2002; 2003) studies.

Mehan (1983) and Mehan, Hertwick, and Meihls (1986) studied decision making and labeling in the special education referral process. They conducted a micro-ethnographic study in a West coast school district of 2,781 students in 1978-1979. Data consisted of 141 cases that included: (1) classroom observational notes of 31 teachers; (2) video of key decision making events, including referral committee meetings, IEP meetings, and classroom interactions; (3) interviews with teachers commenting on videos of classroom interactions; (4) interviews with school staff; and (5) reviews of school records for the 2,781 students. School staff referred five percent of students in the school district for special education; a process that Mehan and his colleagues called an "institutional arrangement" to meet the requirements of PL 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

Using data from 141 referral meetings, in his first article, Mehan (1983) found that "decision making" moments for placement had none of the attributes associated with decision making, such as discussing a range of alternatives in response to a posed problem. Rather, he found that placements were quick presentations by psychologists with agreement by parents and other team members. Leading up to these decisions, Mehan noted a difference in the way individuals presented information. Psychologists and nurses presented information as a single and uninterrupted report. In contrast, other team members often interrupted parents and classroom teachers with questions, which Mehan named "interrogation" (p. 199). Mehan also reported a difference in the sources of information shared. Team members questioned parents

and classroom teachers about direct observations, whereas nurses and psychologists presented evidence from assessments. Similar to Prunty's (2011) findings, academic information was the concern of teachers, psychologists, and nurses. Parents and teachers spoke on emotions and feelings. Parents based descriptions on life-span observations in a variety of contexts, while the classroom teacher observed within the confines of the classroom over the period of one school year. Mehan described the psychologist as the one with the organizational authority and technical expertise, affording her a higher speaking and decision making rank. Of interest is how individuals negotiate and acknowledge parent long term knowledge of their child in a variety of contexts, and how students negotiate descriptions of knowledge about strengths and difficulties with learning within IEP meetings.

Teachers in Mehan's (1983) study shared observations about both the student's problems with the work process and difficulties with the product. Although teachers noted how problems varied situationally, psychologists located problems as "the student's problem" (p. 204). Mothers further offered reports of student performance in other contexts over a period of time, showing the child as growing. Mothers pinpointed problems as coming from past situations, locating the problem outside the student. Mehan contrasted psychologist and nurse reports as *professional* reports, and teacher and parent reports as *lay* reports. He noted that both made claims of being authoritative reports, but that IEP committee members treated professional reports as official, and received them in silence. The psychologist and nurse spoke from written records and read from technical reports and assessments, whereas teachers and parents spoke from memory. The technical language used did not elicit requests for understanding from parents or teachers. The use of technical language without explanation was something Mehan noted as difficult to challenge because of lack of awareness of what parents may not understand. Mehan noted that at

the end of the meeting, one version of the student prevailed, that of the psychologist and nurse. Of interest is how preferred versions of students work with decision making when students are present and possibly contributing to constructions of themselves.

Secondly, in their book describing the above data in further detail, Mehan, Hertwick, and Meihls (1986) pointed to labeling of learning disabled as an institutionalized concept rather than a characteristic of the child. Educator workloads, classroom assignments, availability of spaces in special classrooms, time of the year referred, scheduling conflicts, and a student's bilingual status contributed to locating, assessing, and placing students into pre-determined special education categories. Mehan and his colleagues argued that not only was being "handicapped" institutionalized, but also receiving special education was a "matter of belief" (p. 57). For example, referring teachers did not refer Mexican American students for special education even when their behavior was worse than mono-lingual students who were referred. Teachers in their study believed that bi-lingual students were "better off with me" (p. 57) than in special education.

Similarly, when viewing the videos of teaching, Mehan and his colleagues (1986) found that some teachers identified the behaviors in referred students as justifying the referral even though other non-referred students engaged in the exact same behavior. Reports of such perceptions may dispel the notion that learning disabilities exist within the child. Participants culturally constructed learning dis/ability by the meaning they attributed to signs related to objects (Mehan, et al, 1986). These become institutionalized fact with academic and social consequences for the student. Mehan and his colleagues argued that although children may be struggling or having trouble academically, locating the source as a learning dis/ability serves the

institutional purpose of educational funding. Of interest is how or if the institutional purpose of educational funding comes through in talk, if at all.

In Mehan and his colleagues (1986) study decision making was socially distributed as, “an enactment of routines” to place students, rather than a decision made by all team members (p. 171). The routines of the meeting served to demonstrate the professional version as the “official version” of the student (Mehan, et al, 1986, p. 137) while minimizing other versions. There was an observed hierarchy within the meetings where the psychologist spoke first, then the speech therapists and teachers, and finally the parents. In this way, the authors were able to show how categories and assumptions that educators brought to IEP decision making meetings shaped the interaction, despite parent involvement in the process. This finding connects to conversation analysis studies of IEP meetings (Harris, 2010; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008) reporting educator dominance of interactions.

Mehan’s and his colleagues’ (1986) study demonstrated the possibility for how decision making was socially distributed amongst psychologists, nurses, teachers, and parents. However, their research does not include data with students present. Moreover, their study used data from 35 years ago, and much appears changed with revisions of the IDEA (1990; 2004) law to include students and caregivers at the planning table. Of interest is a comparison between Mehan and his colleagues’ findings in the beginning years of enactment of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) to this present study with and without students, under the mandates of NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004).

In addition, Mehan and his colleagues’ research largely focused on referral meetings that have the primary purpose as constructing a need for special education services, something not necessarily considered in annual or other IEP meetings. Updated research is needed to determine

how decision making interactions are different with a different purpose for the IEP meeting. Mehan and his colleagues did not include annual IEP meetings in their study, and annual IEP meetings may show greater potential for shared decision making in contrast to referral meetings. Further, due to the newness of the law, tri-annual meetings were not included in Mehan and his colleagues research. Tri-annual meetings add an interesting dimension to how team members continue or revise decisions over a number of years. Understandings of the differing purposes of the four types of IEP meetings[22] may show how decision making interactions vary between referrals and the three other types.

Rogers (2002; 2003) published two articles using a critical discourse analysis approach from ethnographic data of one African American family and their experiences with special education in two IEP meetings: a referral meeting and the annual meeting a year later. Data included observations, interviews, and references to meeting occurrences by participants. No reference to audio recording IEP meetings occurred, although Rogers referred to analysis of interview transcripts. No turn by turn exact excerpts of talk were provided. It is likely that her meeting data came from hand-written field notes of meeting observations rather than audio recorded IEP meeting talk, a major limitation similar to Peters (2003) study, as discussed above. Therefore, claims and findings should be viewed more at the macro-level of interpretation similar to a thematic study, even though Rogers named her work as a critical discourse analysis.

In her first article, Rogers (2002) showed how teachers used two special education meetings to describe Vicky with two differing and competing academic descriptions to place and keep Vicky in special education. In the initial IEP meeting, educators described Vicky as an

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[22] These four IEP meeting types are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, and include: (1) Initials; (2) Annuals; (3) Addendums; and (4) Tri-annuals.

academically deficient adolescent in need of a special education self-contained class. Then, in the annual meeting one year later, educators described Vicky as highest in her class, yet still needing special education services. The initial referral meeting was marked by a predictable structure of educators' presenting official evidence with implicit turn-taking procedures. The mother had only nine turns characterized by information elicited from her with two questions, and final agreement to the placement decision. In the first meeting, the mother "was led to believe she had decision making power," but actually had none (Rogers, 2002, p. 229). In contrast, the annual meeting that included Vicky, used a friendly conversational structure, and the mother took 76 turns.

In the annual IEP meeting, there was no formal evidence or achievement data, but rather all anecdotal evidence from Vicky's two CDC teachers, Mr. Ethan and Mr. Bradley. Although the teachers praised Vicky's progress, no written evidence of growth meant that the mother could not demand that Vicky be placed in an inclusive setting, based on scores. The educators built an argument for Vicky staying in the self-contained classroom by emphasizing her success in her present placement, and the difficulty of inclusion placement. The argument was both confusing with jargon, yet clear in its preference for the self-contained classroom placement. Surprisingly, unlike the first meeting where Vicky's mother agreed to services, in this meeting, Vicky was called upon, and not her mother, to make a decision about continued placement. Although Vicky had contributed a few elicited responses throughout the meeting, she also appeared to make the most critical decision of the meeting with: "I want to go with Mr. Ethan and Mr. Bradley" (Rogers, 2002, p. 229). The appearance of decision making existed, but the structure of the meeting showed how educators constrained decisions.

Rogers (2002) study showed that both a student's decision and her mother's decision displayed unequal positions of power at the planning table vis-à-vis professionals. The prevalent deficit based system of special education views the student as deficient and in need of interventions, and it is from this position that arguments were made for continuance in special education. Yet, rather than assuming power differentials, it may be beneficial to look at how participants take up (or do not take up) notions of power, or how they position each other discursively to make certain arguments available to specific participants in IEP meetings. Further, what could be explored is how participants encourage or discourage the sharing of power.

In her second critical discourse analysis of the same data, Rogers (2003) described how implicit assumptions of two teachers and a mother were mismatched when referring Vicky, a sixth grader, to receive an evaluation to determine special education placement. The mother's discourse displayed the assumption that she had decision making power and that the evaluation was exploratory. In contrast, the two teachers' discourse showed that the act of referral for evaluation acted as inevitable placement in special education. Although both teachers' talk maintained deficits within the sixth grader, the mother actively resisted the persistent reports of the daughter as deficient within herself. All three participants were reported as acknowledging the authority of written forms and the authority of tests to determine ability and achievement.

In both her studies, Rogers (2002, 2003) took a critical stance with her data that showed how power was demonstrated to construct identities as well as the need for special education services. However, different assumptions can be made about the role of the researcher in naming power as relevant to participants by considering whether participants take up power roles as relevant in their talk. Similarly, neither of her studies were from actual meeting talk, but hand-

written field notes and transcripts of perceptions of participants, limiting the discursive claims that she could make.

Summary of discourse analysis studies. All four discourse analysis studies involved referral meetings, the initial IEP meetings to qualify a student for special education services. Rogers (2002) also used one annual meeting for a seventh grader as part of her comparison to the referral meeting, making available the comparison to student presence in the meeting as well as comparisons between initial and annual meetings. However, Rogers (2002) mostly studied overall power interactions within the talk, and not the finer points of turn-by-turn social interactions. Also, like the limitation to Peters (2003) study, her observations of how Vicky's presence affected decision making did not stem from analysis of actual audio recorded meeting talk, making the claims she could make more general, rather than specific.

All four studies used an ethnographic case study approach with Mehan (1983), Mehan Herwick, and Meihls (1986) using a discourse approach to analysis, and Rogers (2002, 2003) using a critical discourse analysis. Mehan and his colleagues demonstrated how psychologists and nurses dominated interactions, and decision making was largely routinized and under the control of psychologists and nurses. Although all four studies addressed students in kindergarten through grade twelve, Rogers focused particularly on one middle school student. No students were present in Mehan and his colleagues' data set of 141 meetings. One middle school student was present in one annual meeting in Rogers' (2002) study, but the meeting was observed and not audio-recorded. Given the paucity of discourse analysis studies other than referral meetings, and one annual meeting with a student, it is important to determine how interaction changes, if at all, with students present in different types of IEP meetings.

In the next section, I share my interpretations of the reviewed IEP research and the implications for IEP team members for this study.

Interpretations and implications for this study. In conclusion, research on IEP forms, perceptions, and interactions contribute to current understandings, and point out gaps in our knowledge. IEP forms examined after the fact showed limited attention to individualization or inclusion of student interests (Geenen & Powers, 2006, Lovitt et al, 1994; Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Trainor, 2005). Although students expressed the desire to be involved in their IEP meetings, and everyone acknowledged the importance of parent and student involvement (Goepel, 2009, Hogansen, et al, 2008; Prunty, 2011), even when students were present in meetings, they did not appear to talk much: three percent of the time (Martin, et al, 2006). Students expressed the importance of training in student centered (Childre & Chambers, 2005) and student led (Danneker & Bottge, 2009) practices for their involvement in meetings. In studies that focused more on interactions within meetings, the IEP form was shown as guiding the talk (Harris, 2010; Peters, 2003; Plum 2008; Mehan,1983; Mehan et al, 1986; Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011), and allowing the facilitator to hold the floor for long periods of time (Dufon, 1993). Although desire, training, and acknowledging the importance of being involved in IEP meetings are all valuable, what has not been examined is how students contribute to the written IEP form, and how students negotiate decision making and speaking turns within meetings.

Parents and educators sometimes blamed each other for lack of involvement (Hogansen, et al, 2008). Caregivers felt more involved when their child was also present (Martin, et al., 2006). Like students, caregivers reported wanting to be more involved (Hogensen, et al 2008; Prunty, 2011), and reported feelings of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their involvement, and how decisions were made (Jones & Gansle, 2010). Some parents reported

negotiating decisions (Laluvein, 2007; Laluvein, 2010), and some reported sharing information (Harris, 2010). Parents expressed frustration over how their information was taken up by educators (Laluvein, 2007; Laluvein, 2010; Rogers, 2002).

Teachers expressed frustration with the pressures of creating IEPs that fulfilled school purposes while also needing to engage and involve parents in educational decisions (Prunty, 2011). Also, teachers cited difficulties in getting everyone to the IEP meeting that needed to be there, as well as difficulties finding sufficient time to conduct meaningful meetings (Harris, 2010; Prunty, 2011). In initial meetings, psychologists shared results from a relatively short time with the student (Mehan, 1983), yet their reports had the most weight within interactions. In addition, psychologists held the floor for long periods of time (Dufon, 1993; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008). Psychologists delivered decisions as already made. What has not been examined are comparisons between decision making interactions, and speaking turns of IEP team members when students are present, psychologists are absent, and the meeting purpose varies.

In summary, decision making in special education meetings has been studied by Rogers (2002, 2003), Mehan (1983), and Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls (1986) using a combination of ethnography and discourse analysis. What has not been considered is how IEP participation within decision making is managed within the structure of talk with students present in annual and tri-annual meetings.

Summary of literature review. In this first part of Chapter 2, I began by outlining the predominant theoretical perspective of the deficit focused, medical model of dis/ability, and how the IEP form demonstrated such a perspective. Then, I highlighted current strengths-based frameworks that emphasize involving students. After discussing community of practice, person-centered, and student-directed approaches, I examined empirical studies of decision making in

IEP meetings. First, I reviewed studies that addressed the IEP form. Then, I reviewed student, caregiver, and educator experiences with particular attention to the eight conversation and discourse analysis studies that exist with caregiver and educator experiences. No studies that examine naturally occurring talk from a discursive psychology perspective with students present were found in this literature review.

In the second part of Chapter 2, I describe my theoretical and methodological framework of discursive psychology, the Discursive Action Model, and conversation analysis.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

In this section, I outline my theoretical and methodological approach. I start by describing the underlying assumptions of discursive psychology as both theory and method. Secondly, to illustrate the use of discursive psychology as a methodological framework, I outline the Discursive Action Model (DAM), which I used in analysis. Thirdly, I discuss where features of conversation analysis work alongside the DAM in my analytical framework. I conclude with a look at transcription as analysis, and then a summary of the chapter.

Assumptions of discursive psychology. As I explained earlier in Chapter 1 and summarize again here, discursive psychology (DP) is concerned with the rhetorical constructions and discursive resources that participants deploy to achieve certain social outcomes or argue a certain point (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Silverman, 2001). Thus, language is viewed as social action, through which we may do work such as blame, encourage, or account for difficulties. Discursive psychology explains such interactions as doing orderly social psychological work through talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992). By orienting psychology within interactions, talk is *constructive* of reality, and reality is *constructed* in moment-by-moment interactions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discursive psychology views discourse to be any form of talk, text (Gilbert &

Mulkey, 1984), gestures, and other non-verbal actions (Bavelas, 1994; Finley, Antaki, & Walton, 2007; Goodwin, 2003) produced "to construct and create social interaction and diverse social worlds" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 1). Psychological issues displayed through interaction with others are the ideological foundation of DP. Thus, the focus is on what participants are doing with language in various contexts.

Rationale for discursive psychology. Discursive psychology is interested in the dynamic and situated nature of interactions traditionally of interest to psychologists. Discursive psychology is a field of social psychology that began in Great Britain (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and has only recently been taken up by educational researchers (Rex & Schiller, 2009). Because I consider talk as situated and produced for the occasion, studying naturally occurring IEP meeting talk from a DP perspective enables understandings around how participants construct decision making moment-by-moment. Interactions are contextual. The focus is on how participants work up cognitive constructs in their talk, as I will show with the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1992). By studying IEP meetings from a DP perspective, I can examine social interactions, like how a psychologist constructs her argument in favor of special education placement.

The concerns of discourse analysts lie primarily in identifying discourse patterns and their social functions. Studying IEP meetings from a DP perspective can show how participants make each other accountable for decisions, and how participants manage their own stake in making decisions. When analyzing how participants negotiated and managed decision making in an orderly manner in IEP meetings, I drew upon Edward's and Potter's (1992) Discursive Action Model, a method that applies the principles of DP using three analysis categories. I also utilized

Heritage's (1997) work on conversation analysis in institutional meetings. I explain the Discursive Action Model in the next section.

The Discursive Action Model. The Discursive Action Model (DAM) explains the primary elements of a discursive psychology perspective on the social organization of talk. DAM focuses on three elements: (1) action; (2) fact and interest; and (3) accountability. The three elements work as both theory and method to provide guiding principles for analysis.

Language as action. First, because the inner workings of someone else's thoughts cannot be observed directly, the analytical focus is instead on what participants say and do. Language always performs. Views of language as *action* supersede views of language as representation of a cognitive state (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards, 1997). Whatever participants do with language in the situation, takes analytic precedence over attempts to identify the inner motivations and intentions of the other. Language is dynamic; it has infinitely more varieties than attributing static cognitive or emotional states.

Focusing on action allows an analysis of how people purposefully construct their accounts to do certain things. Thus, a study from a DP methodology eschews cognitive states, and focuses on how participants dynamically design language to perform a social action. For instance an utterance within an interaction is a dynamic opportunity for argument and agreement as, turn-by-turn, participants use language in such a way to co-construct meaning. Consequently, participants' intentions, thoughts, and knowledge are not singularly fixed, but rather "actively managed interactional concerns" (Edwards, 2006, p. 45). Participants interactionally negotiate meanings of definitions, descriptions, and accounts to build versions of events, people, and topics. At any moment, participants manage, arrange, and deploy multiple versions.

As an illustration of language as action, what follows is an excerpt from Michael's seventh grade meeting with the special education teacher and mother constructing Michael with accounts[23] of behavior. At the beginning of the meeting, after teachers had shared missing assignments, the mother shared that Michael's father "decided he doesn't want him anymore" (Michael transcript, line 106). Several turns later, the seventh grade special education teacher picked up the mother's attribution. This excerpt used Jeffersonian transcription symbols that can be found in Appendix B, and which I explain further near the end of the chapter.

Excerpt 1: Michael *(typical; language as action example)*[24]

7th special education teacher (RSP): the the one thing I have seen behaviorally with him (.) I'm in and out of several of his classes, and these copies are for you um (.) the one thing that I have seen (.) consistently with him (.5) and it has mostly been this semester, is he has ten- he tends now to be (.) more off task kind of (1) gazin out (.) not really focused and actin sillier (1.5) lately (.5) and it could all stem around from everything he's goin through with his dad (.) and (.) what

[he's just learned

Mother: [you see that's what I'm thinking because he is usually a really good student (1) usually, I don't have any trouble with him (1) except, sometimes he doesn't turn in assignments (1) or he misplaces em, or doesn't get em turned in on time (1) that's typical for him (.) he does the same thing (.) [at home

RSP: [and it can be very typical for this age as well

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[23] The focus on description leads discursive psychologists to describe some utterances as "accounts" or "reports," as participants construct their talk as factual (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

[24] After each excerpt title, I include whether it is typical of the data set, or a variation. I then include a brief description of the finding being illustrated in the excerpt. In this way, I provide readers with a summary of the purpose of the excerpt.

13 **Mother:** he's been like that since third grade and gettin him out of it has been,

14 like pullin teeth with no pain killers (1) literally (.) but (.5) I've noticed a big

15 difference in his grades (1) the last nine weeks

16 **RSP**: uh hum

In analyzing this excerpt, a focus on language as action would attend to how the seventh grade teacher constructed her account to attribute Michael's unproductive behaviors to previous information shared by his mother (lines 4-5). Emphasizing the speaker's cognitive state, a qualitative analyst might conclude that both teacher and mother displayed concern, and tried to find the cause for the problem. An action focused orientation allows multiple alternative explanations as to what the language choice accomplished.

Focusing on language as action, a discourse analyst shows that the mother made the inference available that Michael's difficulties in school were from his father's recent rejection of him. On line two, following an authoritative account of Michael's behavior, the teacher used, "I'm in and out of several of his classes" to make her description believable. "It could all stem around from everything" (line 5), draws a broad circle around "all" Michael's unproductive behaviors, and deposits it at "everything" to do with his father. She hedges[25] her wide attribution with "could." Thus, the teacher cautiously forestalls a rebuttal that Michael's behaviors were an internal and persistent problem.

The mother also rhetorically constructs her response to agree with what the teacher made available on line eight with, "you see that's what I'm thinking;" as if she had constructed the

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[25] Brown and Levinson (1987) defined hedging as "a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected" (p. 145). Thus, hedging serves to qualify an utterance.

thought for the moment. A cognitive approach would say that the mother *thought* Michael was "usually a really good student" (line 8). An action oriented approach looks at how the mother constructed her response to anticipate possible challenges to her description of "good student" (line 8). Thus, an action oriented approach looks at the outcome of the mother's language choices. Michael's mother used "usually" twice in her turn (line 8/9), and gave a counter example to "good student" with "except" (line 9) turning in assignments, which she concluded was "typical" and the "same" behavior at home (line 11). The mother made "good student" difficult to counter, by giving examples that made Michael's behavior sound ordinary (Sacks, 1992). Such a turn design then led to the teacher agreeing with another broad statement to normalize Michael's behavior further to apply to all thirteen year olds: "very typical for this age" (line 12).

In this excerpt, from a discursive psychology perspective, the teacher and the mother constructed Michael as unaccountable for his behavior because of his father's rejection and because of longstanding traits of disorganization "since the third grade" (line 13). Similarly, the school and mother were held unaccountable for Michael's improvement because Michael's problems were named internal and stemmed from his emotional and cognitive state, something that had not changed despite attempts "gettin him out of it" (line 13). This utterance inoculated the mother against accusations that she had not done enough to ensure her son's success. In this example, a focus on action allows for analysis of how participants constructed Michael as both accountable and unaccountable for his behavior.

The first element of DAM, language as action, connects with the second element of the DAM: fact and interest.

Fact and interest. The second DAM element focuses on the notion that participants sequentially and rhetorically organize accounts in such a way that they are treated as facts. In doing so, participants make certain inferences available through their reports to be taken up as factual by hearers. Or, as seen in Michael's IEP example, participants attempted to make certain inferences unavailable to strengthen their factual account. Therefore, utterances and reports are never just simple descriptions, but are always discursive strategies that participant's construct turn-by-turn to manage their stake, or interest, in the interaction. An example of a discursive strategy is an extreme case formulation used to make a compelling argument and convince hearers to align with claims. "No Child Left Behind" is a persuasive statement because no caring person would insist we leave children behind. Another example of a discursive strategy is the use of reported speech to lend validity to a story. Stating dialogue as if the speaker remembers it word-for-word increases believability (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Managing stake or interest is not a reflection of a cognitive state, but something that participants attend to in the discursive strategies they employ.

A discourse analysis from a DP perspective pays attention to the discursive resources deployed to make claims factual and manage the stake and interests of the participants. In an IEP meeting, participants produce competing claims and account for decisions in different ways. They must do so in a way that others do not discount their concerns. Edwards and Potter (1992) call this a "dilemma of stake or interest" (p. 158). Analyzing actual meeting talk makes available the study of how participants attend to stake and interest in their reports; not in constructions of their reports after the fact, as in interviews. Studying decision making through discursive devices such as categories, rich descriptions, story-telling, contrasts, and rhetorical structures teems with possible ways participants negotiate and manage decision making. Because each participant

rhetorically designs their utterance so that other's treat them as fact, the second element connects to DAM's third element of agency and accountability.

Agency and accountability. Speakers present descriptions in ways that attend to their own accountability for the factualness of the report; often by claiming it as their own or distancing themselves from it. Establishing more or less accountability for descriptions varies based on how potentially controversial an utterance may be. Attention to accountability in discourse analysis highlights how speakers align themselves and take responsibility for their utterances. As an example, perhaps in working to distance themselves and show neutrality, participants may share information with: "it's just a requirement by the state" (Michael, transcript line 79). Such an utterance sets up a description to minimize speaker accountability, should the statement be contentious, because it is the state requiring it, and not the whim of the speaker.

Because descriptions reference a speaker's agency and responsibility, Edwards and Potter (1992) noted that individuals carefully manage accountability in talk. Thus, accountability shifts around in interactions. Goffman (1981) called this process "footing" and assigned roles to speakers and listeners, with a classifying scheme. For instance, in the roles of speakers, the *principal* acts as the originator of the representation, the *author* as the composer of the representation, and the *animator* as the speaker of the representation. Each role has less accountability for the original utterance with the principal having the most (Potter, 1996). Goffman also outlined specific roles for hearers. As Edwards and Potter (1992) do, I orient to footing less as a classifying scheme and more as a topic for analysis. Of interest in this study are what topics within IEP meetings cause participants to shift footing as they give an account.

Footing shifts indicate when speakers are treating an issue as sensitive or controversial; usually the more disputable a point, then the more obvious a shift in footing. Participants may report second hand information to reduce accountability, and direct experiences to take more personal responsibility. For example, a footing shift from, “I said,” to “it is said,” effectively leaves the speaker unaccountable for the utterance. Describing an event where you are a passive agent “just following orders,” mitigates responsibility. Describing an event where you are an active contributor to the action increases accountability. A footing shift makes it unlikely that others will directly challenge the speaker because he has neatly distanced himself from his statement.

Establishing footing is one example of how participants may make their reports accountable, and display their agency when reporting. Footing and accountability have implications for how participants interact within IEP meetings required by the federal government, and conducted according to state and local procedures. Shifts in footing when talking about sensitive areas like failing grades, low test scores, and traumatic life events, show how participants describe problem areas while managing their own accountability.

Connected with agency and accountability is the discursive resource of positioning. Positioning refers to roles and the entitlements attached to such roles, similar to membership categories that I will address in the conversation analysis section. For example, participants defer to the psychologist as the person having expert knowledge on assessments in IEP meetings. This institutional position and how individuals interactionally manage the entitlements of that role, demonstrate the power of one to pronounce the student as eligible to receive special education services.

Summary of the Discursive Action Model. Language always performs action. Therefore, how participants actively construct fact, interest, and accountability is of significance when studying interactions. As seen in the above excerpts, language use is interactive and contingent on context. Therefore, language use is dynamic and shifting. I chose the Discursive Action Model (DAM; Edwards & Potter 1992; 1993) as an analytical framework because the epistemic and ontological claims of discursive psychology mirror my own, as noted in my reflexivity statement. The DAM provides a clear framework for analysis. For the finer points of data analysis, I employed conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992; Heritage, 1997) that I describe in the next section.

Conversation analysis, discursive psychology, and institutional talk. Discourse analysis studies from a Discursive Psychology (DP) perspective often ground their analytic claims in conversation analysis methods (tenHave, 2007). Created in the 1960s by Harvey Sacks (1992), Emmanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, conversation analysis is concerned with the structure and function of "talk-in-interaction" at a micro level. Micro level analysis focuses on the details and sequential organization[26] of talk. With DP and the Discursive Action Model, the focus is more on the rhetorical structure rather than the sequential structure.

Conversation analysis, unlike types of discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) that look at macro-level social and political discourses, is not concerned with "rushing to see in localized utterances the manifestation of presupposed cultural themes, 'interpretive repertoires,' or 'discourses'" (tenHave, 2007, p. 59). Rather, the focus on sequential

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[26] Sequential organization refers to the orderly structure of talk, or how participants order social actions in conversations (tenHave, 2010). For example, "How are you doing?" may occasion a response of "I'm fine. How are you?" However, "I'm fine. How are you?" would not typically be located before the first question. Thus, talk tends to follow a sequential order.

organization of talk in interaction has found that, in general, participants: (1) usually address their utterance to the immediate prior utterance; (2) formulate their utterance to project an expected social action from the hearer; and (3) produce social actions that show shared understandings of particular conversational structures (Sacks, 1992; Heritage, 1997). Thus, conversation analysis and DP share the assumption that context is built "in and through" their talk (Heritage, 1997, p. 224). Accordingly, every detail in a conversation, like length of pauses, silence, and laughter, is potentially significant because it shows the orderly co-constructed nature of talk to build mutual meanings. Like conversation analysis, discourse analysis from a DP perspective attends to sequential organization as it relates to social and rhetorical functions of talk.

With the focus on language as social action, it follows that people within social institutions create realities particular to that system, and they do so with organizational efficiency. In *institutional talk*, specific frameworks and procedures constrain interactions to follow the objective. Because of the institutional meeting purpose, individuals invoke and make relevant professional identities to accomplish an institutional goal. I define institutional talk along the lines of Drew and Heritage (1992) in that we recognize institutional talk against the backdrop of ordinary conversation by its distinctiveness. Connected with my belief that participants' intentions, thoughts, and knowledge are "actively managed interactional concerns" (Edwards, 2006, p. 45), I disagree epistemologically with taking an a priori stance, and examining interactions in IEP meetings through the lens of cultural systems, or cognitive constructs. When I first approached my data, I chose not to look at IEP meetings as "institutional." In other words, even though IEP meetings appear institutional, I wanted to see if participants oriented to them as institutional within my data set.

Both Rogers (2002) and Peters (2003) found that IEP meetings included both conversational and institutional interactions. After initial analysis, I found something similar in this data set: participants themselves oriented to the IEP as institutional. Although ordinary social talk occurred throughout meetings to a greater or lesser degree, there were always obvious shifts to the official function of the meeting as completing the IEP (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Given the sensitive nature of topics covered in IEP meetings, *all* participants negotiated and managed the official business with a mix of ordinary and institutional talk to achieve institutional goals.

Heritage (1997) defined institutional interactions as having three distinct features: (1) institutional roles and identities correspond to how participants orient to a goal; (2) institutional interactions allow and constrain contributions in service to a goal; and (3) institutional talk has contextualized procedures. The IEP form is a legally binding document requiring signatures and agreements from all involved in the meeting. The IEP form structured the talk as institutional. The IEP meeting followed certain institutional guidelines. Educators conducted IEP meetings at school sites with both professionals and "lay persons," such as parents and community members.

Because of the overall institutional nature of meetings, and interactional asymmetries in decision making, I utilized Heritage's (1997) six conversation analysis components to specify the finer points of discourse. While the DAM model provided the overall framework to analyze language as action, rhetorical constructions of "factual" accounts, and track accountability and agency, bringing Heritage's (1997) six areas alongside the DAM assured that I addressed areas that were critical to institutional interactions. Therefore, in my analysis, the reader will see a combination of discursive social actions and conversational features to describe data.

The six conversation analysis areas I attended to in this study were: (1) turn-taking; (2) overall structural organization of IEP meetings; (3) sequence organization of talk and the IEP form; (4) turn-design; (5) lexical choice; and (6) interactional asymmetries.

Turn-taking. Speakers in conversation change with a socially constructed orderliness involving little overlap, and few gaps. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) proposed that turn taking has both a constructional and an allocational component that are related to each other by a set of rules. Turn completion occurs with lexical choices, syntax, intonations, or non-verbals to cue the next speaker to the transition (Liddicoat, 2007; Goodwin, 1981), allowing for smooth passages from one to another. The same type of turn-taking in ordinary conversation can occur in institutional interaction. To name a few examples, turn-taking has been studied in institutional interactions such as: doctor visits (Maynard, 1991; Gafaranga & Britten, 2005), classroom discourse (Mehan, 1984; Rex & Schiller, 2009), and court cases (Atkinson and Drew, 1979).

Of interest is not only when turn-taking advances along predictable lines, but especially when transitions are formalized or troubled. For example, institutional turn-taking organization may emphasize special turns where certain speakers self-select or select others for speaking. Questions are an example of this, and work to expect a response that is constrained to answer the posed topic. Breaking away from expected turns, or in other ways arranging the transition from one speaker to the next in unexpected ways are interactionally interesting when also considering social actions. Similarly, the structural organization of talk is an area that reveals how participants perform social actions.

Structural organization. Heritage (1997) recommends observing whether the overall organization follows a structure specific to the task. Indeed, in IEP meetings, there are distinct phases that participants followed to jointly orient to the IEP form and co-construct

understandings. I outline three phases of IEP meetings in my findings, that showed the structural organization of talk. Identifying main sections allowed me to ascertain whether participants were singly or broadly focused on topics. It also allowed me to note significant shifts from phase to phase as well as how talk progressed within sections. By defining the structure, I was then able to point out transition points where an individual moved to another topic. In so outlining the structure, I show how participants oriented to the IEP form as dynamic, and organized their talk in dynamic ways to perform certain actions.

Sequential organization. Participants organize social actions sequentially to establish facts and make claims (Edwards & Potter, 1992). I studied how IEP meetings progressed in orderly or not so orderly sequences, in particular how "action opportunities are opened up and activated, or withheld from and occluded" (Heritage, 1997, p. 230). For example, one IEP facilitator sequenced his talk to avoid creating opportunities for interruption by talking rapidly and breathing at grammatical places where he was not likely to be interrupted. In this way, he held the floor for extended periods of time in order to efficiently present information to caregivers and students. Similarly, how speakers sequence talk indicates how they orient to previous turns as, for instance, requiring explanations or demanding a defense. Thus, sequentially organizing turns connects to how speakers design their turns to accomplish something with their talk.

Turn-design. Turn-design addresses how participants construct their turns to perform a specific social action, and the means by which they do so (Drew & Heritage, 1992). For instance, IEP meetings are a yearly (or more often in some cases) function for case managers and IEP team participants. Because the IEP form is the same across students with slightly varying criteria, experienced facilitators are very familiar with the form and what needs to be accomplished

within meetings. Being familiar with the process, facilitators are aware of possible challenges and the location of possible interactional trouble spots. IEP facilitators design turns to proceed along the path of least resistance and thus, participants accomplished most IEP meetings within 20 to 30 minutes. Turn-design directly links to lexical choice, as participants avoided or over-used terms to achieve social actions.

Lexical choice. Choosing words within ordinary conversation is important in co-creating meanings. It is especially important in IEP meetings where participants discuss sensitive topics like dis/ability qualifications and performance issues. Equally noticeable in IEP meetings are educators use of professional jargon (Turnbull et al, 2011) that may work to exclude outsiders or make utterances unchallengeable by their very incomprehensibleness. Word choice may shape whole meetings, and also may work to create unequal relationships of knowledge and participation (Heritage, 1997).

Interactional asymmetries. Attention to disproportionate participation, the knowledge displays of participants, and who has the right to speak on certain topics and when, are especially interesting when considering meetings where students are present or absent. Teacher-student relationships have their own interactional rules and expectations (Rex & Schiller, 2009), but these relationships are different within IEP meetings. With caregivers present, and with a task that requires the student participate in a way that is very different from most traditional classroom interactions, student participation may be an interactional game-changer. How participants invite, encourage, and manage student participation is of interest. As noted in the literature, IEP meetings with students in attendance are theoretically places where students self-advocate by letting their needs and desires be known. In the findings in Chapter 4, I describe whether that goal was interactionally achievable in the 33 middle school IEP meetings with

students present. In institutional interactions, participants typically have unequal participation based on membership categories.

Membership categories. Heritage (1997) pointed out that in institutional interactions professionals construct reports authoritatively or cautiously depending on what knowledge they want to deploy to perform a certain action. Caregivers and students may do the same, but their rights to certain knowledge (e.g., academic performance and classroom behaviors) may be limited by qualifying educators as experts to share academic knowledge. Qualifying individuals as such is a function of "membership categories". Membership categories are devices people use to classify each other with a description (e.g., sister, police officer), in order to quickly imply certain characteristics to perform a social action (Sacks, 1992; Stokoe, 2012). For example, introductions within IEP meetings serve as ways to delineate and perhaps assign membership categories. Or when introducing the meeting purpose, participants may be directed to perform certain roles in the IEP meeting, and not others. For instance, in the IEP meeting a student may not share his concerns for his academic performance, but may share his career choice. Although institutions may constrain participants' local management and construction of talk, individuals may also rise above constraints to perform specific social actions. I explain how certain participants accomplished this in my findings, and thus displayed decision making power typically outside stated membership categories.

In summary, I used these six conversation analysis areas to analyze the data. Next, I describe how transcription in conversation analysis studies constitutes the first level of analysis (Jefferson, 2004) because transcription displays features of talk, such as in-breaths, laughter, and pauses; all of which perform social actions.

Transcription as analysis. Conversation analysts (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Sacks, 1992; tenHave, 2007) established that attention to in-breaths, laughter, and pauses are crucially important to understanding social activities. Gail Jefferson (2004) created a way to note such details of conversation along with the exact transcription of participant words. Jeffersonian notations are included in Appendix B. My goal with transcription was to write out exact participant words from repeated listening of audio recordings (Ochs, 1979). Since Jeffersonian transcription of even a few utterances is extremely time-consuming, I did not use Jeffersonian transcription for all 37 hours, but rather transcribed selected excerpts in my findings for deeper notation. I used Jeffersonian notations on certain excerpts in my findings that I considered relevant and necessary for the reader.

Using Jeffersonian notations provided an opportunity to note minute details of actions and utterances within excerpts. Jeffersonian transcription of excerpts allows the reader access to how the excerpt sounded in the absence of the audio file. When transcribing, I included repetitions of words because repetitions can show trouble spots within talk (tenHave, 2010). I also transcribed close approximations to dialect. For example, “gettin” and “gonna” were typical utterances in this data set, and may indicate less stress on the word because of “incorrect” pronunciation (Jefferson, 2004). In this way, I included conversational features as data for analysis.

Following is an excerpt transcribed in Jeffersonian notation to provide the reader with an idea of this type of transcription and what it affords analysis:

Excerpt 2: Jeffersonian notation example

Interviewer (I): So can you say more about this struggle and what kind of resistance you came about

3 **I:** [well]=

4 **Participant (P):** [Yeah]

5 **I:** =give an example, maybe?

6 **P:** (2.) Okay. (1.) $@You want to hear me talk?@

7 **I:** $Yes, please. [$Talk and talk and talk$].

8 **P:** [So it is set?] ((pointing at the camera))

9 **I:** It's set (.) It's good (.) we're going (.) yeah.

This excerpt was from the beginning of a video-taped interview I conducted in a separate study, in which I chose to paid attention to pauses, overlaps, intonations, laughter, and gestures. These notations demonstrated our interaction (Ochs, 1979), particularly in how we managed turn-taking within the interview. I based selections of notations to use according to what I considered to be analytically relevant. For this interview, there were multiple areas of overlapping talk. Overlaps usually occur when speakers are orderly transitioning turns (Sacks, et al, 1974), as can be seen on lines three/four and lines seven/eight. Overlaps may also demonstrate conversational repairs of trouble spots (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008).

