MANIFESTATION DETERMINATION REVIEWS AND SCHOOL TEAM DECISION-MAKING WITH STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL/ BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES

by

Jennifer D. Walker
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

Committee:

_____ Chair

_____

_____

_____ Program Director

_____ Dean, College of Education and Human Development

Date: _____ Summer Semester 2013
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Manifestation Determination Reviews and School Team Decision-making with Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

by

Jennifer D. Walker
Master's of Education
George Mason University, 2000

Director: Frederick Brigham, Associate Professor
College of Education and Human Development

Summer Semester 2013
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my husband, Brett and our children, Tatum, Campbell, and Lincoln.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband Brett. You are my rock and without you, none of this would have ever been possible. Thank you for all of your sacrifices, support, and encouragement along the way. Thank you for listening to countless papers while I read them aloud, for reading numbers as I entered them into databases, for naps when I stayed up too late writing, and for letting me talk to you incessantly about manifestation determinations. Thank you for days of flying solo with the kids while I attended conferences and evenings of dinners and baths while I attended and taught classes. Without you, I wouldn't be the person I am today and none of this could have come to fruition. I will be forever appreciative of this amazing opportunity, this dream in which you gave me the space and time to pursue.

Thank you to my family. Thank you Pop for all of your support and encouragement. Your help with the kids during many crazy days and evenings is unparalleled and we are all very blessed to have you cheering us on. Thank you to Jason and Julie for always asking how things were going, for dealing with rambunctious children while I went to class, for knowing I'm really the one who is adopted, and for always making me laugh at the all-you-can-eat buffet. Thank you Jen for helping with the gremlins (especially during the baby days) and being our on-call nurse when problems arose. Thank you Aunt Roni for being my big sister, for listening to me whine, for letting me vent, and for being a person I know I can always trust.

Thank you to my friend Johanna, who should qualify as family. You've given me the friendship of a lifetime. During the toughest days of my life, you have always been there, supporting me. With St. Lucia you grounded me again, and I know that without that opportunity, I'd still be trudging through this process. Thanks for making me stop and smell the chocolate.

Thank you to Dr. Frederick Brigham, Dr. Peggy King-Sears, and Dr. Pam Baker for the leadership personnel preparation grant that afforded me the unbelievable opportunity to cross a Ph.D. off my bucket list. Thank you for funding me, and more importantly, thank you for graciously offering mentorship, advice, and support. Each of you has pushed me towards excellence and I will always value your wisdom and kindness.

Thank you to my committee and dissertation chair, Rick Brigham, who set this hidden profile fire underneath me long before I was able to fully understand the research potential. I appreciate your support and enthusiasm for my research and I look forward to collaborating with you in the future.

Thank you to my professors. As an educator, the importance of a good teacher is not lost on me. Thank you Dr. Brigham, Dr. King-Sears, Dr. Baker, Dr. Galluzzo, Dr. Samaras, Dr. Maxwell, and Dr. Schrum for providing intellectually stimulating and interesting courses, for teaching me how to become a better writer, researcher, and educator, and for challenging my thinking about education.

Thank you to my colleagues, and now my friends. Thank you Brittany for being a mentor and showing me the way. Thanks for listening to ramblings about t-tests on Friday nights, for being my writing partner, and sounding board. I look forward to years of collaboration with you, even if I can't live in Texas. You are truly a wonderful friend. Thank you to Nancy and Anne, my partners in crime in virtually every single course in this program. Your friendship and laughter along the way helped keep me sane and positive. Thanks to Melissa for countless pep talks and discussions on dance class Wednesdays and for editing my dissertation when I was ready to jump off a cliff.

Thanks to the teachers I've worked with over the years at Bull Run, Yorkshire, Woodbridge, and Molinari. Not only have you cheered me on, but you've graciously volunteered to be interviewees, topics of papers, and participants in research time and time again.

The contents of this dissertation were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H325D080036. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page
List of Tables ix
List of Figures x
Abstract xi
1. Introduction 1
Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities 1
Origin of Manifestation Determinations 3
Team Decision-making and Information Sharing 6
Importance of the Study 8
Research Questions 12
Summary 13
Definition of Terms 13
2. Literature Review 17
Discipline in Special Education 18
Manifestation Determination Litigation and Legislation 19
Manifestation Determination Procedures 22
History of Hidden Profiles and Information Sampling 23
Theories in Information Sharing 26
Multidisciplinary Team Decision-making 28
Factors Impacting Multidisciplinary Team Decision-making 29
Information Sharing in Multidisciplinary Team Decision-making 34
Team Decision-making During Manifestation Determinations 35
Inequity and Dual Discipline 37
Advantages of the Manifestation Determination Review Process 39
Summary 41
3. Methods 43
Purpose of Research 43

Research Rationale 44
Research Design and Methods 47
Phase I 50
Participants 50
Procedure 50
Case Development Round 50
Field Testing Round 50
Refinement Round 50
Phase II 67
Participants 67
Procedure 69
Phase III 74
Data Collection 75
Data Analysis 75
Procedural Integrity, Validity, and Reliability 50
Summary 81
4. Results 82
Research Question 1 83
Non-manifestation Meetings 83
Meeting 1 83
Meeting 3 89
Summary of Non-manifestation Meetings 94
Manifestation Meetings 94
Meeting 2 94
Meeting 4 100
Summary of Manifestation Meetings 104
Discussion Themes Across All Meetings 105
Pre-discussion Decision Rationale and Discussions 107
Summary 108
Research Question 2 110
Non-manifestation Meetings 111
Summary of Non-manifestation Meetings 111

Manifestation Meetings 112
Summary of Manifestation Meetings 112
General Versus Special Educators 113
Summary 114
Research Question 3 115
Summary 117
Research Question 4 118
Non-manifestation Meetings 122
Manifestation Meetings 123
Discussion Across All Meetings 125
Differing Approaches in Decision-making 125
Summary 126
Research Question 5 128
Discussion Contributions 128
Manifestation Determination Guidelines 130
Overall Perceptions of the Manifestation Determination Meeting 131
Comparisons to Team Meetings 132
Summary 133
Conclusion 134
5. Discussion 136
Hidden Profiles 135
Multi-disciplinary Team Meetings 140
Manifestation Determination Guidelines 142
Dual Discipline 143
Limitations 144
Future Research 145
Conclusion 146
Appendices 153