In addition, pauses can show interactional trouble spots (tenHave, 2010), but don't seem to be doing so here. Rather, the pauses in conjunction with the talk on line nine indicate to the reader that perhaps the researcher was checking camera equipment. Pauses (i.e., small silences within a turn), gaps (i.e., short silences at possible completion of utterances), and lapses (i.e., long silences between speaker turns) may also help speakers negotiate the floor in terms of who speaks next and when (Sacks, et al, 1974). Laughter and smiling intonation (lines 6-7) in the talk is interactionally interesting in showing emotion (Glenn, 2003). Laughter is also sometimes used to cover utterances that the speaker does not want heard (Jefferson, 2004), and to show resistance

or alignment with others (Glenn, 2003). Here, the smiling and animated voice may indicate teasing and alignment of both the interviewer's and participant's purpose. Because I made analytical decisions about what to transcribe (Ochs, 1979; Jefferson, 2004), my transcription served as a construction of the meetings (Hammersley, 2010), and a level of analysis.

Summary of theoretical perspectives and methodology. In this section, I reviewed the assumptions of discursive psychology. Additionally, I reviewed how the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and conversation analysis (Heritage, 1997) provided the analytical framework for this study. I concluded the section with an examination of how I used transcription as analysis within this study. In summary, DP, the DAM, and conversation analysis view language as action. The DAM, as a practical expression of DP principles, focuses upon language as action in constructing facts, speaker's attention to stake and interest, and speakers' accountability and agency. A conversation analysis approach to analyzing institutional meetings attends to the finer points of turn-taking, sequential and structural organization, lexical choice, turn-design, and interactional asymmetries. Transcription also acted as part of analysis to display features of talk, such as in-breaths, laughter, and pauses; all of which perform social actions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature related to: (1) IEP documents, and (2) student, caregiver, and educator experiences and interactions within IEP meetings. Overall, differing perceptions and teacher-led meetings equated to limited involvement for caregivers and students in decision making. Studies of interaction pointed to educators arriving with decisions already made, the facilitator dominating the interactional floor, and limited to no caregiver involvement in decision making. One ethnographic case study that used critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2002), included one middle school student in one annual IEP meeting, but

because audio recording of naturally occurring talk did not occur, only certain claims could be supported by the observational meeting notes. I found no study that examined the actual recorded talk within IEP meetings, with students present, from a discourse analysis perspective.

Secondly, I outlined the theoretical and methodological framework used in this study. Discursive psychology, the Discursive Action Model and conversation analysis guided my data collection and analysis. This study focused on the social and rhetorical construction of the interactions taking place within IEP meetings. In Chapter 3, I explain the methods of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 3:

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the discursive practices of middle school students, caregivers, educational staff, school leaders, and other stakeholders participating in Individualized Education Planning (IEP) meetings. In particular, I noted similarities and differences in how participants negotiated decisions when students were present or absent. I audio recorded 77 IEP meetings from three rural school districts in the Southeastern United States from January 2013 to May 2013. Established district and institutional review board (IRB) procedures dictated confidentiality in all levels of data collection, transcription, and analysis. See Appendix C for IRB approval. My analytical framework, from a discursive psychology (DP) perspective, specifically utilized the Discursive Action Model (DAM) along with features of conversation analysis (CA). In the following section, I describe the organization of the chapter detailing the process of data collection and data analysis.

Organization of Chapter 3

In part one, I describe schools and individual student participants within IEP meetings held in two middle schools: Hallelujah Middle School and Grace Middle School[27]. In part two, I discuss my data collection of audio recordings and observational notes of IEP meetings, as well as IEP forms. Part three delineates the five phases of my data analysis: (1) repeated careful listening; (2) transcription and unmotivated annotation; (3) repeated listening and annotating with the Discursive Action Model, conversation analysis, and decision making in mind; (4) selecting and organizing excerpts, as well as developing interpretations; and (5) recursive and

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[27] I used pseudonyms for schools and individual participants. In the description of the schools, I sometimes withheld specifics and approximated numbers to protect confidentiality.

transparent sharing of findings. In addition, I explain how I represented findings and paid attention to issues of trustworthiness and warranting claims. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of ethical and political considerations, and a chapter summary.

School Settings and Participants

From January 28, 2013 to May 9, 2013, I collected the following data: (1) 44 hours of audio recorded conversational data within 77 kindergarten through 12th grade IEP meetings; (2) 67 IEP documents; and (3) 226 pages of observational notes of IEP meetings. Two meetings did not record properly; consequently, I had 75 usable recordings totaling 43 hours and 42 minutes. One meeting, with only educators, was recorded and later discarded because no caregiver was present. The average meeting length across all 74 meetings was 34 minutes. The shortest meeting (12 minutes) was with a mother present without her sixth grader. The longest meeting (1 hour 35 minutes) was with a mother present without her 1st grader. See Appendix D for a list of all kindergarten through 12th grade meetings, including the school, grade, participants, and length of the meeting. By attending all of the meetings to which I gained access, I intentionally immersed myself in the context of IEP meetings as a researcher to sharpen my awareness in an observer role (Merriam, 2009). Immersion was important to me because of my background facilitating my own elementary and middle school IEP meetings in California. Spending time in meetings as a researcher helped me check my own practitioner assumptions (as shown by my previous explanation in Chapter 2 about categorizing IEP meetings as institutional).

School Sites

I used network sampling (Merriam, 2009) to identify potential school sites. In this way, I emailed special education case managers with an invitation letter explaining the intent and extent of the study. At the time of agreement, I asked special educator case managers to identify

scheduled IEP meetings where students may or may not participate. As I gained permission and began attending IEP meetings, I asked school staff to suggest other educators who might want to participate at the school or at different school sites. These educators then forwarded my emails onto other possible participants. As data collection proceeded, I gained permission to attend 22 meetings with students present at Grace Middle School (GMS)[28]. When Hallelujah Middle School (HMS) also had a series of meetings with eighth graders at the end of February, I acquired permission to attend 13 more meetings with students from two separate facilitators. In order to observe more meetings without students, I sent emails to both GMS and HMS special education teachers. My efforts resulted in 26 more meetings for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers at GMS, including four from the GMS sixth through eighth grade Comprehensive Developmental Classroom (CDC) teacher. This resulted in 13 meetings from HMS and 50 meetings from GMS. Because middle school meetings formed the majority of my data sources, I chose to focus this dissertation research on two middle schools. Therefore, the data set referred to from this point involves 63 meetings totaling approximately 37 hours of audio of 30 middle school IEP meetings without students and 33 meetings with students.

I had little to do with the recruitment of potential caregiver and student participants at either middle school. Special education case managers selected and invited participants. In the selection and invitation process, educators likely made certain assumptions of ability and willingness from observable characteristics and past perceptions (e.g., educators' perception of parents' willingness to attend IEP meetings). The likelihood that educators filtered participants according to their own rationales is a limiting, but unavoidable factor. No case manager

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[28] All names of schools and students are pseudonyms.

explicitly mentioned excluding me from meetings based on such assumptions. Case managers mostly scheduled meetings back-to-back over a number of days, and facilitators invited me to the days with scheduled meetings. It's a safe conclusion that for the 46 back-to-back scheduled meetings, the availability, convenience, and the willingness of case managers drove invitation and selection.

In the next sections, I share district and school demographics from the most recent publically available statistics available between 2010 and 2012 for both Hallelujah Middle School and Grace Middle School. In order to protect the identity of participating schools, I approximated the publically available data on districts and individual schools. Statistics in the next sections come from the State (name withheld) Department of Education (2012) and the United States Census Bureau (2012).

Hallelujah Middle School demographics. Hallelujah school district identified 12% of students as receiving special education services. That figure is 1% lower than the national average. District-wide, 65% were identified as economically disadvantaged with 70 % receiving Title One funds. Per pupil expenditures for Americans with Dis/abilities Act (ADA) was approximately $8,000; lower than the state average of approximately $9,000 per pupil. District-wide, in grades third through eighth, achievement data on state tests for math was 39% proficient and advanced. For reading/language arts students scored 48% proficient and advanced. Compared to the state percentages of 45% proficient and advanced in math, and 51% proficient and advanced for reading language arts, Hallelujah district performed lower (SDE, 2012). While multiple factors are at play, lower per pupil expenditures in Hallelujah school district may indicate fewer resources available to students; and thus, may contribute to lower achievement. If

Hallelujah Middle School (HMS) had more funding, then they may have been able to hire extra teachers for test preparation as Grace Middle School was able to do.

One hundred percent of teachers were highly qualified at HMS. In 2012, HMS served approximately 600 students in sixth through eighth grades, with approximately 2% identified as African American, and 7% as Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, or Alaskan. Of the student body 49% was female and 51% was male. I was not able to obtain data on the percentage of students identified as receiving special education services at HMS. HMS offered parent training in advocating for their child during IEP meetings, by request, on an individual or group basis with the head of special services for the district.

Hallelujah Middle School participant roles. Two special education case managers/teachers participated in 13 meetings at HMS. No general education teachers attended the 13 meetings. No related therapists such as speech and language pathologists or occupational therapists attended the meetings. All eighth grade students attended, as did one or both caregivers. While the HMS special education director offered training about advocating for their child in IEP meetings to caregivers on an individual or group basis (HMS[29], personal communication, July 14, 2014), I did not gather information about which caregivers had received parent advocacy training. Two high school special educators served as both transition support and Local Educational Authority representatives (i.e., acting administrators). Table 2 shows a list of participating professional, caregiver, and student roles at HMS.

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[29] Name withheld for confidentiality.

Table 2: Hallelujah Middle School Participant Roles

Title	***Role(s) in Meeting***
Student	Reporter of career goal(s) and academic strengths when queried, chooser of electives (not CDC students), provider of information when queried, approver of IEP transition plan and high school schedule
Caregivers: Mother, Father, Grandmother, Grandfather	Reporter of concerns, provider of information, approver of IEP transition plan and consenter to IEP plan (and eligibility when appropriate)
High School Special Education Administrator	Facilitator; Transition Coordinator; LEA representative, updater of IEP form
High School Comprehensive Day Class Special Educator	Transition support, Co-Facilitator, LEA representative, updater of IEP form
Eighth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator	Case Manager, Co-facilitator, note taker, interpreter of evaluation results, transition support reporter of classroom performance

Table 2 continued: Hallelujah Middle School Participant Roles

Title	***Role(s) in Meeting***
Sixth to eighth Comprehensive Day Class Special Educator	Case Manager, Co-Facilitator, note taker, updater of IEP form, interpreter of evaluation results, transition support, reporter of classroom performance

Grace Middle School demographics. The district identified 15% of students as receiving special education services. This is 3% higher than the state average and 2% higher than the national average. District-wide, 43% identified as economically disadvantaged, with 88 % receiving Title One funds. The district and state website reported per pupil expenditures per ADA at approximately $10,400; higher than the state average of approximately $9,000 per pupil (SDE, 2012). District-wide, in grades third through eighth, achievement data on state tests for math was 53% proficient and advanced. For reading/language arts, students scored 61% proficient and advanced. Compared to the state percentages of 45% proficient and advanced in math, and 51% proficient and advanced for reading language arts, Grace school district performed higher.

One hundred percent of teachers were highly qualified at Grace Middle School (GMS). In 2012, GMS served approximately 600 students in sixth through eighth grades with approximately 9% identified as African American and 4% as Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, or Alaskan. 49% of the student body was female and 51% was male. I found no data available on the percentage of students identified as receiving special education services at GMS. In addition, I was unable to ascertain whether GMS offered parent advocacy training for

IEP meetings despite multiple attempts to gain the information from the district. Nor did I gather information about which caregivers had received parent advocacy training.

Grace Middle School participant roles. I attended 50 meetings for sixth to eighth graders at GMS with four different case managers. I include the GMS professional, caregiver, and student roles in meetings in Table 3.

Table 3: Grace Middle School Participant Roles

Title	***Role(s) in Meeting***
Student	Reporter of career goal(s) when queried, chooser of electives (not CDC students), provider of information when queried, approver of IEP transition plan and high school schedule
Caregivers: Mother, Father, Grandmother, Grandfather	Reporter of concerns, provider of information, approver of IEP transition plan and consenter to IEP plan (and eligibility when appropriate)
Eighth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator	Facilitator, note taker, LEA representative, case manager, transition support
Seventh grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator	Facilitator, note taker, LEA representative, case manager, transition support

Table 3 continued: Grace Middle School Participant Roles

Title	***Role(s) in Meeting***
Sixth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator	Facilitator, note taker, LEA representative, case manager, transition support
Sixth-Eighth Comprehensive Day Class Special Educator at GMS	Facilitator
Sixth to Eighth grade Teachers: English, Language Arts RTI, Math, Science, Social Studies, Art	Reporters of classroom performance
School Psychologist	Interpreter of evaluation results
Middle School Guidance Counselors (two)	Reporters of special information (e.g., student field trip status, Modified State Test listing
Ninth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educators: Biology and English.	Transition support, LEA representative
High School Comprehensive Day Class Special Educators: Math and Science, Language Arts	Transition support
Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP)	Reporter of performance on SLP goals, interpreter of evaluation results

Participant Confidentiality and Characteristics

All participants and schools received pseudonyms. I offered all student participants the option to choose their own pseudonyms to protect their identity. With students present, s/he had the option to choose his/her own pseudonym. With students absent, I invited the caregiver to choose a name for the child/grandchild. For school staff and caregivers, I used their primary role in the meeting as the pseudonym. See Table 4 for the case managers and students associated with each meeting.

Table 4: Case Managers and Students

School Case Manager	***Number of Students and Pseudonyms***
Sixth-eighth Comprehensive Day Class Special Educator at GMS	4: Heath, John, Sam, Sprite
Sixth through eighth Comprehensive Day Class Special Educator at HMS	3: Alvin, Jason, Mylie,
Sixth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator at Grace Middle School (GMS)	11: Amy, Chrissy, Harry, Howard, Ironman, Jase, Laura, Phillip, SwampGuy, Sy, Ted
Seventh grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator at GMS	14: Benton, Bubba, Elsa, Esther, Flossy, Jenny, Kristy, Mia, Michael, Raj, Rob, Sheldon, Trevor, Wendy

Table 4 continued: Case Managers and Students

School Case Manager	***Number of Students and Pseudonyms***
Eighth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator at GMS	21: Andy, Ashley, Benny, Beyonce, Bill, Bizza, Boyd, Chris, Derek, Elvis, Jake, James, Lebron, Mark, Peyton, Smiles, Superman, Superman3, Taylor, Tommy, Weston
Eighth grade Inclusion and Resource Special Educator at Hallelujah Middle School (HMS)	10: Carrie, Christopher, Danielle, Delia, JohnnyP, Keyona, Lenora May, Max, Mike, William

Appendix E provides an overview of student demographic data for the 30 sixth to eighth grade meetings with students absent. Appendix F provides an overview of the 33 eighth grade meetings with students present. Demographics on both tables include: (1) grade; (2) placement and services; (3) school; (4) race; (5) gender; (6) age; (7) dis/ability category(ies); and (8) medical information. In order to maximize opportunities for alternative versions and varied language use, I used all audio recorded sixth to eighth grade meetings (63 out of 63) in analysis. In addition to the 63 recordings, researcher generated field notes, and the IEP document, served as data sources. In the next section, I address data collection and management.

Data Collection and Management

In this section, I report specifically on the types of data I gathered: (1) audio recorded IEP meetings; (2) observational notes; and (3) IEP documents. Then, I describe how I worked to secure and manage the data with qualitative software.

Individualized Education Plan audio recordings. An audio digital recording device was used to capture the participants' naturally occurring talk during each meeting. Where possible, recording began with the talk in preparation for the meeting and concluded with the talk after the meeting (Ochs, 1979). Meetings took place on school grounds, in classrooms or conference rooms. I attended 66 middle school meetings, but in the process of audio recording and transferring digital recordings to the password protected laptop, I discovered three recordings recorded incorrectly or deleted. The 63 meetings averaged 35 minutes, and included, at the very least, caregivers and educators. The shortest meeting was Jase's sixth grade meeting at 12 minutes, without the student. The longest meeting was Benny's eighth grade meeting at one hour 24 minutes, without the student.

There were four types of IEP meetings: initials, annuals, addendums, and tri-annuals. Initial meetings (N=3) were referral meetings to initially establish eligibility for special education services. The type of meeting shaped the purpose of the meeting. In initials, a psychologist and/or speech and language therapist reported test results. The majority of meetings (N=46) were annual IEP meetings: meetings held once a year to complete the next year's IEP. Addendums are meetings held before the present annual IEP expires, and held to address additional issues. Addendum IEP meetings in this study were different from annual IEPs only on the IEP form. All participants with addendums had met a couple months previously for a full annual or tri-annual. Of the five addendum IEPs in this data set, two were with seventh graders who had just had a tri-annual, and three were with eighth grade students who were meeting expressly to choose their electives for high school. Tri-annuals (N=9), held every three years, involve extra paperwork to continue eligibility for special education services. All nine tri-annuals

in this study resulted in continued services for students. I present the four types of IEP meetings and students associated with each in Table 5.

Table 5: Four Types of IEP Meetings by School

IEP Type	***#***	***Grace Middle School***	***Hallelujah Middle School***
Initial	3	Raj, Taylor, Wendy	
Annual	46	Amy, Andy, Ashley, Benny, Beyonce, Bill, Bizza, Boyd, Bubba, Derek, Elsa, Elvis, Esther, Harry, Heath, Howard, Ironman, Jake, James, Jase, Jenny, John, Laura, Lebron, Mark, Mia, Michael, Phillip, Rob, Sam, Sheldon, Smiles, Sprite, Superman, Superman3, SwampGuy, Ted, Tommy, Trevor	Carrie, Christopher, Danielle, Delia, JohnnyP, Max, Mike, Jason
Addendum	5	ChrisJ, Flossy, Kristy, Weston	Keyona
Tri-annual	9	Benton, Chrissy, Mark, Peyton, Sy	Alvin, Lenora May, Mylie, William

Individualized Education Plan observational notes. In conjunction with the audio recordings of the meetings I also took observational field notes totaling 193 pages across the 63 meetings observed. Notes were especially important in capturing non-verbal exchanges such as

gestures or gazing. Speaker positions, gestures, movements, and gaze captured in the notes provided valuable context for understanding the audio recording of the meeting (Merriam, 2009). I recorded gestures, either corresponding to spoken utterances, or in place of spoken words, when observed. Notes were also helpful in identifying speakers on the recordings, noting pre- and post-meeting talk prior to the recording, and recording some of my questions and reactions to the interaction while it was happening. I hand-wrote observational notes of meetings on legal pads, and scanned them as soon as possible after leaving the school site so that they could be transferred to qualitative data analysis software.

Individualized Education Plan forms. I also requested copies of the IEP form as a source of data. The IEP form is a legal document that all participants sign at the conclusion of each meeting indicating their agreement with the plan written in the document. Appendix G describes the 17 sections of the IEP form in sequential order. The IEP document served as a reference for certain points of the interaction. For example, when participants sounded like they were reading directly from the IEP on the audio, I referenced the IEP form to establish what they were reading. I obtained 62 IEP documents. Before leaving each school site, I catalogued the IEP forms and my notes by student pseudonym. At the same time, I blacked out all identifying information on the IEP forms. Then, as soon as possible, I scanned forms for entry into data analysis software. Qualitative data analysis software helped manage transcripts, notes, and IEP forms.

Managing data with qualitative software. ATLAS.ti™ software (Muhr, 2004) served as an organizational tool to: (1) transcribe; (2) identify discursive features across transcripts; (3) keep researcher memos; and (4) store IEP documents and meeting notes for analysis. I scanned IEP documents and uploaded them into ATLAS.ti™ for electronic access. Passwords protected

all data on the researcher's computer. I organized all notes, documents, and transcripts by participant pseudonyms. Thus, ATLAS.ti™ served as the main repository for all documents. The software greatly helped with efficiency in the analytic notation process in the form of analytic and theoretical memos, comments, and coding features. I explain data analysis further in the next section.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded across five levels: (1) repeated careful listening; (2) transcription and unmotivated annotation; (3) repeated listening and annotating with the Discursive Action Model, conversation analysis, and decision making in mind; (4) selecting and organizing excerpts as well as developing interpretations; and (5) recursive and transparent sharing of findings with research team members. After describing my levels of analysis, I specify how I represent findings, and how I warrant my claims.

Level One: Repeated listening. I began my analysis by listening to all 63 meetings with a stance of "unmotivated" listening (Psathas, 1995; Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1996). At this stage, I had not decided upon decision making moments as my research focus. I desired to wait until after engaging with the data in order to see possible areas of interest. In unmotivated listening, no guiding research question frames analysis (Psathas, 1995). Rather, noticing discourse features, functions or anything of interest serves as a first step in pursuing a more grounded approach. While listening, I paid attention to moments that I considered interactionally interesting, and listened to many meetings more than once. Interactionally interesting moments included such things as: (1) how and when parents and students participated; (2) what discursive features participants used when making arguments; (3) what sharing stories did to the interaction; and (4)

decision making moments. Although I considered many more possible research areas than described here, decision making moments ultimately became my main focus.

Level Two: Transcription and unmotivated annotation. The second step of analysis was transcribing all middle school meetings within ATLAS.ti™ (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2013). Transcription included laughter, participants coming or going, and sounds such as bells, phones, and intercom announcements. This level of transcription made available for analysis how these features of the interactions contributed to the rhetorical organization of IEP meeting talk. For example, caregiver cell phone calls or texts with students present usually prompted an interaction between caregivers and students. This often disrupted the flow of talk so that others then took the floor. Intercom announcements sometimes stopped interaction and provided moments of comment, or sometimes speakers simply spoke over them. Therefore, I included attention to such moments in the transcription. In the following sub-sections, I describe: (1) transcription details; and (2) unmotivated annotation.

Transcription details. Making decisions about how and what to transcribe occurred on levels two and three of analysis as I repeatedly listened to participant talk, and considered discursive features and their functions within IEP meetings. First, I focused on verbatim transcription using ATLAS.ti™ (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2013). Secondly, I referenced my observational notes for non-verbal interaction. While aware of overlapping speech, whispers, and changes in tone, I did not transcribe these features in detail when they did not seem to be integral to the primary interaction. Thus, transcription became a level of analysis as I made choices about what was interesting. Multiple overlapping conversations often occurred and, where possible, I transcribed all. Where I could not transcribe after repeated listening, I included a bracket indicating such. In my first level of transcribing and listening, I made analytical decisions by

considering some overlapping conversation irrelevant to transcribe (e.g., listing and describing classes available for freshman), and so I put the topic in brackets. In repeated listening with the transcript, I refined what I was interested in, and transcribed in greater detail to capture all of the primary thread of conversation.

I checked transcripts with my observation notes and filled in non-verbal interactions where participants were nodding or otherwise indicating participation that was not recorded on audio. Observational notes of the meeting were sometimes helpful in noting shared gaze or other non-verbal actions around the IEP or other documents on the table. Where provided, and where it appeared as a participant concern, I referenced the written IEP. In this sense, I orient to the document as a version of institutional talk (Mehan, et al, 1986). For example, when a special education teacher said, “I’m writing that down,” I looked on the final copy of the IEP to see what the teacher wrote. I also scrutinized the IEP text to see where and how participants used language from the IEP in their talk, and how this influenced decision making, if at all.

Unmotivated annotation and memoing. As I transcribed, I made notes about what I was thinking using the “memo” feature in ATLAS.ti™. These 134 initial memos recorded my thoughts, feelings, and ideas as I transcribed. As in level one, I attempted to listen and label with “unmotivated looking” (Psathas, 1995; Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1996), attending to my reactions as I listened and annotated everything intriguing or surprising. This phase resulted in 1,513 annotations. The most commonly used annotations included student description, reported speech, attribution, questions, and humor. After completing transcription, reviewing memos, and debriefing with research team members at multiple points in analysis, I focused and refocused my analysis on various aspects, finally landing on how participants worked through decision making within IEP meetings.

Then, I began level three and listened to all meetings for a third time (or fourth time for some meetings). Now I listened and annotated with a working question in mind: How do speakers discursively negotiate decision making within middle school IEP meetings with and without students present?

Level Three: Repeated listening and annotating. As part of analysis, I went back and forth between listening to meetings without transcripts, and listening to meetings with the transcript. Looking at the data with and without text affected what I was noticing. Over the course of one week, I listened to all 37 hours of the 63 meetings with the intention to identify overall patterns by immersing myself in the meetings. I devoted long and concentrated blocks of time to listening. In addition, I recursively annotated with ATLAS.ti™, iteratively reviewing 63 meetings. I focused on different discursive resources being used to accomplish the work of the meetings, as well as questions, decision making moments, and shared decision making moments. In the first few levels of analysis, I deliberately did not annotate using a list of labels provided by DA or CA research. I wanted to work up from description, rather than down from a specific feature or function. In subsequent levels, I simultaneously summarized each meeting, and annotated each of the 63 meetings according to the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and any of the six areas of institutional conversation analysis (Heritage, 1997). During all phases, I compiled excerpts to represent my findings. In this and the following levels, I shared findings with Discourse Analysis Research Team (DART) members, and engaged in conversations that pushed me to look at the data in different ways, and consider how best to present findings.

Level Four: Developing interpretations and selecting excerpts. Recursively developing interpretations, as well as selecting and organizing excerpts occurred at level four.

Developing interpretations. In this level, I specifically analyzed, according to the three levels of DAM (Edwards & Potter, 1993), how speakers: (1) formulated reports and what they accomplished in decision making (action); (2) rhetorically constructed talk, including attention to stake and footing (fact and interest); and (3) attributed agency and accountability for reports about decisions (agency and accountability). I also looked at lexical choice, turn-design, turn-taking, sequence organization, and the overall structure as participants used these features to work up decision making. During this phase, I began to identify major organizational structures, types of interactions, and ways in which participants also addressed interactional asymmetries through membership categories within decision making moments. Using ATLAS.ti™, I organized each focus area in all meetings and began the process of reading through only the annotations for that area across meetings. For example, as I concentrated on how participants shared descriptive information to engage in shared decision making, I gathered excerpts and engaged in detailed interpretation to demonstrate patterns.

I also analyzed moments where individuals resisted other participants' constructions. For instance, all meetings included "agreement" interactions in which caregivers and students agreed with the constructions of students or events by educational staff. However, in 33 meetings, 18 without students and 15 with students, participants also deftly constructed challenges to their own or others presentations of "facts." I considered what such challenges might be doing within decision making moments.

When making annotations, I attended to varieties of patterns of discourse. Because the discourse of the IEP meeting is the data for analysis, and not the language users, a variety of

participant descriptions demonstrates the situational nature of talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992). I did not assume that participants took up race, class, gender, ethnicity, language, culture, dis/ability labels, and impairment effects as an issue in talk. Accordingly, I did not attend to such categories at the outset. Rather, I carefully paid attention to what the participant took up as important in the interaction (Edwards, 2006). In analysis, I paid attention to the way that participants oriented to various content moment-by-moment and turn-by-turn. The equivalent to "exhausting categories" in a discourse analysis would be accounting for every instance of a language feature. When I made a claim that participants used a certain discursive feature in the same way across transcripts, then I accounted for every instance, including exceptions, where participants used the feature. The varied participants across three grade levels and six facilitators maximized *potential* variations of the talk.

The number of annotations for each meeting increased with the number of overlapping and competing areas of annotation. For instance, in one phase, I annotated 33 discursive features from CA and the DAM to note how participants were constructing decision making. Quantity of annotations was the primary way that I selected excerpts for further analysis. Even though I narrowed for excerpts and more in depth analysis, my interpretations come from across the data set.

Selecting excerpts. To select excerpts from meetings, I looked for confirmation and variations across data, and reflexively challenged patterns to display multiple versions of the data. In the course of listening, transcribing, and annotating, I grew to appreciate each meeting participant and delighted in what each brought to the interaction. Because of this, deciding which excerpts to exclude from my discussion of findings was extremely difficult. I wanted to share every moment a social action was beautifully done, especially when students contributed. In the

end, I chose meeting excerpts that provided the most variation of interaction amongst participants. I used Jeffersonian notation with excerpts to demonstrate conversational features (Jefferson, 2004). Throughout my representation, I emphasized the discursive actions and techniques as participants worked up competing positive versions at times side-by-side with negative versions. The Discourse Analysis Research Team (DART) were instrumental in helping me choose excerpts to focus my representation of findings.

I reveal more about how DART helped me think through analysis in level five, which overlapped with this level.

Level Five: Recursive and transparent sharing of findings. I repeatedly met with DART in order to share findings, hear other conceptualizations of the same data, and refine my own analysis and interpretations. Although I describe this as level five, I engaged in recursive and transparent sharing of findings from levels three onward. I gave numerous presentations to team members singly or in groups. With the resulting discussions and questions from members, I noted areas that I consistently talked about, and areas that needed more development. Each time, my level of understanding grew and shifted.

Summary of data analysis levels. In summary, during data analysis, I transcribed the meetings with attention to my observational notes. Then, I simultaneously and repeatedly read the transcripts and listened to the audio. After focusing my research question, I engaged in recursive analysis of meetings with the following question in mind: How do speakers discursively negotiate decision making within middle school IEP meetings with and without students present? As I analyzed with the DAM (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and noted CA features (Heritage, 1997), I developed interpretations and organized excerpts. I formed patterns and

looked for confirmation and variation across meetings. While doing so, I challenged patterns, by thinking through how to display multiple versions of the data.

The nature of claims made, and the way discourse analysts justify them is best understood by exploring how I represent findings, as I describe in the next section.

Representing findings. When representing findings, DA researchers provide excerpts of language use for the reader, and then logically and empirically re-work the analysis and interpretations in detail for reader evaluation. Interpretations usually begin with naming the social actions begin performed, and then carefully and systematically identifying and arguing how the participants use discursive features to achieve these actions. Discourse analysts typically represent findings in the form of selecting excerpts of the data that illustrate claims and competing claims; in other words, representing the rhetorical nature of talk through patterns of discursive features and their functions (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Billig, 1996). With the focus on multiple and competing meanings of participants, I noted patterns of social actions within and across transcripts, and detailed how the excerpt confirmed or disconfirmed these patterns (Wood & Kroger, 2000). To allow the reader to draw their own interpretations, I selected and presented typical and variant excerpts throughout the representation of findings.

Because discursive features and its effects in creating social actions both support a claim and offer alternative claims, DA has a number of strategies for establishing trustworthiness and warranting the claims made by the researcher.

Trustworthiness and warranting claims. Representing findings in DA work tends to show increased variability rather than a triangulation of data, as is seen in other types of qualitative work (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wood & Kroger, 2000). Triangulation tends to support the notion of a single version of the data as fact (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); all data

points landing on one interpretation to bolster claims (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2003). Discourse analysis does not use triangulation to establish trustworthiness. I warranted claims and attended to issues of trustworthiness in this study in three ways: (1) establishing an audit trail; (2) regularly exposing my ongoing analysis to the comment and critique of others; and (3) mindfully searching for analytic shortcomings.

In an effort to create transparency in my analysis as well as to make visible assumptions embedded in my interpretations, I established an audit trail. I did this throughout data collection in the form of notes and audio memos, as well as in analysis in the form of memos in ATLAS.ti™. I shared these memos, as well as transcripts of meetings, with members of the DART to engage in data sessions (tenHave, 2007). I welcomed alternative interpretations as an opportunity to deepen my understanding of the data. DART members: (1) pushed back against my understandings; (2) questioned my analysis; (3) posed new questions; and (4) offered their own interpretations. With this process, I methodically built rationales for claims to defend interpretations.

To warrant my claims, throughout data analysis, I was careful to avoid six weaknesses of analysis described by Antaki, Billig, Edwards, and Potter (2003): (1) summarizing; (2) taking sides; (3) over quoting or under quoting; (4) reasoning circularly; (5) attributing to membership categories; and (6) spotting features (paragraph 9). I briefly describe all six, clarify how each contributes to poor analysis, and explicate how I avoided each while analyzing.

First, summarizing draws attention to certain utterances and not others through paraphrasing. Not only can summarizing distort the content of a speaker's utterance, but also make the speaker seem more fluid then they were in the text. To avoid this failing, I used participant's words within summaries. I wrote summaries when describing certain findings that

otherwise would have proceeded across multiple turns of talk, and were not critical to the finding, but were needed to show how that extract fit into my larger argument.

Second, I was careful to not take sides with participants or critique them in such a way as to forgo detailed analysis. For example, I avoided being overly effusive about those facilitators whose talk I admired. Conversely, I paid special attention to including data from facilitators whose talk I found, at times, abhorrent to my moral sensibilities. Taking sides connects to the third failing of over-quotation or under-quotation. In arguing my interpretations, I did not over-quote or under quote participants whom I especially liked, but pulled excerpts from across all meetings.

As described in the section on representing findings, I carefully demonstrated arguments with specific details of the text to avoid the fourth analytic shortcoming of circular reasoning. Moreover, I checked and double-checked transcripts so that I avoided the fifth failing of over-generalizing by not attributing discourse patterns to certain participant categories. As an example, when Bizza used humor to diffuse tension around her academic performance, I cannot claim that all students with learning dis/ability labels used the same strategy in IEP meetings across the United States. Noticing that certain participants used certain resources does not give me license to generalize. However, I was able to show that certain social actions produced a similar outcome across the 63 meetings (Goodman, 2008). Finally, to avoid the sixth failing of merely spotting discursive features, I showed how participants used features to carry out certain social actions. For instance, in Amy's meeting, the facilitator used questions as a way to invite participation within an overall dynamic where one person held the floor to present information.

Even though participants engaged in an already scheduled IEP meeting that would take place regardless of the presence of the researcher, there were risks to participation within this

study because of the audio recording of meetings. Consequently, I took certain ethical and considerations into account.

Ethical and Political Considerations

I considered two ethical and political issues in data collection: (1) the presence of the researcher and the audio recorder may have limited the openness of discussion; and (2) the collection of the IEP makes information publicly available. Without intending to do so, audio recording the IEP meeting may alter activities considerably, and participants may exhibit behaviors that they may not have otherwise. These behaviors may include certain concerns left unsaid or certain issues elaborated upon that might not have been otherwise elaborated upon. Participants may have felt that privacy concerns precluded sharing; thus, participating in the conversation might have been uncomfortable for individuals. There is no way of knowing the feelings or thoughts of participants unless they specifically indicated that there was an issue. Yet, the presence of the researcher was a possible ethical dilemma given that the IDEA law (2004) encourages caregiver and student participation within IEP meetings.

I cannot say whether or not participants oriented to the audio recorder as changing their utterances, or desire to participate. Participants in this study referred to the presence of the recorder, if at all, in a joking manner as a record of unwanted noises. For instance: chorus and band recitals in the auditorium adjacent to the meeting room prompted asides between teachers about the song's appearance on the recording. On two occasions, participants also made references to the recorder in a joking manner when certain individuals made mistakes (Jase) or deliberately did not share information (Lenora May). In Lenora May's meeting, an eighth grader at Hallelujah Middle School, the special education teacher blamed the recorder for Lenora May not answering her repeated questions about disclosing the names of any teacher, "that you feel

more comfortable talkin to" (line 1068). The special education teacher did not receive Lenora May's answer of "they're all equal" (line 1070). Instead, she said: "kay I'll talk to you later when the little tape recorder's not going she's [gestures to researcher] not in here and you're gonna give me an honest answer" (lines 1072-1082). Lenora May responded to her disbelief with soft laughter. Other than the insistence of the teacher in Lenora May's meeting that she was not sharing because of the recorder, I cannot definitively say that the audio recorder changed the openness of communication.

To manage this possible ethical dilemma, I offered all participants the opportunity to turn the recorder off and/or ask the researcher to leave the room if they felt uncomfortable or wanted to share something off audio. No participant did so. Participants did not give the appearance of overly attending to the recorder beyond the examples shared here. I offered participants the option to withdraw from the study at any time, either during or any time after the meeting. No participant did so. Perhaps participants desired the recorder to be turned off, but as this would be a dis-preferred response[30] (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1992), and a challenge to perceived interactional power (Heritage, 1997), it would have been a difficult social action to perform. As such, my authority as a researcher sanctioned by the school may have subtly coerced IEP team members into participating who might not have otherwise been interested. This is an important ethical issue.

Collecting and viewing the IEP document was an ethical and political area of concern. Regardless of the law, politics, and policies precipitating the occasion of an IEP meeting,

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[30] Speakers may structure their talk to invite a social action over another dis-preferred social action (Pomerantz, 1984). For example, the psychologist designing his report of assessments to prefer agreement from the mother that the student needs special education services by framing an IEP as the only help available. It is usually more interactionally difficult for responders to deploy a dis-preferred response (Heritage, 1984).

facilitators conduct such meetings outside the public eye. By focusing attention on the discourse within the meetings in relation to the IEP document, and reporting on and publishing the results, the discourse becomes available for public scrutiny and critique. IEPs are legal documents with prescribed protocols. All IEP meetings included in this study complied with federal standards. In disseminating findings, even though participants chose pseudonyms, it may be difficult to protect the identity of participants from insiders. To address this, I did not collect or share demographic information of facilitators, and I approximated publicly available data on school districts. In collaboration with participants, I addressed the two ethical and political considerations in a manner consistent with professional behavior, and in accordance with guidelines from the Institutional Review Board at the institution and the two school districts.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explained my methods of data collection and data analysis. To answer how participants negotiated decisions in IEP meetings with and without students present, I analyzed naturally occurring, audio recorded talk from 63 IEP meetings of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from two different middle schools in the Southeast. The resulting 37 hours of data, 193 pages of handwritten field notes, and 62 IEP forms comprised the data set for this study. I explained how I transcribed and analyzed the data set with attention to trustworthiness and warranting my claims. My overall findings stem from repeated listening and analysis of all 63 meetings. While collecting, analyzing, and representing findings, I paid attention to ethical and political considerations.

My findings tell but one story. Because the claims within my study are “situated, partial, and shifting” (Gallegher, 2003, p. 131), I consider my findings as one construction of a myriad of possible constructions. I chose to focus this study on decision making. Often, I presented

findings in sets of three areas that I oriented to as primary findings. Such presentation was not without complications. Three-part lists work as a rhetorical device to demonstrate completeness, and work as a discursive resource to summarize (Jefferson, 1990; Potter, 1996). It is a tidy way to provide a synopsis while also working to position findings as all encompassing. I reflexively acknowledge my part in using the three-part list to outline findings. Even though I presented three "major" findings, there were numerous and various "minor" findings that participants oriented to as relevant. For instance, participants engaged in multiple social actions such as explaining, reporting, assenting, and disagreeing, but in creating a concise representation of findings, I did not address all social actions. Where appropriate, I describe major and minor findings together to call attention to the rich and layered social interactions within the meetings, and accentuate my own construction of findings. Showing other minor versions enables me to simultaneously hold the three primary versions lightly. It also serves to remind the reader to complicate what should remain complicated even as I condensed findings to three-part lists. In addition, dividing sections in the way that I did was for clarity and understanding of the findings, and should not be construed to suggest that areas do not overlap and intertwine. In the next chapter, I report my findings.