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page
Table 1. Manifestation Determination Case Law 22
Table 2. Participant Responses by Case 60
Table 3. Participant Demographics 70
Table 4. Manifestation Determination Meeting Schedule 60
Table 5. Meeting 1 Team Decision-making Summary: Non-Manifestation 85
Table 6. Meeting 1 Non- Manifestation, Shared Information 88
Table 7. Meeting 1 Non- Manifestation, Unique Information 88
Table 8. Meeting 3 Team Decision-making Summary: Non-Manifestation 90
Table 9. Meeting 3 Non-Manifestation, Shared Information 92
Table 10. Meeting 3 Non-Manifestation, Unique Information 93
Table 11. Meeting 2 Team Decision-making Summary: Manifestation 96
Table 12. Meeting 2 Manifestation, Shared Information 98
Table 13. Meeting 2 Manifestation, Unique Information 99
Table 14. Meeting 4 Team Decision-making Summary: Manifestation 101
Table 15. Meeting 4 Manifestation, Shared Information 103
Table 16. Meeting 4 Manifestation, Unique Information 104
Table 17. Team Decision-making Themes 106
Table 18. Mean Unique Information Discussed by General and Special Educators 113
Table 19. Mean Unique Infromation Discussed by Holder of Unique Information 113
Table 20. Information Reported by Participants as Important for Decision-making 120

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page
Figure 1. Study Phases 49
Figure 2. Decision-making Information for Lucas 56
Figure 3. Decision-making Information for Seth 57
Figure 4. Overlapping Decision-making Information 57
Figure 5. Distribution of Manifestation, Non-Manifestation, and Neutral Items for Phase II, Manifestation Case 63
Figure 6. Distribution of Manifestation, Non-Manifestation, and Neutral Items for Phase II, Non-Manifestation Case 66

ABSTRACT

MANIFESTATION DETERMINATION REVIEWS AND SCHOOL TEAM DECISION-MAKING WITH STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL/ BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES

Jennifer D. Walker, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2013

Dissertation Director: Dr. Frederick Brigham

Manifestation determination teams are required by law to determine the relationship between a student's disability and behaviors that lead to disciplinary action when a student with a disability is either excluded from school for more than 10 days, is put in an interim alternative placement, or is under consideration for a change in placement. Manifestation determination reviews have been an evolving legal mandate with political undertones, continually raising issues about fairness and the protection of students with disabilities. Objections surrounding manifestation determination include concerns with the method and the decision- making process. Arguments against the manifestation determination process can be categorized into issues concerning guidance, politics, and equity.

In this study, hidden profiles were used to construct student case profiles in a mock manifestation determination meeting. Team decision-making was examined

utilizing both general and special educators as participants. In addition, the differences between general and special educators when making a manifestation determination were explored.

Eight secondary special educators and eight secondary general educators participated as groups in four mock manifestation determination meetings. Hidden profiles were used to create non-manifestation and manifestation case studies. In each manifestation determination meeting, either the special educators or general educators held the weight of hidden information which was embedded in individual case studies. Educators made both individual and group manifestation determinations and reported the most influential pieces of information impacting their decision-making.

Results indicated that all educators discussed and repeated a higher percentage of shared information than unique information about the student's cases. Further, special educators discussed approximately twice as much shared and unique information than general educators during the manifestation determination meeting, regardless of whether or not they held the majority of the case study information. Overall, participants found the manifestation determination process to be an effective way to discuss student behavior, but special and general educators approached the determination process differently. Further discussion, as it relates to issues of fairness, equity, and dual disciplinary challenges are presented along with implications for practice, limitations, and future research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Disciplinary provisions for students who receive special education services have a long history in educational case law and administrative proceedings (Skiba, 2002). Students with disabilities are more likely to be disciplined through exclusionary practices such as suspensions or expulsions than their peers (Katsiyannis, Losinski, & Prince, 2012) and further analysis of exclusionary discipline data suggests that students with emotional and behavioral disabilities are even more likely to be suspended from school (Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Herbst, 2004). Under the current federal law, school teams must carefully consider whether students with EBD are demonstrating behaviors consistent with their diagnosis or if teams believe that students are behaving in such a way that puts safety and the educational progress of themselves and others in jeopardy, therefore requiring consequences. This group decision-making process becomes critical when making such weighty decisions concerning students' educational future.

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities

During the 2008-2009 school year, 13.2% of the total number of students enrolled in public schools received special education services under IDEA (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012). Of these students, approximately 0.8% of the population received services under the label Emotional and/ or Behavioral Disability (EBD).

In a report of social competency ratings of students with EBD, teachers noted that almost half of the students fell at or below the 16th percentile in social skill development, meaning they lacked the proper skills to navigate through their school days in a socially appropriate, safe, and non-disruptive manner (National Longitudinal Transition Study, NTLS-2, 2006). Students' inabilities to make appropriate decisions in social situations are troublesome when considering the reasons that suspensions are used in schools. A review of school discipline studies shows that suspensions for all students are used most frequently for fighting or physical aggression (Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams,1997), followed by abusive language (Imich, 1994), skipping class or school and tardiness (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northrup, LaFleur & Spera, 1996), disrespect (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, et al., 1997), and disruptive behavior (Morgan-D'Atrio et al., 1996; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Rausch & Skiba, 2004).

Based on the criteria for an EBD diagnosis and what is known about how suspensions are being used, the nature of the EBD disability itself falls into many of the most common reasons students are suspended. For example, students with EBD may exhibit inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, which may manifest into behaviors such as fighting, physical aggression, abusive language, and disrespect. Therefore, when discipline decisions are being made, it is crucial for IEP teams to carefully sift through students' information and, as a collective team, assess the students' motivations and their internal states as they relate to their behavior. This is not a simple task when considering the unique and varied information each team member possesses about students and their ability to understand and regulate behavior.

Origin of Manifestation Determinations

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), mandated that all children with disabilities should be provided the right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Included in this mandate was the provision known as the "stay-put provision." This provision ensured that students with disabilities could not be removed from their current educational placement and placed elsewhere during the time between students' misconduct and the administrative proceedings that determined the appropriate consequences for that misconduct (i.e., long-term suspension or expulsion). Unless a placement decision was otherwise agreed upon by students' parents and school system, the students would remain in their educational setting until all administrative proceedings were completed.

The first litigated case that challenged the stay-put provisions set forth by PL 94-142 were disputed in Stuart v. Nappi (1978), where a student's rights to a free and appropriate education were challenged after a disciplinary hearing in which the school recommended expulsion. Because the school neglected to provide services as set forth by the student's IEP team, the court was unable to rule that the students' misbehaviors were unrelated to the lack of appropriate services. In addition, the courts determined that expelling the student would be a violation of her rights for an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.

The Supreme Court set additional precedence in one of the most well-known cases in the history of manifestation determination, Honig v. Doe (1988). In this case, the courts ruled that the provisions set forth by IDEA prohibited schools from unilaterally

excluding students with disabilities for more than 10 days when the student's misbehavior is a result or manifestation of his or her disability. In addition, expulsions and suspensions in excess of 10 days were considered a change in placement and initiated the "stay put" provision. From this case, the limits of the "stay put" provision and procedural safeguards that protected the rights of students with disabilities were defined. Any suspension over 10 days required appropriate education services, as outlined in the students' IEP. Additionally, IEP teams were required to conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), write or revise a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), and conduct a manifestation determination. Furthermore, students whose behavior was a manifestation of their disabilities were given legal protections that required a review process before a determination about their enrollment status could be made.

In the mandates set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997), when a student with a disability is disciplined, Individualized Education Program (IEP) team members are required to determine the relationship between a student's disability and the behaviors that led to the disciplinary action. This process is referred to as the manifestation determination (MD) and is required when a student with a disability is either excluded from school for more than 10 days, is put in an interim alternative placement, or is under consideration for a change in placement. During the determination, specific questions relating to the student's IEP, disability, and behavior are discussed and a determination is made regarding the relationship between the student's behavior and his or her disability condition. The purpose of the MD meeting is "to determine if the conduct was caused by or had a direct or substantial relationship to the

child's disability, or if the student's conduct was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the student's IEP" (IDEA, 2004).

An MD review must be held within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability due to a violation of a code of student conduct. The manifestation determination meeting is held with all relevant members of the IEP team, to include, but not limited to special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, parents, and if appropriate, students. The team reviews all relevant information in the child's file, the IEP, teachers' observations, and any pertinent information from the parent and the child. During the meeting, the team must determine whether the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or whether the conduct in question was a direct result of the local education agency's (LEA) failure to implement the child's IEP.

If the team can answer "yes" to either question, the team must take immediate action to address the student's behavior or IEP implementation. If there was a failure to implement the IEP, the school division must take immediate action to remedy the deficiencies. If the student's behavior was found to be a manifestation, a functional behavior assessment (FBA), a plan that determines why a student engages in a behavior as well as the function of the behavior within the environment, and a behavior intervention plan (BIP), a preventative measure that addresses teaching alternative skills and responses to behaviors identified in the FBA, must be conducted if they are not already in place. If a BIP is in place, it must be reviewed. Finally, the student returns to

his/her school except in the special circumstances that involve weapons or serious bodily injury to self or others. If the team answers "no" to both questions above during the manifestation determination process, then students may receive consequences as if they are a general education student and no further action is required by law. The results of this team decision-making process may become a critical turning point on the educational path of students with EBD, making the MD meeting process an important undertaking.

Team Decision-making and Information Sharing

Despite the importance of such team decision-making meetings, in their seminal research on decision-making groups, Stasser and Titus (1985) found that groups often make inadequate decisions. Groups tend to discuss and integrate information that is shared, or known to most or all members, into their decision-making while ignoring information that is unshared or only known by a single member. In a technique using hidden profiles, an entire group receives a pattern of shared information that makes one alternative most favorable, but individual members receive unique, or unshared information that favors another preferred, optimal, or correct alternative. During group discussions, shared information is disproportionally discussed over uniquely held information, resulting in an incorrect or inaccurate group decision. The decision-making process using the hidden profile methodology parallels multi-disciplinary meetings in many ways and the theories supporting team decision-making across other disciplines may be helpful in understanding how team members interact in education.

The types of information shared in team decision-making and the factors that influence group decisions are poorly understood. Theories that have arisen in hidden

profile research in other disciplines include advocating for personal positions theory (Brodbeck, Kerschreiter, Mojzisch, Frey & Schulz-Hardt, 2002; Gigone & Hastie, 1993; Stasser, 1992), personal preferences theory (Brodbeck et al., 2002; Klocke, 2007), and balancing status and power theory (Holen, 2000; Knotek, 2003; Larson, Christensen, Abbot & Franz, 1996; Olaniran, 1996; Stasser, Stewart & Wittenbaum, 1995; Stasser & Titus, 2003).

According to the personal positions and personal preferences theory, it would not be unusual for members of a group to enter discussions with a preferred outcome, and consequently, to advocate for their position and promote information that defends this position (Brodbeck et al., 2002; Gigone & Hastie, 1993; Stasser, 1992). Instead of considering new information, members maintain their original opinions, steering decision-making away from the unshared information that would uncover all of the information to select the best option. When considering the factors that influence shared information bias on an individual level, Brodbeck et al. (2002) suggested that members perceive their information as being more valuable than others' information, and they only value information that other members can corroborate because it is socially validating. Information that is unshared is also perceived as unreliable because it does not align with initial individual preferences (Brodbeck et al., 2002; Klocke, 2007). Ultimately, the most important factor is not what is said during group discussions, but what positions are supported prior to the discussion (Gigone & Hastie, 1993).