Chapter 4:

Findings

At least once every year, educational staff meet with caregivers, and sometimes students receiving special education services, to review and update student services in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. This study explored how the students themselves, when attending, as well as caregivers and educational professionals, managed decision making within meetings. Of particular interest were comparisons between meetings with only caregivers and educational professionals present to meetings with students also in attendance. My research question was: How do participants negotiate decision making within middle school IEP meetings with and without students present? The Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and conversation analysis of institutional talk (Heritage, 1997; Sacks, 1992) framed analysis.

The overarching finding of the study is that all participants generally engaged in the meeting as if decisions had already been made. Educators nearly always presented information for agreement by caregivers and students. When students were present they often shared information about career interests and course electives, but in only nine of the 63 meetings did instances of spontaneous shared decision making take place. In this chapter, I demonstrate how both the *IEP form* and the *talk* within the meeting contributed both to the presentation style of interaction, and any decision making that occurred.

Organization of Chapter 4

I organize the findings into two sections. First, I illustrate how participants oriented to the meeting as completing the IEP according to legal federal and state procedures, and not necessarily as a place to make decisions together. In these meetings, participants used the IEP form as a discursive resource to present, share information, make decisions, and in nine

meetings, to engage in impromptu shared decision making moments. Given the institutional and legal purpose of the meeting, I show how speakers managed their own agency and accountability in decision making. Second, I address how the overall structure of the meeting talk generally followed the seventeen IEP form sections to locate problems and offer solutions. I demonstrate how all IEPs resulted in agreement to the information presented with limited additions to the IEP, and limited shared decision making. While educators, caregivers, and students did not often engage in making decisions together, everyone worked together to create hopeful thoughts about the future.

Throughout both sections, I show how participants use language as action to construct fact, and displayed their stake and interest in the interaction. Also in both sections, I note how individuals performed social actions using specific conversational and discursive features (Heritage, 1997; Sacks, 1992), and make connections to previous research.[31] I also provide typical excerpts and variations to illustrate how participants worked discursively to frame competing and corresponding actions. In addition, I compare talk in meetings with and without students, and point out variations. To conclude the chapter, I summarize the findings.

In the next section, I examine the ways participants constructed the IEP form as a discursive resource. This functioned to limit participants' agency and accountability in decision making.

Overall Discursive Use of IEP Form

Typically, participants oriented to the IEP meetings as an institutional practice with prescribed rules and procedures, resulting in all required parties signing the IEP form. All 63 IEP

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[31] I made connections to literature in this chapter because of readability. The numerous and specific findings repeated in Chapter 5 would have reduced readability and added to the length. Rather, I connect to previous research here and use Chapter 5 to focus on a few overall findings with implications and suggestions for further research.

meetings I attended resulted in agreeing to and signing the IEP. The ways in which the IEP form was taken up throughout the meeting created an interactional dynamic of presentation by the facilitator with agreement by the caregivers and students, when present. In general, across this data set, participants engaged in the meeting as if decisions were already made, and simply required their agreement. With little variation, annual meetings started with facilitators offering the parent rights booklet, reporting assessments, presenting the IEP form in detail or in brief, and ending with agreement through signing the signature page. As I will illustrate, the expressed purpose of all meetings was to complete the IEP, and update the annual legal forms according to predetermined procedures with IEP team signatures. Whether expressed or not, the IEP form guided the talk and acted as a hidden facilitator in the meeting. That is, the overall discursive structure of the form worked as an overarching institutional framework for the meeting.

In all 63 meetings, educators arrived with draft IEP copies that were shared with caregivers. Except for 13 meetings with students sharing transition information at Hallelujah Middle School (HMS), IEP drafts came fully formed with strengths, concerns, goals, accommodations, and services already written by educators. Facilitators then offered IEP drafts for approval by caregivers. Although writing the IEP ahead of the meeting is not recommended practice (Turnbull, et al, 2011), state protocols allow case managers to complete all but the Least Restrictive Environment[32] portion. It was standard practice in these meetings to have the IEP written prior to the meeting with a draft copy either sent home before the meeting, and/or available at the meeting. When it is not already completed, the assumption is that the caregiver

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[32] In IDEA (2004) "least restrictive environment" calls for as much time in the regular education setting as possible. Therefore, this section explains "the extent, if any, in which the student will not participate with non-disabled peers in: (1) the regular class; (2) extracurricular and nonacademic activities; and (3) his/her LEA [Local Educational Authority] Home School" (EasyIEP™).

needs to make a choice before it can be filled in on the IEP. Because I did not share gaze or see IEP forms during meetings, I cannot say whether this portion was already filled out previous to the meeting. I can only say how participants constructed talk around the IEP form. Arriving with the IEP in completed draft form seemed to function to preclude development together, and made spontaneous decision making an exception, as seen in this data set. Further, arriving with the completed draft set the educator up as the presenter of information, and caregivers and students as the receivers of information. Thus, the meetings became a specialized meeting in presentation format with legal parameters prescribing decisions, rather than a fluid parent teacher conference to discuss student progress and make decisions about educational goals. This may have been due to educator training following district protocols, and this study is not an evaluation of the "correct" procedures for an IEP meeting. With a discourse study, it is the social actions performed that is of interest, and not the intentions, perceptions, or evaluations of participants (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

I organize part one by the three ways participants interactionally engaged around the IEP form in: (1) presentation interactions; (2) shared information interactions; and (3) shared decision making interactions. Appendix I outlines the three types, their social outcomes, and categorizes the individual meetings associated with each. In the following sections, I describe and illustrate how the participants used the IEP form in conjunction with these three interactions with and without students present. In addition, I address how participants rhetorically constructed their talk, following the form to emphasize stake and interest, and agency and accountability in decision making.

Presentation Interactions

Given that the official and legal task of the IEP meeting was to result in a completed IEP, the presentation interaction structure prevailed. The presentation format followed the main sections of the overall IEP form structure and was accomplished by sequentially organizing turns of talk interspaced with inviting questions. As I will show, in the first typical excerpt from Bill and second typical excerpt from Ironman[33], facilitators used introductions and the stated meeting purpose to set membership categories[34], and justify unequal modes of participation in both meetings with and without students present. In the third excerpt from Flossy, I demonstrate how the completed IEP form worked to set the preference for the presentation style of interaction, and thus limited agency and accountability in decision making opportunities. In the fourth excerpt from Keyona's meeting at Hallelujah Middle School (HMS), I demonstrate how the facilitator established the grandmother's legal role as guardian, thus emphasizing the legal nature of the meeting. Finally, in the fifth excerpt with Bill, I show how the action of signing multiple legal forms cued caregivers as being in agreement with and willing to sign the presented information. All meetings demonstrated findings related to how the educator held a privileged membership category when it came to decision making, and how caregiver and student agency for the IEP was reduced with presentation interactions.

Justifying asymmetrical participation. Bill's eighth grade meeting provides an example of how introductions often serve as ways to clarify membership categories for school staff, and

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[33] Appendix H includes descriptions of students and meetings, as they appear in order of the chapter, from selected excerpts illustrating findings.

[34] Categorizing by roles imply entitlements to speak, expert knowledge, and the possible activities of a person. Another function of membership categories is to quickly define boundaries of participation (Sacks, 1992; Stokoe, 2012).

justify asymmetrical participation. In this excerpt at the beginning of the meeting, school staff members introduced themselves.

Excerpt 1: Bill *(typical; introductions).*[35]

1 **8th Special Education Teacher (RSP):** we'll go ahead and introduce ourselves

2 you all know who I am (.) I am [full name] I'm the eighth grade special education

3 teacher and case manager for his files and things like that I include ah (1)

4 inclusion services and things like that in the classroom

5 **High School Counselor:** I'm [full name] I'm one of the counselors at the high

6 school and we'll be addressing his schedule a little later in the meeting

7 **Mother:** okay

8 **High School Teacher:** I'm [full name] special educator at the high school and I'll

9 help him with his biology and world geo (1) geography

10 **Father:** okay

The special education teacher, the high school counselor, and the high school teacher all indicated what areas their knowledge and expertise covered. For the eighth grade RSP, this includes managing Bill's files. The eighth grade RSP clarified his role as a legal case manager of forms, as well as a classroom teacher. The high school counselor noted how she would lead the scheduling portion of the meeting (lines 5-6). Similar to the high school teacher here (lines 8-9), when general educators were present in GMS meetings, they shared their subject when introducing themselves. Introductions were often received by caregivers with "okay" (line 7/10),

[35] Appendix B has descriptions of Jeffersonian transcription symbols used in all excerpts (Jefferson, 2004).

and were treated as a presentation of information. “Okay” and “uh huh” work as receipt markers. Receipt markers indicate that the hearer has heard the information (Sacks, 1992).

Taken together, these introductions served to emphasize the academic roles of educators, and their qualifications to share information related to their areas of expertise. Membership categories in introductions largely served to set the roles of educators and school staff, but this also occurred through sharing the purpose of the meeting. As facilitators explained the meeting purpose and had parents sign legal documents, they further reinforced their role as managers of the IEP file and IEP draft; and thereby established their right to speak and hold the floor to present information. Caregivers and students received introductions of institutional roles and identities as part of the nature of the IEP meeting (Heritage, 1997).

What’s noticeable in Bill’s meeting, and also occurred in most meetings with and without students, was that students and caregivers were not included in introductions. As a result, the membership categories for students and caregivers were largely established outside of introductions. Greetings occurred in the beginning of meetings, but introductions were directed *at* caregivers and students. While educational staff changes from year to year, thus necessitating introductions, McCoy (2000) noted rightly that parents and students are the one constant throughout the child’s IEP meeting career. By skipping parents and students in introductions, there was a missed opportunity to officially sanction the caregiver role in terms of providing expert knowledge on the student’s past and present home-life. In addition, there was a missed opportunity to officially recognize the student role as providing expert knowledge on their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. Rather, introductions served as another indicator to IEP team members that this meeting was about academics and behavior related to school life, one that educators will share, and likely only as it relates to sections on the IEP form.

Thus, in meetings with and without students, participants were cued that the facilitator will do most of the speaking, and therefore be in control of the meeting agenda. Because this is an institutional meeting, through introductions, educators invoked and made relevant professional identities to accomplish an institutional agenda (Heritage, 1997). This agenda or meeting purpose, as shown in the next typical example from Ironman was set by the facilitator and presented to the team. While there were a few exceptions where no introductions occurred, or where introductions occurred slightly different, I share a typical one here and summarize a variation in Danielle's meeting in an upcoming section on shared information.

Setting the meeting purpose. In the second excerpt demonstrating presentation interactions, Ironman's meeting demonstrates what typically happened across meetings, with and without students, where the overall purpose of the IEP meeting, as stated by facilitators, was to "update the IEP" (SwampGuy, line 20), or "complete" the IEP (Bill, line 14). It's important to note for this excerpt that at Grace Middle School (GMS), the resource special education (RSP) teachers shared testing data from the Woodcock Johnson III achievement test at every annual review, with sixth and seventh grade RSP teachers sharing STAR testing data (a test that measures readiness for the state standardized test) in addition to the Woodcock Johnson. In Ironman's excerpt, introductions had already occurred. This excerpt begins with the sixth grade special education teacher (RSP) sharing the purpose and agenda for the meeting.

Excerpt 2: Ironman *(typical; setting agenda).*

1 **Sixth RSP:** we'll get started the reason for the meeting of course is um Ironman

2 annual review (.)

3 **Mother:** okay

4 **Sixth RSP:** so we'll go over some testing data and=

5 **Mother:** okay

6 **Sixth RSP:** =talk to regular ed and

7 **Mother:** okay

8 **Sixth RSP:** OT okay? then we'll develop his IEP

9 **Mother:** okay

10 **Sixth RSP:** alright So (1.) I'll start off

With "of course" on line one, the RSP referred to the meeting purpose as one that the mother knew as a matter of course, making it mundane and expected (Wooffitt, 1992). The mother's quick agreement on all points also established this, with four responses of "okay" (lines 3, 5, 7, 9) as a receipt marker or back channel communication (e.g., okay) that she understood (Sacks, 1992). If Ironman qualified three years earlier, then the mother had attended at least three meetings at this point, and was therefore likely familiar with the expectations and established procedures of the meeting.

In contrast to Mehan's (1983) and his colleagues (1986) 141 referral meetings where the parents largely remained silent, in the meetings I attended, caregivers, like Ironman's mother, used backchannel utterances to show understanding, and to function as a turn continuer (Schegloff, 1981) with the facilitator keeping control of the floor. With and without students, no caregivers challenged the meeting purpose. As an institutional meeting, the facilitator framed the interaction to allow and constrain conversational points in service to a goal (Heritage, 1997). No challenges to the meeting agenda occurred as presented because the goal was to complete the IEP so the student received the services they needed. Throughout the meetings, most caregivers and communicators used their turns largely for backchannel utterances and receipt markers

(Sacks, 1992). To follow institutional procedures in light of the goal to complete the IEP, caregivers and students appeared to willingly give up their agency and accountability for the IEP.

Ironman's meeting was an "annual review" (line 2), inferring a review of educational information by the facilitator. With "we'll go over," (line 4), it sounded like everyone was included in going over testing information. However, with "I'll start off," (line 10) followed by testing, and a reference to the regular education teacher and Occupational Therapist (OT), the "going over" was clearly the purview of educators. As an institutional meeting, it was an accepted assumption that an educator would present, even with the use of inclusive lexical choices.

As seen here and as was a common occurrence in all meetings, the facilitators often used "we" when talking about an action that they were going to do, like read off assessment scores. This hearkens back to Peter's (2003) finding that as part of their holding dominance of the interaction, facilitators spoke "on behalf of the entire IEP team (e.g., using the "we of co-presence" [Speigelberg, 1973, p. 131 as quoted in Peters, 2003, p. 275]). While I don't interpret such moments in these meetings as dominance, I do acknowledge that using "we" rhetorically strengthens the speaker's factual claim (Edwards & Potter, 1992) by appearing to speak for everyone. In addition, the "we" seen in this excerpt, and in other meetings, was an inclusive lexical choice to show the *appearance* of participation (Schiffrin, 1987) without *actual* participation in making decisions. Presenting the meeting purpose occurred without invitation for caregivers and students to also help set the meeting agenda or purpose. While this limited students' and caregivers' agency and accountability, by the framing of turns and the use of receipt markers, participants demonstrated that such limitation was nonetheless an accepted institutional practice (Heritage, 1997).

Similarly, looking across all meetings, the use of an active word choice like “develop” (Ironman, line 8) to frame the meeting did not necessarily mean active participation in developing the IEP together. After the announcement of “we’ll develop his IEP” (line 8) the talk continued, turn-by-turn in favor of the presentation format. The facilitator and other educators presented information from the completed IEP for agreement from the mother, with one instance of spontaneous shared decision making when participants decided to extend Ironman’s occupational therapy consult services. Other than the nine meetings where spontaneous shared decision making occurred, the presentation format worked to decrease student and caregiver agency and accountability for the IEP form.

Taken alone, the use of “develop” by facilitators did not increase participation. With one notable exception, the facilitator of four CDC meetings at GMS, used “develop” to describe the purpose in every meeting. All of her meetings (John, Heath, Sprite, and Sam) included increased participation dynamics with shared accounts[36] amongst participants, as I will demonstrate in the next section with Heath’s meeting, and in another section with Sprite’s meeting. In Heath’s and three other meetings, when the facilitator framed her purpose with the lexical choice of “developing” the IEP together actively, her lexical choice worked with other discursive moves to increase participation. In 59 meetings, the lexical choices of “update the IEP” (SwampGuy, line 20), or “complete” the IEP (Bill, line 14) reflected the preferred style of interaction of presentation by facilitator with agreement by caregivers.

In Ironman’s and all other meetings, the facilitator came with the IEP draft already prepared to review with the IEP team. So, even when individual facilitators used the word

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[36] Shared accounts refer to shared stories or reports in which participants co-construct stories together (Ochs & Caps, 2001) and/or continue co- building descriptions with different stories in a series of turns (Sacks, 1992).

"develop" (Ironman, line 6) in some meetings and not others, the overall legal purpose of the meeting to agree to the IEP did not change. The completion and review of the IEP form is the legal task of the meeting; a task that does not necessarily require active participation in order to remain legal and correct. Comparable to findings in other meetings, facilitators acted as reviewers of decisions already made (Harris, 2010; Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2008; Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011), and the presentation format prevailed regardless of lexical choice hinting at developing the IEP together.

Overall, the meetings in this data set were not decision making meetings because there was no problem presented with an array of alternatives to make a choice from, either for the teacher or the caregivers. Exceptions occurred with students present where they were asked to choose electives and declare their future career interests. These interactions were largely sharing of information and sometimes shared decisions, as I explain in later sections. In the majority of meetings, the majority of interactions were largely a presentation by facilitators with agreement by caregivers and students. The facilitator had already made decisions. Most IEP meetings could then be accomplished within 20 to 30 minutes. Updating the IEP was not about participation, but presentation.

Participation was not the goal of these meetings, neither was decision making. Completing the IEP was the goal, and everyone had a part to play. However, caregivers and students appeared to agree with backchannel utterances to the presentation format. "Willingly passive participants" is what Harris (2010, p. 174) labeled the nine parents in his micro-ethnographic study of parent IEP participation. Harris engaged in a word count and determined that while parents and educational staff participation might look equal based on the number of speaking turns, the parents' turns were largely in confirmation of what the special education

teacher was presenting. Not only did the presentation format limit caregiver and student agency and accountability, but also facilitators arriving to meetings with completed IEP forms limited family agency.

Completed IEP forms limiting agency and accountability of caregivers and students. Flossy's meeting demonstrates how arriving to the meeting with a completed IEP to update also worked to reduce caregiver and student agency and accountability in relation to the IEP form. Further, this excerpt demonstrates how questions were sometimes asked that worked to place students and caregivers in passive roles.

In this next excerpt from Flossy's meeting, the seventh Resource special education teacher (RSP) summarized her process as case manager of the IEP draft form in Flossy's meeting, describing a practice with the IEP forms that I observed in all meetings. Case managers would use the first page of the IEP to update addresses, phone numbers, and any medical information. Here, the RSP had just received a current phone number from the mother that differs from what was written on the draft. By "go back in" on line one the RSP referred to updating the draft on the IEP in the computer software EasyIEP™.

Excerpt 3: Flossy *(typical; IEP form use).*

1 **7th RSP:** since your (1.) copy here says draft when I go back in I'll make the

2 correct changes on the phone number

3 **Mother:** okay

4 **RSP:** and then I'll hit finalize (.) and then everything else will stay the same

5 it'll just (.) the draft just lets me be more flexible with it as far as me gettin to

6 make changes or like on the weaknesses and strengths if you wanted somethin

7 else it would let me go back in and do that (.) legally (.) instead of tryin to go back

8 around and not do it correctly so=

9 **Mother:** okay

10 **RSP:** =but then when I reprint it won't have that water mark on there it'll just

11 be the full IEP and it'll be filed in her book (1.) okay? do you have ANYTHING

12 for us? any questions or anything else you want to talk about?

13 **Mother:** (1.) no I'm glad she's doin better

14 **RSP:** $she really is$

In Flossy's meeting, the only thing that changed on the IEP was to update the phone number "then everything else will stay the same" (line 4). The educator came to the meeting with a completed draft, and that draft was framed as relatively static and unchanging. This type of construction occurred in eighth grade meetings with students, as well. Emphasizing stability may reassure the caregiver that nothing major changed in terms of services. Also, it may indicate that no in depth line-by-line explanation of the IEP was needed, because it was similar to what had been discussed last year. Therefore, this could be a justification for arriving to the meeting with a completed IEP similar to agreed upon previous IEPs.

In annuals and tri-annuals, IEPs have a history of agreement by caregivers. The preference then becomes continuing what worked in the past; therefore, no discussion was needed, as I will show in a later section with an excerpt from a tri-annual meeting. The outcome was that caregivers and the student *did not* help make decisions. The IEP was updated from last year's meeting. This reinforced the concept of the facilitator presenting the draft IEP as the

preferred plan (Pomerantz, 1984)[37] with educational decisions already made, as decided previously with the initial IEP meeting. In addition, perhaps the past history of agreement invoked with "everything else will stay the same" (line 4), reinforced the role of caregivers as previously in agreement with decisions.

As the one who created the IEP, made changes to it (lines 1-2/5-6), reprinted the IEP (line 10), and filed it (line 11), the educator held the agency and accountability for the legal form. In this data set, this effectively stripped agency from the caregiver to make decisions, because the caregiver was always in a position of one who had to ask for changes. In Flossy's and in other meetings, the caregiver could request changes to the IEP draft at any point, "like on the weaknesses and strengths if you wanted something else" (line 6-7). The use of the hypothetical "if" placed the caregiver in a position of requesting changes if they wanted to disagree. In addition, the use of "if" rhetorically framed requesting changes as an unusual and probably unnecessary circumstance (Billig, 1996). Disagreeing with the preferred already existing phrases written on the IEP requires more effort interactionally than not (Pomerantz, 1984), one that not many participants attempted in this data set. Challenges to the IEP by caregivers (N=19), students (N=1), and other educators (N=2) were not frequent in this data set (22 out of 323 total instances of challenge). Agreeing to the IEP draft as presented occurred in the majority of meetings.[38] Such agreement to already written IEP drafts, demonstrated the educator's agency and side-lined other participants, thus negating the development of the IEP together with the team.

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[37] Speakers may structure their talk to invite one social action over another dis-preferred social action (Pomerantz, 1984). It is usually more interactionally difficult for responders to deploy a dis-preferred response (Heritage, 1984) For example, when a response of agreeing is expected, and the responder disagrees.

[38] I provide examples in a later section on how two mothers from meetings with the most challenges accomplished such challenges.

In Flossy's meeting, there was a footing[39] shift from line four with "I'll hit finalize" to "the draft" (line 5) to "it would let me go back in" (line 7). In this way, the seventh RSP seemed to shift her accountability from "I" to "the draft," and finally to EasyIEP™, the software that controls the fact that educators cannot edit final drafts of IEPs. The educator framed EasyIEP™ as limiting her agency to control certain aspects of how drafts are created and developed. Throughout all meetings, educators sometimes referenced the software program EasyIEP™ as determining what they were able to do. For instance, EasyIEP™ software, like other IEP software, has drop down menus for goals tied to grade level state standards. Although a time saving feature, this limited not only the individualization in selecting goals, but also team member's, especially the case manager's, agency in choosing goals, as I will show specifically in a later section.

Further emphasis here was on "legally" (line 7) correct, because all meeting participants signed a signature sheet that was attached to the final copy. Thus, the educator, even as she demonstrated more accountability and agency over the form than the caregiver and students, pointed out her own constraint to the institutional procedures (Heritage, 1997). Doing so, she aligned herself with the mother as also subject to legal procedures, and showed her own following of the rules. This could serve to limit her accountability in the interaction as one who must follow rules.

This was a legal meeting, with prescribed rules to result in signing the IEP; with legal forms under the responsibility of the case manager to fill out correctly. After the meeting, case managers updated the draft, then either sent the final draft home with the student or mailed it.

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[39] Footing shifts indicate when speakers are treating an issue as sensitive or controversial, and therefore attempting to reduce their accountability for the utterance (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Usually the more disputable a point, than the more obvious a shift in footing by speakers.

While the IDEA (2004) law says the IEP team is responsible for developing the IEP, these duties fall mainly on the special education case manager from year to year. Because of this, a preferred format of reviewing and presenting information to result in signing of the legal forms, was the most efficient interaction, an action that all team members helped construct and manage through the predominant interaction of presentation by facilitators with agreement by caregivers and students. This was done in service to the institutional goal of a completed legal IEP. Also in service to this goal was access to the completed IEP draft during the facilitator's presentation so that families could follow along with already determined decisions.

Access to IEP forms as reinforcing educator agency and accountability. In Flossy's meetings and all others, when going over the IEP page by page, many students and the second caregiver did not share gaze with another caregiver because of his/her position at the table in relation to the IEP form. The position of the IEP form during HMS meetings was usually between the high school administrator and one caregiver or student at the corner of the conference table. The caregivers and students had one copy of the draft IEP, meaning that two family members could share gaze at the IEP. The position of the IEP form at GMS meetings was similarly in front of caregivers with sixth and seventh grade meetings. The facilitator and one caregiver, shared gaze at the IEP in these meetings. Because of this, the reader should not assume that all participants had access to or agreed with the information *during* meeting interactions, even though they signed completed IEPs at the end of meetings.

Correspondingly, limited access to the IEP form during the meeting for most team members means limited access to ground claims in what counts as evidence (e.g., assessment scores), and to information on which to raise points of clarification or challenge. Thus, the limited access to IEP forms could serve as a discursive resource to keep knowledge and in the

hands of educators who present decisions, rather than displaying information equally. In addition, it may reinforce the educator's institutional role (Heritage, 1997) in the meeting as a presenter of information. It further may keep caregivers and students agreeing to presented information, and less likely to challenge information that appeared official and legal in written form (Mehan et al, 1986). Thus, limited access may reinforce the role of caregivers and students to agree with and sign the IEP as presented. With limited access to forms, facilitators could exclude students and caregivers from decision making, and reinforced their own agency and accountability for the IEP form. Not only did limited access to the IEP form reduce agency and accountability, but also the design of asking questions did so. The institutional goal of presenting information in a way that caregivers and students could understand thus also worked to reduce caregiver and student agency and accountability for the IEP.

Questioning as limiting agency and accountability of caregivers. Because of the presentation mode, facilitators invited caregivers to share information at prescribed points, as in Flossy's meeting with: "do you have ANYTHING for us?" (line 11-12). As common across most meetings, facilitators also asked, with greater or lesser frequency, "any questions or anything else you want to talk about?" (line 12). This was part of turn-taking in meetings (Heritage, 1997), in which the facilitator shifted the participation from their dominance of the floor to the caregiver or student. In so doing, it opened the opportunity for others to speak, but in a limited way, as the answering of any questions reinforced the facilitator's role as the expert with agency and accountability (Ford, 2010) for what was written on the IEP. Similarly, asking a close ended question prefers a yes-no response (Robinson & Heritage, 2006), framing caregivers and students as passive participants.

This finding connects to similar findings from other IEP discourse studies (Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986; Rogers, 2002, 2003) reporting that caregiver responses were mostly elicited rather than volunteered. Caregivers could share information or ask any questions related to schooling issues, and often did. This provided educators and caregivers time to talk about other issues that perhaps were unrelated to the IEP, yet no less important in informing educational decisions. However, the predominant role of caregivers and students was to listen and to answer questions (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Mehan, et al, 1986; Plum, 2008; Rogers, 2002) in a predominantly passive participation mode (Robinson & Heritage, 2006).

Questioning as increasing opportunities to construct hopeful futures. In Flossy's meeting, the mother shared her response to the presentation with "I'm glad she's doin better" (line 13). The seventh grade RSP smiled in response with, "she really is," and they both continued to share descriptions and stories of Flossy's struggles and successes by emphasizing Flossy's potential for future success. Thus, presentations with questions, while providing no decision making moments, provided moments for sharing information in which participants constructed hope about the student's continued success. Not only in Flossy's meeting in response to an inviting question, but constructing hope happened in all meetings. Sharing positive expectancies also sometimes occurred because the facilitator turned the floor over to caregivers and students by inviting questions, as in Flossy's meeting, or in inviting further information. I demonstrate this finding in the section on shared information interactions. In the next section, I address the legality of the IEP as also cuing caregivers to their preferred role to agree with the presented IEP.

Clarifying caregiver legal role for the IEP form. If needed, facilitators clarified the official caregiver membership category as the legal guardian in relation to their role as signer of

the IEP form. In this fourth excerpt from Keyona's eighth grade meeting, the facilitator situated the meeting as different from other meetings by clarifying the legal role of the grandmother.

Excerpt 4: Keyona *(typical; legal guardian).*

1 **High School Administrator (HSA):** are you the legal parent?

2 **Grandmother (GM):** yeah I'm grandmother

3 **HSA:** okay I just have to- when we sign these documents right here they are legal

4 documents

5 **GM:** uh huh

6 **HSA:** the IEP is and I just want to make sure you were (.) her legal guardian

In this excerpt, the repeated lexical choice of "legal" (line 1, 3, 6) set apart the IEP document and any forms associated with it as special. The administrator also asked on line one and confirmed on line six, that the grandmother was the legal parent/guardian. The grandmother may define herself as grandmother, but for the purposes of this meeting, the administrator defined her as the legal parent/guardian; one who signs the legal documents.

On line 3, the high school administrator noted "I just have to." "Just" minimizes the seriousness of the action, by making it mundane and inevitable (Wooffitt, 1992). "Have to" implies that the administrator must follow pre-defined rules as a representative of the state. "Have to" also justifies the need to know the grandmother's exact legal status in relation to her granddaughter. The administrator followed "have to" with a self-initiated repair to include "we sign." Self-repairs are signs of self-monitoring (Schegloff, 1992). Coming on the heels of "have to," the repair could be a form of hedging[40] perhaps to not appear rude by asking a personal

[40] Hedging is a discursive resource deployed when qualifying an utterance to avoid any offense or anticipate possible trouble spots and avoid them (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

question. In addition, by changing pronouns to include herself with the grandmother, the administrator moved from the very direct pinpointing of the grandmother's exact legal status to an indirect marker. Discourse markers indicate connections between units of talk (Schiffrin, 1987), and here demonstrate a participation framework. Moving to "we" (line 3) aligned herself with the grandmother as also needing to sign the legal documents. The grandmother agreed without challenge to the institutional procedure of checking her legal status with a receipt marker: "uh huh" (line 5).

As seen in Keyona's meeting and in Flossy's meeting, the law was a major player at the decision making table, whether stated or unstated, and unilaterally dictated decision making moments and prescribed topics. Therefore, facilitators emphasized their own lack of agency, and the state's accountability. In Keyona's meeting, the administrator simultaneously made the state accountable for the paperwork, and included the grandmother in the purpose of completing the paperwork correctly for the state with: "when we sign these documents right here they are legal documents" (lines 3-4). Everyone had prescribed roles that may or may not include making decisions, but all team members in the end must sign the IEP as the state requires.

In other meetings, facilitators also made the state accountable by making jokes around all the signing required, or verbally labeling forms with "your state department notice form" (Bubba, line 13). Such talk provided stake inoculation[41] for the special educator, from the appearance of rudeness in asking a personal question because rules had to be followed in the interest of the state. I demonstrate how participants made the state accountable in other ways in

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[41] Stake inoculation involves constructing your utterances to minimize your own accountability for the utterance (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

part two throughout the overall structure of the IEP meetings. Emphasizing the legality of forms reminded participants of the institutional nature of the meeting.

Using legal IEP forms to prefer agreement to presented information. In this fifth and final excerpt in this presentation section from Bill, I show how facilitators worked from the beginning to establish the meeting as uniquely legal with the signing of multiple forms. At the beginning of meetings, forms required a caregiver signature indicating agreement of receipt: the offering and refusing/receiving of parental rights and procedural safeguards, and the invitation to a meeting notice form. Another form needed to be signed indicating that the caregiver was physically present in the meeting. At the end of meetings, participants signed the IEP, official meeting notes, and any tri-annual paperwork, if appropriate. In the middle of eighth grade meetings such as Bill's, caregivers and students signed the completed schedule.

Signing papers previous to introductions, may work to cue and sensitize caregivers and students to the institutional procedures of signing legal paperwork. This excerpt was typical of meetings both with and without students. Previous to this excerpt, the parent rights had been provided for the mother and her signature received. Because IEP participants were part of my research study, adult participants also had the addition of signing consent forms, and student's signing assent forms. During this excerpt, I was still gaining assent for this research from Bill in the background, while the eighth grade special education teacher (RSP) was having the mother and/or father sign IEP meeting forms. Some forms cued both parents to sign by providing two lines for caregivers, and some forms have just one place to sign. The mother's question referred to whether both caregivers needed to sign or just one of them.

Excerpt 5: Bill *(typical; signing multiple forms)*

1 **8th RSP:** next thing I have is the meeting time and the meeting date right there

2 [pointing] since you're present (.) if you would check I'll be PREsent for the

3 meeting and then sign and date as well (.) right there [pointing]

4 (11)

5 **Mother:** just one on those?

6 **RSP:** just one on that (.) and on the IEP that we sign and the conference

7 report I'll I'll (.5) BOTH would be GREAT

8 **Mother:** okay

9 **RSP:** okay (1) and I'll go ahead and STOP (.) since >I was just gettin a couple

10 housekeeping things< right there and since you've [to researcher] got signatures,

11 we'll go ahead and introduce ourselves

These were standard and necessary institutional procedures; "just getting a couple housekeeping things right there" (line 9-10), made the task mundane and ordinary (Wooffitt, 1992). This was a task that the mother also oriented to as mundane and ordinary with "just one on those?" (line 5). However, even as both the mother and the eighth RSP oriented to signing as a mundane task, they both emphasized the importance of filling the form out correctly. This showed their attention to the form as legal, needing correct and careful following of procedures by all. The RSP did this through his highlighting the date and signatures (lines 1-3, 6-7). The mother accomplished this through asking a clarifying question (line 5) to make sure that they as caregivers were fulfilling their legal obligations on the form. Legal forms cued caregivers to their preferred role (Pomerantz, 1984) to ratify decisions through the actions of signing numerous papers at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of the meeting.

Summary of presentation interactions. In this section, I demonstrated how participants engaged in meetings as if decisions were already made and simply needing agreement. I showed how caregivers and students were cued to unequal modes of participation in decision making through Bill's excerpt. Then, I showed how presenting the meeting purpose, regardless of whether the lexical choice "develop" was used (Ironman, Excerpt 2), did not result in a different interaction style, except in four meetings where more shared information interactions resulted. Flossy's meeting demonstrated how the completed IEP worked to limit the agency and accountability of caregivers and students with the IEP form. Her excerpt also demonstrated how facilitators' used questions to open the floor for shared interactions that constructed hope, even though there was not shared decision making. Keyona's and Bill's meeting showed the attention to the form as legal with the use of clarifying caregiver's legal roles, and through the signing of multiple forms in meetings.

Fifty nine meetings predominantly followed the presentation format described in this section through these five excerpts. Other than small asides, the presentation format remained consistently constructed by facilitators to prefer agreement, and hold the floor. IEP meetings are at least a yearly function for case managers and IEP team participants, and the IEP form is the same across students with slightly varying criteria. Most special education facilitators have led hundreds of IEP meetings. Because of this, it is likely that facilitators design turns to proceed along the path of least resistance: showing up to the meeting with a completed IEP draft, and noting the small changes from year to year before presenting the IEP. Thus, the holding of the floor by the facilitator was the accepted default in most meetings.

The predominant format in presentation included facilitators summarizing scores, and paraphrasing sections of the IEP for the other team members in long turns of talk, followed by

inviting questions from caregivers and students. Similar to Harris' (2010) findings with parents, caregivers and students in these findings also showed that caregivers were active listeners through "back channel" communications; agreeing or confirming with continuers like "okay," "um hum" and "all right" (Schegloff, 1981). Students participated in back-channel communications mostly through non-verbal nods, shakes of the head, and smiles, although a few students joined their caregivers in verbal continuers. Because these were middle school meetings, it was likely that caregivers had attended multiple IEP meetings up to this point. As such, most caregivers accepted their role as receivers of information in annual meetings.

While educators had the role of presenting decisions, caregivers and students would assume the role of sharing information, as I show in the next section. In four meetings, participants shared information to such an extent that the entire meeting appeared to be the exchanged of shared information amongst participants, rather than presentation interactions.

Shared Information Interactions

Across the data, either by invitation or spontaneously, team members often shared information in descriptive accounts that worked to attribute causes of difficulties or successes to information that only a particular team member would know. Caregivers or students often shared information to offer an attribution, justification, clarification, or explanation for the information presented by facilitators. Sharing information interactions never resulted in changes to previously made decisions by educators, unless such interactions occurred as part of a sequence of turns that included shared decision making, as I demonstrate in a later section. However, shared information around transition moments with students present, led to additions on the IEP, as I will demonstrate with Danielle's meeting. Sometimes shared information related to information needed for the IEP form, such as strengths, concerns, or transition plans. More often than not,

shared information was just that: shared descriptions that participants made relevant, but that was not necessarily part of the IEP form. Sharing information moments occurred around the following IEP form topics: (1) accommodations; (2) further testing; (3) goals; (4) medication; (5) the modified state test; (6) retention; (7) services; (8) strengths and concerns; and (9) transition. Appendix J illustrates the topics of shared information moments, and where such overlaps between shared information and shared decision making occurred. The bold font in Appendix J indicates meetings where shared decision making also occurred.

Sharing information occurred in all meetings to a greater or lesser degree. In the next few sections, I share excerpts from Danielle and Heath; both of which illustrate variations of sharing information with and without students. Throughout these sections, I also summarize other typical interactions across the data set in order to highlight the uniqueness that each excerpt afforded the shared participation dynamics of the meeting. I do this in further contrast to presentation interactions in the previous sections, and to highlight the surprising finding of the shared construction of hope in all meetings.

Throughout the data, students most often shared information about their interests and career goals, as I will show in Danielle's excerpt, and caregivers most often shared current and former history of family situations or medical conditions, as I will demonstrate in Heath's excerpt. In the 33 meetings students attended, facilitators briefed students on their roles as sharers of information. Assigning students as choosers of their high school courses was negotiated in similar ways in the 33 eighth grade meetings at both GMS and HMS. However, in a significant addition to this pattern in Danielle's meeting, and representative of the ten meetings at HMS, the administrator made connections between the student's chosen career and the IEP. This set the student's role as important both in relation to the IEP, and in sharing information

about their future. In the thirty meetings without students, as illustrated by Heath's meeting, caregivers and educators took on roles of sharing information. Heath's meeting also illustrates the construction of hope for future success. While participants did not share equal decision making power, as already demonstrated in the section on presentation interactions, they appeared to share equal power when it came to sharing information and constructing hope.

Students sharing information with resulting changes to the IEP. In the next excerpt from Danielle's meeting, the facilitator had already shared the meeting purpose (similar to Ironman's meeting in Excerpt 2), but with an added connection to how Danielle would choose classes that related to her future goals. In this way, facilitators cued students to their membership category as choosers of their high school classes, and sharers of career goals. After signatures on meeting forms, and a few turns of talk alluding to topics outside the meeting, the high school administrator focused the talk back on one of the meeting goals to choose high school classes. This excerpt starts with the high school administrator asking Danielle about her future career. In doing so, the high school administrator made Danielle's future career goals directly tied to the IEP, unusual because it both valued Danielle's information as important, and made the IEP relevant to Danielle.

Excerpt 6: Danielle *(typical and variation; career as relevant to IEP).*

1 **HSA:** Danielle what do you wanna do when you um (.) finish high school?

2 **Danielle:** I wanna be a surgeon

3 **HSA:** okay (.) so the medical field right?

4 **Danielle:** um hum

5 **HSA:** (2) okay [typing on laptop] (1) do you like math? cause there's a lot of math

6 in that

7 **Danielle:** I do (1) but I have-

8 **Mother:** =she struggles with math

9 **HSA:** okay alright

10 **Mother:** really [really bad

11 **HSA:** [well we'll talk about those classes because uh when we pick an elective (.)

12 um (.) we'll talk about if you wanta start health science education or if you want to

13 wait till your sophomore year

14 **Danielle:** okay

In the sequence of the talk, the facilitator both confirmed ("okay") and asked questions (lines 3/5). This served to verbally validate Danielle's answer (Sacks, 1992), even as the facilitator typed her answer on the IEP. Both actions begin the process of making available to Danielle the ability to share information and make decisions in relation to her future. The facilitator immediately connected Danielle's choice to her classes with a question about math (lines 5-6). When Danielle answered that she did like math (line 7), "but I have," she was interrupted by her mother. Danielle's mother shared that Danielle not only "struggles with math" (line 8), but "really really bad" (line 10). This served to place Danielle's desired future as a surgeon in doubt, based on her reported difficulties, and evidenced by how her career choice ended up being typed into the IEP form. The facilitator wrote Danielle's expressed choice of surgeon on Danielle's IEP transition page as: "wants to be a doctor when she grows up" (p. 7). "Doctor" was somewhat of a downgrade from the highly technical expertise of a surgeon. It was a common practice in all meetings for the facilitator to include paraphrases of student and caregiver words, if they were written on the IEP at all. This functioned as another way in which facilitators demonstrated

control of the IEP form, and limited student and caregiver agency. However, this agency differed in relation to the shared interactions in ten meetings at Hallelujah Middle School (HMS).

Student agency in sharing transition information at Hallelujah Middle School. While Danielle may not have input on other areas of the IEP, she does get to choose her career (line 1-2) as well as her electives (line 11). Beginning the meeting with a question about future careers, as in Danielle's meeting (Excerpt 6), made the inference available that the IEP impacted student futures and careers, and that the student had agency in providing information. Further, by inviting comment at the beginning of the meeting, the HMS facilitator set the student up in the role of provider of information that no one else could provide: an expert on her career and electives. As seen in the above excerpt, the mother's information was not necessarily treated the same as Danielle's.

The mother's information that Danielle struggled with math seemed to be dismissed by the high school administrator with "well" (line 11). "Well" often works as a lexical choice to offer a different, contrasting (Heritage, 1984) report. The high school administrator followed "well'' with the general, "we'll talk about those classes" (line 11), and then continued as if the math would not be a problem to Danielle's stated career goal. Perhaps "well" functioned to set up and delay her dis-preferred response to the mother (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984). The administrator continued by using: "if you wanta start health science education or if you want to wait till your sophomore year" (line 12-13). Starting health science was inevitable if Danielle was to reach her goal of being a surgeon. Danielle must only choose whether it will be freshman or sophomore year. Therefore, while students in some meetings declared choices, these moments were important to sharing information, but not necessarily to decision making. The importance

of students sharing information should not be underestimated due to the nature of overall meeting interactions with students present as I explain more fully in later sections.

In Danielle's meeting, while both Danielle and her mother shared information about math difficulties, the educators had already made the decision to place Danielle on the slower math track available to students receiving special education services at the high school. With the student present, Danielle could share her own version of her difficulty with math. The mother also shared her opinion. Given the above sequence, the mother may have felt that her opinion was not wanted. In the sequencing of her turn, the facilitator sets Danielle up as a significant and necessary member of the IEP team, capable of making her own decisions, but did not set the mother's information up as significant in relation to her daughter's information. Not taking up the mother's shared information, may indicate similarity to Laluvein's (2010) study with parents and teachers in which one teacher noted that the information shared by parents did not change the school's opinion, but did enhance understandings. A parent in Laluvein's (2010) study noted the necessity for more respect "for what people know" (Laluvein, 2010, p. 197). In Danielle's meeting and others, the team often discussed careers together, the major area of student involvement within meetings. In doing so, students' information was sometimes privileged over caregiver information, but neither resulted in changes to the IEP form other than addition of transition related information, and sometimes additions to strengths and caregiver concerns in some meetings.

The explicit connection between career and elective choices (lines 11-13) made the IEP meaningful for students, as the meetings at HMS made the choosing of classes to reflect the student's career choice a central goal of the meeting. In all other nine eighth grade meetings at HMS, with parents and students present, the facilitator not only asked students about career

interests, but also about their academic strengths and likes. During the ten Resource meetings at HMS, the facilitator accessed the IEP on her laptop in order to make changes to demographic information, strengths and concerns, and add transition information. This showed the caregiver and student the importance of their shared information, in that the IEP was not already completed in the areas of strengths, concerns, and transition information.

Student agency in sharing transition information at Grace Middle School. In contrast, the eighth grade teacher at GMS neither brought up strengths and concerns, nor made changes to the transition pages for the 19 IEP drafts as students shared career information. As a result, typical interactions in these meetings included students sharing information without it being written on the IEP, thus reducing student agency. For instance, a typical example from Bizza's meeting included Bizza sharing her desire to be a stunt double after high school. However, the final IEP form continued to have the generic: "The student will work in full time employment upon completion of school." (Bizza IEP, p. 5). This vague language was common on all other IEP forms generated by the eighth grade RSP teacher at GMS. Thus, while there was an appearance of importance of students sharing their career goal in meeting *talk*, it did not have an effect on the generic language already written on the IEP *form*. This finding from GMS was consistent with the document reviews of transition plans in Trainor's (2005) and Geenen and Power's (2006) studies. Both studies revealed that the vague and generic goals made the transition plans meaningless in terms of individuation. However, in this data, even though it was not written on the IEP *form*, career goals and interests were discussed in the *talk* of the meeting.

Further, in the 19 eighth grade meetings at GMS with students present, educators also asked students about their career interests at some point in the middle of the meeting, and never in connection to the IEP. In these meetings, the IEP was framed in a way similar to how it was

framed in Ironman's meeting (Excerpt 2), as something that needed to be completed by the case manager, with no relationship to the students' choices of classes. For instance, the GMS eighth RSP sometimes contrasted updating the IEP with the "fun part now of choosing classes and all that" (James, line 146). In doing so, the IEP becomes the routine, boring part of the meeting; just a form that needs to be brought up to date. This makes the inference available that the annual IEP had little to do with actual day-to-day curriculum choices. For students, this could minimize the IEPs impact on the future, and possibly reduced their agency and accountability in relation to the IEP form. In summary, the meetings in this data set showed reduced student agency when it came to additions to the IEP, except in the case of ten meetings at HMS.

Summary and implications of student agency in sharing transition information. Not connecting career goals specifically to the courses and the IEP did not affect decision making within meetings. However, these connections made the significance of the students' roles in relation to sharing information on transition sections of the document very clear for the ten students at HMS. Thus, in the meetings at GMS, students had limited agency in relation to the IEP form, and at HMS students had greater agency in relation to sharing transition information on the IEP form.

However, both schools asked students about their career interests, even though they went about it differently. This finding is in contrast to Martin and his colleagues (2006) findings that special educators often skipped over student career interests. Yet, at GMS, and consistent with Martin and his colleagues findings, students in the majority of meetings discussed their skills, needs, and future goals on a *limited* basis, and mostly passively participated in the meeting. In addition, the finding of limited student agency at GMS was similar to findings from Cobb and Alwell's (2009) 31 study literature review of transition planning research that found *limited*

parent/student involvement in transition planning, but family *influence* on choosing future careers. This was true for the meetings at GMS, but not so for the ten meetings at HMS. Thus, the ten meetings at HMS stand in contrast to both Martin and his colleagues and Cobb and Alwell's literature review, showing that students can display agency in relation to the transition portion of the IEP form.

In addition, at both schools, but more frequently at HMS, sometimes facilitators also asked students about their need for certain accommodations, or special education services, in general. In Danielle's and other meetings at HMS, the eighth grade RSP asked several students about their comfort level with direct special education services or inclusion services at the high school. At both schools, this was usually done in the form of a suggestion or a question framed for agreement. Students always confirmed the teacher's suggestion, perhaps showing again the preferred structure (Pomerantz, 1984) of agreement. Likewise, in the five tri-annual meetings in this data set with students present, educators looked to students for confirmation that nothing should be changed, and that continued special education services were needed for continued success in high school. Such shared interactions rarely resulted in changes to the IEP, except in the case of one student (Ashley), as I show in a later section. However, they did result in greater opportunities for shared information.

These opportunities for student presence appeared to be controlled by the school. In the 30 meetings when students were absent, educators in one meeting (Wendy) explained student attendance as only being necessary in IEP meetings under certain circumstances. A summary of educator rationales for students' presence from Wendy's meeting included: (1) a legal requirement, "she doesn't have to be" (line 35); (2) "if there's a strong issue that we need to address with the kids" (line 31); (3) or, "if the parents want to have them there" (line 31). The

institutional preference, before eighth grade, was student absence. Only if there was a "strong issue" would student presence be necessary. Thus, it was only eighth grade meetings in this data set where students were present and sharing information, as mandated by IDEA (2004) and state policies.

When students were present, facilitators invited them to share on their choice of electives and choice of career to fulfill legal requirements on the IEP transition page. Thus, the opportunity for more shared information occurred with students present. As seen with Danielle's meeting, and as a demonstration of the ten Resource meetings at HMS, student agency in relation to the IEP increased with inviting students to share their career goal at the beginning of the meeting, and then connecting it to high school electives as a central purpose of the IEP meeting. This is related to findings by Martin (2004), Danneker and Bottge (2009), and Childre and Chambers (2005) who noted increased participation by all members when students were present. Increased participation in this data set may have been related to the opportunities afforded students to share their interests. Thus, the IEP *form* created an opportunity to *talk* about student interests, which different facilitators accomplished differently.

Students and caregivers used their turns both as confirmation and to provide additional information or descriptions, often times to provide a view that might contrast an attribution made previously by someone else. This stands in contrast to Harris' (2010) finding with nine parents that showed that parents largely used back-channel communications during their turns, and displayed passive participation. The difference between my findings of more active IEP members, might lie in the fact that all of Harris' meetings were only attended by the special education teacher and one parent. Rarely did the meetings in this data set only include a parent and special education teacher and one caregiver (N=2). Multiple team members in this data set

meant the possibility of more varied interactions, beyond presentation by facilitator with agreement by caregiver, and more opportunities for shared interactions, both with and without students. In the next section, I address caregivers sharing information with students absent.

Caregivers sharing information with no changes to the IEP. Caregivers shared information both with and without students present. Notable for overall interactions of shared information, including one meeting with shared decision making, were the four meetings of the Comprehensive Development Classroom (CDC) teacher at Grace Middle School. Unlike 59 other meetings where educators led the descriptions of students through reporting assessments and reading strengths and weaknesses from the IEP, *all* team members in these four meetings worked through stories and descriptions to share information. The CDC teacher framed her meetings to encourage shared interactions, as I will show in an excerpt with Heath.

Throughout these CDC meetings, and in a limited way in other meetings, descriptions by one person often led to a taking up of the description and adding another description in agreement with the first account (Sacks, 1992). These were not descriptive moments where participants challenged each other's versions, but rather descriptive moments where participants extended each other's accounts. In fact, in the four CDC meetings, only two instances of challenge occurred, as opposed to an average of ten challenges per facilitator. An environment of shared interactions, and not presentation, resulted in fewer instances of challenge, and more agreement and extensions of information. These extensions either led to more shared information, to additions on the IEP, or to shared decision making.

Therefore, shared information was often crucial to attributing information, as well as a lead in to additions to the IEP or shared decision making. It was in one of these CDC meetings that sixth grader Sprite's mother worked with the speech and language therapist to add a speech

goal, a feat that occurred in no other meeting. Additionally, eighth grader Heath's meeting had the distinction of being the only meeting where the CDC teacher started to describe Heath, but turned to the mother for a description instead. No other facilitator relinquished the floor to a caregiver at the beginning of the meeting to provide a description. This was unique when considering that educator descriptions usually framed the student at the beginning of the meeting, and such descriptions were rationales for decisions previously made and presented to caregivers and students.

Because the student was home-bound, only the mother and a teacher who came in for three hours a week knew the student well. Although the CDC teacher, who facilitated the meeting, attempted to describe Heath, she quickly turned to the mother to provide a description. This excerpt occurred after introductions, and after the mother signed that she had received a copy of her parent rights.

Excerpt 7: Heath (*typical and variation; caregiver sharing*)

CDC teacher: we're meeting today to develop the IEP (1) uh the new IEP for HEATH of course I'm not sure that everybody knows Heath and >I'll let you tell a little bit about him< but (.) course Heath has been on homebound has he ever been? did he ever go to the public school?

Mother: [shakes head]

CDC teacher: I didn't think so (.) Heath's been on home bound- why don't I just let you tell about Heath a little bit

Mother: [laughter] [huh huh huh huh

CDC teacher: [just give an overview of Heath [and

Mother: [thanks JeNNY

11 **CDC teacher:** you're better than me spittin and sputterin over here over (.) not

12 knowin what I'm sayin, so go ahead and tell em a little bit about Heath

With “of course I’m not sure that everybody knows Heath” on line two, the CDC teacher began turning over the floor to either the teacher or the mother. With “I’ll let you,” (line 2) the CDC positioned herself as the one with the interactional authority to choose the next speaker, and grant speaking rights (Heritage, 1997). The mother or the teacher’s role was to “show a little bit” (line 2), meaning that descriptions should not be an extended holding of the floor. The “little bit” was emphasized again on line seven, and again with the final relinquishing of the floor to the mother on line 12. On line 12, the CDC teacher made it clear again that the description need not be long. Compiled with the “just give an overview” on line 9, the mother’s role had been clearly designed by the CDC teacher’s turn as one who will provide a brief overview.

Because the CDC teacher, as Heath’s case manager, would be expected to know information like whether Heath had always been on homebound, her questions on lines three and four were framed as an already known information question (Rex & Schiller, 2009). Teachers prefer already known information types of questions to demonstrate knowledge (Rex & Schiller, 2009). It may have worked here to set Heath’s mother up as the expert and herself as not, but this was a delicate dance causing the CDC teacher to assure the IEP team that she agreed with the mother with “I didn’t think so” (line 6). We now see the end of the CDC teacher’s information as she started to repeat the same information on line six as she said on line three: “Heath’s been on homebound.” Stopping herself, she turned the floor over to the mother.

Of interest to participation in general, and decision making in particular, was the sequence of the turning over of the floor. Before the CDC teacher turned over the floor, she positioned the mother as the expert by asking the mother a question. While this was a confirming

question, it could have been a question that held an answer that only the mother would know. With the asking of her question on lines three and four, the CDC teacher displayed that she was not the expert on Heath. In only Heath's eighth grade meeting was the mother positioned as the expert on her child. While students had explicitly assigned roles as choosers of electives, no such explicit assignation of membership categories existed for parents, just the subtle cue as signers of the IEP as shown with signing multiple forms in Bill's Excerpt 5. What was missing in all meetings was a clarification of caregiver role in terms of providing expert knowledge on the student's home-life. Even though Heath's mother shared a description, that description did not affect decision making for the IEP, which was an already written IEP awaiting agreement and signatures.

That the CDC teacher framed her meetings to encourage shared interactions was similar to Laluvein's (2007) finding that four of her ten parent/teacher dyads reported shared information and stories within meetings. However, with Laluvein's four dyads, it appeared that parents influenced decisions, whereas in this data, shared information only influenced spontaneous shared decisions in nine meetings; only one of which was from this CDC teacher. These four meetings were distinctive given the numerous sharing of student descriptions framed in positive terms by all participants. Additionally of interest, as Heath's meeting continued, the mother and home-bound teacher[42] shared a structure that occurred across all meetings, across multiple participants, in which participants stated hopeful and positive statements alongside statements of student difficulties. The structure of constructing hope was an unexpected finding,

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[42] Districts assign home-bound teachers to teach students with special needs at their house, who cannot attend the physical school due to health, behavior, or other issues.

and was especially apparent in all four of the CDC teacher's meetings where shared interactions dominated.

Constructing hope through sharing information. The CDC teacher often began her meetings sharing a description of growth or capability. Her accounts were often built on and extended by other team members, and the meeting progressed with accounts being shared by all. While participants mentioned difficulties, they did so in a way that immediately acknowledged effort or change, thus demonstrating a hopeful outlook. Of interest in Heath's meeting was that negative information was shared alongside positive information within the mother's turn, as well as in turn-taking between the mother and the homebound teacher.

Excerpt 8: Heath *(typical and variation; constructing hope)*

1 **Mother:** Heath's very special (1.) he's (1.) got his ways (.5) he's um (1.) has
2 behavior (1.) uh he seizures like (1.) for instance she said (1.) when >he's comin
3 in here< there's no way (1.) it would be it for him (1.) um (2.) he has his moments
4 he's angel he's my angel (1.) >always gonna be my angel< um (1.) he's CP (1.)
5 he's MR he is autistic (.5) characteristics (1) um (4.) he's just a special little boy
6 but (.5) at some points he uh (.5) can be very aggressive (1) um (.5) I won't get
7 into how aggressive >but very aggressive< we'll just say that (.5)

The mother's description was marked by stops and starts and sped up sections of talk, demonstrating how hard she was working to provide a description. This could be named "troubles talk" (Jefferson, 1988). Heath's mother first described Heath as "special" immediately followed by the vague, "he has his ways," and the more specific: "behaviors" and "seizures" (line 2). To further add to the seriousness of the seizures, the mother noted that if Heath came to the meeting that "would be it for him" (line 3). Connecting her description to the present meeting

served to further factualize her claim (Edwards & Potter, 1992), because the mother made it relevant to the present time and space. The mother could have shared a past story to factualize her claim, as she does later, but connecting it to the present meeting made her claim rhetorically stronger from the outset.

In addition, Heath's mother described Heath as his diagnosis: "he's CP he's MR he is autistic characteristics" (lines 4-5), something the IEP form does under the category of "student information." This hearkens back to Heath's eligibility for special services written on the first page of the IEP, further serving to establish her claim as fact; evidence already written on the IEP. This deficit backdrop of the IEP form appeared in talk not only in Heath's meeting, but in every meeting. As seen here by Heath's mother's description, the deficit framework could be drawn upon at any time to factualize descriptions and strengthen claims (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Because the IEP framed the student in terms of deficit, there was always a looming "negative" in the background to foreground hope. We see this explicitly here with the immediate following of a positive assessment by Heath's mother with: "he's just a special little boy" (line 5). Despite the list of deficiencies that qualified Heath for special education, and demanded homebound services, the mother used one word to dismiss them all. With "just," the mother's description of "special little boy" takes precedence over all previous listed deficiencies as the final conclusion (Wooffitt, 1992) of her construction of Heath's identity.

Heath's mother progressively moved from vague to specific descriptions to build her description of Heath, and the homebound teacher added her descriptions using the same pattern of countering a negative with a positive to construct and maintain a hopeful attitude, as I demonstrate in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 9: Heath *(typical and variation; constructing hope)*

1 **Mother:** uh then you have moments (1.) with >Homebound Teacher he loves the

2 laptop and< (.5) but when he's had a enough he's had enough you better go hhh.

3 you know and he'll say leave now (.5) so

4 **Homebound Teacher:** but he does shut the computer down for me

5 **Mother:** yes

6 **Homebound Teacher:** before he does ask me to go=

7 (laughter from others covering a few words)

8 **Homebound Teacher:** =to the door (said in higher voice) when are you leaving?

9 **Mother:** um (.5) that uh (1) if he's (.5) around (1.) >he doesn't get out< I mean to

10 the appointment doctor appointments and then it's like so bad there (.5) you're

11 wanting to get out of there (1.) can't take em into Walmart can't take em like that

12 because (1) he'd be seizuring like crazy >he seizures in the night time< the last

13 time >he seizured on the day has been about< since sixth grade I think (1)

In this description of Heath, across the excerpts Heath's mother used contrasts with "but" (Excerpt 8, lines 6, 7; Excerpt 9, line 2) when describing a negative and then a positive or vice versa. "But" functions as a comparison or contrast word (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Even when Heath's mother did not use "but," she constructed her phrases as two opposing thoughts. She used the construction of sharing a less flattering description with a more positive description six times (Excerpt 8: lines 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 7-8; Excerpt 9: lines 1-2). The home school teacher also co-constructed Heath with his mother; one time using "but" and a positive description in response to the mother's "he'll say leave now" (lines 3-4).

I saw similar constructions by all team members across all meetings when a “negative” or less favorable story or description was shared. Rarely was a negative description allowed to stand without the speaker or someone else opposing it with a positive description. This construction appeared similar to “troubles talk” (Jefferson, 1988) in which participants worked hard to balance “the constant tension between attending to the trouble and attending to business as usual”; a messy social action, but “vaguely orderly” because participants followed a “constrained set of elements for producing the talk” (Jefferson, 1988, p. 419). Similar to Jefferson (1988), when constructing hope, the process was not sequentially ordered, but the elements of positive/negative were always there. Even as problems were located, the positive expectation that the student was a growing, changing, and capable individual was constructed alongside the dis/ability label, academic struggle, or behavior difficulty. This hopeful attitude was always present, if not initially, then always eventually, and always before the meeting ended. Not only was it evident in shared information interactions, but also in other ways, as I will show in part two of the findings.

Summary of shared information. Sharing information did not necessarily lead to making decisions for the IEP in all meetings. However, sharing information led to the outcome of additions to certain IEPs for some meetings. For instance, shared information around transition moments with students led to additions on the IEP in 13 meetings at HMS, as shown in Danielle’s meeting. Ten inclusion meetings at HMS, represented through Danielle’s meeting, and four CDC meetings, represented here through Heath’s excerpts, stand in contrast to previous research (Harris, 2010; Martin et al, 2006; Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2003; Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2003; Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011) indicating the dominance of facilitators on meeting interactions, particularly in holding the floor. When students were present

at the ten HMS inclusion meetings, the facilitator shared the floor to invite information about student careers and elective choices for high school. In the four meetings at GMS with more shared interactions than other meetings, facilitation of shared moments occurred regardless of student presence.

In other meetings, with and without students, shared information resulted in constructions of hopeful attitudes about students and their futures, as demonstrated with Heath's meeting. Starting the meeting with sharing information, and encouraging shared stories throughout the IEP meetings, led to co-constructions of hope, if not co-constructions of decisions. There was overlap between shared information moments and shared decision making. Sharing information often spontaneously turned into a decision making moment, as I will show in the next section with Ashley's meeting.

Shared Decision Making Interactions

I labeled moments as shared decision making when participants discussed alternatives and then agreed upon a certain course of action. These moments were not pre-determined and/or written on the IEP before the meeting. Further, shared decision making was mutually determined by participants, and changes to the IEP resulted. I make a distinction between *expected* shared information of decisions, and *spontaneous* shared decision making. In 33 meetings, facilitators *expected* students to share decisions around transition topics. In these meetings, students were specifically invited to make contributions around their chosen career goal and high school electives, and other participants discussed their choices with them. There was a possibility of all 33 meetings with students to include shared information for discussion around transition topics. However, in six meetings (Alvin, Carrie, Christopher, Delia, John, and Peyton), participants simply shared information about future careers with no shared discussion. I do not name the 26

meetings with expected and invited contributions of students, as shared decision making moments, rather they were shared information of decisions. Of interest for a later study is how such moments with students might be framed to encourage shared decision making. It is important to note that while the talk in most meetings did not include spontaneous decision making with students, such moments were hinted it in some HMS meetings with the eighth grade inclusion teacher. Students had filled out interest inventories prior to meetings, and such shared decisions may have occurred outside of the meeting with the teacher. However, this data only focused on decisions made together *within* IEP meetings.

Spontaneous shared decision making on topics *other than* the expected transition topics occurred in nine meetings, both with and without students present. In these moments, possibilities were debated and discussed from a range of alternatives (Mehan, 1984). All nine of these meetings were contrasts with my overall finding that educators arrived to meetings with decisions already made. Caregivers, special educators, and general educators instigated spontaneous shared decision making moments, in this data set. No student instigated a spontaneous shared decision making moment, although one student participated in one. I share excerpts of spontaneous shared decision making in this section from one meeting with a student (Ashley) and one meeting without (Sprite). Three of the nine meetings had students present (Ashley, Peyton, Smiles), but only in Ashley's meeting did the student share in decision making with expert status; such expert status as was usually afforded to educators making decisions about student placement. This notable exception had educators asking Ashley directly to explain her past performance on tests, and present performance in class, with the direct result of placement on an inclusion track.

Caregivers and general educators also worked with special educators to spontaneously make decisions. Although both present, Peyton and Smile's meetings were similar to the five meetings without students. Smile's mother shared in co-constructions of a decision about speech while Smiles remained largely silent. In Peyton's meeting, Peyton shared information, but his mother and the eighth RSP shared a decision for a modified test. The typical pattern of shared decision making started with caregivers or general educators challenging the current topic, and then working through shared stories, explanations, and justifications, to co-construct decisions and make changes to the IEP (i.e., Benny, Bubba, Flossy, Ironman, Laura, and Sprite). I share an excerpt from Sprite showing how participants typically accomplished shared decision making without students. I use Sprite as both a typical and unique variation example in that the shared decision making in her meeting was the only one in which the mother requested a new speech and language goal.

Shared decision making with a student. Ashley was the only student in this data set to engage in shared decision making with educators. The context that required engaging with Ashley to share decision making power, involved radically different test scores between the Woodcock Johnson III achievement test and the ACT Explore test. This occasioned asking Ashley what track she preferred in high school, either the inclusion track with her peers that could include special education courses in Math and English, or a fully general education track.

In my data, educators typically used the scores to determine placement decisions before the meeting. Yet, Ashley's scores posed a quandary for placement. Previous to this excerpt, educators worked to frame Ashley as a capable individual who could share attributions about her performance when results were puzzling. Educators asked Ashley to explain the discrepancy of the scores, which she did so with: "I just really didn't feel good and really didn't didn't wanta be

here" (Ashley transcript, line 46). Unique to Ashley's meeting, educators constructed Ashley's expert status and allowed her a decision making role. This was not merely sharing information, as can be seen as talk continued. Rather, Ashley actively worked with educators to construct herself as capable of taking inclusion classes in high school and passing them.

Excerpt 10: Ashley *(variation; shared decision making).*

1 **HS Counselor (HSC):** okay cause those and I mean and its okay we're just tryin
2 to help (1) I guess tryin to figure out (.) placement which classes would be
3 appropriate for you (1) to start out in your freshman year we're tryin to figure out
4 (.) this is a really good picture of you [picks up Explore scores]
5 **8th RSP:** yeah
6 **HSC:** and that's a $really not as good a picture of you$ [referring to Woodcock
7 scores] so we're tryin to figure out what the real picture of you academically
8 would like- so what do you think?

The high school counselor framed placement as a school decision with, "we're just tryin to help" (lines 1-2), but she also invited Ashley into the decision with the question "so what do you think?" (line 8). Her open ended question allowed Ashley true decision making power along with other team members. Ashley was allowed to have real decision making power within the discussion because the scores showed discrepancies and distorted the "picture" (lines 4/6). A good picture was crucial to placement, so Ashley's opinion became important. It is important to note the difference between the high school counselor's open ended question, and other educators in eighth grade meetings who otherwise asked students to ratify a placement decision already made.

Ashley then shared information that helped educators make the placement.

Excerpt 11: Ashley *(variation; shared decision making).*

1 **Ashley:** I think I mean I don't (.) struggle but yet I (1) I can't like (1) do like really

2 (.) high stuff (.) yet I (.) I (1) I think I'm a little bit more advanced in all the (.)

3 easy (1) stuff

4 **HSC:** okay

5 **Ashley:** so I'm kinda of like in the middle (.) ish

Ashley's account served to confirm the Explore scores. However, Ashley's report is marked by hesitancies, pauses, and hedges, ending with the ultimate "middle (.) ish" (line 5). Should another choose to challenge Ashley's account, she leaves the option open. With "I think I mean," Ashley prefaced her coming explanation as an expansion of the previous talk (Schiffrin, 1987). Ashley had already shared that she was sick for the Woodcock Johnson, but perhaps the educators needed her to further clarify her meaning (Schiffrin, 1987), which Ashley does. The high school counselor did not challenge Ashley's account, but asked a question about the extent of her effort; an inference made available by Ashley's tentative "I think I mean I don't struggle" (line 1).

Ashley's Explore scores may indicate that she was capable, but it was Ashley's perception of her effort that educators sought. If Ashley indicated that she had to put forth tremendous effort in her classes, it was unlikely that she would be placed in inclusion classes, given that difficulty levels increased with each year. Using data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS-2), Wagner (2007) reported that 59 % of students perceived school as "not hard at all" or "not very hard" (p. 38). This may be a reflection of teachers working to place students in classes at just below their level of challenge in order to ensure success. In her question to Ashley about her effort, the counselor provided a three-part list of examples of

homework, projects, and getting “everything turned in organized” (line 55). Three-part lists work as a rhetorical device to demonstrate completeness, and work as a discursive resource to summarize (Jefferson, 1990; Potter, 1996). Getting homework done without difficulties was another indicator in the NLTS2 study, in which 28 % of students reported never having difficulty, and 40 % reported having difficulty a few times (Wagner, 2007). If Ashley reported having trouble with homework, or being unorganized, then inclusion classes may not have been deemed appropriate.

At this point, Ashley’s mother added her information to the decision being built up with “she's good about that her and her sister both about doin their homework and studying and things” (Ashley transcript, line 56). Ashley’s mother used the vague, “good about that,” and referred to Ashley’s sister to show that it’s a family trait. “That” may indicate that all the concrete examples named by the high school counselor were part of Ashley’s repertoire, but to be certain, the mother added “about doin their homework and studying and things” (line 3). Like the counselor, she used a three-part list to rhetorically strengthen her factual claim. Both the counselor and the eighth RSP responded with “good” (lines 57-58) to show that the decision was made. In this way, the educators discounted the Woodcock assessment scores, and used the higher Explore scores as evidence to place Ashley in inclusion classes for high school. This was confirmed by the high school counselor as she turned back to her schedule of course offerings. It was the counselor’s job to settle the details of the shared decision, a task she did in consultation with the high school case manager as the meeting continued.

In these two excerpts, we see how the only student in this data set to engage in shared decision making, accomplished that social action with other participants. Ashley explained her differing assessment scores so that everyone agreed to an inclusive education college preparation

track. With such potential changes on the table with students present, it is interesting that facilitators in this study did not invite students to meetings before fourteen years of age. As noted in the literature review, having students present resulted in perceptions of increased involvement by caregivers and educators (Jones & Gansle, 2010; Martin, et al, 2006). In this data set, shared information and *expected* shared decision making led to increased meaningful interactions among participants when students were present. Yet, *spontaneous* shared decision making did not appear to occur with greater frequency when students were present.

Shared decision making without students. Sprite's meeting holds the distinction for being the only meeting where shared decision making resulted in creation of a new goal written on the IEP during the meeting. Although Sprite's shared decision making moment occurred in an environment of increased shared information interactions as part of the four CDC meetings from GMS, the construction of shared decision making was typical of this data set in meetings without students. Previous to this excerpt every IEP participant had shared stories and descriptions of Sprite and her speech and language. Of particular concern to the mother was Sprite's stammer, but no goal was on the already completed IEP to address it. The typical pattern of shared decision making started with caregivers or general educators challenging the current topic, and then working through shared stories, explanations, and justifications, to co-construct decisions and make changes to the IEP. Here, because the speech and language therapist (SLP) explicitly listed and explained how he was working on the two speech and language goals with Sprite, the mother did not need to challenge, but rather named the stammer as another area of need.

Excerpt 12: Sprite *(typical and variation; shared decision making)*

1 **Mother:** she still has a difficult time (.5) speaking I noticed like, she still has a

2 stutter I I [am CONvinced that she does

3 **SLP:** [uh huh

4 **CDC teacher:** [uh hum

5 **Mother:** but to try- >and you know< (.) there is no cure for a stutter a stammer

6 there is no cure, you can have therapy=

7 **SLP:** =right=

8 **Mother:** =you can you know learn to control it but she's I don't think she'll

9 EVER be able to do that cause eh (.) if you've noticed sometimes she'll try and get

10 a word out and she'll be like uh huh yuh yuh yuh have you ever noticed that?

11 **CDC:** um hum

12 **SLP:** yes

13 **Mother:** that's a stutter (.)

14 **SLP:** yes

Here, the mother named Sprite's difficulty (lines 1-2, 13) and shared an example (lines 9-10), with the SLP and the CDC teacher demonstrating understanding through receipt markers (Sacks, 1992). As she named the problem, Sprite's mother made no specific request for a speech goal. She mitigated her stake in the interaction by acknowledging through repetitions "there is no cure" (lines 5-6), even as she noted that "you can have therapy" (line 6) and "learn to control it" (line 8). She further rhetorically arranged her talk to make her claim factual by a footing shift from, "I am convinced" (line 2), to a hypothetical, "if you've noticed" (line 9), and a question of agreement to others (line 10).

The use of "you know" (line 5) could work as a discourse marker (Schiffrin, 1987) to reinforce the mother's role as a presenter of information, and the hearer as a recipient of information. Further, sharing a description of her daughter's speech (line 10) word-for-word

increases believability, and created her account as factual. The mother designed her turn to prefer agreement to her assessment, which she got. The mother may have worked up her turn to subtly disagree with the lack of an IEP goal for Sprite's stammer. Peters' (2003) found that parents disagreed subtly, if at all. In Sprite's excerpt, by bringing up the stammer, the mother may be working to gently push for a goal. In fact, that was precisely how it was taken up later in the meeting by the speech and language pathologist.

Talk continued with the sharing of stories on a different topic before the speech and language therapist brought the conversation back to Sprite's stammering problem. Of interest is that the speech and language therapist, instead of ignoring potential conflict, or the mother's subtle request for the stammer to be a focus, made it an important topic to address, even after the conversation shifted elsewhere. No other educator did so. This excerpt begins after the CDC teacher apologized to the speech and language therapist (SLP) for getting off topic, and invited him to speak.

Excerpt 13: Sprite *(typical and variation; shared decision making)*

SLP: and, and, I mean (.) does that? do you feel that's appropriate? the stammering? do you want me to try and? (.) and target that a little bit or?

Father: =uhh=

Mother: =it would be nice yeah

Father: =yes=

Mother: =because [um you know well

SLP: [I mean you brought that up I I mean

8 **Mother:** here here's the deal I stuttered (.) I and I still do, uh but I can kinda

9 control it a little better but um I never saw a speech (.) therapist until I was like

10 twenty (.) four maybe twenty five

11 **SLP:** uh huh

The SLP's turn was designed to reduce his stake in the interaction, even as he tentatively offered a goal that he would need to write. He did so with much questioning in his voice (lines 1-2), and a footing shift including a reminder to the mother that she had brought up the idea of the stammer as a problem (line 7). The reminder could also serve as an opportunity for the mother to provide a justification for what was now framed as her request, if the mother was not already overlapping with the SLP to readily offer one (lines 6-7). The mother sequentially ordered her talk to start with a gentle "it would be nice" (line 4), before moving to a rationale starting with "because" (line 6). Talk continued with the mother sharing her concern that a stutter was hereditary, but that you could control it. In other meetings where shared decision making took place, justifications for the outcome were always offered by the person who brought up the requested change or addition in the first place.

Of interest, was the relative ease by which the goal was then written on the IEP form. Talk continued on to other subjects, and the goal did not come up again until both caregivers were signing the IEP and the meeting notes. During this time, as there was an unusual moment of quiet, the SLP noted that he had added the goal onto the IEP.

Excerpt 14: Sprite *(typical and variation; shared decision making)*

1 **Mother:** that's good

2 **SLP:** but (.) you know (.) don't expect a miracle please

3 **Mother:** oh we

4 **Father:** uh no

5 [laughter]

6 **SLP:** $I will work on it [and$

7 **Mother:** [honestly its somethin that it’s a difficult thing (.)

8 **SLP:** uh hum

9 **Mother:** honestly it's somethin that I remember the speech therapist told me she

10 said (.) its as much a part of YOU as you've got brown eyes

11 **SLP:** uh huh

12 **Mother:** or >blonde hair or whatever< its just a part of you (.) and that doesn’t

13 mean that you say you need to kind of give into it

14 **SLP:** right

By “don’t expect a miracle please” on line two, the SLP mitigates his accountability towards the achievement of the goal, one that was readily accepted via laughter and affirmatives. The laughter here may serve to smooth over (Glenn, 2003) what had been previously (Excerpt 13) and presently framed (line 7) as a difficult task to accomplish. As in other meetings, sometimes after participants achieved the shared decision, there was a final summarizing of an explanation before there was movement away from the topic. The mother again emphasized that it was hereditary, but did so with a footing shift to what her therapist had said (lines 9-12), reducing her stake at the same time that she reemphasized the importance (line 12-13) of the goal. Stating dialogue as if you remember it word-for-word increases believability (Edwards & Potter, 1992). These excerpts showed the ease in which participants sequentially and rhetorically organized their talk to engage in spontaneous shared decision making. However, the speech and language therapist displayed an intention through his talk to honor the mother’s subtle request for the goal.

Summary of shared decision making. In this section, I showed how participants accomplished spontaneous shared decision making through five excerpts. In two excerpts from Ashley, I demonstrated how educators framed Ashley as not only capable of making decisions, but as the expert who would help the team decide placement for high school. Then, in three excerpts from Sprite's meeting, I demonstrated the relative ease by which the mother framed Sprite's stammer as a problem, and how it was taken up later in the meeting by the SLP as an occasion for writing a new goal. While expected shared information of decisions occurred in 26 meetings with students present, in only nine meetings did shared decision making occur both with and without students. Occasions of shared decision making in meetings did not seem to vary in terms of student presence, except in Ashley's meeting. Because of Ashley's unique case involving her position with equal decision making power with educators, and because of Sprite's meeting that uniquely involved the spontaneous creation of a goal, other more dominant ways of interaction, such as presentation interactions can be called into question, as I will explore in Chapter 5.

Summary of Part One

Providing appropriate special education services is the expressed purpose of IEP meetings. The legal purpose of proceedings and the procedures involved to get signatures made it unlikely that changes were made to the IEP within the meeting. Discourse surrounding the IEP form throughout the meeting served to limit agency of certain participants, and resulted in unequal participation. By delineating membership categories in introductions and through setting the meeting agenda, participants justified who made decisions on certain topics, making specific decision-making actions unavailable to certain participants. Therefore, at the outset, speakers warranted their own and others' participation in relation to decision making within the meeting.

There were three styles of interaction present in this data set. The first, and the predominant style, was presentation by the facilitator with agreement by caregivers and students. I demonstrated this with five excerpts. Overall, educators worked to keep the legal forms in line with state procedures, and made the state accountable for the purpose of the meeting as completing the IEP. This served to limit caregiver and student agency and accountability for the form as decisions were already made. Secondly, shared information also occurred in all meetings; as I showed with four excerpts both with and without students. Surprisingly, even though caregivers and students had limited decision making power, all participants worked together to construct hopeful futures. The third, and much rarer, spontaneous shared decision making, occurred in nine meetings. I illustrated these meetings with five excerpts. Throughout the excerpts, I emphasized how participants made discursive use of the IEP form to perform social actions related to decision making.