When considering the balance of status and power theory, Larson et al. (1996) found that members with lower status levels (e.g., interns and students) reluctantly shared

or repeated unique, or unshared information, over the course of the discussions about patients in research comprised of team members in medical school with unequal status. The only member who was persistent in repeating unique information was the member with the highest status, the 3-year resident. When the member who held the unique information was labeled as the "expert," unique information was repeated more frequently and the group paid more attention to what was shared (Stasser, Stewart & Wittenbaum, 1995; Stasser & Titus, 2003). Not only do team members with social influence and power sway the decisions of the team, but they also influence the language that is adopted throughout decisions and the conceptualization of the problem discussed (Knotek, 2003).

Group productivity is often hindered by the hierarchal statuses of group members and participation among group members that is unequal and unproductive (Holen, 2000; Olaniran, 1996). From a social standpoint, lower status members who have unique information may feel that sharing their information is too risky based on their status level (Stasser & Titus, 2003). Unless credibility is already established through status, experience, or expertise, gaining acceptance from the group and having information validated by the other team members through discussion is an important layer in group interactions (Parks & Cowlin, 1996; Stasser & Titus, 2003).

Importance of the Study

This study may help contribute to the understanding of how multi-disciplinary teams, specifically MD teams, make decisions and examine student information and how individual educators perceive this process and their roles. This study will attempt to

accomplish two goals. First, this study will explore how team members make manifestation determination decisions as individuals and as a group, based on hidden profiles of student information. Secondly, this study will explore the differences between general and special educators when making a manifestation determination in a team decision-making discussion.

Addressing each of these goals is important when trying to understand how decisions are made within multidisciplinary teams when given both unique and shared information about a student. In the current research on group decision-making studies in special education, the methodology varies, but none explore how group decisions are made, or provide a detailed, or even a general understanding of the nature of group decision-making in a MD meeting. The types of information shared and the factors that influence each group's decisions are also unknown. Interestingly though, many of the theories about causes for group decision-making behaviors in hidden profiles also appear to be evident in the current research on special education group decision-making.

Using hidden profiles as a methodology is actually quite similar to the process which occurs with special education team meetings. It is common knowledge that prior to discussions, some members hold unique pieces of information that other members do not, while other information is known by all members. School psychologists, parents, teachers, or even students themselves may have pieces of information that are not necessarily known to the group as a whole prior to discussion. Because members of a special education team may come from different disciplines, each member may have a specialized area of expertise and members may have information that others do not

(Baker, 2010). While this unique information may not be intentionally withheld, it is unique, or unshared, just as the information that makes hidden profile methodology work.

As a number of researchers have discovered, members of special education teams may have preconceived ideas or preferences based on the information they hold about students (Esquivel, Ryan & Bonner, 2008; Fish, 2008, 2009; Huebner & Gould, 1991; Knotek, 2003; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Martin, Marshall & Sale 2004; Ochoa, Gottschall & Stuart, 2004). In both hidden profile research and in team meetings, individual and personal biases have been found to exist (Esquivel, Ryan & Bonner, 2008; Klinger & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003). For example, Wittenbaum, Hollingshead, and Botero (2004) asserted that conflict of interest is an inherent characteristic in organizational decision-making, which could impact the decision-making in manifestation determinations.

Goals of individual members in decision-making meetings may include maintaining relationships with co-workers, advocating for a preferred decision, avoiding conflict, attaining status, aligning oneself with organizational norms, or to simply, just be correct (Wittenbaum, Hollingshead & Botero, 2004). Within groups, members may also deliberately withhold select information based on position or goals during discussions (Brodbeck, et al., 2002; Klinger & Harry, 2006; Klocke, 2007; Ochoa, Gottschall & Stuart, 2004; Wittenbaum, et al., 2004). For example, a case worker may believe a student's behavior is of a result of his or her disability, but because the student assaulted a co-worker, the case worker does not voice their opinion. In another example, a teacher may be frustrated with a student's disruptive behavior in his or her class, and despite the

progress a student may be making; the teacher may elect to withhold this information so that the student will be moved out of class. Although the provisions set forth by IDEA are aimed to protect students with disabilities, the reality is that the aforementioned goals of members may also apply to members of special education teams in MD decisions.

Although the argument may be made that in reality, MD teams understand the weightiness of such decisions and do not make them lightly, the research on group decision-making suggests that the importance of a task may lengthen the overall discussion, but does not increase the amount of information discussed (Larson, et al., 1996). Although special education team members may assert that they have a solid working relationship and make informed decisions, groups with established relationships have been found to mention less unshared information than groups of strangers (Mennecke & Valacich, 1998). Despite the experience a MD team may have working together, the task and team experience among members has been found to negatively impact information sharing and groups shared less information than members who did not have the same experiences (Kim, 1997).

While MDs have been a required process for each child with a disability who may misbehave in school, little research is available on this topic. While perceptions about the equity of discipline have been surveyed, the process of a MD has not been addressed in the research. Because of confidentiality issues and the very short time frame that manifestation determination meetings are held, conducting research in this area is extremely difficult. It is unlikely that when a student with EBD violates the school's rules, parents would want an outsider observing the process. In addition, it would be

logistically difficult for researchers to attend meetings that require consent from all parties and must be conducted within 10 days of the behavior of concern. Yet, without an understanding of the processes taking place within meetings and the perceptions of manifestation determination team members, it is impossible to know how effectively this provision and decision-making works for students with disabilities or how decisions are made and information is exchanged. Although the research may need to utilize contrived case scenarios and unnatural environments, such as hidden profiles, it needs to be conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the manifestation process.

Research Questions

To address decision-making in MD meetings and to explore the differences between general and special educators during these meetings, the following research questions will be asked:

1. What information do general and special educators elect to mention in their discussions when making a manifestation determination and holding unique student information?

2. Do special and general educators differ in the extent to which they discuss unique facts when given unique information about a manifestation determination?

3. If pre-discussion determinations change after team discussions about manifestation determinations, what information influences these changes?