In the next section, I report on how participants negotiated and managed decision making through the *sequential and structural* organization of the IEP form, largely demonstrating decisions as already made. I also continue to illustrate the unexpected finding of how participants constructed hopeful statements about students and their future success.

Overall Structural Organization of the Meetings

Across all meetings, the three interactions of the *talk*, as described in part one, largely followed the overall structure and sequence of the IEP *form*. In this section, I explain in depth how the sequence of the 17 categories of the IEP form, worked as a discursive resource to frame decisions as already made. As I illustrate through excerpts, the overall structures of the IEP *form:* (1) located problems within the student; (2) offered institutional special education resources as a solution; and (3) required signatures for agreement to the proposed plan. The overall structures

of the IEP *talk* usually did not pose problems or frame questions in need of solutions that would create decision moments within meetings. Thus, both the form and the talk typically *displayed* the problem and the solution as a complete package, and the talk often rhetorically framed decisions as already made.

I illustrate this finding with excerpts from three initial meetings where educators constructed the child as having an academic or language problem through educational assessments. Further, in supporting excerpts from annual and tri-annual meetings, I show that as services continue, the dis/ability label and the need for special education services often become taken for granted assumptions through the rhetorical moves of team members. Thus, the constructions used to initially place students in special education services carry over to subsequent meetings, and work throughout a student's academic career to keep him or her in special education. Alongside these findings, I also show how participants worked up hopeful constructions of students by contrasting positive and negative descriptions to prefer a positive outlook for the future.

Part two of my findings will be organized into the following subsections: (1) sequence of social actions on the IEP form; (2) locating problems; (3) offering solutions; and (4) performing agreement. I provide excerpts from three initial meetings: (1) eighth grader Taylor, qualifying under a specific learning dis/ability in math; (2) seventh grader Wendy, qualifying under a specific learning dis/ability in math, and (3) seventh grader Raj, qualifying under language impairment. As is typical, none of these students attended their initial meeting. All three initial meetings showed how facilitators followed the sequence of the IEP form rhetorically to locate problems and offer solutions, and how caregivers performed agreement. Other excerpts from annual and tri-annual meetings provide comparisons and contrasts to initial meetings. I also

demonstrate how educator descriptions prevailed in the sequential nature of talk, and how participants rhetorically constructed their talk to perform social actions, attend to fact, manage their stake and interest, and attend to issues of agency and accountability (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Sequence of Social Actions on the IEP Form

With a few exceptions, most facilitators and participants worked in an orderly manner through a sequence of opening talk, the 17 major categories of the IEP form, and closing talk. Social actions in talk worked to attribute problems to the student, and offer institutional resources in the form of special education services. The intended outcome was agreement with the plan. Table 6 shows how I divide the 17 sections of the IEP into these three social actions. Appendix G provides definitions for each of the 17 categories on the IEP form.

Table 6: Sequence of Social Actions on IEP Form Sections

Social Action	IEP Section
Locating Problem(s)	1. Student Information
	2. Current Descriptive Information
	3. Present Levels of Performance
	4. Considerations of Special Factors for IEP Development
Offering Solutions	5. Transition Services Planning (Age 14 or turning 14 during the IEP period)

Table 6 continued: Sequence of Social Actions on IEP Form Sections

Social Action	IEP Section
Offering Solutions	6. Transition Services (Age 16 or turning 16 during the IEP period)
	7. Measurable Annual Goals and Benchmarks/ Short-term Instructional Objectives for IEP and Transition Activities
	8. Program Participation
	9. State/District Mandated Tests and Modified or Alternative State Test Participation Guidelines
	10. State Test Accommodations
	11. Special Education and Related Services
	12. LRE and General Education
	13. Special Transportation
	14. Extended School Year
Performing agreement	15. IEP Participants
	16. Informed Parental Consent
	17. Documentation of IEP Review by Other Teachers not in Attendance

Following the presentation style described in part one, facilitators designed their turns as they reviewed the IEP to follow what they considered as important. Facilitators followed certain sections of the IEP, minimizing their stake and interest at certain points, as I describe in the upcoming sections.

Locating Problems

The first social action that was accomplished through the talk, as guided by the form, was locating problems. Visually, the display of the "problem" on page one of the IEP served to highlight the dis/ability category as a backdrop for the meeting. Page one of the IEP form displayed the student's primary (and in some cases secondary) dis/ability category in the center of the page with a box around it. The dis/ability category, one designating deficit and lack of ability, was assigned within initial meetings to establish eligibility for special education services, and reinforced at tri-annual meetings. The IDEA (2004) law states that public schools must make a free appropriate public education available to: "any individual child with a disability who needs special education and related services, even if the child has not failed or been retained in a course or grade, and is advancing from grade to grade" [§300.101(c)(1)].

If the IEP team determines that a student has one of the 13 dis/ability categories[43], he can receive services. In the absence of impairments with a medical diagnosis (i.e., deafness, blindness, traumatic brain injury), then the school constructs dis/ability labels with test scores (i.e., learning dis/ability, language impairment, intellectual dis/ability). In this construction, psychologist reports have the most weight in decision making (Mehan, 1983), and they often come with placement decisions for special education already determined (Dufon, 1993; Harris, 2010; Plum, 2008; Rogers, 2003). Caregivers pushed back against placement decisions and descriptions of negative performance in surprising ways, as I display in the next few sections.

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[43] The thirteen dis/ability categories according to IDEA (2004) are: (1) autism, (2) blindness, (3) deafness, (4) hearing impairment, (5) emotional disturbance, (6) intellectual disability (formerly mental retardation), (7) multiple disabilities, (8) orthopedic impairment, (9) other health impaired (commonly used for ADD/ADHD), (10) specific learning disability, (11) speech or language impairment, (12) traumatic brain injury, and (13) visual impairment [§300A 300.8(c)].

Mother and general education teacher locating problems. Taylor's initial meeting began with the Response to Intervention (RTI)[44] language arts, math, English, and science teachers reporting on Taylor's classroom performance. The teachers attended the first third of the meeting to share Taylor's current classroom performance, and then all of them left the meeting to go teach. The RTI teacher began by sharing about missing assignments, poor performance, and Taylor choosing "not to attempt" (Taylor transcript, line 55) her work. This excerpt begins at the end of her turn.

Excerpt 15: Taylor *(typical; general educator locating problems).*

1 **8th grade RTI Language Arts:** she did her best work (.5) right before spring
2 break she had like at an A but she has turned in (.5) zero work this week um (1) I
3 don't (.5) think that she's having trouble with the material I mean it's very simple
4 in fact (.5) a lot of the grades are simply did you attempt it it's not even correct or
5 incorrect (.5) she just (1) chooses not to (.5) attempt um in my class we have so
6 that's a big concern
7 **Mother:** okay

In lines one and two, the RTI teacher contrasted Taylor's work before and after spring break. This construction of first sharing a positive "best work" (line 1) contrasted with a negative "zero work" (line 2) was common throughout all meetings to describe students as good and capable, but having an underlying motivational, academic, or behavioral problem causing academic failure. This rhetorical structure worked to attribute problems to the student, and mitigated the

[44] Response to Intervention (RTI) is a general education program where students who are struggling to learn math or English at the same rate as their peers go to receive extra support in their area of need. While every school structures RTI differently, at GMS, RTI was approximately half an hour of extra instruction every day. Progress was measured according to formulas and percentages of "normal" growth from the intervention. Students who do not show proper gains in RTI are referred for special education support.

teacher's responsibility for academic failure. It also functioned to construct hopeful attitudes about Taylor possibly returning to her previous best.

The RTI teacher described the problem as non-academic, because the material was "very simple" (line 3). Not just simple, but with the added emphasis of "very simple in fact." This made the inference available that other students received the material as simple, therefore, the teaching was not at fault, nor was Taylor's understanding of the material. Rather, the teacher attributed the problem as motivational, because Taylor "chooses not to attempt" (line 5). The RTI teacher was careful to hedge her attribution of Taylor's behavior with "in my class." This limited the RTI's motivational attribution to only her class, and left other attributions open for the other teachers who had yet to take the floor. She finally noted, "so that's a big concern" (line 5-6). "So" works as a discourse marker (Schiffrin, 1987), and could function as a conjunction to draw attention to the conclusion of her turn.

In the next turn, Taylor's mother replied with agreement to the motivational attribution. However, she did so in a way that complicated the work of the meeting to attribute Taylor's academic failures to a qualifying category on the IEP form.

Excerpt 16: Taylor *(variation; mother locating problems).*

1 **Mother:** okay (1.) I I can already (1.) probably save you all a little bit of breath

2 here um (1.) I've really been gettin on to her about her grades and (1.) I really

3 don't think she has some type of a (1.) am (1.) issue as far as like ADHD or

4 anything like that I think her her issue is she just simply doesn't care"

5 **RTI Language Arts:** huh

6 **Mother**: she has an I don't (1.) I don’t care attitude and um (2.) so I've really been

7 gettin on to her about that cause I've I’ve noticed when I go and check the power

8 (1.) the Power School?

9 **8th grade special education teacher (RSP):** um hum

In line one, with “already probably save you all a little bit of breath here,” the mother established herself as not surprised, but rather an informed and knowledgeable parent. Further, stating that she already knew, rhetorically positioned herself alongside the teachers; showing her alignment while at the same time forestalling teachers from sharing Taylor’s failures. Taylor’s mother explained that she monitored Taylor’s grades (line 7), and attributed Taylor’s failures to the fact that Taylor “doesn’t care” (lines 4/6). This might mitigate accusations that the mother was neglecting to supervise Taylor’s education, and that the mother did not care. Rhetorically this could function to align the mother with her listeners and increase believability of her account (Billig, 1996). It also functioned to attribute the failures to motivational or organizational factors under Taylor’s control, similar to the RTI teacher.

However, in doing so, the mother stated: “I really don't think she has some type of a an issue as far as like ADHD or anything like that” (lines 2-3). She excluded attributions “like ADHD” that is a qualifying category under “other health impaired.” The mother did not stop at excluding ADHD, but also added “or anything like that,” which might be a vague reference to any other qualifying category. Rather, Taylor’s not caring (lines 4/6) was an unavoidable conclusion (Wooffitt, 1992), completely excluding other issues. In one turn, the mother completely demonstrated her rejection of the idea that Taylor had a learning issue, and constructed Taylor’s difficulties as motivational.

No team member picked up the mother's attribution, as shown by the next turn. In fact, in the next turn, the RTI teacher changed the subject to summer school. Lack of motivation was not an available qualifying category on the IEP form. This initial meeting goal was about attributing a dis/ability to Taylor so she could receive special education services. Therefore, the inference made available by the RTI teacher, and carried on by the mother, became a somewhat tricky "fact" to support. In ensuing talk, the mother and the RTI teacher engaged in a question/answer interaction over a possible motivator for Taylor being a special field trip. Throughout their interaction, the psychologist remained uncharacteristically silent. Silence may have been a rejection of the mother's news by not using a receipt marker (Sacks, 1992). Like back-channel communications, receipt markers show that you have received the information. Making no comment, the psychologist instead used her turn to ask for more general educators to share information. While the mother and the teacher could attribute performance to motivational factors, this was not a relevant category on the IEP. In this meeting and other initial meetings, their factual accounts carried little weight. It is the psychologist who belongs to the membership category of one who interprets and presents assessments to qualify a student for services. Like other studies (Dufon, 1993, Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986, Plum, 2008), the psychologist's factual accounts carry weight.

Psychologist locating problems. Because this was an eligibility meeting, the psychologist had a strong case built with IQ and achievement scores to construct a learning dis/ability in math. As demonstrated in the beginning talk in Taylor's meeting, either inviting directly or allowing caregivers and educators to share information first, was a similar sequence of talk in Maynard's (1991) discourse study with doctors sharing diagnosis of developmental dis/abilities. First, doctors asked the parent's opinion in a "perspective display invitation" (p. 168), as in Taylor's

meeting with general educators speaking first. The recipient then offered a reply. This could then be followed by further questions and explanations, as with Taylor's mother and teacher. Finally, in Maynard's study (1991), the doctor would share his report and diagnosis. Similarly, after the teachers finished sharing Taylor's classroom performance, the psychologist shared Taylor's achievement scores, as the basis for a math learning dis/ability category, as I show in the next excerpt. Thus, general education attributions appeared to be considered in decision making, but in actuality were not, because the decision for services was already made by the psychologist as a math dis/ability. This finding may relate to survey research (Martin, et al, 2004) where secondary school general educators ranked themselves as the lowest of all participants in helping make decisions, even lower than students, when present. However, even though they appeared to lack decision making power, general education attributions, as seen in the following excerpts, were included in Taylor's meeting.

In the next excerpt, we see how the psychologist displayed her decision while also including information from other IEP members. Extract 17 comes at the point when the psychologist located the problem as Taylor's learning dis/ability in math.

Excerpt 17: Taylor *(typical; psychologist locating problems).*

Psychologist: (puts sheet in front of mother) and I just want to show you the numbers here because (1) we have you know a category called SPECIFIC learning disability and what that means is her IQ that 103 102 that we looked at (.5) <average great smart> girl but (.5) is there a big difference between that 102 103 mark and some sort of achievement area

Mother: uh huh

7 **Psychologist:** and so when you kind of do the numbers the state gives me formula

8 you have to have at least a 16 point difference between your IQ and achievement

9 **Mother:** (nods)

10 **Psychologist:** and if you look in that math calculation on both assessments she

11 was 25 points difference and then 21 point difference so the only area she

12 QUALIFIES in for a specific learning disability is math calculation

In locating the problem, the psychologist carefully shared the results based on numbers, leading to her decision of the qualifying category. Before doing so, she made the state accountable for the social task of locating the dis/ability with, "the state gives me [a] formula" (line 7). Only the psychologist had access to the numbers, and these numbers were given meaning by the state's formula. This worked to minimize the psychologist's stake in the interaction.

In general, psychologists share results from a relatively short time with the student (Mehan, 1983), yet their reports have the most weight. Psychologist reports are given weight because they have the authority of the federal qualifying categories and the state formulas behind them as systemic evidence building structures. The state formulas, and by extension the IDEA (2004) qualifying category of "specific learning dis/ability," made the decision. Minimizing her own stake in the interaction made the psychologist unaccountable for the decision that was nonetheless made by her.

Assessments and qualification to locate and label problems. The assessment scores alone were allowable evidence for the final decision. Teachers' and caregivers' attributions, if in line with the evidence of the achievement scores, were part of the information, but the psychologist made the final decision of eligibility for services. Not only in Taylor's meeting, but across 48 other meetings, assessments were found to be given the most weight when making

decisions; assessment numbers that educators and psychologists reported. On the IEP form, when locating problems, the case manager wrote present levels of performance with current test scores. Teachers and caregivers could share strengths and concerns, but teacher and caregiver reports alone could not qualify a student. As shown in part one and also found here in the overall sequential meeting structure for decision making, this placed caregivers and general education teachers in the role of *sharing information* about classroom performance, homework, and motivational factors. Caregivers and teachers were not in a position to *make a decision* about qualifying for special education services. The psychologist or speech and language pathologist in these three initial meetings had the membership category of locating problems in terms of a diagnosis, relegating decision making power to diagnosticians by default and reducing caregiver and general educator agency in decision making power. The decision making power of school staff in initial meetings seemed to frame the subsequent annual and triannual meetings where educators made decisions.

In the sequential order of turn-taking, when general educators shared information at the beginning of the meetings, this information rarely resulted in shared decision making (N=2). When caregivers (N=6) instigated spontaneous shared decision making, it usually occurred later in meetings, and never addressed qualification. The school made decisions on who qualified following state formulas. That qualifying category (or categories) was then shared on the first page of the IEP; authorizing the discourse that followed: this student qualifies for special education services based on her qualifying dis/ability category, and therefore was entitled to an IEP. This was the “only area” (line 11) qualifying Taylor, an exclusive and special category.

In rhetorically constructing her turn, the psychologist located a math dis/ability using Taylor’s high IQ in relation to her low achievement scores in math (Excerpt 17, lines 2-12). The

psychologist did so, balancing her talk by sharing a “negative” with “specific learning dis/ability” (lines 2-3), and then a “positive” with Taylor as an “average great smart girl but” (line 4). Immediately following the positive came the negative again as “but” (line 4) contrasted the positive description with the negative learning dis/ability, serving to balance the news with a conjunction (Schiffrin, 2001). The construction of alternating positive and negative, could function to offer hope for the future, even while emphasizing the need for special education services.

Moving quickly from diagnosis to intervention, the psychologist explained the qualification:

Excerpt 18: Taylor *(typical; psychologist locating problems).*

1 and what that means (.5) is we can provide her with a plan >because we did all of

2 this< to not (.5) lighten her load so much that she's not accountable but (1.) there

3 truly is a math problem

4 **Mother:** (nods)

By “what that means” (line 1), the psychologist performed her membership category (Sacks, 1992; Stokoe, 2012) as the explainer of educational assessments. Because “we did all of this,” (lines 1-2) referred to locating the dis/ability with the assessments. Only after sharing the scores and the discrepancy between the IQ and achievement could the psychologist then conclude “there truly is a math problem” (line 3). The tests proved the “truth,” even while teacher and parent reports could not. The psychologist framed the truth as “truly” (line 3) a math problem; a lexical choice that worked like “just” to make the conclusion unavoidable and fixed (Wooffitt, 1992). In this construction, the assessments were allowable evidence to make a decision;

assessments under the control of the psychologist and special educators. The problem was located. Taylor's new qualification now entitled her to special school resources.

Normalizing locating problems. The psychologist did not discount the information the mother and teacher shared, but neatly folded it into her conclusions in her next turn.

Excerpt 19: Taylor *(typical; psychologist locating problems).*

1 **Psychologist:** and I think that just like I said translates into the confidence issue

2 when you're not confident in something it's really hard to PERFORM

3 **Mother:** I I I can actually (1.)

4 **Psychologist:** uh hum

5 **Mother:** understand=

6 **Psychologist:** uh hum

7 **Mother:** =where she's coming from

8 **Psychologist:** yes

9 **Mother:** because even my my self (.5) I'm not a math person

10 **Psychologist:** oh goodness me either

11 **Mother:** (shakes head) I struggled very much=

12 **Psychologist:** um hum

13 **Mother:** =in the high school with math

By quickly linking her factual claim to "a confidence issue" (line 1), the psychologist also brought in motivational factors. This was a nod to the mother's attribution at the beginning of the meeting that Taylor "just doesn't care" (Taylor transcript, line 56). Because the psychologist had the classroom teachers and mother share first, she designed her presentation of dis/ability around what was previously shared; something that doctors also did when delivering diagnosis

(Maynard, 1991). Thus, the psychologist showed openness to the mother's attribution, and aligned herself with it, even while sharing the diagnostic label of specific learning dis/ability. The explaining away of the motivational concern focused the attention on what was constructed as unable to change: the dis/ability label.

Taken as a whole, the psychologist rhetorically designed her turn for one result: agreement; which she readily got. Because the psychologist framed Taylor as both smart and having trouble with math, the mother shared without losing face that she herself was "not a math person" (line 9). There was agreement by association that Taylor's lack of math skill was part of her personhood, just as the mother described herself in comparison to her daughter as "not a math person" (line 9). Quick agreement from the psychologist served to normalize what just happened; the locating of a dis/ability within a person. The psychologist was not a math person either. However, the difference between the utterances was that one utterance changed student academic careers, and the other had no such effect.

Locating problems *within* students. Everyone in Taylor's meeting seemed to agree that a lack of academic skill was acceptable as part of your person, something that was unchanging. However, a motivational attribution *can* change in expectancy for success (Weiner, 1985), and attributions can be constructed as changing or not, in order to perform social actions within talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This was important because in all of the 63 meetings, the dis/ability label was the backdrop for making decisions to place in special education services, or to continue with special education placement. Qualifications for special services necessitated the forever locating of dis/ability within the child. Therefore, a label must always remain in place, and affixed to the student, as I will also show later with an excerpt from a tri-annual meeting. This was a decision relegated to the psychologist or speech and language pathologist in initial

meetings, and reinforced by educators in tri-annual meetings. As shown with Taylor's initial meeting, it was very important that a single version of the student prevail to qualify the student in a certain category. In Mehan's (1983) and his colleagues (1986) data of 141 referral IEP meetings, the psychologist's version of the student as learning dis/abled and in need of services was the single preferred version. Thus, over 35 years later, my research confirms what Mehan (1983) and his colleagues (1986) found in initial meetings. In comparing the two data sets, caregiver involvement in decision making about qualifications for special education remains non-existent, although caregivers did share information. Such sharing of information can appear as caregiver involvement in decision making, but is not actual decision making. Caregivers may have made decisions outside of IEP meetings concerning the education of their child, but this discourse analysis studies talk *within* IEP meetings. Within these initial IEP meetings, the psychologist made the decision.

While the psychologist constructed a version that resulted in a decision for special education services, she also, along with educators and caregivers constructed students in hopeful ways. As seen in Taylor's meeting, along with the label affixing dis/ability *inside* the student, educators engaged in social actions to maintain a positive expectancy of good, while locating problems. As of this meeting, Taylor had a learning dis/ability in math; however, Taylor would have a plan to help with her math problem. As described in part one with Heath's meeting, this framework of positive expectancy occurred throughout meetings and occurred across participants. I saw such hopeful constructions as resisting the deficit model framework of the law and legal IEP forms.

The school's decision of the qualifying category was perpetually located on the first page of the IEP with some students having two qualifying categories (i.e., most commonly in this data

set as specific learning dis/ability and language impairment). In labels of learning dis/ability, the state was made accountable for the category, limiting agency of other team members to qualify students. This forever displayed the first decision for services as the educator's domain. Even though psychologists attributed decisions in locating problems to the state, and even though caregivers and students had limited decision making moments, the participants constructed the future in hopeful terms.

Summary of locating problems. Five excerpts from Taylor's meeting demonstrated how participants located problems, with the predominant responsibility to do so relegated to the psychologist. The psychologist constructed her talk rhetorically to prefer agreement with her assessment, and approval of the qualification category. Such constructions involved making the state accountable for the formula to determine specific learning dis/abilities. This reduced the psychologist's stake in the interaction, even as she had agency over how the student was constructed. The psychologist and others worked to frame Taylor in hopeful ways; meaning rarely was a negative description allowed to stand without the speaker or someone else opposing it with a positive description. When locating problems, this hopeful attitude was always present, if not initially, then always eventually, and always before the meeting ended. Even as problems were located, the positive expectation that the student was growing, changing and capable prevailed over the deficit framework of the IEP form.

After locating the problem, the facilitator moved sequentially to the next step of offering the IEP. In annual meetings, the problem was forever located in the dis/ability category so it was a largely unspoken assumption (written on the first page of the IEP form, but rarely discussed in talk). Therefore, most annual meetings shared assessment scores to locate present academic difficulties. In doing so, educators could emphasize growth and construct difficulties as outside

the student and capable of being overcome with hard work, effort, and the continued IEP as written by educators.

Offering Solutions

The second social action that was accomplished through the talk as guided by the IEP form was offering solutions. After qualifying a student as having a dis/ability, the solution offered by the school in three initial meetings in this data set, was an Individualized Education Plan. Schools can also offer Section 504 plans that are similar to IEPs in many respects, but without the funding attached. Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls (1986) argued that the funding districts receive for IEP students was one of the primary reasons that students are identified as needing an IEP, and the reason students tended to stay in special education. While I noted educators continuing students in special education without testing, as I show with Mark's meeting, nothing from the talk in this data set implied that funding was the reason for continuing in special education. In this section, I show how educators offered solutions in initial meetings with Wendy's excerpt. Then, I illustrate how educators offered solutions with goals, using Jenny's and Benny's annual meetings. Finally, I show solutions with accommodations, using Mark's tri-annual meeting.

Offering the IEP. In the three initial meetings in this data set, the IEP was the only solution offered. No 504 plan was offered. The educators came to initial meetings with IEP drafts ready to be signed; emphasizing the decision for the special education solution as already made. Sometimes educators offered the only solution even before the psychologist shared assessment scores that qualified a student. For instance, in Taylor's meeting, the eighth grade special education teacher (RSP) foreshadowed the solution after general education teachers shared information about Taylor's academic difficulties and unproductive behaviors. Following

the pattern of maintaining a hopeful atmosphere, the RSP teacher contrasted the shared information with: “and we've got a good plan we're gonna we'll talk about each of the testing results and things but I think we've got a great plan in place for to help her be successful” (Taylor, line 144). Using repetition to refer to the IEP as a “good” and “great” plan as well as framing it with success provided her mother with one option. Repetition might function here as increasing in force from the first saying to the second saying (Wong, 2000). All three sets of caregivers in these meetings accepted the IEP, and the extra help it meant now that they qualified based on their dis/ability label. Wendy’s initial meeting was an example of how school staff typically offered IEP services.

This excerpt from Wendy’s meeting comes after the psychologist constructed Wendy as having a specific learning dis/ability in math. Similar to Taylor’s meeting shown previously (Excerpt 19), the psychologist shared positive constructions alongside negative information, with a lot of attention paid to Wendy’s strengths.

Excerpt 20: Wendy *(typical; offering IEP).*

Psychologist: what we can do now is provide her with something called an IEP and it is called an individualized education plan and it is considered special education (.) but she will stay in her classroom (.) but what we'll be able to do is provide her with accommodations to make (.) life a little bit easier for her we're hoping that you know (.) through this help you know we can kind of fill in the gaps and try to help her through and especially in high school okay high school now the math track you have to have four upper level math courses

The psychologist used “we,” perhaps to reference the authority of the state and federal laws. It was not a personal decision, but by the state formula and the federal law that the school could

now “provide” Wendy with special education and accommodations. The psychologist constructed the argument without giving caregivers the opportunity to make a decision. “What we’ll be able to do is provide her” showed that the decision for special education was already a foregone conclusion made by the school. This was what the school offered.

Further, the plan offered today would “provide her with accommodations to make life a little bit easier for her (line 4), “fill in the gaps” (line 5), and “help her through” high school; a three part list denoting completion (Jefferson, 1990). Special education was framed as “help” for Wendy’s math. Through this rhetorical and sequential construction, the psychologist argued in such a way as to make the alternative an unwise and even harmful decision for Wendy’s academic career. The only drawback was that, “it is considered special education” (lines 2-3), which the psychologist quickly contrasted with, “but she will stay in her classroom” (line 3). The psychologist then followed this by another three positive statements of what the IEP provided. In the next turn of talk, the psychologist continued sharing specifics about how the IEP would slow down the math for Wendy in high school. The help of special education may come with a stigma, but that stigma was contrasted as necessary for success by both the psychologist and her parents.

Receiving legal services. To contrast the negative of receiving special education help, the psychologist shifted footing to share that the teachers had been accommodating, but that the services were now legal.

Excerpt 21: Wendy *(typical; legal services).*

1 **Psychologist:** and you know her teachers have been great they've accommodated

2 for her because they know that she needs the help but legally on paper and during

3 State Test testing time (.) by having this individualized education plan we can

4 help her even more and I think too like you said the futuristic thing we need to

5 think towards high school

6 **Father:** uh huh

7 **Psychologist:** what can we do (.) if we put this in place (.) she will still $graduate

8 with a high school diploma she'll still be able to go to college$ if she chooses to

9 that’s not gonna be a problem at all but we slow the math path down

10 **Mother:** uh huh

The psychologist just performed a delicate dance of praising and acknowledging the help that teachers gave while also stating that it was not enough. With the IEP, “we can help her even more” (lines 3-4). The resources of the school shifted now that Wendy had an IEP. This was done rhetorically through contrast, which is a powerful part of rhetoric (Billig, 1996). One option was contrasted with another with claims made for one choice as being better. The psychologist set apart the IEP accommodations as special because they were “legally on paper” (line 2), and could help during state testing (line 3). This undermined the alternative of refusing the IEP, and continuing with RTI intervention. Special education with an IEP was the best of school resources to offer Wendy. The use of “you know” (line 1) also worked as a discourse marker to show that what comes after it was explanatory, shared information (Schiffrin, 1987). The use of “you know” here and in other meetings could also serve to reinforce the speaker’s role as presenter of information, and the hearer as recipient of information.

On line 4, the psychologist included the father in the IEP solution with, “like you said the futuristic thing we need to think towards high school.” However, all help was contingent on “if we put this in place” (line 7). Here the parents were included in “we” with the hypothetical “if.” The psychologist might have used “if” to frame a potentially delicate decision (Peräkylä, 1995)

in a gentle way that would make it more acceptable to caregivers. Caregivers needed to agree to the IEP, even if they were not in on the decision to offer one, or in on the creation of the IEP. In reiterating the outcome of the plan, the psychologist had a smile in her voice as she shared that nothing was excluded for Wendy in this offer. Wendy would "still $graduate with a high school diploma she'll still be able to go to college$ (line 7-8). With the repeated use of "still," the psychologist again normalizes the help Wendy would receive. Special education services would not set her apart from her peers, even though it was setting her apart "legally on paper" (line 2). Offering the help with a smile reminded the parents that this was a good plan. Everyone at the table agreed that math was a difficulty, and that the *legal* plan on offer would be a help for Wendy. The idea that Wendy was now labeled and receiving special education supports that set her apart from her peers, was constructed as necessary.

In summary, these two excerpts from Wendy show the offering of the IEP as a solution to the problem. Rhetorically, the solution was difficult to counter in the absence of other choices. Further, all agency and accountability for the solution stood with the school, and the school constructed the IEP as the best legal solution. This connects with Keyona's meeting in part one where the lexical choice of "legal" worked to show the specialness of the IEP. With the acceptance of the IEP, the student received the extra help that they needed to be successful. This meant that the student received goals and accommodations for academics, behaviors, and life skills, as needed. In the next section, I showcase goals as areas where educators shared their limited agency, and therefore accountability for goal creation.

Facilitators presenting goals. The goals listed in the IEP form, served as a presentation of what the institution planned for the student. With the exception of Sprite, special educators and support staff (i.e., Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist) had already

written all goals on the IEP form prior to the meeting, and these goals were presented to caregivers and students. Goals make predictions based on current levels of performance; the purview of educators with test scores and classroom performance at their disposal. With drop down menus on Easy IEP™ software, and the policies that goals must reflect grade level standards, case managers had little autonomy to make an IEP reflective of the individual needs of the student, as will be shown in Benny's meeting. I believe this could explain why, in the majority of meetings, facilitators minimally addressed goals, as I will show in Jenny's meeting. Many of the facilitators would hold all of the goal sheets together in one hand, or quickly flip through them, with a generalized statement swiftly informing parents and students, if present, of the existence of goals and accommodations. In this section, I demonstrate how educators typically presented goals with an excerpt from Jenny's meeting. Then, I demonstrate a variation with three excerpts from Benny's meeting where Benny's mother challenged the practice of writing goals at grade level, even when Benny showed significantly lower grade levels.

Facilitators typically over-viewing goals. In this excerpt, the seventh grade RSP gives a typical overview of the goals on the IEP. This excerpt begins after the RSP has described the transition page as "to be determined later" (Jenny transcript, line 354).

Excerpt 22: Jenny *(typical; offering goals).*

RSP: and then [flipping IEP pages] is all her goals (1) for seventh grade and eighth grade Mr RSP has put on eighth grade goals and all of these help (1.5) not just focus on the areas that she just needs to improve but they're also covered (.) in what the teachers are covering that the state expects the teachers to teach, so its all connected

Mother: okay

Just as in Danielle's meeting (Excerpt 5), goals are "put on" (line 2), a lexical choice demonstrating educators creation of the goals. The RSP made the state accountable for goals with "the state expects" (line 4). The inference was that goals are "put on" following state guidelines, and not necessarily teacher choice (lines 3-4). The goals were vaguely referred to rather than specifically, and the RSP designed her turn for agreement, rather than a decision making moment for what goals should be written on the IEP. The finding of a goal written during one meeting with parents present (i.e, Sprite, N=2 % of total meetings), was well below caregiver perceptions in the National Longitudinal Transition Study data (Newman, 2005). Newman (2005) reported that parents indicated their perceptions of goals primarily developed by the school and family (33 %) or the family/youth (21 %), with only 45 % perceiving goals as developed by the school. In this study, 98 % of meetings had goals developed by the school.

Yet, in only Benny's meeting did a mother challenge the creation and presentation of goals, and even then, she did not challenge the assymetrical participation of educator dominance (Heritage, 1997) in writing goals. She challenged the gap between Benny's performance as shown with current testing, and the goals and objectives on the IEP.

Writing goals to standards. The following excerpt from Benny's meeting illustrates how facilitators must write goals to eighth grade standard performance indicators (SPIs). According to the Woodcock Johnson Achievement test, Benny's broad reading, math, and written language skills were mid second grade level. Setting goals six grades above Benny's current level did not pass without comment by the mother. Benny's eighth grade special education teacher, Benny's mother, and the district administrator of special education worked up both lack of agency and making the state accountable. They did this through explaining and questioning, as I show in the

next three excerpts. As was typical in most meetings (see Jenny, Excerpt 22), the eighth grade RSP offered goals initially in the same manner as the seventh grade RSP.

Excerpt 23: Benny *(variation; offering goals).*

1 **8th RSP:** pages right there on the IEP (.) pages seventeen through nineteen those

2 are our goals [flips pages] for reading written language and mathematics that I

3 have in place for him those are eight (.) eighth grade standards that we are (1)

4 obligated to teach right there

Beginning his turn on lines one and two, the RSP listed three broad categories of goals. In this way we see how the IEP form also used three-part lists to denote completion (Jefferson, 1990; Potter, 1996). On lines three and four, the RSP made the state accountable with lexical choices of "obligated" and "have to," demonstrating his lack of responsibility for the creation of goals. His turn design included a rationale, perhaps to forestall a challenge from the mother (Billig, 1996).

Of importance in this turn design was what was not present: there was no opportunity for the creation of goals together. Instead, these were obligations, as the RSP further explained.

Excerpt 24: Benny *(variation; lack of agency with goals).*

1 **8th RSP:** those are things that we have to [get

2 **Mother:** [this-

3 **RSP:** THROUGH the state and things have to get through those [SPIs and

4 **Mother:** [so you have to put it like that=

5 **RSP:** =have to go through-

6 **Mother:** =this is-Dr Ascot[45] was just really (1) concerned about that part he said

7 how do you get from (1) where he is (2.5) to here?

8 **RSP:** right the the state requires that I teach [the certain curriculum

9 **Mother:** [with that goal

10 **RSP:** there are certain skills and SPIs that I have to teach (.5) to get him

11 through so we can (1) try to master State tests and some of those (1) assessments

12 that that we have comin up (.) and so that's why (.5) we tailor his goals towards

13 those (.) to try to make sure that he (1) gains that knowledge

In this excerpt, the RSP and the mother overlapped at times (lines 8-9) as they discussed the rationale for higher goals. These overlaps were at transition relevant points, and indicated that speakers were attending to the turn-by-turn nature of talk (Jefferson, 1986). However, overlaps also show repairs (lines 1-4): in which the mother abandoned her utterance (line 2), and reformulated it into a question on line four (Jefferson, 1972; Schegloff, 1979). The RSP's speech was riddled with "have to," and references to the state, limiting his own accountability and agency. Both speakers were carefully attending to each other's talk to mitigate potential conflict.

Although much is happening discursively in this excerpt that I do not examine for the sake of time, I will note that of all 63 meetings, only Benny's mother questioned goals. The mother began her turn on line four by aligning herself with the RSP in acknowledgement that he had to write the goals, "like that." It is difficult to simultaneously agree, and call into question the goals. To do so, the mother masterfully shifted footing on lines six and seven so that she made Dr. Ascot, an outside assessor, accountable for her concern. Using reported speech, the

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[45] Dr. Ascot was an outside assessor whose report the 8th RSP had read, and that the mother referred to in support of her reports.

mother placed the question that all team members could be asking in Dr. Ascot's mouth: "how do you get from where he is to here?" Reported speech increases the believability of her report, as she constructs her utterance as fact (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Like the mother's carefully vague and distanced question, the RSP's response, and that of the special education administrator later in the talk, were equally full of discursive resources, such as hedging and vague formulations (Sacks, 1992), to reduce accountability.

The special education administrator added his explanation to further the RSP's justification:

Excerpt 25: Benny *(variation; lack of agency with goals).*

1 **Special Education Administrator (SEA):** that dudn't mean that he's not being-

2 that his instructional level is not lower then that (1) but (.) the goals have to be

3 written at grade level but the objectives (1) can be written at his present level

4 **Mother:** [nods]

5 **SEA:** you know to try to work toward (1) you know cause you know he dudn't

6 even have the option of selecting a seventh grade or a fifth grade goal you know

7 to match up this so that's why it has to be written that way

The RSP, "dudn't even have the option of selecting" (line 5-6) on the EasyIEP™ menu what would best reflect an achievable goal. Thus, the administrator made EasyIEP™ accountable, a software company with policies outside the reach of everyone sitting at the table. The institutional procedure could then appear set in stone, outside educator, caregiver, and even administrator agency. Goals were reduced to a record for a "certain curriculum" (Excerpt 24, line 8) that did not necessarily address the skills Benny might need.

For Benny, objectives were set six grades away from his current performance. Looking at his IEP, Benny's annual goals for reading, written language, and math were to increase "scores by six months as measured by the Woodcock Johnson III achievement test" (Benny, IEP pages 17-19). Of the eight objectives for reading and writing set to eighth grade SPIs, all have the appearance of being created for Benny's instructional level of second grade. They addressed skills of fluency, comprehension, independent reading, writing with proper grammar and sentence structure: reading and writing goals that suit any level. However, Benny's objectives for math, written to eighth grade SPIs, referenced performing algebraic operations, understanding algebraic relationships, and solving linear equations. These were well outside Benny's present second grade level of math performance assessed by the Woodcock Johnson. However, the RSP and the administrator rhetorically and sequentially organized their talk to make the school unaccountable for having to make goals that were not achievable.

To further emphasize the shifting nature of state requirements upon which educators must stand, in a subsequent turn, the special education administrator continued that the Common Core Standards would require changes, but even when those changes came through on EasyIEP™, the RSP would be in a similar position of choosing grade level goals despite current levels of functioning. Not only now, but in the future, the ability to make decisions about goals was attributed to the state and to EasyIEP™, not with educators and administrators. This further worked to minimize school accountability, because it was the state requiring it, and not the whim of the speaker. Further, the administrator reported second-hand, vague information to reduce accountability (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The only response the mother had was to nod.

Goals, agency, and accountability. In Benny's meeting, the meaning of some goals as measured stepping stones was effectively eviscerated, and goals were reduced to a hollow

standard off in the distance. Not only did this reduce facilitator agency, but also goals on the IEP become a non-issue because they could not be written slightly above the child's present level of performance. Thus, in this meeting and the other 62 meetings, educators did not read specific goals and objectives out loud. There was no need to read goals and objectives that were not and cannot be tailored to the student by those responsible for day to day systematic instruction. Facilitators, when they referred to goals at all, did so as a listing of broad categories or referred to them like the RSP as "in place" (Excerpt 23, line 3). Such lexical choice demonstrated the goals as pre-determined and fixed.