4. What information do team members deem important or unimportant in making a manifestation determination decision?

5. How do general and special educators perceive the discussion process in the manifestation determination meeting?

Summary

While research in special education can be hindered by the individualization of special education issues (Christle & Yell, 2010), it is imperative that the research in group decision-making in special education be conducted. In particular, one of the areas where special education group decision-making research is limited is in understanding the very complex, yet incredibly important MD process. Using hidden profiles and information sampling, this research could help educators better understand not only what decisions are made, but why the decisions are made in meetings, and how this impacts the educational programming of students with disabilities. This research will explore what critical pieces of information are shared during meetings and how this information impacts the ultimate group decision. The information gleaned from this study will provide insight into the MD decision-making process and may provide recommendations about ways to improve how groups pool information and consequently, enhance the quality of MD group decisions and outcomes for students with EBD.

Definition of Terms

An understanding of the following terms and concepts will help guide the reader in understanding the context of this research.

- *Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)*: A plan, informed by a student's functional behavior assessment (FBA), that includes replacement

behaviors, positive reinforcement, and supports for the student to change behaviors of concern.

- *Emotional/ Behavior Disturbance (EBD):* "A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (A) Inability to learn not explained by other factors; (B) Inability to have interpersonal peer relationships; (C) Inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (D) Pervasive mood of depression or unhappiness; (E) Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears. Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of the IDEA legislation. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors." (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, U.S. Department of Education, 2007)
- *Fully Informed Case Study:* In hidden profile research, a case study that includes all shared and unique information held by all participants.
- *Functional behavior assessment (FBA)*: A data gathering process that investigates the antecedents and consequences of student behaviors. This information is used to inform and guide the behavior intervention plan (BIP).

- *Hidden profiles*: Cases in experiments in which group members have shared information favoring a non-preferred, wrong, or undesirable decision, while also holding unique information favoring a preferred, correct, or desirable decision. Hidden profiles are parts of fully informed case studies.
- *Individualized Education Program (IEP)*: A program, or plan, written by a student's special education team and parents that outlines academic goals, present level of performance, and accommodations and modifications, as appropriate. The plan outlines a timeline for goal achievement and may include transition services, depending on the age of the student.
- *Interim alternative education setting (IAES)*: Another setting, or suspension, for a child with a disability. The alternative setting is determined by the IEP team and allows the child to participate in the general curriculum with services and modifications as described by the student's IEP (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, U.S. Department of Education, 2007).
- *Local education agency (LEA)*: "A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State." (The Individuals

with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, U.S. Department of Education, 2007)

- *Manifestation determination (MD)*: As mandated by IDEA, a manifestation determination is an analysis of the causal relationship between a student's disability and the misconduct for which he or she is being disciplined. Procedures are incorporated prior to a disciplinary removal which would constitute a change in placement. Individualized Education Program teams are charged with determining whether behavior was or was not a manifestation of the child's disability.
- *Multidisciplinary team (MDT)*: A group of professionals whose responsibility it is to evaluate the needs and abilities of a child referred for evaluation for special education.
- *Shared information*: Information shared by all participants, and known by all group members during hidden profile research.
- *Stay put provision:* A procedural provision set forth by IDEA that keeps a child in special education in their current educational placement pending litigation. A child's services, program, or placement may not change until a settlement is reached about a proposed change.
- *Unique information*: Information held by individual participants, and unknown by all group members during hidden profile research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of the research in four major areas. Manifestation determination legislation, litigation, and procedures, hidden profiles and information sampling, team decision-making, and inequity and dual disciplinary practices will be explored. This review provides a foundation for the current study, including gaps in the research and a justification for using a hidden profile methodology. The chapter begins with the history of manifestation determinations, including pertinent legislation and litigation shaping the MD process. This is followed by MD procedures, including considerations for determining whether a relationship between a student's disability and behavior of concern exist. The next section provides information on the hidden profile and information sampling methodology. The seminal research from Stasser and Titus (1985) is reviewed as well as more current research across disciplines. The section that follows includes information on team decision-making, including research with special education teams. In the last section, research addressing inequity and dual disciplinary controversies are presented. The review of the literature concludes with a summary and a rationale for the current study.

Discipline in Special Education

Since the passage of Public Law 94-192 in 1975, the issue of disciplining students with disabilities while protecting their rights to a free and appropriate education has been a controversial issue because of issues of fairness (Katsiyannis, Losinski & Prince, 2012). To protect against excessive exclusionary discipline that would result in a change in placement for students with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) requires a manifestation determination (MD) meeting for special education students who are recommended for suspension or a change in placement. In the MD process, the relationship between a students' disability and the behaviors that led to the disciplinary action must be evaluated by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. However, the issues surrounding manifestation determination reviews are complex and the determination process that occurs among IEP team members during these meetings has not been researched. This is particularly troublesome for students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD) who are more likely than their general education counterparts to be suspended from school (Zhang, Katsiyannis & Herbst, 2004).

Manifestation determinations have been an evolving, legal mandate with political undertones, continually raising issues about fairness and the protection of students with disabilities. The controversy surrounding manifestation determinations is emotionally charged and while this is an important area of concern, little research exists in support or opposition of the manifestation determination process. The majority of objections or concerns surrounding manifestation determination can be categorized into issues

concerning guidance, politics, and equity. Arguments include concerns with both the methods and concepts of the process.

Manifestation Determination Litigation and Legislation

In 1997, disciplinary policies and procedures were strengthened through the reauthorization of IDEA. The addition of functional behavior assessments (FBA) and behavior intervention plans (BIP) in student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) ensured that supports were in place for students with disabilities. This allowed schools the opportunity to address behavioral issues with students with disabilities while also maintaining a safe school environment. While the 1997 amendments developed a framework for the MD process, the 2004 amendments moved the MD towards a zero-tolerance policy (Zirkel, 2010).

In 2004, the amendments to IDEA simplified the MD process, requiring a direct and substantial relationship between a student's disability and their behavior. In addition, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports and a provision for interim alternative education settings (IAES) for incidents of serious bodily injury was established. According to IDEA 2004, a MD is required when a student with a disability is (a) suspended for more than 10 consecutive school days (b) suspended for more than 10 cumulative days, demonstrating a pattern of behavior, or (c) removed to an interim alternative placement for drugs, weapons, or inflicting serious bodily injury.

A number of important and influential cases have impacted the interpretation of the regulations set forth by IDEA (2004) and set precedence for conducting MD meetings

(Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000; Katsiyannis, Losinski & Prince, 2012; Zirkel, 2010). The progression of cases and the impact of each decision are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Manifestation Determination Case Law

Case	Year	Ruling
Goss v. Lopez	1975	Validates due process rights for students with disabilities.
Stuart v. Nappi	1978	Established the standard for the first prong of the current two question MD test.
Doe v. Koger	1979	If the student's disruptive behavior is linked to the disability, the student cannot be expelled.
S-I v. Turlington	1981	A manifestation determination must be made by a trained and knowledgeable group.
Prince William County School Board. v. Malone	1985	A behavior of delivering drugs by a student with a learning disability was found to be a manifestation determination of the disability because of the link to the student's low self-esteem.
Doe v. Maher	1986	Manifestation determination is determined by an IEP team.
Honig v. Doe	1988	If a student's behavior is linked to their disability, the student cannot be expelled. The 10-day change of placement rule was established.
Fitzgerald v. Fairfax County School Board	2008	Team members do not have to have a personal familiarity with the child as long as they meet the requirements of IEP team membership

Manifestation Determination Procedures

Despite the fact that the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) committee asserted that the MD process under IDEA 2004 is "a more simplified, common sense procedure for schools to use," (Senate report, 2003, p. 45) guidance and direction in decision-making is still lacking (Zilz, 2006). Further, research suggests that special education team members do not have the skills or knowledge to reliably make a determination of whether or not a behavior is a manifestation of a disability (Buck, Polloway, Kirkpatrick, Patton & Fad, 2000). While IDEA provides questions to consider in making a MD decision, it does not provide guidelines for resolving these questions (Zilz, 2006).

The MD is conducted by the Local Education Agency (LEA), the parent, and relevant members of the IEP team. Relevant members are determined by both the LEA and the parent. In a landmark court case in Virginia, it was ruled that members do not have to have a personal familiarity with the child as long as they meet the requirements of IEP team membership (Fitzgerald v. Fairfax County School Board, 2008). Team members could include, but would not be limited to special educators, general educators, administrators, school psychologists, school social workers, related service providers, parents, advocates, and students.

During a manifestation determination, team members must address a two-prong test. Members must determine if the conduct in question was caused by; or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability and/ or if the conduct in question was a direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the child's IEP. If the team can answer

yes to either question, the student returns to school except in special circumstances involving weapons, drugs, or serious bodily harm. If the LEA failed to implement the IEP, the school division must take immediate action to remedy the situation, including the possibility of compensatory education. Finally, the team should conduct an FBA and BIP, unless one already exists, in which case the BIP should be reviewed. If the team answers no to both two-prong questions, the student receives consequences as if they were a general education student and no further action is required.

History of Hidden Profiles and Information Sampling

In their seminal research on hidden profiles, the assumption that group decision-making is more informative than individual decision-making was challenged by Stasser and Titus (1985, 2003). Since then, a substantial body of research has been established using hidden profiles and/ or information sampling in the fields of psychology (Brodbeck, et al., 2002; Brodbeck, Mojzisch, Kerschreiter & Frey, 2007; Gigone & Hastie, 1997; Lam & Schaubroeck, 2000), medicine (Kelly & Karau, 1999; Larson, Christensen, Abbot & Franz, 1996; 1998), management (Henningsen & Henningsen, 2003; Mojzisch & Schulz-Hardt, 2011) and business (Hollingshead, 1996; Hunton, 2001). Another line of research has also attempted to better understand the effects of hidden profile paradigms (Reimer, Kuendig, Hoffrage, Park & Hinsz, 2007; Reimer, Reimer & Hinsz, 2011; Van Swol, Savadori & Sniezek, 2003).

Stasser and Titus (1985) found that decision-making groups often make inadequate decisions. They noted that groups tend to discuss and integrate information that is shared, or known to all members, into their decision-making while ignoring

information that is unshared, or only known by a single member. Using three sets of profiles, with positive, negative, and neutral characteristics for student government candidates, Stasser and Titus (1985) attempted to understand how groups would share information and come to a group decision. Candidate profiles included both personal attributes and standpoints on university issues. One candidate, the "best" candidate, was given twice as many positive characteristics as the other two candidates. Each member of a four-person group was given an incomplete description of the three candidates. The information given to any one member made it difficult to discern which candidate was best.

A hidden profile occurs when the entire group receives a pattern of information that makes one alternative most favorable, but individual members receive information that favors another alternative. The hidden profile created by Stasser and Titus (1985) included three profiles, one for Candidates A, B, and C. The profile for Candidate A included eight positive, four neutral, and four negative items. Candidate B and C's attributes included four positive, eight neutral, and four negative items. Each participant in the study was given 10 pieces of information about each candidate. Of these 10 pieces of information, two attributes given to each participant was unshared information. The first member received two attributes about a candidate that no other member received; the second member received two attributes, different from the first member. Each member received one fourth of the unshared information about a candidate, and ultimately, all information about each candidate was provided to at least one member of the group. Members of the group decision-making team were given two of the eight positive

attributes and all four negative attributes about Candidate A. The information distributed about Candidate B included all four positive attributes and only one negative attribute. The profile for Candidate C included a balance of both positive and negative attributes. Therefore, all members were given information that favored Candidate B. Collectively, the entire group had received all eight positive attributes about Candidate A and all four positive attributes about Candidate B. Therefore, in the unshared condition, all of the positive attributes about Candidate A were distributed among the group members so that no one member shared the same information. Using all of this information, groups should have selected Candidate A based on the predominance of positive attributes. However, this was not the case. Groups selected Candidate B more often in the unshared condition.