As already shown in part one, neither caregivers nor students had equal decision making power with educators. However, that educators also declared their lack of agency in relation to the IEP form was also seen when presenting goals, as shown in Benny's excerpts. As seen throughout this data set and demonstrated by Benny's meeting, goals were written on the IEP, but not read aloud, except in vague categories. Goal sheets were held together all at once and presented in generic terms by facilitators. This finding is consistent with research by Lovitt and his colleagues (1994). On the IEP forms in Lovitt and his colleagues' study, examination of the goals showed a lack of individuation, lack of student friendly language, and an overwhelming number of goals and objectives. While I did not interview students, from this data, the comment by a student in Lovitt and his colleagues' study would likely hold true for these meetings: "I just know that teachers fill it out and they talk to my parents or something" (p. 36). Naming specific goals was not possible if they were never taught to the student or presented to the caregiver in detail during the meeting. Thus, the IEP meeting becomes less about goals, and more about performing institutional procedures to result in signing of the IEP form. This finding remained similar regardless of student presence.

In the four excerpts shown for offering goals, both educators and caregivers appeared to have limited agency when it came to goal creation. Educators and administrators, as shown in Benny's meeting, worked to show the school as unaccountable for the institutional procedures of goal creation and blamed the state when challenged. In the next and final section, I show how facilitators offered accommodations.

Offering accommodations. Similar to goals, some facilitators also read accommodations as if they had little agency in their creation, even though the facilitators had chosen the accommodations on the IEP previous to the meeting. In the 56 Resource (RSP) meetings, facilitators tended to read the accommodations and modifications in greater detail than the goals[46]. The difference could lie in the relevancy of accommodations to the classroom type, and that RSP facilitators had greater agency in choosing accommodations. Reading the list of accommodations in greater or lesser detail occurred in meetings with and without students. The only difference when students were present was that facilitators would often address accommodations to students, and often with a confirming or agreement question. In all RSP meetings, accommodations seemed to function as a justification for keeping students on consultation, completely participating fully in general education classes, despite assessment scores that showed the student at grade level. I share how justification was done without the student present in Mark's tri-annual meeting.

Accommodations in tri-annual meetings. When students attended, in most of the eighth grade meetings, the facilitator designed their turn to read the accommodations and ask for student agreement. This was not a particularly interesting finding unless taken together with how

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[46] In Comprehensive Day Classes (CDC), students were in a special day class all day long and so accommodations and modifications were assumed. Thus, the seven CDC meetings did not cover accommodations and modifications.

accommodations were used in meetings. In Mark's tri-annual meeting, educators used his need for accommodations in class and on the state tests as the rationale for continuing him in special education, regardless of the fact that he no longer qualified for speech and language services under his only eligibility label of language impairment.

This excerpt occurred at the beginning of the meeting, before Mark came into the room, and indicated the school's argument for keeping Mark in special education. The RSP strengthens his factual claim by noting his alliance with Mr. Speech (line 1), and that Mark be "allowed" to continue services as beneficial (line 10).

Excerpt 26: Mark *(typical; offering accommodations without student)*

1 **8th RSP:** my feeling and I've talked to Mr. Speech and things we feel that we
2 need to leave him in for accommodations reasons and things like that for so he's
3 still allowed to get those accommodations and the modifications like extended
4 time and the tests to be read aloud and things like that so my feelings is that we
5 keep him and sign off to allow him to continue services for another three more
6 years
7 **Mother:** oh
8 **RSP:** is that
9 **Mother:** is that what you think?
10 **RSP:** I think so I think that would be beneficial for him to

At this point, the speech and language therapist (SLP) interrupts. Since Mark was diagnosed with a language impairment, he needed to simultaneously justify why Mark would continue to receive special education services without receiving speech services. Mark's mother and the SLP worked to locate the difficulty outside of Mark's language because that had been previously described as

"most of the time they're um on target," and "kinda on target for me" (Mark transcript, line 39). In the construction of the utterance, the SLP did some serious hedging to reduce his stake. With "most of the time" and "kinda on," the SLP minimizes his stake in the interaction to manage his accountability should he be challenged (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Without using test scores as evidence, it was agreed that Mark "still needs help" (Mark transcript, line 42). This constructed fact stood in for the testing that placed Mark in special education. Everyone agreed that they *feel like* Mark still needed services, and they would be uncomfortable if they were removed. No further testing was done. Even though Mark's mother described a heart condition due to pre-mature birth, focusing issues, and difficulties with math, none of these have anything to do with the official diagnosis of language impairment for which the speech and language therapist had said several times were on target. Mark's continuation appeared to be based on emotion, and certainly was not on assessment evidence, as the RSP used "feel" (line 1, two times), "feelings" (line 4), and "think" (line 10) when making his recommendation. With Mark's meeting taken in comparison to the carefully presented case in Taylor's five excerpts to locate Taylor's qualifying dis/ability, there was a drastic difference between initial meetings, annual meetings, and tri-annual meetings for what counted as evidence in how decisions were made. While much more was happening in this excerpt that I do not go into for lack of space, it was clear that educators made the decision. In Mark's meeting, the special educator noted that continuing in special education was "beneficial" (line 10); and the decision was concluded.

Summary of offering solutions. The IEP form only addressed sanctioned areas related to academic performance or behaviors contributing to academic performance that educators could conceivably address with school resources. The IEP form legally dictated for the

individual what could be addressed with institutional resources. An IEP was only individualized to the extent of the resources available, and was the only help on offer. Talk needed to stay focused on what was available. While goals were determined by standards and constructed as outside the realm of IEP team member agency, there was more expressed accountability and agency with accommodations. Unlike goals, accommodations could come off or stay on the IEP based on student needs. As seen in Mark's meeting, the need for accommodations was the rationale for students continuing in special education, despite lack of testing. Accommodations could become the crux of educator decisions about continuing services; a service that educators expressed more control over than goals. Therefore, accommodations became a huge bargaining unit when arguing for special education services.

As in locating problems, educators offered solutions as a presentation of their own previously made decisions. As in all presentation of services, no matter how brief, facilitators needed agreement in order to be legal, and the IEP to be updated and complete. Therefore, the third and final social action in the overall sequence was performing agreement.

Performing Agreement

The third social action that was accomplished through the talk, as guided by the form, was performing agreement. The decision to offer an IEP, made by educators, only needed the agreement of caregivers to take effect. There was no need for a decision; but a binary choice of: (1) "Yes, I want services, or (2) "No, I do not want my child to receive help for math and/or reading." In the three initials I attended, the choice was "yes" in the absence of other choices. Accepting the school's solution of special education meant that the student received the help they needed to succeed. Thus, facilitators framed agreements to the IEP as presented as helping the

student. In the next two sections, I show the special education solution framed as “help” in Raj’s meeting, and the signing of the form in Wendy’s meeting.

After the sharing of scores, the seventh grade special education (RSP) teacher asked for agreement to the IEP for Raj.

Excerpt 27: Raj *(typical; performing agreement).*

1 **7th RSP:** do do you all agree that you would like for him to be certified with

2 this language impairment

3 **Mother:** yeah if it's gonna help him [because he's been strugglin for awhile

4 **7th RSP:** [to be able to provide the-

5 **Mother:** and he needs the help I mean cause I do things with him at home I'll read

6 to him and he'll read to me (.5) and then we'll talk about what was read but (1) it’s

7 been (.5) a slow process (.5) so

8 **7th RSP:** um hum

9 **Mother**: this would I think will help him

10 **7th RSP:** well we can sign this today

The mother picked up the rhetoric of special education as “help” that the speech and language therapist and the special education teacher shared as they established Raj’s eligibility. The language impairment label was not taken up heartily by the mother, but rather contingently with “yeah, if it’s gonna help him” (line 3). Her reason was “because he’s been struggling for awhile” (line 3), not that Raj had the newly minted language impairment. The focus was on the solution. The mother referenced three times that the certification for services would help Raj (lines 3, 5, and 9). Each time she noted “help,” her reference was stronger. First, the help was hypothetical

"if it's gonna help him" (line 3), as if the mother was easing into the idea of the IEP with the use of the hypothetical (Peräkylä, 1995).

Then, the mother iterated that Raj "needs the help" (line 5). She established this as fact with an account of how reading at home was "a slow process" (line 7). Her conclusion with "so" (line 7) was that this plan "would I think will help him" (line 9). "So" worked as a discourse marker to indicate her conclusion (Schiffren, 1987). There was a positive expectation (i.e., "would/will") that the IEP would result in help for Raj. Again, we see the maintenance of hopeful possibilities for a concrete academic skill of reading. Language impairment certification was agreed to only because Raj would receive the help along with it. The mother and father were ready to sign.

Signing the IEP. Interestingly, on the IEP form, there was only one spot for the parent to sign, as we see in Wendy's meeting. However, on the qualification form, there are two spots for legal caregivers to sign. In the following excerpt, the facilitator emphasized the appropriate places to sign to complete the IEP meeting legally, and following all institutional procedures (Heritage, 1997).

Excerpt 28: Wendy *(typical; signing IEP).*

1 **7th RSP:** okay well I've got um four places on this form and we'll pass this around
2 everybody will sign but the top part says that you were invited to participate in the
3 meeting and that you've been here to get all the input and the feedback so you'd
4 sign and there's only one spot but one of you could sign here and one of you could
5 just write in parent down here and you can both still sign (1.) and this part says for
6 the eligibility determination that she is eligible (.5) so the part of signing down
7 here is that you've been part of this meeting and that you agree that she can be

8 served under that certification so she can receive services (.5) and there are two

9 spots two lines up here spots for parents to sign

Agreement means signing multiple forms that served to emphasize the institutional, legal nature of the meeting. As seen in Raj's and Wendy's meeting, signing the eligibility and IEP forms made the meeting official. In the words of the psychologist in Taylor's meeting, the qualifying category means the school could "legally provide" Taylor with help in the form of an IEP (Taylor transcript, line 392). For Wendy's meeting, the IEP form showed that help was offered "legally on paper" (Wendy transcript, line 234).

Caregivers need only sign the IEP to agree to services for their child. There was no spot for the student to sign at initial IEP meetings. Students were not expected at initial IEPs, thus there was no place for them to sign on the form. If the meeting was a *discussion* of strengths, needs, and goals, then it would make sense for the student to be present. Yet, initials were meetings to agree to the school's decision to offer special education services. Annuals and tri-annuals were presentations about what the school offered. When students were present in eighth grade meetings, they also signed the IEP to signify their agreement to the plan. In tri-annual meetings, educators looked to students and caregivers for confirmation that nothing should be changed, and that continued special education services were needed for continued success in high school, as shown in Mark's meeting. For most tri-annuals the rhetorical structure of the meeting included referencing the dis/ability category, usually in conjunction with sharing current performance. As seen in Mark's meeting, no tri-annuals in this data set included further testing to establish need for special education services. "Participate" for caregivers and teachers, looked like sharing information that resulted in agreement to a decision already made.

Summary of performing agreement. The final social action of institutional talk in IEP meetings was signing the IEP to show agreement. Every IEP meeting I attended resulted in agreeing to the IEP as presented. Signing in initial meetings required multiple explanations, as seen in Raj's and Wendy's meetings, to be sure of the fulfillment of the institutional requirement of both agreement to the IEP, and signatures in appropriate places on the IEP. With the signing of the IEP, most meetings were then concluded.

Summary of Part Two

In summary, in following the sequence of the IEP form to locate problems and offer solutions, the educators nearly always made the decisions, and presented them to caregivers. Qualifying initial meetings, re-qualifying tri-annual meetings, and annual meetings were not decision making meetings for caregivers because there was no array of alternatives sequentially presented from which to make a choice. Rather, initial meetings were rhetorically constructed presentations of decisions about qualifying categories that located the problem within the student, as shown in Taylor's meeting. Team members attributed problems to students in initial meetings without the student present. Educators made decisions to qualify students and offer IEPs. The presentation of the problem and the solution together rhetorically sequenced talk and the IEP form to structure decisions as already made. The only resources available were what the school was offering, and only under qualifying categories. These qualifying categories were taken up as unchanging in tri-annual meetings regardless of the label, and in the absence of further testing.

The only solution on offer was the IEP as shown in Wendy's meeting, with the goals and accommodations being highlighted, as shown in Jenny's, Benny's, and Mark's meetings. Year after year, caregivers agreed to and signed the legal IEP, as shown in Raj's and Wendy's

meetings. At age fourteen (sixteen in some states), students also join in the meeting to agree to services. Once the team initially made the decision, the student had the possibility to always stay in special education; even when they were performing at the level of their peers; no further testing was done in tri-annuals. The IEP was rhetorically framed as a great plan to help students be successful, perhaps throughout their academic career; an IEP to which everyone in this data set agreed and signed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter was divided into two parts. In part one, I addressed the three interaction styles that participants used to manage and negotiate decision making in meetings. In part two, I addressed the overall structure of the IEP form that sequenced how decisions were presented in IEP meetings to result in a signed IEP. In the first part, I demonstrated how the predominate presentation style in 59 meetings, resulted in participants engaging in meetings as if decisions were already made and simply needing agreement. I showed how caregivers and students were cued to unequal modes of participation in decision making, how the completed IEP worked to limit the agency and accountability of caregivers and students with the IEP form, and how attention to the legal forms worked to reinforce the institutional goals of the meeting. Participants managed their stake and interest, and facilitators made the state accountable for the procedures and purposes of the IEP meeting. I also described how the facilitator's use of questions worked to open the floor for shared interactions that constructed hope, even though there was not shared decision making.

In the second section on shared information interactions, I reported the finding that all meetings had shared interactions, but that those interactions did not necessarily result in changes to the IEP, but instead were sharing of perspectives. It was especially important when students

were present that they shared information about their careers interests and course electives, and facilitators made this part of the purpose of the meeting. Only when students were present was there an opportunity for them to share their own perspectives about their future. In the second section, I also demonstrated how the four CDC meetings that exhibited a shared information style amongst all participants resulted in the only caregiver in this data set leading a meeting with a description of her son, Heath. Within this section, I also showed how the construction of hope by participants worked to reframe the meeting with a positive expectancy for success so that a deficit perspective did not dominate talk. Participants worked to balance negative talk with positive talk about the student, and an atmosphere of hope resulted, if not initially, then always eventually by the meetings' end. When students were present, they were able to hear and share in the hopeful constructions of their future.

In the final section of part one, I reported how, in nine meetings, participants engaged in *spontaneous* shared decision making. I exhibited Ashley's meeting to show how participants worked together to accomplish interpreting assessments and setting her academic course for high school with her as a major player at the decision making table. Of interest is how only nine meetings in this data set included spontaneous shared decision making, and only one of the nine included a student in decision making outside of the typical topics for students to share information. Also of interest, and demonstrated by Sprite's meeting, was the relative ease by which a goal was created and added, the only meeting in which this occurred throughout the data set. Both variations show the possibilities of engaging in spontaneous shared decision making moments with students and caregivers appearing to share equal decision making power with educators. With Ashley present, different constructions including the student in decision making were made possible. Thus, her meeting speaks to the importance of students sharing information

and sharing in actual decision making moments. Of importance is knowing how to create and encourage such decision moments as intentional, rather than spontaneous.

In the second part of my findings, I demonstrated how the IEP form structured talk to prefer educator's locating problems and offering solutions, with caregivers performing agreement to the completed IEP. I demonstrated how this overall sequence worked rhetorically to keep decisions in the hand of educators, there was no problem to be solved together, but an immediate choice for special education services. Yet, educators worked to show the state as the entity to be held accountable for qualifications and written goals, thus distancing themselves as the decision makers. Such constructions were difficult to counter, and educators framed special education as the only help offered.

Through tri-annual meetings, I showed how the preference was for continuance in special education for the benefits of receiving accommodations in the regular classroom, without assessments as evidence. Thus, the psychologist worked hard in initial meetings to locate problems within the student using a qualifying category with supporting evidence from assessments. However, in tri-annuals, students continued to receive special education based on the perceived benefits and the success of the student with current accommodations. All caregivers and students agreed to the IEP as presented, completing the institutional goal of the IEP meeting. Even though participants did not share equal decision making power in these meetings, participants constructed an atmosphere of hope to show that despite their construction of difficulties as within the child, there were solutions. Such solutions were working and were expected to continue to work. Thus, in a way, participants overcame the institutional rules, and legal boundaries of the talk to show that the student was a capable individual, actively growing, even if he was in need of special education services.

Chapter 5:

Conclusions, Considerations, and Recommendations

Involving parents and students in special educational planning has been a federal priority for many years (Will, 1984; IDEA, 1990). Promising approaches include students making decisions about their future academic career with educators and caregivers in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Including students with dis/abilities in decision making about their future is crucial to success (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Test, et al, 2004), increased academic achievement (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2009), and increased parent involvement (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al, 2004). Yet, Martin and his colleagues (2006) observed that even when students were present in meetings, they do not appear to talk much: three percent of the time in 109 secondary meetings. Although a few discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis studies examined referral meetings and one annual meeting, what was not known was how middle school students contributed to IEP decision making interactions in turn-by-turn actual talk.

This discourse analysis of 63 middle school IEP meetings compared interactions with or without students present to explore how participants achieved decision making. I analyzed the audio recorded meetings using the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993) and conversation analysis (Heritage, 1997; Sacks, 1992), to show how speakers rhetorically constructed talk. Chapters 1 through 4 explained the background, current literature, methodological framework, methods, and my findings. In the next three sections, I provide: (1) a synthesis and implications of findings; (2) considerations for improving practice; and (3) recommendations for future research.

Synthesis and Implications of Findings

I synthesize the findings according to the three criteria of the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1993), and some conversational features of institutional talk (Heritage, 1997). Accordingly, I organize this section into how participants: (1) used language to perform social actions; (2) rhetorically constructed talk to display factual accounts, and manage stake and interest; (3) attended to accountability and agency; and (4) managed institutional roles and institutional procedures to result in signing of the IEP.

Using language to perform social actions

Focusing on action allowed an analysis of how IEP participants purposefully constructed their accounts to do certain things (Edwards & Potter, 1992). An action oriented approach to this data demonstrated how facilitators allowed and constrained contributions with turn-taking and turn-design, in service to the goal of a signed IEP. Whether expressed or not, the IEP form guided the talk and acted as a hidden facilitator of social actions within the meeting. That is, the overall discursive structure of the IEP form worked as an overarching institutional framework for the meeting. I observed three styles of interactions: (1) presentation interactions; (2) shared information interactions; and (3) spontaneous shared decision making. Undergirding all three styles were “interactions of hope” in which participants constructed events and students in hopeful ways.

Presenting information. First, the most frequently used interaction was presentation of decisions already made by facilitators, with agreement by caregivers and students. These looked like long turns of talk by facilitators reviewing completed IEP drafts, and interspersing their review with invitations for questions. This corroborates findings from previous interaction studies in referral meetings where psychologists held the floor for long periods of time (Dufon,

1993; Mehan, 1983; Mehan, 1984; Mehan, et al, 1986; Plum, 2008), or educators held the floor for long turns of talk (Peters, 2003; Harris, 2010; Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011). From this research, it appears that caregivers and students willingly engaged in agreement to presentation interactions in the majority of meetings, as Harris (2010) also found in his study with caregivers.

Similar to previous findings (Harris, 2010; Martin et al, 2006; Mehan, et al, 1986; Peters, 2003; Plum, 2003), the presentation format in these meetings followed the main sections of the overall IEP form structure. Attention to the IEP form induced the beginnings and endings of conversation points (Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011). Similar to this study, Ruppar and Gaffney (2011) observed that this prompted turn-taking interactions that reduced decision making opportunities for discussion of assessment information and IEP goals. Facilitators accomplished the social order of facilitator presenting and other team members listening by sequentially organizing long turns of talk interspaced with inviting questions of caregivers and students. This was done by facilitators sometimes inviting caregivers with “if you have any questions you just stop me” (Danielle, line 36), and also inviting questions throughout the meeting. Such statements clue other IEP members that the facilitator will be doing most of the talking in order to complete the IEP.

This presentation style of interaction varied little with students present. Facilitators invited students to share information on transition related topics and to ask questions. However, like their caregivers, students shared information or asked questions less frequently in meetings where presentation style interactions dominated, than in meetings where shared information was more the norm (i.e., in four CDC meetings as demonstrated by Heath, Excerpts 7-9). In addition, students responded more frequently when their responses were valued and taken up as meaningful to the IEP (i.e., the ten HMS meetings, as demonstrated by Danielle Excerpt 6).

Because presentation style interactions diminished involvement in decision making, it begs the question of what might occur in interactions if facilitators placed students in the role of presenter, and students reported and constructed accounts of their progress and goals, rather than a third party. Transition planning for secondary students necessitates additional and more in depth discussion of career interests, training, education, and goals for postsecondary activities and employment, and was only seen in some meetings. More involvement, though not necessarily in decision making, occurred with shared informational interactions, especially with students.

Shared information interactions. Second, another common interaction style was shared information interactions. When students were present, facilitators invited them to share information about transition related topics, and choose high school electives. The importance of such sharing of information by the student himself/herself, cannot be overstated. The opportunity for shared ownership of the IEP was more available in meetings where additions to the IEP occurred as a result of students' sharing information. Shared information interactions did not result in additions to the IEP, except in 13 meetings with students present at HMS. In addition, in four meetings at GMS, with and without students, shared interactions were the norm, resulting in greater involvement by all participants, but not in decision making, except in one meeting. Rather than the facilitator reading from the completed IEP, she shared stories, and other IEP participants also added their own stories and descriptions. Her meetings were marked by the only time a facilitator asked a caregiver to provide a description of the student (e.g., Heath, Excerpts 7-9), rather than the facilitator providing the description. Also, in only Sprite's meeting (Excerpts 12-14) was a goal added to the IEP draft in the meeting. Shared interactions result in constructions different from the norm. This allowed interactions that encouraged caregiver and student participation.

Of interest was that while presentation style interactions were the norm, shared interactions did also occur, and the institutional goal of agreeing and signing the IEP still occurred. This shows that the presentation style may not be necessary in order to accomplish the goals of the meeting, and connects to research that placed students in the role of presenter of decisions in student led meetings (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Kelley et al, 2013; Test, et al, 2004; Woods, et al, 2010; Woods, et al, 2013). Of interest also was how the written IEP did not always reflect the discussions with students within meetings about their future careers. Therefore, studies that examine solely IEP forms may falsely conclude that discussions about the future, and student interests did not occur. More exploration is needed to show how students may have made decisions together with educators prior to the meeting, or may be a mouthpiece within meetings for decisions made for them by educators. Where shared information occurred, spontaneous shared decision making also sometimes occurred.

Spontaneous shared decision making. Third, shared information interactions turned into spontaneous shared decision making moments in nine meetings. In these nine meetings, both with and without students, written changes to the IEP resulted. As demonstrated with both Ashley's and Sprite's meetings, shared decision making moments afforded social actions not provided to others. In the other seven meetings where spontaneous shared decision making occurred, all participants worked together to make a change to the already completed IEP draft. Facilitators in Ashley's meeting set her as the valued expert with information necessary to making a decision about high school placement. In Sprite's meeting, the speech and language therapist picked up a subtle desire by the mother, and wrote a goal in response. It is unclear if the shared interaction made it easier for the speech and language therapist to subtly pick up on the

mother's cue about Sprite's stammer, but a deeper analysis for another study may reveal more here.

Because of Ashley's unique case of equal student decision making power with educators, and because of Sprite's meeting that uniquely involved the spontaneous creation of a speech goal within the meeting, other more dominant ways of interaction, like the presentation style, can be called into question. Greater possibilities for shared interaction occurred when facilitators let go of the presentation style interaction. Mehan and his colleagues (1986) noted that decision making was socially distributed as, "an enactment of routines" (p. 171) to place students in special education, rather than a decision made by all team members. Thirty-five years later, this is still the case with the presentation style prevailing, but with shared information interactions also occurring with the even more rare shared decision making moments. Of interest was what would happen if shared decision making was built into the meeting format, and became the new routine.

It is an open question as to whether facilitators using a different meeting format, like one of the strengths based approaches (e.g., communities of practice, person-centered planning, and student directed IEPs), may result in more shared decision making. In this data set, fifty-nine meetings predominantly used the presentation format; with limited moments for shared decision making due to the presentation of the IEP. However, in the meetings here, caregivers appeared content or "willingly passive participants" (Harris, 2010, p. 174). Prior to and after shared decision making in six of the nine meetings, the presentation style with agreement prevailed. Benny's and Peyton's meetings offered a contrast because of the number of challenges by the mothers in the meetings, which made these two meetings a presentation format by facilitators with challenges and questions by mothers (e.g., Benny Excerpts 23-25). In the four CDC meetings that showed greater shared information interactions and fewer challenges, and Sprite's

meeting with a shared decision making moment, there was a different way of interacting other than presentation.

The question becomes, “If parents were offered a different way of interacting, would they choose to be more involved?” While it may be tempting to say that caregivers and students engaged in shared information interactions and shared decision making interactions at the level they desired, it is impossible to say from this research. What can be said was that in these four CDC meetings, shared interactions occurred to a greater extent than other meetings, and there were fewer challenges to utterances (N=2) on average than other meetings (N=10). However, with the exception of three of the nine meetings in which spontaneous decision making moments ocurred, the presentation style prevailed.

Prunty’s (2011) study and others (Esquivel, Ryan, & Bonner, 2008; Fish, 2006, 2008; Mortier, et al, 2009; Mortier, et al, 2010; Reiman, Beck, Coppola, & Engiles, 2010; Rueda, et al, 2005; Sheehey, 2006) reported that parents desired greater participation in sharing information that related to the IEP, and felt excluded from decision making. The findings in this study show that parents and students *were* excluded from decision making in the talk of the meeting, and that such exclusion was built into the sequence and structure of the IEP form, as well as policies for qualifying students. The information that caregivers and students shared had little effect on the IEP form except in nine meetings where shared decision making took place. Given this finding, it is important to not assume that everyone wants to be involved in shared decision making.

Caregivers may not want to be involved in educational decisions to the extent that others would like them to be. Harris (2010) found that 66 % of parents felt that they were an equal partner in the meeting. Fifty-five percent indicated that they “fully” (p. 179) participated in decision making, and 33% were active in contributing to goals. A number of parents (44%)

indicated preference for the IEP written ahead of time. Discrepancies between parent perceptions of participation and their observed participation led Harris to conclude that parents have a differing view of participation in decision making than he did, and that further research needed to be done examining how parents define participation. Jones and Gansle (2010) also found discrepancies between actual, observed participation and caregiver and teacher reports of involvement. It may be that parents are involved as they think they should be, given the presentation style and preference for agreement infused in facilitator turns of talk.

However, caregivers may not know of the possibilities of shared decision making unless facilitators offer them the opportunities for such. In the IEP meetings in this study, without student led processes, educators noted their own lack of agency and accountability around the IEP form and goals. The presentation format limited other team members' involvement. Of interest is how this might change when using a student led process. In Childre and Chambers (2005) study that trained parents and students in a student-led process, caregivers assumed they were supposed to take passive roles in the IEP meeting. Before training, families felt they participated, but this participation was listening and answering questions, much like in this data set. After the student led training, caregivers reported in post interviews that they saw themselves and their children as active participants, and were more satisfied with their involvement within meetings. In two meetings, students shared information about their educational strengths and their future dreams. Three students shared information related to goals and their future before the meeting that educators then shared in the meeting on behalf of the student (Childre & Chambers, 2005). In this data set, shared decision making was not the norm, and the question remains as to whether changing the IEP form to emphasize decision making together would increase educator, student, and caregiver agency and accountability around the IEP form.

Shared decision making did not appear to be an intentional focus in these 63 meetings, because shared decision making occurred within shared information interactions in largely a presentation style of interaction. If the benefits of shared decision making with students are to be realized (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2010; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Test, et al, 2004), a different, more direct approach may be needed, including the training of students and teachers in student centered approaches. It may be that if shared decision making is going to occur, that it occurs *outside* of meetings with students who then share their decisions that they co-constructed with educators *during* their IEP meetings (Thoma & Wehman, 2010). In the absence of shared decision making, all participants shared in the hopeful constructions of future success.

Interactions of hope. Throughout all three styles of interaction, in conjunction with others and within their own turns of talk, participants constructed hope. Rarely was a negative description allowed to stand without the speaker or someone else opposing it with a positive description (e.g., Flossy, Excerpt 3; Heath, Excerpts 7-9; Taylor, Excerpts 15-19). Similar to Jefferson's "troubles talk" (1988), when constructing hope, participants did not sequentially order positive and negative statements, but the elements of positive/negative were always there. Even as problems were located, the positive expectation that the student was a growing, changing, and capable individual was constructed alongside the dis/ability label, academic struggle, or behavior difficulty. This hopeful attitude was always present, if not initially, then always eventually, and always before the meeting ended. Not only was it evident in presentation interactions with inviting questions from caregivers and students, but also in shared information interactions, which always resulted in co-construction of hope. While providing no decision making moments, hope was pervasive across all meetings.

These constructions of hope did not appear related to the social action of decision making, but were doing something else. I viewed such constructions as talk that mitigated the overall deficit framework and deficit focus of the IEP form. A closer analysis of what and how constructions of hope appeared in meetings might afford a different version of how such constructions worked to manage conflict, for example. Also, of interest for another study is how such constructions of hope might tie to perceived feelings of satisfaction with IEP meetings, and what these constructions afforded the overall meeting. This is important considering the research that shows the costliness of conflict between caregivers and schools when caregivers are dissatisfied (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Mueller, et al, 2008; Nowell, & Salem, 2007).

Summary of language as action. In summary, in this study of decision making in IEP meetings, participants used three interaction styles with a fourth and pervasive interaction of hope undergirding all three interaction styles. Shared decision making only took place in nine meetings within a predominate structure of presentation with moments of shared information. Facilitators here largely constructed their talk to offer a yes/no agreement option to the completed IEP. The social action of making a decision involves reaching a conclusion after considering available solutions to a problem. This includes the process of resolving a question with a formal judgment or solution. The key is that there must be a problem or question to be resolved to begin the process of making a decision. There was limited to no decision making from those other than facilitators, except when students were present to discuss transition. This limited predominate actions to presentations of decisions already made by facilitators, and shared information by caregivers, and students, when present. In the next section, I share how participants rhetorically constructed their talk to result in an agreed upon IEP.

Rhetorically Constructing Talk

Second, participants sequentially and rhetorically organized accounts in such a way that they were treated as facts. Facilitators negotiated and managed their stake and interest in decision making largely by presenting problems and solutions together for agreement by caregivers and students. The IEP form, sequentially followed in most meetings, organized talk rhetorically to: (1) locate problems, both within and outside the student; (2) offer the only solution of the IEP and special education services; and (3) perform agreement through signing the IEP. Signing the IEP was the foregone conclusion because it was the only solution on offer. Therefore, caregivers and students worked to show agreement with the presentation. While the solution of special education never changed in this meeting set, how participants located problems, and thus argued for services in initial meetings and tri-annual meetings varied.

Locating problems and offering solutions. Rhetorically, facilitators presented difficulties and solutions together so there was no space for problems to be posed. After locating the problem, the facilitator moved sequentially to the next step of offering the IEP. In annual meetings, the problem was forever located in the dis/ability category so it was a largely unspoken assumption. Therefore, most annual meetings shared assessment scores to locate present academic difficulties. In doing so, educators could emphasize growth and construct difficulties as outside the student, and capable of being overcome with hard work, effort, and the continued IEP.

All participants, including students, worked to attribute difficulties to factors both inside and outside the student. This finding was in contrast to Mehan's (1983) study in which only mothers pinpointed problems as coming from past situations, locating the problem outside the student. A similar finding occurred in this study with *caregivers* and *students* (e.g., Taylor and

Ashley) pointing to outside factors. In all meetings, *caregivers* and *educators* attributed difficulties to both within and outside the student as they built descriptions to locate problems. Students, like Ashley, sometimes were invited to participate in attributing difficulties to other factors outside of her control.

Initial meetings were slightly different. In Taylor's initial meeting (Excerpts 15-19), I demonstrated how participants located problems, with the predominant responsibility to do so relegated to the psychologist. The psychologist constructed her talk rhetorically to prefer agreement with her assessment, and approval of the qualification category. Such constructions involved making the state accountable for the formula to determine specific learning dis/abilities to reduce the psychologist's stake in the interaction, even as she had agency over how the student was constructed as deficient. The solution was offered either before or alongside the locating of the problem.

Using data from referral meetings 35 years ago, Mehan (1983; 1984) and his colleagues (1986) found that psychologists presented the problem qualifying students, and presented one alternative of special education placement. In this data set, whether initial, annual, addendum, or tri-annual, meetings followed the rhetorical construction of presenting problems and solutions together. In these meetings, especially initial meetings, the only solution on offer was the IEP, which caregivers agreed to as necessary. In annuals and tri-annuals, the solution appeared as a taken for granted assumption, and all participants signed the IEP. While difficulties and problems were located, they were done so primarily on the IEP by educators and psychologists. This limited the decision making power of participants other than the case manager or psychologist to decisions already made. It also reinforced decisions made in initial meetings and carried them through to tri-annual meetings.

When general educators, caregivers, and students also shared information about the origin and location of problems in initial IEP meetings, it did not affect decisions written on the IEP. Such moments were important in talk, but were not given as much weight on the written IEP form or on decision making moments. Likewise, in annuals and tri-annual meetings, while caregivers and students shared information, no additions occurred, with the exception of invited transition information from students in 13 meetings at Hallelujah Middle School, and in nine meetings with shared decision making. When participants posed difficulties as needing solutions from team members, then shared information and sometimes shared decision making resulted, but it was not the norm. The rhetorical construction rather showed a preferred response of problems and solutions presented together, predominantly by educators.

This is important, because rather than presenting a range of alternatives and discussing the merits of each, psychologists and educators in both this data set, and Mehan's (1983; 1984) and his colleagues' (1986) data set 35 years earlier showed how institutional decision making in IEP meetings remains consistent in its preference for educators making the decisions about problems and solutions, and then presenting them to caregivers. However, student contribution is important with shared information and in shared decision making. As seen in this data set with Ashley being allowed to make decisions about her problem and solution, student participation may be an interactional game-changer. Ashley's meeting demonstrates the potential for students speaking to their own futures in an environment where student opinions are valued and given meaningful decision making weight. As such, there is potential for meetings such as Ashley's unplanned, spontaneous decision making moment, to be intentionally planned for in order to provide opportunities for student and parent involvement. Because student involvement has already been shown as beneficial to all IEP team members (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger,

2009; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Cobb & Allwell, 2009; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al, 2004), it behooves an intentional rethinking of how to restructure locating problems and offering solutions.

Performing agreement. All interactions within the meeting appeared to be designed for the preferred response of agreement (e.g., as demonstrated by Raj, Excerpt 27), and final signing of the IEP (e.g., as demonstrated by Wendy, Excerpt 28). All meetings here resulted in signed IEPs because it was in the best caregiver and student interest to do so. No help was offered without it. Agreeing to the IEP draft as presented occurred in the majority of meetings. Such agreement to already written IEP drafts, demonstrated the educator's agency and side-lined other participants in decision making. This negated the development of the IEP together with the team, but all participants worked in service to the institutional goal of an agreed upon IEP.

I liken these IEP meetings to getting on a train heading to one particular station. Arriving at the station meant educational services continued, and the student *legally* received help in academics, speech and/or occupational therapy; help framed as only available to those with IEPs. Stopping a train moving at full speed was an effort that few made, nor would they. Caregivers and students used turns largely for backchannel utterances and receipt markers (Sacks, 1992) to indicate agreement. Challenges to the IEP by caregivers (N=19), students (N=1), and other educators (N=2) were not frequent in this data set (22 out of 323 total instances of challenge). Efforts to challenge the IEP draft might be viewed as obstructing or slowing down progress to the preferred end of a signed IEP; a dis-preferred response (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1992), and a challenge to perceived interactional power (Heritage, 1997). Few considered it within their interests to make, as evidenced. Interestingly, it did not take particularly hard interactional effort to suggest changes within the nine shared decision making meetings, as seen in Ashley's and

Sprite's meeting. Suffice it to say, all participants carefully constructed agreement and minimized conflict to arrive at the destination of an agreed upon IEP.

Facilitators rhetorically presented largely completed IEPs to minimize conflict and maximize agreement. To do so, they constructed the IEP as: (1) a legal document that carried entitlements not afforded to just anyone (Taylor, Excerpts 15-19); (2) "a good plan" (Taylor transcript, line 144); and (3) one that caregivers had agreed to previously (Flossy, Excerpt 4). In annuals and tri-annuals, IEPs have a history of agreement by caregivers, and rhetorical constructions included caregivers sharing their expert status as signers of multiple IEPs. Because of the emphasis on both sides on the familiarity and the routine procedural aspects of the institutional meeting, the preference then becomes continuing what worked in the past; therefore, no discussion was needed (e.g., Mark, Excerpt 26). Thus, facilitators managed their stake and interest in the interaction as presenters of previously agreed to decisions. Caregivers and students managed their stake and interest to show that because of the desire for success, or continued success, they would agree to the IEP (Mark, Excerpt 26).

In tri-annual meetings, observation evidence was used to keep the student in special education, even when assessments showed the student as meeting target goals. Not only was it the only help on offer in initial meetings, but special education remained the only help on offer for years, and thus caregivers and students worked to show their acceptance of the IEP, because their stake in the interaction was high. Similar to Rogers' (2002) ethnographic case study on an annual meeting, anecdotal evidence from educators in tri-annual meetings rhetorically framed the argument for continuance in special education. The decision making practice appeared to change from initial meetings that used assessments to build towards a dis/ability qualification category to making decisions based on feelings of benefit. In that way, the rhetoric shifted from a deficit

perspective to a success perspective, in that current accommodations helped the student, and therefore should not be removed.

The outcome in annual and tri-annual meetings was that, once again, caregivers and the student *did not* help make decisions. The IEP was merely updated from the previous year's meeting. This reinforced the concept of the facilitator presenting the draft IEP as the preferred plan (Pomerantz, 1984) with educational decisions already made, as decided previously with the initial IEP meeting. Caregivers were to agree with previous decisions, and students agreed along with their caregivers. Limited to no shared decision making took place. In order to smoothly engage in the institutional goals of the IEP meeting, and manage their interest in receiving help, caregivers and students may minimally engage except in agreement, as seen in most meetings here. There were limited opportunities for shared decision making built into these presentation style meetings.

Facilitators may consider other alternatives to the presentation style to obtain agreement to IEPs, in which caregivers and students have greater autonomy to make the IEP meaningful. It may be best to offer alternatives (e.g., student led meetings), and discuss options for meeting frameworks. Applying this autonomy may best be accomplished in a meeting framed by community of practice principles (Laluvein, 2007; Mortier, et al, 2009; Mortier, et al, 2010). Mortier and her colleagues (2010) noted the simplicity within which the communities of practice model was carried out by stakeholders: small groups of stakeholders met together regularly to ask and answer "two natural, open questions, "How is the child doing?" and "How can we support him/her better to participate and learn in school?" (p. 352). Effective group problem solving and group reflection occurred in response to these questions. Setting the boundaries of

desired participation might easily occur in this open atmosphere, changing the rhetoric of participation in decision making.