Groups did not fully consider all the information that was available to them, causing the group to fall short in their decision-making potential. If the members sufficiently shared all of the information held by the group, they should have selected the preferable or optimal option, Candidate A. Instead, they spent the majority of their time discussing the shared information (negative attributes) over the unshared information (positive attributes). Not only did groups fail to discuss all of the unique information, this unshared information was also more likely to be ignored once it was mentioned by a member (Stasser & Titus, 2003). Upon further analysis, Stasser and Titus (1985) reported that prior to discussion, only 25% of members selected Candidate A, compared to 24% of the groups after information sharing. When no hidden profile existed and members were provided with all the candidates' information, 67% of members selected

Candidate A, and after discussion, this number increased to 83% of groups. When given unique information, groups did not make better or more informed decisions once all members were able to share and discuss the information they had been given.

Theories in Information Sharing

A number of theories have been suggested as an explanation for shared information bias. Brodbeck, et al. (2007) proposed that during hidden profiles, there was a higher statistical probability that, based on how information is distributed among group members, shared information will be discussed over unshared information. In addition, members of a group come into discussions with a preferred outcome, and consequently, they advocate for their position and promote information that defends this position (Brodbeck et al., 2007; Stasser, 1992). Instead of considering new information, members maintain their original opinions, steering decision-making away from the unshared information that would uncover all of the information to select the best option. When considering the factors that influence shared information bias on an individual level, Brodbeck et al. (2007) suggested that members perceive their information as being more valuable than others' information and they only value information that other members can corroborate because it is socially validating. Information that is unshared is also deemed as unreliable because it does not align with initial individual preferences (Brodbeck et al., 2007; Klocke, 2007).

Ultimately, the most important factor was not what was said during group discussions, but what positions were supported prior to the discussion (Gigone & Hastie, 1993). Stasser (1992) proposed that member size also impacts group decision-making.

Larger groups were less likely than smaller groups to detect hidden profiles due to the fact that unshared information was more widely distributed among more members, leading to less advocacy discussions.

The impact of experts and power among members has also received a great deal of attention from researchers. The original research by Stasser and Titus (1985) did not assign member roles within decision-making groups and their research found approximately a third of the shared information was repeated after it was first mentioned. On the other hand, only about a quarter of unshared information was repeated throughout discussions. In their research comprised of team members in medical school with unequal status, Larson et al. (1996) found that members with lower status levels (e.g., interns and students) reluctantly shared or repeated unique (unshared) information, over the course of the discussions. The only member who was persistent in repeating unique information was the member with the highest status, the 3-year resident. When the member who held the unique information was labeled as the "expert," unique information was repeated more frequently and the group paid more attention to what was shared (Stasser, Stewart & Wittenbaum, 1995; Stasser & Titus, 2003).

Not only do team members with social influence and power sway the decisions of the team, but they also influence the language that is adopted throughout decisions and the conceptualization of the problem discussed (Knotek, 2003). Group productivity is often hindered by the hierarchal statuses of group members and participation among group members that is unequal and unproductive (Holen, 2000; Olaniran, 1996). From a social standpoint, lower status members who have unshared information may feel that

sharing their unique information is too risky based on their status level (Stasser & Titus, 2003). Unless credibility is already established through status, experience or expertise, gaining acceptance from the group and having information validated by the other team members through discussion is an important layer in group interactions (Parks & Cowlin, 1996; Stasser & Titus, 2003).

Multidisciplinary Team Decision-making

From an historical perspective, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) required the use of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) in the special education referral and placement processes. These teams are a critical component in the special education process. They were designed to not only support students' education through a group problem solving process, but to protect against bias when evaluating students for special education services (Knotek, 2003). Furthermore, the IDEA of 1997 specifically prohibits one member of a team from unilaterally making decisions, especially as it relates to disciplinary issues (Ochoa, Gottschall & Stuart, 2004). While MDTs are designed to objectively evaluate students' academic functioning and effectiveness of interventions, the process may be hindered by competing agendas, the influence of experts and predetermined ideas. Research on MDTs has highlighted concerns with both bias and objectivity of team members in decision-making (Knotek, 2003).

In 1975, the passage of Education for All Handicapped Children's Act (EAHCA) also mandated the implementation of IEPs as a means for guiding and monitoring the education of students receiving special education services. These plans ensured that students with disabilities received a free and public education in the least restrictive

environment. In a subsequent reauthorization, IDEA required the attendance of special educators, administrators and most importantly, parents, when developing IEPs. To date, little information exists about the participant behavior in IEP meetings, although procedural methods are well researched (Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004).

Some of the behaviors and perceptions of group members in decision-making processes in special education has been explored through ethnographic research on Child Study Teams (Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003), problem-based learning within a computer supported unit focused on disciplinary actions with students in special education (Ochoa, Gottschall & Stuart 2004), surveys of the perceptions of IEP team members' participation, (Fish, 2008; 2009; Huebner & Gould, 1991; Kalyanpur, Harry & Skrtic 2000; Martin, Marshall & Sale 2004) and surveys on MDT participation (Esquivel, Ryan & Bonner, 2008).

Factors Impacting Multidisciplinary Team Decision-making

When examining member behavior in special education group decision-making, issues of established relationships, bias, predeterminations from members, and the influence of roles and expertise impact the perceptions and behaviors of the group (Esquivel, Ryan & Bonner, 2008; Fish, 2008; 2009; Huebner & Gould, 1991; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003; Martin, Marshall, & Sale 2004; Ochoa, Gottschall, & Stuart, 2004). In a study of 1,638 participants in 393 secondary IEP meetings over three years, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004) explored the attendance of team members and perceptions of participant roles. Using survey scales, researchers found that special educators talk significantly more than any other team member, and other than the

administrator, they also make more IEP decisions. General educators, on the other hand, talked less about students' strengths than any other member, believed they were less helpful in making decisions, and reported knowing less about what to do during the meeting than other participants. This study demonstrates how varied team members' perceptions are during IEP team meetings and how some members, particularly general educators, may not be perceived as being actively involved in the decision-making process.