Summary of rhetorical constructions. Participants sequentially and rhetorically organized reports through discursive devices such as categories, rich descriptions, story-telling, and contrasts to manage stake and interest in decision making. The IEP form, largely sequentially followed in all meetings, provided a rhetorical structure where facilitators presented problems and offered solutions together as the IEP. Agreement to the IEP was assumed as it was in the interest of caregivers and students to agree to the extra help offered.

I discuss how participants attended to accountability and agency in the next section.

Attending to Accountability and Agency

Third, participants attended to their accountability and agency in decision making within these 63 meetings. Speakers in these meetings presented descriptions in ways that attended to their own accountability for the factualness of the report; often by claiming it as their own or distancing themselves from it. Establishing more or less accountability for descriptions varied based on how potentially controversial an utterance would be. All participants used footing shifts and hedging to distance themselves or highlight their agency. Case managers, psychologists, support therapists, general educators, caregivers, and students managed their accountability and agency in different ways.

Case managers. There were six different case managers, and while their attendance to agency and accountability varied by meeting purpose and classroom context, there were many similarities to how they handled agency and accountability. First, all but two case managers came with the IEP draft completed. The exceptions were both the CDC teacher and inclusion teacher at Hallelujah Middle School (HMS), who both left transition areas open for eighth grade

students to share information. In addition, the inclusion teacher at HMS also left the strengths and concerns blank for students and caregivers to share information. By leaving areas open for student and caregiver comment, the case managers increased student agency and accountability in relation to the IEP form. In the other 50 meetings at Grace Middle School (GMS), because facilitators arrived with completed IEP drafts, there was no opportunity or invitation for students and caregivers to assume agency and accountability in relation to the IEP form.

Facilitators de-emphasized their accountability and agency for the IEP form to justify unequal modes of participation in decision making. This was most obvious when facilitators emphasized the legality of the IEP, and presented goals and accommodations. Case managers had responsibility for ensuring that all legal forms (e.g., receipt of parent rights, invitation to meeting, IEP notes, and the IEP) were properly signed. Because the institutional procedures were in service to this goal, facilitators made the state accountable to justify the IEP procedures, and portions of the IEP form (e.g., "it's just a requirement by the state," Michael transcript, line 79), and the goals (e.g., "the state requires that I teach the certain curriculum" Benny transcript, line 413). By distancing themselves from the procedures, countering becomes difficult because those who attempted this would now need to challenge the entire state and federal procedures, and not the educator standing in front of you as the state's representative.

How case managers described their lack of agency, and distanced themselves from the IEP form connects to results in studies of *perceptions* where educators: (1) expressed frustration over parents not understanding the constraints of paperwork (Hogensen et al, 2008; Prunty, 2011); and (2) wrote generic IEP goals (Geenen & Powers, 2006; Lovitt et al, 1994; Pawley & Tennant, 2008; Trainor, 2005). Case managers may express their lack of agency in relation to the IEP through "perfunctory paperwork" (Geenen & Powers, 2006, p. 13) and generic goals. Even

though the case managers have the appearance of the most decision making power, by making the state accountable and emphasizing the legality of the forms, they align themselves with the lack of decision making power afforded to caregivers and students. Therefore, this normalizes lack of decision making power, when in fact, the IEP is supposed to be a document created for the individual student. This effectively keeps decision making power in the hands of educators, while also making the IEP document meaningless as a means for educational change driven by students. With the acceptance of the lack of decision making power, comes the acceptance of presentation style of interaction. With a shift to encourage decision making power, then a format where all participants can view the IEP at once to track what is written on the IEP as parts of the IEP are written together, may become a possibility. For instance, projecting the IEP document so that everyone can see what is written on the form and contribute might encourage more decisions together. Regardless of lack of shared decision making, the IEP becomes a ticket to the extra help and accommodations of special education, dictated by the state, as seen in the next section.

Psychologists. Like case managers, the psychologist in two initial meetings in this study emphasized "the state gives me a formula" (Taylor transcript, line 301) to distance herself from her construction that qualified Taylor for a math learning dis/ability. Describing an event where you are a passive agent "just following orders," mitigates responsibility. Describing an event where you are an active contributor to the action increases accountability. The psychologist did both in her description of qualifying Wendy and Taylor in these meetings. Aligned with managing accountability was the psychologist's position in the meeting. Because she belonged to the membership category (Stokoe, 2012) of one who would report assessments, and was entitled to pronounce the student as eligible to receive special education services, she held tremendous agency and responsibility in relation to other participants. Other participants deferred to the

psychologist as the person having expert knowledge. To manage that increased responsibility due to her position, like case managers, the psychologist emphasized the state as being accountable.

Further, just as the case manager mentioned legal procedures, the psychologist, when offering special education services, noted in relation to the IEP that: “what it allows us to do is legally provide her with these services” (Taylor transcript, line 392). Highlighting the legal authority of the IEP shifted footing from the psychologist to an overarching legal system providing the IEP. This served to strengthen the IEP as a document with tremendous power and scope. In qualification meetings, the psychologist made the argument to emphasize the importance of the solution the school offered in the form of the legal IEP.

How the psychologist managed accountability and agency is interesting interactionally when considering other interaction studies where the psychologist held the floor for long periods of time (Dufon, 1993; Mehan, 1983; Mehan, et al, 1986; Plum, 2008). Making the state accountable mitigates her own responsibility, as well as justifies her need to hold the conversation floor, and be the one who makes decisions about qualifications. This serves to normalize the unequal participation in decision making in relation to other IEP team members like support therapists and other members.

Support therapists. The occupational therapist and speech and language pathologist, emphasized their agency and accountability in similar ways as the psychologist and case managers. However, in a variation, the speech and language pathologist in Sprite’s meeting (Excerpts 12-14) constructed Sprite’s mother as having agency in asking for focus on Sprite’s stammer. Because of this, he wrote a goal *during* the IEP meeting. This is important because the speech and language pathologist needed to seize the moment of the mother and father sharing

their concerns to move to the action of creating a goal. No other case manager or facilitator was as quick to provide agency around decisions about Sprite's speech goals. He then mitigated his accountability in adding a goal with: "don't expect a miracle please" (Sprite transcript, line 1101). Thus, there was a balance of offering agency to a caregiver, with corresponding decrease of accountability from the speech and language therapist.

This is important because there may have been other opportunities in other meetings where not only support staff, but also educators could have increased caregiver and student agency by acknowledging and moving expressed desires to an addition to or change to the presented IEP. This balance of offering agency and limiting accountability may be more costly to some facilitators than others. Therefore, facilitators may continue with the presentation style of decisions they made in order to protect their need to have legal and correct IEPs. Facilitators may reduce availability of other interactions like shared decision making, and resist methods that encourage such shared decision making. Educators and support therapists, as keepers of the IEP form, act as gate-keepers to the types of interactions available within IEP meetings.

As expressed by research on perceptions, caregivers and students may not know what is available to them in the IEP meeting (Hogansen, et al., 2008; Lehman, Bassett, & Sands, 1999; Lovitt, et al, 1994, Morningstar, Pawley, & Tennant, 2008; Powers, et al, 2001; Test, et al, 2004), until they experience a different experience that provides them agency and autonomy in regards to decision making (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Danneker & Bottge, 2009). For instance, until caregivers in Danneker and Bottge's (2009) study experienced a student centered meeting, they reported feelings of involvement, even though it was observed as minimal. Like the speech and language pathologist here, it may take showing another way in order for others to realize the possibilities of shared decision making. General educators also

contributed to shared decision making in a few meetings, demonstrating an ability to change the IEP that few others showed.

General educators. General educators displayed minimal accountability and agency for making decisions on the IEP form in most meetings in this study. This connects to a previous survey by Martin and his colleagues (2006) in which general educators reported the least involvement in helping make decisions. An important variation occurred in two meetings where shared decision making took place. In both Bubba's and Flossy's meeting, the general educator initiated a spontaneous shared decision making discussion about moving the students to consultation. They did this when they were asked at the beginning of meetings to share information about classroom performance. This is important because general educators did not always attend meetings. In fact, none of the 13 meetings at HMS included a general educator present in the meeting. When general educators were present in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade meetings at GMS, they added valuable information to the meeting *talk* that in two cases resulted in a change of placement on the IEP *form*. Thus, in this meeting set, the presence of general educators to the interaction was important. Of interest is how to include general educators in meetings in efficient and meaningful ways along with the focus on student and caregiver involvement.

Caregivers. Because of the presentation style, as previously described, caregivers had limited agency and accountability in regards to the IEP form. However, in the talk, caregivers worked to establish footing as concerned and good parents, with shifts in footing to show limited accountability for sensitive areas like failing grades, low test scores, and traumatic life events. Although caregivers explained and offered attributions to manage their accountability for difficulties, the information that they shared rarely resulted in changes to the IEP form. Overall,

caregivers appeared to accept their limited agency and accountability in relation to the IEP form with the exception of two mothers (e.g., Benny and Peyton), who consistently and overtly challenged utterances. This was displayed with Benny's mother challenging how IEP goals were written at grade level even though students worked well below grade level (Excerpts 23-25). Overt displays by both mothers taking agency resulted in spontaneous shared decision making with changes to the IEP. In a subtle show of taking agency that also resulted in spontaneous shared decision making, Sprite's mother shared her desire for focus on Sprite's stammer through sharing examples, and emphasizing that stammers responded to remediation. Sprite's meeting also resulted in a change to the IEP (Excerpts 12-14).

While further study is needed in how caregivers display accountability and agency in decision making, the results demonstrated here show the difference in caregiver styles in taking ownership of the IEP to make changes. Of interest is how, in an atmosphere of shared information interactions, Sprite's mother was able to *subtly* express a desire, and have it be taken up. This interaction appeared easy for all participants in Sprite's meeting. However, in an atmosphere of presentation, Benny's mother and Peyton's mother consistently challenged utterances and asked for explanations. Everyone in these two meetings appeared to be working hard (see Benny Excerpts 23-25). All three of these meetings lasted over the average time of 35 minutes, and extended from one hour (Peyton, Sprite) to an hour and a half (Benny). This is important because of the reported perception of parents that felt that they received implicit or explicit messages by professionals that their views were not welcome in IEP meetings (Angell, et al, 2009; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Fish, 2006; Salas, 2004; Rueda et al, 2005; Williams, 2007). Given how hard two mothers worked in these two meetings, there may be a connection between how hard they had to work to establish agency when the predominant mode of

interaction was presentation, versus the ease with which Sprite's mother's views were taken up by the speech and language pathologist (SLP) in a predominant style of shared information.

In addition, this finding of the ease in which the SLP took up the subtle desires of caregivers in shared interaction is important when considering caregiver perceptions of greater satisfaction and feelings of meaningful contributions in meetings where students are present at and/or facilitate their IEP meeting (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Branding & Miner, 2008; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al, 2004; McKay, 2014; Test, et al, 2004; Valenzuela, & Martin, 2005). While no student facilitated their IEP meeting, in 26 meetings, when students shared information about their career and elective choices, discussion by educators and caregivers ensued. The question remains how shared interactions connect to perceptual research of greater satisfaction of caregivers. Further research of both interactions and perceptions of the same meetings may show how sharing information correlates with satisfaction ratings. Further, additional research may show how increased caregiver and student interactions around career talk may relate to positive transition for students to post high school opportunities, and increased agency regarding choices in life.

Students. Students had agency and accountability for the IEP form more so in ten inclusion meetings at HMS than elsewhere due to the facilitator's invitation to comment upon their strengths, as well as their career goals, and ninth grade course electives (e.g., as demonstrated in Danielle Excerpt 6). In these meetings, students were more engaged in the IEP *talk* and with the IEP *form* because of the stated relevance to their immediate choice of electives, as well as the facilitator's immediate recording of responses on the IEP form. This immediate writing on the form displayed value for student responses, and increased their agency and accountability in relation to how their responses effected decisions. Thus, the ten meetings at

HMS stand in contrast to Martin and his colleagues (2006) finding that students were not asked about interests. This data showed that some students had agency in relation to the transition portion of the IEP form. These ten meetings show the potential for inviting students to engage in sharing information around their strengths, and decisions about their future.

In the other 23 meetings, students had agency only over transition related topics, as invited by facilitators, but limited accountability as compared to the ten meetings at HMS. As a variation, in Ashley's meeting at GMS, facilitators invited her to share decision making power with educators in offering information that led to the decision to place her on a consultation track in ninth grade. No other facilitator offered a student such agency. Ashley's meeting shows the potential for possible actions when students were given such decision making power in the IEP meeting.

These results are important in light of other research demonstrating the effectiveness of person-centered planning (Chambers & Childre, 2005; Keyes & Owens-Johnson, 2003; Kim & Turnbull, 2004; Meadan, et al, 2010), and student-led or student-directed IEP meetings (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Branding & Miner, 2008; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin, et al, 2004; McKay, 2014; Test, et al, 2004; Thoma & Wehman, 2010; Valenzuela & Martin, 2005). Because this research displays the occurrence of enhancing student agency in some areas without such training in special programs, it provides a baseline for further research to compare interactions with students and facilitators trained in strengths-based approaches.

Summary of accountability and agency. In conclusion, all participants managed their accountability in relation to the IEP form. Educators had the most agency when it came to making decisions, except in transition areas where students were invited to speak. Therefore, this research shows the importance of having students present and inviting them to speak on certain

topics. In the next section, I explore how participants managed the institutional roles and goals of the meeting.

Managing Institutional Roles and Goals of a Signed IEP

In this fourth and final section, I summarize findings about how participants attended to the institutional nature of the IEP meeting through their talk. Participants allowed and constrained contributions with turn-taking and turn design, as previously discussed, in service to the goal of a signed IEP. I briefly summarize and connect to literature here.

Individual Education Planning teams convene on governmental authority and by government mandate. That institutional authority meant certain information needed to be shared between schools and families. Given that the IEP meeting must legally follow federal guidelines and state protocols, the federal and state governments acted as unseen but authoritative presences in the meeting. In practice, orienting to the government's legal authority was taken up by participants in how they attended to the institutional IEP form during the meetings. This served to make the IEP form and those responsible for filling out the forms, namely the special education teacher, agents of state and federal guidelines. It also reinforced the purpose of the meeting as completing an IEP according to state guidelines. Thus, while the educator assumed the greatest accountability and agency for the form, they sometimes referenced their limited agency as one who must follow state procedures to reduce their stake and interest in the form. Conversely, all participants referenced their stake and interest in completing the review of the legal IEP and signing to indicate agreement, thereby managing the agreed upon institutional purpose (Heritage, 1997).

Because the IEP *form* and the *talk* within the meeting framed the IEP as legal, and the meeting as following institutional procedures, participants oriented to the institutional

contextualized procedures constraining talk to largely presentation. Membership categories, (Stokoe, 2012) constructed in introductions and through signing papers for caregivers, contributed to who was allowed to speak about what. These constraints, as displayed in this data set, may connect to how caregivers in other studies reported that they felt that they received implicit or explicit messages by professionals that their views were not welcome in IEP meetings (Angell, et al, 2009; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Fish, 2006; Salas, 2004; Rueda et al, 2005; Williams, 2007). These perceived barriers are of interest for this discourse analysis because of facilitators who constructed their discourse to prefer a presentation format that included preferred responses from caregivers to agree and sign. Thus, in both the talk in this data set and in previous research, facilitators showed that caregiver participation was not needed in decision making, just their agreement to decisions already made. Yet, in the absence of decision making, and even with the overarching presentation style of interaction, participants shared information. As they shared information, participants worked within their own talk, and in conjunction with others, to balance a negative account with a positive report. This constructed an atmosphere of hope, by building an expectation for success despite difficulties. Interactions of hope stood in contrast to the overall institutional deficit perspective working in the IEP form to re-frame interactions. While hopeful constructions did not appear to change the fact that decisions were largely made by educators, it spoke back to the dominant deficit perspective of the IEP form.

Conclusions and Implications

This research contributes to what we know about how the IEP *form* works in conjunction with the IEP meeting *talk*. Knowing that showing up to the meeting with the IEP completed, and how the IEP form guided the meeting talk to make decision making moments unavailable, points to the importance of IEP forms as guiding and structuring discourse. If following the IDEA

(2004) and NCLB (2001) law to include parents in meaningful ways is important, than attention to the meaningfulness of the IEP form is important. Lawyers, policy makers, and IEP software companies might consider revising the IEP forms to encourage shared decision making.

In addition, this research contributes to what we know about how some educators encouraged shared interactions and shared decision making to encourage more participation from caregivers and students. Knowing that the predominant format was presentation shines the light on educator practices that discourage decision making together. Knowing that shared information interactions led to more participation, if not actual decision making, shows others the value of such interactions. Further, one facilitator at HMS made meaningful connections from student career choices to their IEP and future coursework. She also asked students about strengths and caregivers about concerns. Because of this, these meetings had greater interaction with students, showing the value of engaging students in such a way for a meaningful IEP.

This research contributes to our understandings about how students add to interactions, not just as sharers of transition related information, but also as sharers of strengths in ten meetings, and shared decision making in one meeting. In Ashely's meeting, educators allowed Ashley to contribute to a decision about placement in high-school, resulting in placing Ashley in an expert role about her future. Knowing the value of having students at the decision making table, especially when educators puzzled over assessment results, shows the potential of involving students in decision making. Given the potential with students involved in meetings, it may be beneficial for more students *of all ages* to both attend and lead portions of their IEP meeting.

This research contributes to what we know about how caregivers mostly agreed to IEP decisions, but that in *all* meetings caregivers shared information about their child. Knowing that caregivers have valuable information to share, and how constructing the meeting to emphasize

shared interactions sometimes resulted in spontaneous shared decision making is important to understanding the possible ways to encourage involvement. Knowing such information may change how caregivers are included in decision making, and how caregivers *choose* to be included.

Summary of Synthesis of Findings

In summary, this study found that facilitators arrived to meetings with decisions already made, and IEP documents largely completed. The overall structure of the IEP form and legal nature of the meeting accounted for differing modes of participation in decision making. Facilitators rhetorically arranged talk to handle sensitive issues with minimal challenges from participants by engaging in a presentation format that favored agreement from caregivers and students. Decision making in IEP meetings took place within prescribed, legal protocols. Educational facilitators, who held the most decision making power as demonstrated by presenting already completed IEPs, nonetheless reported limited agency in qualifying students, creating goals, and offering services. Findings demonstrated that discursive constructions limited decision making interactions with and without students present. In all meetings, educators read and paraphrased portions of the IEP with predominant agreement by caregivers, limiting decision making opportunities.

Contributions to the IEP occurred with some caregivers, and with eighth grade students invited to talk about their career choices and elective coursework for high school, and in ten meetings about their strengths. Shared interactions increased when students were present. Spontaneous shared decision making with changes to the IEP occurred in only nine meetings with and without students. When students were present in meetings, spontaneous shared decision making around modified state tests, high school placement, and speech and language placement

occurred. However, even though decision making lacked, constructions of hopeful attitudes toward the future prevailed in all meetings. All participants worked to present students as capable and growing, despite their need for special education services.

Considerations for Improving Practice

My findings indicated that with students present, shared information about transition occurred in 26 meetings, with shared decision making occurring in three with students present. Therefore, my findings show that what was happening in these interactions corroborates with research on perceptions of successful transitioning as increasing with students involved in the planning and decision making process (Cobb & Alwell, 2009). Because of the focus on students in current research and the finding that more shared interactions occurred with students present, I focus my suggestions on incorporating strengths based approaches (Weishaar, 2010), such as community of practice approaches (Laluvein, 2007; Mortier, et al, 2009; Mortier, et al, 2010), person-centered planning (Chambers & Childre, 2005; Keyes & Owens-Johnson, 2003; Kim & Turnbull, 2004; Meadan, et al, 2010), and student-led IEP meetings (Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Thoma & Wehman, 2010).

I realize that it appears easy to offer simple solutions and suggestions. Given the complex contextualized social interaction within meetings, while I offer suggestions, I leave it up to the reader to decide what and how to best apply suggestions in her particular context. Therefore, I frame suggestions in terms of questions for readers to ask themselves, their school districts, state legislatures, and educational policy makers. I offer suggestions for students along with educators and caregivers with the knowledge that students need training, support, and encouragement to participate in the IEP decision making process. To organize this section, I share suggestions for three people groups: (1) creators of IEP forms and state policy makers; (2) educators and

students; and (3) caregivers and students.

Considerations for Creators of IEP forms and State Policy Makers

The findings from this study showed that not only did facilitators use the IEP form as a guide for talk, but also they used procedures to make the state accountable for the lack of decision making in meetings. Also, the deficit language of the form and the limited areas for parent and student input led to decreased spontaneous decision making moments. Because of this, I have the following questions for creators of IEP forms and state policy makers as they consider the IEP form.

(1) Using strengths based language: *Can the same purposes of having a plan in place be accomplished using strengths based language?* With the use of strengths based language, the possibility of creating a more inviting atmosphere that emphasizes the hopeful constructions shown by these IEP participants exists. As seen in this data set, educators, caregivers, and sometimes students, pushed back against the deficit language of the IEP form through constructions of hope. Capturing hopeful language on IEP forms would start at a positive level of interaction, which means that the IEP team members could then focus attention not on mitigating deficits, but on constructing student strengths to maximize possible transition related points.

(2) Maximizing sections for student and caregiver input: *Can areas of the form that ask for student strengths and parent concerns be re-framed and re-sequenced?* In this data set, only one facilitator asked students about their strengths and parents about their concerns in ten meetings. In all other meetings, both with and without students, this section was either ignored or read from a previously written statement continued from the year before. Framing the prompt in a way that not only invites, but requires input, may increase involvement. Similarly, sequencing these sections alongside present levels of performance would indicate equal sharing of the IEP form to

invite student and caregiver input.

(3) Re-organizing the IEP form to emphasize shared planning. *In what ways might the form be re-organized to emphasize shared planning rather than presentation?* The IEP is a legal form, with legal procedures. However, re-organizing the forms in such a way as to maximize areas where shared planning is possible (e.g., transition and accommodations) and where decisions are already made (e.g., goals) would make it clear to both students and parents where potential shared decision making might take place. It is not fair to parents and students to act like they have decision making power when they do not. Being clear about what areas are institutional resources that the school has control over and areas where negotiations can take place is important.

These three areas would change the organizational format of the form and thus the IEP meeting, because these findings indicated that facilitators largely followed the format and structure of the IEP form. In the next section, I address areas for educators and students to consider for increasing participation in decision making.

Considerations for Educators and Students

This data set showed that student presence increased shared interactions, if not decision making. Given that student-led meetings have the potential to disrupt the dominant paradigm by making the student the presenter, and change the purpose to the student learning how to self-advocate and gain self-determination skills, I suggest that educators and school districts who desire to increase shared decision making utilize such methods. Where such methods are neither desired nor possible, I have the following questions for educators working with students.

(1) Involving students and caregivers: *How am I involving students and caregivers in decision making during the IEP meeting?* While decision making can also take place before the

IEP meeting with the student, it is also important that caregivers have opportunities to make suggestions and share information in a way that is meaningful and leads to changes on the IEP. While some educators in this study were careful to encourage and allow shared information, none of that information, except invited transition information changed the IEP. Including caregivers and students in formal introductions can provide the opportunity to emphasize their membership categories. In these meetings, students were cued to their role within sharing of the meeting agenda. Multiple studies pointed to students not knowing the purpose of the meeting (Lovitt, et al, 1994; Martin et al, 2004; Pawley & Tennant, 2008). Making categories and areas of input clear from the outset lets students know what to expect. Sharing the meeting purpose at the beginning of the meeting may increase participation.

(2) Asking open questions: *What questions do I ask and how do I frame my questions during IEP meetings?* Asking questions encourages involvement. However, many times the educators in this study asked agreement questions, especially with students. Framing open ended questions and asking frequently if there were any questions resulted in more shared interactions. Within presentations, it was common practice to stop and ask for questions. Framing questions ahead of time to encourage shared information is important. Students can be cued ahead of time in regards to what questions might be asked. For instance, students at HMS had filled out interest inventories prior to meetings, and were readily able to answer questions about their chosen career.

(3) Encouraging meaningfulness: *How do I invite students and caregivers to share information?* Facilitators in this data set conducted IEPs as presentations. Where students were present to choose schedules, there were specific moments for planning and discussion of transition. Where students were not present at all, the IEP was a presentation. Oftentimes when

information was shared, it had no connection to changing the IEP, unless it was invited information about future careers. Connecting shared information to the IEP plan is important. One facilitator at HMS connected IEP goals to student career interests. Similarly, one facilitator in four meetings of this data set conducted her meetings as shared information. While parents and students still had no decision making power, everyone worked together to share information about the student. She accomplished this by starting her meetings with sharing positive stories about the student, stories of growth and change.

(4) Engaging in shared decision making: *At what points during the IEP meeting might we engage in decision making together?* If one of the many strengths based approaches or student-led approaches are not yet viable for you, then examine the IEP form. Likely there are moments on the form where questions can be asked to encourage decision making. Similar to the ten inclusion meetings at HMS, coming with these portions blank would show students and caregivers the value of their shared information. Further, displaying the IEP form on a projector and typing exact participant words as caregivers share concerns can increase the meaningfulness of the meeting. Showing the IEP as incomplete without caregiver and student information demonstrates powerfully the intention to engage families.

(5) Infusing hope: *How am I framing the student?* The participants in this study worked hard to construct hopeful ways of talking about the student as growing and capable, despite their difficulties. Many studies point to negative educator assumptions as limiting student and caregiver perceptions of opportunities to be involved (Angell, et al, 2009; Childre & Chambers, 2005; Fish, 2006; Hogansen et al, 2008; Salas, 2004; Rueda et al, 2005; Williams, 2007). Maintaining a hopeful atmosphere is important. In fact, of the five suggestions here, I consider it the *most* important, and *most* impactful, based on the prevalence in this data set of creating

hopeful meetings where participants displayed congeniality and intentional caring through their talk.

Considerations for Caregivers and Students

The findings here showed just how easy it was for caregivers and students to challenge assumptions, and make changes to the IEP. In the nine spontaneous decision making moments, caregivers and students did not have to work hard to have educators accept their request, and make a change. Educators in these meetings appeared eager and willing to respond to caregiver and student requests. Recognizing that the presentation format is the norm, it becomes caregiver and student responsibility to stop the presentation, ask for changes, share information, or otherwise contribute to the institutional proceedings. The caregivers and students who had increased interaction in these meetings got their questions answered. Likewise, shared information often led to spontaneous decision making moments where services were added or changed.

(1) Infusing hope: *How am I presenting my child in positive ways?* Mehan and his colleagues (1986) noted how construction of students as learning disabled and in need of special education services was largely a matter of belief. Data from this study showed that everyone worked to describe students in positive, hopeful ways. Doing so created a strengths based atmosphere that spoke back to the deficit nature of the IEP form, and of the stigma of special education services, in general. Like the caregivers in these meetings, it is caregiver and student responsibility to point out strengths in areas that may not appear to be IEP related. Caregivers and students have expert status about strengths and needs, perhaps unknown to educators. When students attend, they may need caregiver support to share their strengths.

(2) Determining decision making agency: *What decisions do I have control over, and what decisions are dictated by school resources?* As shown in the talk around signing the legal IEP and the talk around formation of goals, special education teachers have limited authority with an IEP that must follow federal guidelines and policies, and goals that must follow the state curriculum. Thus, reduced teacher agency led to talk about the state's accountability for the IEP, and can lead one to think that all decisions are made by the state. Caregivers can find out what decisions they can make, and work with teachers to ensure their voices are heard.

(3) Negotiating IEP elements: *Where can I negotiate services, goals, and accommodations?* Again, it was not interactionally difficult to negotiate in these meetings. Finding out what can be negotiated, and being bold will result in changes on the IEP. Oftentimes, caregivers have more agency than teachers when requesting a resource. Therefore, being proactive in knowing what can be asked for and being ready to negotiate.

(4) Determining your desired level of involvement: *What does involvement look like for me and my child?* Being clear with educators on desired levels of involvement in decision making may result in smooth meetings. Trusting educators to present information and letting them know, or stating your desire to make decisions ahead of time helps educators plan ahead. In Jase's meeting, the mother made her expectations clear at the beginning of the meeting that she wanted the meeting to be quick, and that she trusted the educator decisions already made. While she still asked questions, and engaged in many back channel communications (Sacks, 1992), the meeting was accomplished in 12 minutes. In a different meeting accomplished in an hour and a half, Benny's mother made it very clear that she wanted to be involved in sharing information that would lead to decisions about her son's program. Assessing the level of desired involvement and

communicating that to educators before each meeting will help the meeting proceed smoothly for everyone.

(5) Inviting your child to meetings: *Would it be beneficial for my child to come to the whole meeting, or a portion of the meeting?* When students were invited to their meetings, and led their own meetings then academic increases resulted (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2009; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Test, et al, 2004). When considering the benefits, know that previous research shows that parents feel more involved with their child present (Danneker & Bottge, 2009; Martin et al, 2006). If there are particular areas of concern, then letting the meeting facilitator know ahead of time what would be off limits to discussion (e.g., some mother of young children do not want the child to know their qualifying category).

These five suggestions are offered for consideration to improve current practices. Asking yourself these questions could result in benefits for your child both inside and outside of school.

In summary, IEP meetings are complex, content specific and culturally situated meetings. Therefore, the considerations shared here may not work for everyone. However, questioning your own practice is a great way to become aware of what you are doing well and what you might like to change. In the next section, I share recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study addressed how participants negotiated decision making with and without students present, further research is needed in the areas of: (1) meetings with students present, particularly elementary and high school students; (2) potentially contentious IEP meetings; (3) strengths based approaches to include community of practice meetings, and person centered meetings; and (4) student-centered and student-directed IEP meetings; and (5) mixed methodology designs. An important methodological note is that discourse analysis can only

demonstrate decision making interactions *within* IEP meetings and not decision making before or after meetings. In this data set, with the completed IEP form presented to caregivers, as well as the talk within the majority of meetings that did not reference prior decision making together, it was likely that such outside decision making did not occur. Yet, because it is possible that IEP decision making occurs with some schools and families outside of the IEP meeting and across the school year, gathering additional types of data such as interviews and surveys would address questions that discourse analysis of actual IEP meetings cannot answer. Data addressing the perceptions of participants might allow participants to share their rationales for their utterances or silence during meeting interactions. Such research would add dimension to our understanding of decision making in IEP meetings.

Research with Students

This study was limited to middle school students. In this data set, only eighth grade students attended their meetings. It would be beneficial to study meetings of all age groups both with and without students, preferably with students, given the reports of increased involvement with students present (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Martin, et al, 2004). Studying elementary school students, where parents and teachers both report more involvement and higher satisfaction (Krach, et al, 2005) could be contrasted to interactions with secondary students, where parents and teachers report less involvement and satisfaction (Geenen, et al, 2001; Hogensen, et al, 2008).

Further, studying discursive interactions over a period of time would show how student interactions change with familiarity with the process. Transition planning in high school changes from year to year. Research on interactions with various high school students would show how interactions change, for example, before the student is set to graduate. Moreover, parental

involvement decreases (Hogensen, et al, 2008) in high school, and IEP meetings are held without parents, but with students present, especially if that student is already 18. Researching meetings with high school students, without parents present, would offer an interesting contrast to meetings without students, with parents present. Overall, further research needs to be done with all student age groups using a discourse analysis perspective, so that interactions with students can be further studied.

Research on Contentious IEP Meetings

Further research is needed on meetings where there is a potential for disagreement. This study was limited because I was likely not invited to meetings that were possible contentious. Or perhaps the constructions of hope in this data set of IEP meetings worked against conflict. Regardless of the possible cause, I did not record any contentious IEP meetings. Dissatisfaction and disagreements lead to legal disputes (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Mueller, et al, 2008; Nowell, & Salem, 2007). Caregivers of older, secondary students, file more complaints than caregivers of younger students (Zeller, 2010; Zeller, 2011). The number of mediations has increased (Zeller, 2010; 2011) over a number of years. Also, caregivers of secondary students consistently report less satisfaction with special education services (Geenen, et al, 2001; Krach, et al, 2005). Understanding the interactions within contentious meetings would show how difficulties are negotiated, managed, and not resolved. Due process filings and mediations are financially costly. Further, they are costly in terms of said strained relationships between families, schools, and communities (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Mueller, et al, 2008; Nowell, & Salem, 2007). Studying contentious meeting from a discursive approach would show how interactions are managed and offer suggestions for improvement. Such suggestions may reduce future caregiver dissatisfaction and lawsuits.

Research on Strengths-Based Approaches

The research on community of practice approaches (Laluvein, 2007; Mortier, et al, 2009; Mortier, et al, 2010), strengths based planning (Weishaar, 2010), and person-centered planning (Chambers & Childre, 2005; Keyes & Owens-Johnson, 2003; Kim & Turnbull, 2004; Meadan, et al, 2010) involved quantitative and qualitative measurements. No studies involved an examination of how these programs increased interaction with a study of naturally occurring talk. While satisfaction with approaches, and perceptions of increased involvement are important, knowing how each of these programs achieve shared planning is important. A look at the actual talk within interactions would demonstrate how each program participant actively or passively managed shared planning. Further research needs to be conducted to study the discourse within trainings before meetings to ascertain if shared decision making takes place both outside and within the official meeting. Knowing this level of detail, as well as measurement outcomes of program success would radically increase the validity of program claims in increasing satisfaction and involvement.

Research on Student-Centered Approaches

There is research to show that student presence (Martin, et al, 2006), student centered approaches (Childre & Chambers, 2005), and student-led approaches increase perceptions of involvement (Danneker & Bottge, 2009. Further, student centered approaches are crucial to success (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Test, et al, 2004) and showed increased academic achievement (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2009). However, what is not known is how participants in student-centered and student-led meetings discursively construct their talk to achieve greater participation. Further, it is not known how the discursive constructions of student-centered meetings are different from constructions in teacher-led meetings. This data showed how

teacher-led meetings were predominantly conducted in a presentation style of interaction. A study of how the facilitator guides discourse in student-centered and student-led meetings would be important to determine if collaborative decision making is happening or if the facilitator rhetorically constructs discourse to favor a preferred decision (Pomerantz, 1984), regardless of the student-centered nature.

With the possibilities of shared decision making in student-led IEP meetings, I postulate that lawsuits against school districts by dissatisfied parents would be greatly reduced. Further research is needed to study whether there is a correlation between student-led decision making and a reduced number of lawsuits in school districts over time. Knowing the discourse within meetings and the differences can do much in promoting student-centered approaches. In that way student-centered approaches would not merely be *perceived* as better, but analyzed interactions can show how participants constructed involvement.

Research Using Mixed Methods Approaches

One of the regrets I have now that I have finished this study is that I did not gather achievement data. If I had done so, I would have a baseline for further research to compare achievement with middle school students who do not participate in student-centered approaches to outcomes from IEP meetings using a student-centered approach. Combining a micro-analytic approach to studying interaction such as discourse analysis or conversation analysis with measures of achievement would strengthen the claim that certain interactional approaches that increase involvement also increase achievement.

Further, some researchers may desire to combine discourse analysis approaches with interviews. It is still uncertain based on earlier research (Harris, 2010; Peters, 2003; Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2003) how perceptions of meetings and actual meeting interactions inform each

other. Interviews after the meeting would allow for further clarity on this point. When engaging in training programs for students, measuring student outcomes through achievement scores along with a discourse analysis of meetings would show in detail how certain interactions may lead to increased achievement.

Finally, there were no evaluation studies of IEP meetings found. A longitudinal program evaluation study using the various programs that use student-led approaches would benefit from an approach that included a discourse analysis methodology for analyzing interactions, and a focus on measurement outcomes. In summary, much research remains to be done with the discursive approach and IEP meetings, either in combination with other methodologies or on its own. Knowing more about interactions can generate considerations for improving practice.

Final Thoughts

When students were present in 26 meetings, facilitators invited students to share information about their future, with ten of the meetings resulting in additions to the IEP. In only nine meetings, with and without students, did *spontaneous* shared decision making occur. If we want to include shared decision making in IEP meetings, then the discourse structure needs to change from one of presentation, to one of planning together. Changing from a controlled presentation to one of shared planning needs to be done in an efficient way that does not unduly burden already overworked educators, stress busy parents, and scare students. In order to increase involvement and shared decision making, efficient institutional structures and procedures will be needed to replace the well-oiled machine of educators as decision makers that has continued for over 35 years (Mehan, 1983; Mehan et al, 1986).

This research demonstrated how presenters used the IEP form as a guide to talk. Exchanging one presenter, the educator, for another, the student, may be an excellent measure to

include students. Approaches that teach student-centered and student-led approaches already exist, but are not widely used (Thoma & Wehman, 2010), even though they accomplish both involving the student, as well as completion of all legal forms. It is not clear from present research how student-centered *interactions* would increase shared planning, discursively.

Although this research showed how the majority of interactions were presentations by educators with agreement by caregivers and students, findings indicated that participants pushed back against deficit constructions with hope. Participants overcame the institutional rules, and legal boundaries of the talk to show that the student was a capable individual, actively growing, even if he were in need of special education services. Such constructions of hope within meetings dominated by an IEP form focused on student deficits, demonstrated that all IEP participants worked hard to encourage and engage in hopeful talk, if not decision making together. Further research on how hopeful constructions may also contribute to feelings of satisfaction with meetings is of interest. It is in the hopeful expectancy for success that continues to drive IEP team participants to the overall shared goal of high school graduation, and continued success later in life.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Studies with Multiple IEP Participants

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Childre & Chambers, 2005	Qualitative pre-post interviews with six families, including educator discussion	unknown, other than six families: middle school students age ten to 15	Student Centered IEP planning process perceptions of families, with corroboration by educators	Pre intervention, families perceived that they participated, but it was through listening and answering questions. Post intervention, families saw themselves as active participants.
Danneker and Bottge, 2009	Qualitative multiple case study with pre-post interviews, IEP meeting observations, previous and present IEP document review, field notes from lesson observations	16: 4 elementary students: 3 boys (one 4th grader and two sixth graders) and one girl (5th grade); all white in inclusion services; 4 caregivers; 4 general educators; 4 special educators	Each student received six 20 minute lessons to prepare them to lead their IEP meeting	Student-led meetings increased collaborative problem solving, centered meeting on student, and gave students a chance to practice self-determination skills.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Dufon, 1993	Ethnographic case with observations and audio tapes of K-12 IEP meetings and interviews of professionals and parents	14 IEP referral meetings: 6 psychologists as focal participants; 13 interpreters; 12 Spanish speaking mothers/2 fathers	politeness of psychologists: language patterns successful in gaining relational and referential goals in sharing diagnosis; accuracy of interpretation,	Three psychologist speaking styles: (1) academic; (2) informal and egalitarian; and (3) clear. The clear style resulted in more accurate interpretation and perception of politeness.
Goepel, 2009	Qualitative case study with interviews of 4 students and surveys for parents and educators	4 middle school students, 2 boys and 2 girls, ages 10-11, inclusion services; 7 caregivers; 4 teachers	partnership of IEP team members and perceptions of need for special education services	Lack of shared understandings about student needs led to limited partnership
Harris, 2010	Ethnographic study: video tapes of nine IEP meetings	12: nine parents: three parents from each setting: rural, suburban and urban ranging from 20 to 45 years old; 3 female special educators	special education teachers' discourse in rural, suburban and urban setting and the effects of discourse on parental involvement in three IEP meetings	Educators showed up with completed IEP. Although equal number of speaking turns, parent turns were largely in confirmation of educator topics.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, & Powers, 2008	Qualitative study with interviews and focus groups	146: 67 female students, ages 15-23 with all dis/ability types; 34 parents: 26 mothers, 3 fathers, 4 family members; 45 K-12 special education teachers, paraprofessionals, transition specialists, school psychologists	influence of gender on transition goals and student experiences	Students reported dissatisfaction with IEP because of lack of voice. Educators held negative assumptions about students and parents. Parents and professionals blamed each other for lack of involvement.
Jones & Gansle, 2010	Quasi-experimental: Surveys and time-sampling observations of IEP meetings	41 students17 elementary, 24 secondary, 70% boys, all dis/ability types; 48 parents of various SES types: 80% were mothers; 14 special educators: 5 elementary teachers and 9 secondary teachers; 12 administrators	parent involvement and satisfaction as determined by parent SES and school professionals responses to 11 item survey and time-sampling of meetings, with one group (n=20) receiving a pre-IEP training conference	Even though they observed no difference in IEP interaction, all parents of all SES domains reported meaningful involvement and satisfaction with meetings. Teachers also reported greater participation from training, even though there were no observed increases of interaction.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Laluvein, 2007	Qualitative interviews	10 parents and 10 primary school teachers from United Kingdom	perceptions of teachers and parents working together to support primary school children	Teachers and parents did not share the same value for information that came from parents or from sources outside the school. Some teachers negotiated with parents more than others over decisions. There were two reported instances of shared decision making attempted, but failed.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Laluvein, 2010	Qualitative interviews	10 parents and 10 primary school teachers from United Kingdom	Analysis of interviews from a community of practice framework.	Differential decision making power between parents and teachers. Four teacher parent dyads shared information and stories in a way similar to communities of practice frameworks. For these four dyads, parents *influenced* decision making, even if they did not make specific decisions.
Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004	Survey given over three years	1,638: students (attending 70 % of meetings), parents, administrators, special and general education teachers, related services: 25 % junior high; 21 % middle school; 54 % high school students	perceptions of IEP team member on secondary transition IEP meetings and how they differ when certain participants attend	Of all participants, students were less likely than others to know the reasons for the IEP meeting and what they needed to do. When students were present, parents better understood more of what was being said by professionals and felt more comfortable speaking.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Martin, Van Dycke, Greene, Gardner, Christensen, Woods, & Lovett, 2006	Time sampling Observations and post meeting surveys	109 secondary, ages 12-19, meetings observed; unspecified 627 IEP team members (special and general educators, family members, administrators, support staff) with 89.9% completing survey	extent of student involvement in secondary transition meetings and perceptions of involvement	Special education teachers talked 51% of the time, family members 15% of the time and, students 3% of the time. However, 40% of special educators surveyed perceived that students participated "a lot" (p. 196). Family feeling of meaningful involvement within decision-making was higher when students attended meetings and lower when students did not attend meetings.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Mehan, 1983	Ethnographic study using discourse analysis: observations and videotaping with discourse analysis	140 referral meetings from 1978-1979 with unspecified number of parents and educators	decision making and labeling in the special education referral process	"Decision making" moments for placement had none of the attributes associated with decision making, such as offering a range of alternatives. Placements were quick presentations by psychologists with agreement by parents and other team members.
Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986	Ethnographic study using discourse analysis: observations and videotaping with discourse analysis	141 referral meetings from 1978-1979 with unspecified number of parents and educators	decision making and labeling in the special education referral process	Labeling of learning disabled is an institutionalized concept rather than a characteristic of the child and receiving special education was a "matter of belief" (p. 57).

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Peters, 2003	Ethnographic case study using conversation analysis like techniques and thematic analysis	observations of 4 IEP meetings and 30 classroom lessons; audio taped interviews with 1 self-contained classroom special educator and 3 parents	language and social structure of IEP meeting with attention to impression management	IEP team members used the IEP form as a script and performed routine social interactions to smoothly conduct meetings. Everyone assumed appropriate roles, which included impression management to minimize disruptions to the social order.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Plum, 2008	Collective case study using conversation analysis	13 video and audio taped IEP meetings (six hours) from K-8 schools; unspecified number; special and general education teacher, psychologist, parents, grandparents, social worker and administrator	social interaction of IEP teams making placement decisions with attention to membership categories and power asymmetries	Collaboration of participants looked like everyone agreeing to and maintaining a deliberate social order with the psychologist holding the most interactional power. IEP team members asked questions and presented opinions until it was clear that the decision was not a shared decision, but that the psychologist recommended a pre-determined placement.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Prunty, 2011	Mixed method: focus groups and surveys	five focus groups: N=27: 19 special educators, 8 parents, 3 students with autism diagnosis ages 8, 9, 10; 213 general and special educator surveys	children with autism spectrum disorder labels and their UN rights as displayed in Irish IEP meetings using author developed indicators and survey	All participants noted the importance of parent involvement on surveys and in focus groups. Teacher and educator focus groups reported parent input related more to self-care than academics. Parent focus groups desired more active participation with IEP assessment, planning and reviewing, and felt excluded from decision making.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Rogers, 2002	Ethnographic case study: two years of observations, audio recorded interviews, document collection using a critical discourse analysis	two IEP meetings with two focal participants, mother/daughter over period of two years: 1st meeting: African American lower SES mother, and her youngest child, psychologist, meeting chair, speech therapist, parent liaison; 2nd meeting: mother, 7th grade daughter, two special educators, teacher aide, student teacher, and counselor	language and social construction of dis/ability and placement in referral meetings compared to one year later for a 6th and 7th grader	Teachers demonstrated interactional power to construct a 6th grader's identity and need for special education services and keep her in services one year later.With little parent input and little logic, the construction changed from constructing deficit to how well the student was now doing in special education.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Rogers, 2003	Ethnographic case study: two years of observations, audio recorded interviews, document collection using a critical discourse analysis	two IEP meetings with two focal participants, mother/daughter over period of two years; 1st meeting: African American lower SES mother, and her youngest child, psychologist, meeting chair, speech therapist, parent liaison; 2nd meeting: mother, 7th grade daughter, two special educators, teacher aide, student teacher, and counselor	discursive construction of identities during referral process, particularly, the classroom teacher, the remedial reading teacher, and the mother	Implicit assumptions of two teachers and a mother were mismatched when referring a sixth grader. The mother's discourse displayed the assumption that she had decision making power and that the evaluation was exploratory while the two teachers' discourse showed that the act of referral for evaluation acted as inevitable placement in special education. The mother actively resisted the persistent teacher reports of her daughter's deficit.

Citation	Research Design	Participant Number and Characteristics	Topic	Relevant Findings
Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011	Case study: observation of one two hour initial IEP meeting and ten team members interviews	11 IEP team members: special education administrator, principal, special education teacher, pre-school teacher, psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, current and receiving speech and language therapist, father, mother in one meeting for a five year old boy	how communication related to the decisions made during the IEP meeting and perceptions of the decision-making process and the final decisions written on the IEP	The facilitator used the IEP form as a guide to lead the meeting, which prompted a turn-taking interaction that reduced decision making opportunities for discussion of assessment information and IEP goals.

Appendix B:

Transcription Symbols

(Jefferson, 2004)

[overlapping talk, the bracket starts where the overlap starts]

= latching, talk that continues unbroken even while another speaker might interrupt

(.) micro pause shorter than 0.2

(.5) longer pause with length in seconds

-cut off of speech

, continuing intonation

. stopping fall in tone

? rising inflection

$ smiling in the voice$

EMPHASIS

(non-verbal actions)

@@ animated voice

>faster<

<slower>

Exte::nded sound

Appendix C:

Institution IRB Approval

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE UT
KNOXVILLE
Office of Research & Engagement
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

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From: Brenda Lawson
Office of Research
Compliances

Subject: Annual Review and Progress Report
Project Involving Research with Human Subjects IRB#: 8968 B
IRB-APPROVED RENEWAL

Project: A Discourse Analysis of Individualized Education Program Meetings

Initial Approval Date: October 4, 2012 Last Approval Date: October 24, 2013

Approval Expires: October 4, 2014

In response to our request regarding annual review and a progress report of the above protocol, you indicated that the study is still active and that there have been no changes with regard to the use of human subjects in this project since the last date of review. Therefore, the Institutional Review Board has approved the protocol until **October, 2014**, which coincides with the anniversary month of your initial approval date.

If there should be any modifications in the project before the date of next annual review, please submit them, utilizing a Form D, to the Compliances Office immediately for review. Requests for your next annual review will be sent to you approximately one month prior to the expiration date.

Appendix D:

All 77 Kindergarten to 12th Grade IEP Meetings

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
1	1.28.13	Marcus	Grace Elementary/3rd	Mother, Father, Resource Specialist Personnel (RSP), classroom teacher, psychologist, Response to Intervention (RTI) specialist, (no student)	41:06
2	1.29.13	Priscilla	Maranatha Elementary/1st	Mother, Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP), Occupational Therapist (OT), RSP, Comprehensive Day Class (CDC) teacher, classroom teacher, psychologist, principal, (no student)	1:35:04
3	1.31.13	Jesse	Grace Elementary/3rd	Mother, Father, RSP, classroom teacher, psychologist, (no student)	26:16
4	2.5.13	John	Grace Middle School/8th	Father, 8th CDC, 8th RSP, High School (HS) counselor, HS biology RSP, HS English CDC, HS CDC teacher, classroom teacher: Art, (no student)	31:20
5	2.5.13	Wonder Woman	Grace MS 8th	Student, father, 8th RSP, High School (HS) counselor, HS biology teacher	attended; audio missing
6	2.5.13	Bizza	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology	28:50

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
7	2.5.13	Peeta	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, SLP, HS counselor, HS biology, Middle School (MS) counselor, Classroom teacher: Language Arts (LA)	attended; audio missing
8	2.5.13	James	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology, SLP, Classroom teacher: science	31:32
9	2.5.13	Mark Owen	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology, SLP	39:13
10	2.5.13	Heath	Grace MS 8th	Mother, 8th RSP, 8th CDC, homebound teacher, HS CDC, HS CDC language arts, HS biology , HS counselor, (no student)	22:26
11	2.6.13	Derek	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology, Classroom teacher: social studies	30:29
12	2.6.13	Boyd Crowder	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology; classroom teacher: LA	55:24
13	2.6.13	Andy	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology	21:39
14	2.6.13	Jake	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology, classroom teacher: science	37:28
15	2.6.13	Superman	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, SLP, HS counselor, HS biology, classroom teacher: social studies	23:09

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
16	2.6.13	Beyonce	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, SLP, HS counselor, HS biology, classroom teacher: social studies	23:55
17	2.6.13	Superman 3	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology, Classroom teacher: science, ESL teacher/translator and translator	24:54
18	2.6.13	Weston	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology	23:07
19	2.8.13	Chris Johnson	Grace MS 8th	Student, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor2, HS biology, classroom teacher: science	17:49
20	2.8.13	Lebron James	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor2, HS biology, classroom teacher: math	32:38
21	2.8.13	Smiles	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, aunt, 8th RSP, HS counselor2, HS biology	27:40
22	2.8.13	Tommy	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor2, HS biology	32:37
23	2.8.13	Bill	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor2, HS biology, classroom teacher: LA	23:57
24	2.8.13	Elvis	Grace MS 8th	Student, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor2, HS biology, classroom teacher: social studies	29:02
25	2.8.13	Ashley	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology	34:12
26	2.8.13	Peyton	Grace MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS counselor, HS biology	1:04:49

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
27	2.15.13	Amherst	Lovely Middle/4th	RSP, SLP, (no student & no parent)	11:18 audio dropped
28	2.15.13	Toby	Lovely Elementary/K	Mother, RSP teacher, SLP, Psychologist, classroom teacher, (no student)	42:40
29	2.21.13	Jason	Hallelujah MS 8th CDC	Student, mother, HS Sped coordinator, 8th CDC, HS CDC	39:02
30	2.21.13	Mike Jones	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, father, HS Sped coordinator, 8th RSP	40:28
31	2.21.13	Carrie	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, mother, HS Sped coordinator, 8th RSP	30:35
32	2.21.13	Lenora May	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, mother, HS Sped coordinator, 8th RSP	45:17
33	2.25.13	Johnny P.	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, Father, 8th RSP, HS SPED coordinator	23:38
34	2.25.13	William James	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, mother, HS Sped coordinator, 8th RSP	22:22
35	2.25.13	Delia	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, mother, HS Sped coordinator, 8th RSP	16:38
36	2.27.13	Keyona	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, grandmother, 8th RSP, HS SPED coordinator	26:53
37	2.28.13	Christopher	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, grandmother, 8th RSP, HS SPED coordinator	22:45
38	2.28.13	Max	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, grandmother, grandfather, 8th RSP, HS SPED coordinator	1:00:43
39	2.28.13	Danielle	Hallelujah MS 8th	Student, mother, father, 8th RSP, HS SPED coordinator	43:55
40	3.5.13	Alvin	Hallelujah MS 8th CDC	Student, grandmother, mother, 8th CDC, HS CDC	54:10

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
41	3.5.13	Mylie	Hallelujah MS 8th CDC	Student, mother, father, 8th CDC, HS CDC	36:53
42	3.11.13	Kristy	Grace MS 7th	Mother, grandmother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP classroom teachers: math, social studies and science, (no student)	23:03
43	3.11.13	Trevor	Grace MS 7th	Mother, grandmother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP classroom teacher: social studies, (no student)	43:07
44	3.12.13	Esther	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, classroom teachers: math, social studies and language arts, (no student)	44:35
45	3.18.13	Rob	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, classroom teachers: science and language arts, student teacher, (no student)	22:47
46	3.18.13	Jenny	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, classroom teachers shared in meeting A: science, LA, Eng, (no student)	a) 2:17 b) 29:26
47	3.19.13	Flossy	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, Classroom teachers: social studies and language arts, (no student)	21:09
48	3.19.13	Elsa	Grace MS 7th	Mother, translator, 7th RSP and 8th RSP, (no student)	37:46
49	4.2.13	Wendy	Grace MS 7th	Mother, Father, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, psychologist, Classroom teachers: math, social studies, LA, (no student)	38:02
50	4.2.13	Stephan	Lovely ES 1st	Mother, Father, RSP, classroom teacher, psychologist, translator, (no student)	21:57

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
51	4.3.13	Mia	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, classroom teachers: math, LA, science, (no student)	35:30
52	4.5.13	Taylor	Grace MS 8th	Mother, 8th RSP, classroom teachers: math, LA1, LA2, science, psychologist, (no student)	56:03
53	4.5.13	Amy	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 7th RSP, 6th RSP, LA classroom teacher, SLP, (no student)	25:09
54	4.5.13	Ironman	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 7th RSP, 6th RSP, OT, LA classroom teacher, (no student)	45:40
55	4.5.13	Chrissy	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, LA classroom teacher, (no student)	40:36
56	4.5.13	Paul	Grace MS 6th	6th RSP, 7th RSP, LA classroom teacher, (no student & no parent)	8:44 audio dropped
57	4.5.13	Philip	Grace MS 6th	Grandmother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, LA Classroom teacher	26:25
58	4.8.13	Bubba	Grace MS 7th	Mother, Father, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, OT, classroom teacher: math, social studies, LA, science (no student)	27:47
59	4.8.13	Michael	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, classroom teachers shared in meeting A without mother, (no student)	A) 2:02 B) 36:56
60	4.10.13	Benton	Grace MS 7th	Grandfather, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, four classroom teachers (shared in meeting A): science, LA, math, social studies, (no student)	A) 21:47 B) 35:31

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
61	4.10.13	Sheldon	Grace MS 7th	Mother, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, SLP, Classroom teachers: science and LA, (no student)	26:39
62	4.11.13	Benny	Grace MS 8th	Mother, 8th RSP, HS English, HS biology, SLP, district special education supervisor, principal, (no student)	1:24:07
63	4.12.13	Laura	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, Classroom teacher: LA, (no student)	21:05
64	4.12.13	Raj	Grace MS 7th	Mother, Father, 7th RSP, 8th RSP, speech and language therapist Classroom teachers: math, LA 1, LA 2, science, (no student)	53:51
65	4.12.13	Howard	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, Classroom teacher: LA, (no student)	31:17
66	4.12.13	Ted	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, Classroom teacher: LA, (no student)	24:12
67	4.12.13	Sy	Grace MS 6th	Grandmother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, Classroom teacher: LA, (no student)	41:20
68	4.12.13	Harry Potter	Grace MS 6th	Father, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, Classroom teacher: LA, (no student)	28:34
69	4.12.13	Jase	Grace MS 6th	Mother, 6th RSP, 7th RSP, Classroom teacher: LA, (no student)	12:05
70	4.15.13	Willie	Lovely HS 11th	Student, mother, grandmother, HS RSP, psychologist, HS guidance counselor, special education secretary	22:43

#	Date	Pseudonym	Grade and School	Attending	Length
71	4.16.13	Shaggy	Lovely HS 11th	Student, HS RSP, psychologist, HS guidance counselor, sped secretary, non-participating teacher in room, (no parent)	21:22
72	4.16.13	Callie	Lovely HS 11th	Student, mother, HS RSP, psychologist, HS guidance counselor, special education secretary	56:26
73	4.19.13	Percy	Grace MS 5th to 6th	Mother, Father, 5th RSP, 6th RSP, OT, 5th classroom teacher, 6th grade classroom teacher: science, (no student)	54:44
74	4.19.13	Banana	Grace MS 5th to 6th	Mother, 5th RSP, 6th RSP, 5th classroom teacher, OT, SLP, 6th grade classroom teacher: math, (no student)	42:01
75	4.19.13	SwampGuy	Grace MS 6th	Father, 7th RSP, 6th RSP, 6th grade classroom teacher: social studies, (no student)	48:18
76	4.24.13	Sprite	Grace MS 6th CDC	Father, Mother, CDC teacher, 6th RSP, SLP, OT, Classroom teacher: art, (no student)	1:01:54
77	4.24.13	SamIAm	Grace MS 8th CDC	Mother, Boyfriend, CDC teacher, 6th RSP, SLP, OT, Classroom teacher: art, (no student)	30:10

Appendix E:

Demographic Information with Students Absent

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Amy	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting and SLP 1x 30 minutes a week	Grace	White	Female	12	1st: Specific Learning Dis/ability (SLD) 2nd: Language Impairment (LI)
Benny	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting and SLP 1x 30 minutes a week then move to consult in HS; move OT to consult 2x/year in HS	Grace	White	Male	14	Autism 2nd: LI; seizures, wears glasses
Benton	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	13	SLD; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) meds; malformation at base of skull
Bubba	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	13	SLD; ADHD; wears glasses

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Chrissy	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting/ no SLP	Grace	White	Female	13	1st: LI 2nd: speech impairments; Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
Elsa	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting and SLP 1x30min/week	Grace	Hispanic	Female	14	1st: SLD 2nd: LI
Esther	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	14	Other health impaired: ADD
Flossy	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	13	SLD
Harry Potter	6th	SLP and inclusion 30 minutes moving all services to consult	Grace	White	Male	12	Autism; ADHD meds
Heath	8th	CDC/Homebound	Grace	Unknown	Male	Unknown	health impaired: cerebral palsy, intellectual dis/ability, seizures, autism

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Howard	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	12	SLD
Ironman	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting and OT moved to consult	Grace	White	Male	11	SLD
Jase	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	13	SLD wears glasses; going to try ADD meds
Jenny	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	14	SLD
Kristy	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	12	SLD
Laura	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	12	SLD
Mia	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting and SLP 1x30min/week	Grace	White	Female	13	1st: SLD 2nd: LI

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Michael	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	12	SLD; wears glasses, anxiety issues
Phillip	6th	Consult academics and SLP 2x/month	Grace	White	Male	12	Other health impairments: three cranial surgeries
Raj	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting/no SLP services	Grace	Black or African American	Male	13	LI; migraines
Rob	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	13	SLD
SamIAm	8th	CDC with OT and SLP each 1x/week for 30 min	Grace	White	Male	15	1st: Autism 2nd: LI
Sheldon	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting and SLP 1x 30 minutes a week	Grace	White	Male	13	LI; wears glasses
Sprite	6th	CDC with SLP 2x/week for 30 min and OT 1x/mo 30 min until Dec then consult 3x year	Grace	White	Female	12	1st: Intellectual dis/ability 2nd: LI

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
SwampGuy	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	Hispanic	Male	12	SLD; allergies and asthma
Sy	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	11	SLD; takes ADHD meds
Taylor	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	13	SLD
Ted	6th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting; SLP moved to consult	Grace	White	Male	12	1st: SLD 2nd: LI
Trevor	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	14	SLD; history of ADD, no meds
Wendy	7th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	13	SLD; wears glasses

Appendix F:

Demographic Information with Students Present

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Alvin	8th	CDC	Hallel	White	Female	14	Autism
Andy	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours sped setting	Grace	White	Male	14	Other health impairments; no meds for ADHD
Ashley	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	14	1st: Specific Learning Dis/ability (SLD) 2nd: Language Impairment (LI)
Beyonce	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	Black or African American	Female	14	LI
Bill	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	14	SLD
Bizza	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Female	13	SLD; no meds for ADHD
Boyd Crowder	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	13	SLD; meds for ADHD
Carrie	8th	moved to consult for the rest of the year with 90 min/day in HS in fall	Hallel	White	Female	14	1st: SLD 2nd: LI

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Chris Johnson	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	13	SLD
Christopher	8th	MS moving from RSP to inclusion math; HS will have 3 hours/day in sped setting	Hallel	White	Male	15	Other health impairment: ADHD; no meds
Danielle	8th	MS moving from RSP to inclusion math, science and LA; in HS will have one 90 min inclusion and one 90 min in sped setting	Hallel	White	Female	15	SLD
Delia	8th	Inclusion LA for MS, consult academics in HS 2x/month	Hallel	White	Female	15	Other health impairments: ADHD
Derek	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	14	SLD
Elvis	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	14	SLD
Jake	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	14	1st: SLD 2nd: LI
James	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	14	SLD and speech impairments

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Jason	8th	CDC and SLP 1x per week 30 min	Hallel	White	Male	14	1st: LI 2nd: functional delay
John	8th	CDC: 5 hour/day special education setting;speech 1x 30 min/week	Grace	White	Male	15	1st: Intellectual dis/ability 2nd: LI; diabetes, orthopedic issues
Johnny P.	8th	Inclusion math, science and LA in reg ed setting in MS then in HS 90 minutes/day in sped setting	Hallel	White	Male	14	1st: SLD 2nd: LI
Keyona	8th	Consult for rest of MS year; 3 hours/day in sped setting in HS	Hallel	Black or African American	Female	14	SLD
Lebron James	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	Black or African American	Male	14	SLD; subaortic heart condition; blood pressure meds
Lenora May	8th	Consult 2x/week in MS and 2x/month in HS	Hallel	White	Female	14	SLD; scoliosis and asthma
Mark Owen	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	15	Language impairments; heart condition

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Max	8th	MS in Inclusion LA for 100 minutes; HS will have 3 hours/day in sped setting	Hallel	White	Male	14	Emotional disturbance; depression, borderline diabetic; multiple meds
Mike Jones	8th	moved from special education setting to Inclusion math, science and LA	Hallel	White	Male	13	1st: SLD 2nd: speech impairments
Mylie	8th	CDC	Hallel	White	Female	14	Intellectual dis/ability
Peyton	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting with SLP and OT consult	Grace	White	Male	14	LI
Smiles	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	White	Male	15	1st: SLD 2nd: LI ringing in ears
Superman	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting; SLP 1x week for 30 min	Grace	Black or African American	Male	14	1st: SLD 2nd: LI
Superman three	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours regular education setting	Grace	Hispanic	Male	14	SLD
Tommy	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours sped setting	Grace	White	Male	14	1st: LI 2nd: speech impairments

Name	Grade	Placement and services	School	Race	Gender	Age	Dis/ability Label & Medical
Weston	8th	Inclusion: 3 hours reg ed setting and SLP 1hour/week	Grace	White	Male	14	1st: SLD 2nd: speech impairments
William James	8th	Consult	Hallel	White	Male	13	Visually impaired; congenital nystagmas

Appendix G:

Descriptions of IEP Form Sections

IEP Section	Description
1. Student Information	Refers to demographic information such as name, age, grade, gender, race, contact information, medical information, and primary and secondary dis/ability labels.
2. Current Descriptive Information	Includes three prompts: (1) “Describe the student’s strengths;” (2) “Describe the concerns of the parents regarding their student’s education;” and (3) “Describe how the student’s disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum” (p. 2).

IEP Section	Description
3. Present Levels of Performance	Includes the instruction: "Levels of functioning, should when applicable, include norm referenced and/or criterion referenced data, as well as descriptive information of the student's deficit areas" (p. 2). The tables that organize information ask for the name of the assessment, the subject or functional area assessed (e.g., language, academics, vocational skills), and whether the results were "exceptional yes/no" (p.2).
4. Considerations of Special Factors for IEP Development	Special factors include questions about: (1) primary language and limited English; (2) blind or visually impaired; (3) communication needs; (4) deaf or hard of hearing; (5) assistive technology needs; and (6) behavior that "impede[s] his/her learning or that of others" (p. 3).

IEP Section	Description
5. Transition Services Planning (Age 14 or turning 14 during the IEP period)	Starts from age 14, and includes measurable post secondary goals for: (1) employment; (2) independent/supported living; (3) post-secondary education/training; and (4) community involvement.
6. Transition Services (Age 16 or turning 16 during the IEP period)	Starts from age 16, and includes activities and strategies for each transition service area (e.g., community experiences, daily living skills, and instruction).
7. Measurable Annual Goals and Benchmarks/ Short-term Instructional Objectives for IEP and Transition Activities	Includes: (1) the areas of need; (2) the person held responsible (e.g., regular and special education teacher and assistants); (3) start dates; (4) mastery criteria; (5) evaluation methods; (6) any program modifications and supports for teachers; and (7) and supplementary aids or services and support for the child.

IEP Section	Description
8. Program Participation	Refers to classroom accommodations for each subject such as preferential seating, extended time on tests, additional time on assignments, prompting upon request, and oral testing.
9. State/District Mandated Tests and Modified or Alternative State Test Participation Guidelines	Indicates standardized tests that students will take in the upcoming year. Facilitators used this page to note whether the student would be taking a Modified State Test or to explain the difference between the Modified test and the regular State Test. The differences, as explained by facilitators were three answer choices instead of four and shorter reading passages. Students receiving CDC services took the alternative portfolio assessment.

IEP Section	Description
10. State Test Accommodations	Lists the allowable and special accommodations for each of the subject achievement tests and constructed response assessments. This repeated much of the information from classroom accommodations because accommodations for the State Test needed to also be provided in the classroom.
11. Special Education and Related Services	Refers to the times (minutes or hours per session and week), locations (in the regular education setting or a special education setting), providers (e.g., speech/language pathologist and special education teacher), and types of services (e.g., academics, life skills, occupational therapy). It also included the beginning and end dates for services, and whether those services were direct special education in a regular or special education setting or whether they were consultation.

IEP Section	Description
12. LRE and General Education	References “least restrictive environment” in IDEA (2004) that calls for as much time in the regular education setting as possible. Therefore, this section explains “the extent, if any, in which the student will not participate with non-disabled peers in: (1) the regular class; (2) extracurricular and nonacademic activities; and (3) his/her LEA [Local Educational Authority] Home School” (EasyIEP™).
13. Special Transportation	Any bus transportation provided for the student that is different from other students.
14. Extended School Year	Summer school usually runs for four weeks in the summer and is provided for students who need academic support to maintain progress on their academic goals.

IEP Section	Description
15. IEP Participants	Includes the signature page for IEP participants with the statement: “The following individuals attended the IEP Team and participated in the development of the Individualized Education Program.” Positions on the form include the roles of participants such as: (1) parent; (2) student; (3) LEA representative who is the person acting as an administrator; (4) special education teacher; (5) regular education teachers and their subject areas; (6) guidance counselor; and (7) interpreter of evaluation results, which could be a support therapist, school psychologist, or special education teacher.

IEP Section	Description
16. Informed Parental Consent	Applies to agreement or disagreement with IEP. To receive special education services, the caregiver/guardian must agree with four statements in that they: (1) are the legal parent/guardian/surrogate of the child; (2) have been informed, understand, and received a copy of their parental rights; (3) have been involved in the IEP meeting and/or the development of the IEP and give permission for the program described; and (4) have been informed that when the child turns 18 he/she can represent himself/herself.
17. Documentation of IEP Review by Other Teachers not in Attendance	Provides for times when general education teachers could not be present, but were in a responsible position of educating the child. The case manager reviews the IEP with the educator or therapist at another time, and obtained their signature.

Appendix H:

Excerpt Student Descriptions

Excerpt	Description
1 & 5: Bill	At the time of this meeting, Bill was an eighth grade white male student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability. He received three hours of inclusion services. The meeting lasted 24 minutes. Attendees included Bill, his mother and father, the eighth grade social studies teacher, the high school counselor and the high school case manager, with the eighth grade special education teacher facilitating.
2: Ironman	At the time of this meeting, Ironman was a sixth grade white male student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability. He received three hours of inclusion services. The meeting lasted 45 minutes and was attended by Ironman's mother, the OT, the sixth grade language arts teacher, and the seventh grade special education resource teacher (RSP), with the sixth grade RSP teacher facilitating.
3: Flossy	At the time of this meeting, Flossy was a seventh grade white female student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability. She received three hours of inclusion services. This addendum meeting lasted 21 minutes. Flossy's tri-annual meeting had been held two months previously. Attendees included Flossy's mother, two classroom teachers: social studies and the language arts RTI teacher, with the seventh grade RSP teacher facilitating.

Excerpt	Description
4: Keyona	At the time of this meeting, Keyona was an eighth grade African American female student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability at Hallelujah Middle School. In her present courses, Keyona received consultation services with the special education teacher checking on her progress one time a week. In this IEP meeting, the eighth grade RSP and high school administrator decided Keyona would receive direct special education services at the high school for math and language arts. The meeting lasted 27 minutes. Attendees included Keyona and her grandmother with the high school administrator and the eighth grade RSP teacher facilitating.
6: Danielle	At the time of this meeting, Danielle was an eighth grade white female student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability at Hallelujah Middle School. She received three hours a week inclusion services. The meeting lasted 44 minutes. Attendees included Danielle and her mother and father, with the high school administrator and the eighth grade RSP teacher sharing facilitation.

Excerpt	Description
7-9: Heath	At the time of this meeting, Heath was an eighth grade white male student who qualified for special education services under multiple categories. Heath received three hours of home-bound services a week, and was not present in this meeting. Because Heath was home-bound, only the mother and a teacher who came in for three hours a week knew the student well. The meeting lasted 22 minutes. I was not able to obtain a copy of Heath's IEP, so I cannot report the exact categories for which he was receiving services.
10-11: Ashley	At the time of this meeting, Ashley was an eighth grade white female student who qualified for special education services under two categories: specific learning dis/ability and language impairments. She received consultation services with speech checking on her once a month, but when given the option to discontinue speech services, she took it. Ashley also received three hours of inclusion services in regular education. The annual meeting lasted 34 minutes, including time for choosing high school electives and stating a career path. Attendees included Ashley and her mother, Ashley's science teacher, the high school case manager, the high school counselor, with the eighth grade RSP teacher, facilitating.

Excerpt	Description
12-14: Sprite	At the time of this meeting, Sprite was a sixth grade white female student who qualified for special education services under the intellectual dis/ability and language impairments categories. She received services in a comprehensive day class at Grace Middle as well as occupational therapy once a month and speech and language services twice a week. The meeting lasted one hour and was attended by both Sprite's parents, her Art teacher, the 6th grade RSP, the occupational therapist, and the speech therapist, with the comprehensive day class teacher, facilitating.
15-19: Taylor	At the time of the IEP meeting, Taylor was an eighth grade white female student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability. The meeting lasted 56 minutes. Attendees included Taylor's mother, the school psychologist, the eighth grade resource special education teacher (RSP), and four of her classroom teachers: math, science, the Response to Intervention (RTI)7 reading teacher, and the English teacher. The psychologist and the eighth grade RSP teacher shared facilitation, with the psychologist facilitating the beginning and ending of the meeting, and the eighth grade RSP facilitating the presentation of the IEP.

Excerpt	Description
20-21 & 28: Wendy	At the time of this meeting, Wendy was a seventh grade white female student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability in math. She was not present in this initial meeting. She received three hours of inclusion services. The meeting lasted 38 minutes. Attendees included Wendy's mother and father, the seventh grade special education resource teacher (RSP), the school psychologist, the eighth grade resource special education teacher (RSP), and three of her classroom teachers: math, social studies, and the English teacher. The psychologist and the seventh grade RSP teacher shared facilitation, with the psychologist facilitating the beginning and ending of the meeting, and the seventh grade RSP facilitating the presentation of the IEP.
22: Jenny	At the time of this meeting, Jenny was a seventh grade white female student who qualified for special education services with a specific learning dis/ability. She received three hours of inclusion services. The meeting lasted 29 minutes. The mother was so late to the meeting that the science, language arts RTI, and English teacher shared with the seventh special education resource (RSP) teacher in a separate recording. Then they left to teach their classes. The eighth grade RSP also had to leave to attend to his students, and arrived late. Attendees for the entire meeting included Jenny's mother with the seventh grade RSP teacher facilitating.

Excerpt	Description
23-25: Benny	At the time of this meeting, Benny was an eighth grade white male student who qualified for special education services under the categories of autism and language impairments. He received inclusion services in the regular education setting for three hours a week. In this annual IEP meeting, Benny's speech services and occupational therapy services were moved to consultation for the high school. The meeting was the longest of all 63 meetings, and lasted one hour and 24 minutes. Although Benny was not there to choose electives, his mother noted that Benny preferred participating in band and football, but was awaiting doctor clearance. Attendees included Benny's mother, the director of special education for the district, the speech and language pathologist, the high school case manager, the high school counselor, and the high school English teacher, with the eighth grade RSP teacher facilitating.
26: Mark	At the time of this meeting, Mark was an eighth grade white male student who qualified for special education services under language impairments. He received inclusion services three hours a week in the regular classroom at Grace Middle School. In this IEP meeting, the eighth grade RSP teacher also completed re-eligibility paperwork continuing inclusion services and discontinuing speech services. The meeting lasted 39 minutes. Attendees included Mark, his mother, the high school case manager, high school counselor, and speech and language pathologist, with the eighth grade RSP teacher facilitating.

Excerpt	Description
27: Raj	At the time of this meeting, Raj was a seventh grade African American male student who qualified for special education services with a language impairment. He received three hours of inclusion services, with no speech and language services. The meeting lasted 54 minutes. Attendees included Raj's mother and father, the seventh grade special education resource teacher (RSP), the speech and language therapist, the eighth grade resource special education teacher (RSP), and three of his classroom teachers: math, the RTI language arts, science, and English. The psychologist was not able to be present, and had called the mother ahead of time to state that Raj qualified for special education. The speech and language therapist and the seventh grade RSP teacher shared facilitation, with the speech and language therapist facilitating the sharing of language scores, and the seventh grade RSP facilitating the presentation of the IEP.

Appendix I:

Three Types of Interactions

Type	**Outcome**	**Number**	**Children (bold font=student present)**
1. Presentation	Agreement and confirmation	63	All
	Challenges from team members	57	**Alvin,** Amy, **Andy, Ashley,** Benny, Benton, **Beyonce, Bill, Bizza, Boyd,** Bubba, **Carrie, Chris, Christopher, Danielle, Delia, Derek, Elvis,** Esther, Flossy, Howard, Ironman, **Jake, James,** Jase, Jenny, **Jason, Johnny P, Keyona,** Kristy, Laura, **Lebron, Lenora May, Mark, Max,** Mia, Michael, **Mike, Mylie, Peyton,** Philip, Raj, Rob, Sam, Sheldon, **Smiles,** Sprite, **Superman, Superman3,** Swamp Guy, Sy, Taylor, **Tommy, Trevor,** Wendy, **Weston, William**
2. Shared Information	No additions to IEP	63	All

Type	Outcome	Number	Children (bold font=student present)
	Additions to IEP	38	**Andy, Ashley,** Benny, **Beyonce, Bill, Bizza, Boyd,** Bubba, **Chris, Danielle, Derek, Elvis,** Esther, Flossy, Ironman, **Jake, James, Jase, Jason, JohnnyP, Keyona,** Laura, **Lebron, Lenora May, Mark, Max, Mike, Mylie, Peyton, Smiles,** Sprite, **Superman, Superman3,** Sy, **Tommy, Trevor, Weston, William**
3. Spontaneous Shared Decision Making	Additions to IEP	9	**Ashley**, Benny, Bubba, Flossy, Ironman, Laura, **Peyton**, **Smiles**, Sprite

Appendix J:

Topics of Shared Information and Shared Decision Making Moments

Topic	Students (Bold = shared decision making)
1. Accommodations	**Benny, Laura**
2. Further testing	**Ironman**, Sy
3. Goals	**Sprite**
4. Medication	Jase, Trevor
5. Modified State Test	**Peyton**
6. Retention	Howard
7. Services: related services, summer school, transportation	**Ashley, Bubba**, Esther, **Flossy**, **Ironman,** Jason, Mike, **Smiles**
8. Strengths/Concerns	Carrie, Christopher, Danielle, Delia, JohnnyP, Keyona, Lenora May, Max, Mike, SwampGuy, William
9. Transition	Alvin, Andy, **Ashley**, Beyonce, Bill, Bizza, Boyd, Carrie, Chris, Christopher, Danielle, Delia, Derek, Elvis, Jake, James, John, JohnnyP, Keyona, Lebron, Lenora May, Mark, Max, Mike, Mylie, **Peyton**, **Smiles,** Superman, Superman3, Tommy, Weston, William

Vita

Elizabeth Price was born in New Jersey. She attended the University of Utah, earning her Honor's Bachelor's in Sociology in 1998. Elizabeth went on to study the theory and practice of Structural Cognitive Modifiability under the supervision of Professor Reuven Feuerstein in Jerusalem, Israel. In 2001, she completed her teaching credential in special education at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, and began teaching in California public schools. In 2003, Elizabeth completed her Master's degree in special education, and continued teaching as a resource specialist. Elizabeth is highly trained in all aspects of Feuerstein's cognitive programs and approaches to dynamic assessment. She continues to train educators and caregivers in these approaches, and teaches in private practice as an educational therapist. While at the University of Tennessee, Elizabeth taught an educational psychology course to pre-service teachers for six years. She also completed a credential in Educational Administration, as well as certificates in Evaluation Methods in Education, Grant Writing and Proposal Development, and Qualitative Research Methods in Education. In August 2014, Elizabeth graduated with a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Research from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. She presently works in the northwest as an educational administrator.