Similarly, in a micro-ethnographic study of the process and context of multidisciplinary teams in two elementary schools, Knotek (2003) also found that general education teachers play specific roles in group decision-making meetings. Of all the team members, including administrators, counselors, school psychologists and other teachers, the classroom teacher of the referred student is consistently the most negative and evaluative of students. The researcher found that social forces, such as professional and social relationships, inhibited team members from presenting a complete picture of students and compromised objectivity and rigor in decision-making, particularly for students with behavior problems. Further, Knotek (2003) consistently found that when lower status teachers were required to present student information in front of high-status team members, peers supported the teacher based solely on this limited information. Overall, the social influence of the team members kept the focus narrowly defined on the information from one team member.

In an effort to understand how team members understood the special education referral process and interacted to make decisions, Klinger and Harry (2006) also observed

19 Child Study Team (CST) meetings and planning conferences for English Language Learners (ELL) in special education referral meetings over the course of three years. They found that the quality of discussions among team members varied greatly and was impacted by the intentions, knowledge, skills, and the commitment of group team members. In particular, during evaluations, psychologists were found to demonstrate the most authority and carry the most weight with decision-making. Psychologists acknowledged that although CST decisions were team decisions, they made decisions prior to the CST meetings and recognized their influence over other team members. Klinger and Harry concluded that despite what was listed on agenda checklists, what actually happened during meetings deviated from the outline of CST procedural guidelines based on the influence of individual members.

Even when pre-service teachers were utilized as research participants, hierarchies of power were automatically established among group members, despite the fact that professional titles or areas of expertise were not defined (Ochoa, Gottschall, & Stuart, 2004). Ochoa, Gottschall, and Stuart (2004) explored individual satisfaction and participation of 35 undergraduate education majors who served as team members in group decision-making meetings. Through questionnaires and videotaped observations, the researchers found that in each of the decision-making groups, even though no such role was formally assigned to one member, one person acted as a gatekeeper or facilitator of the discussion. The researchers suggested that within group decision-making meetings, hierarchies automatically form even without the assignment of titles.

The roles and influence of individual members is perceived very differently when considering the viewpoints of school professionals and parents. Despite the fact that the IDEA (2004) requires schools to extend invitations to parents when teams are making special education decisions (Esquivel, Ryan & Bonner, 2008), in a survey of 177 participants, school psychologists indicated that they perceived lack of parental participation as one of top three problems with MDT meetings (Huebner & Gould, 1991).

In the ethnographic study of Child Study Team (CST) meetings and placement decisions of English Language Learners (ELL) being considered for special education, Klingner and Harry (2006) noted a great deal of negative, derogatory, and demeaning comments about parents, both privately and during meetings that included parents. On the other hand, parents have reported that part of their negative experiences with MDT meetings is the lack of consistent leadership and members acting without direction (Esquivel, Ryan, & Bonner, 2008). Through surveys and interviews, members of a school district's advisory committee were queried to learn about parent perceptions of their involvement in team meetings. Esquivel, et al. also found that parents valued being heard in team meetings but expressed frustration with generalization statements about their children rather than specific parent concerns and questions. These results are also in line with Klingner and Harry's (2006) research that found school personnel's initial avoidance of parents' questions or comments during CST meetings, causing parents to withdraw, stop participating, or become agitated.

Fish (2008) surveyed 51 parents in an effort to understand how parents perceived IEP meetings and treatment from educators. He found that only 71% of parents agreed or

strongly agreed that educators maintained positive relationships with them during team meetings and 77% believed that educators provided a welcoming atmosphere during meetings. In a follow up study of 274 educators and administrators, Fish (2009) overwhelmingly found that 97% of respondents believed that during IEP meetings, parents were treated with respect and 84% of school based team members agreed that input from parents was valuable.

Conversely, when examining the interactions among all group members, Esquivel, Ryan, and Bonner (2008) found that when negative dynamics among team members existed, parents perceived team meetings to be both negative and unproductive. Furthermore, when given the choice to first discuss student versus instructional failings, teachers consistently chose to focus on student failings (Knotek, 2003). From the start of meetings, teachers set the tone for placing the student as the problem, impacting the entire flow of the SST process. Teachers set up a social context, impacting the framework in which all further discussions were based (Knotek, 2003), a fact that parents claim exists because meetings are hindered by pre-established relationships with team professionals who set the tone and direction of the meetings (Esquivel, et al., 2008). Not only do team members bring their own agendas into meetings, potentially biasing group decisions, but pre-meeting discussions also impact the group. Despite the fact that members assert that decisions are made on a team level, decision-making does occur prior to placement meetings being conducted (Klingner & Harry, 2006). The perceptions of both parents and school team members are variable and conflicting despite legislation

that places a team approach as a central and key component in special education meetings.

Information Sharing in Multidisciplinary Team Decision-making

In existing group decision-making research in special education, group members do not always utilize the opportunity to share information in a productive manner. Specifically, members do not always share all of the information they initially deemed to be important when working independently (Ochoa, Gottschall, & Stuart, 2004). Therefore, discussions do not include comprehensive contributions from all group members.

In a problem-based learning activity, regardless of what each individual member decided prior to the group discussion, if one member within the group opined that an IEP was inappropriate, the group changed its decision accordingly to a negative response (Ochoa, et al., 2004). When discussing the issue of team members and their respective contributions, parents expressed frustration with expert team members who were knowledgeable about specific special education labels and children who may fit a typical special education profile, but had no specific knowledge about the individual children at the center of such meetings (Esquivel, Ryan, & Bonner, 2008). Similarly, parents found that professionals did not make information regarding their children's educational profile clear or openly available.

In cases where professionals heavily impact team meetings, there can be an overreliance on specific team members' contributions. Klingner and Harry (2006) observed team members put full confidence in the evaluations provided by school

psychologists as a method for diagnosing a student's disability. In IEP meetings, decisions have been more heavily based on standardized educational assessments, than by anecdotal input from parents (Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000). Outside of the test scores provided, little additional information was considered during discussions.

Team Decision-making During Manifestation Determinations

The last area of concern related to the manifestation determination process involves the lack of guidance in making decisions with determining the true cause of a student's behavior. Since disabilities are socially constructed categories or contextually and culturally biased, making a decision about whether a behavior was caused by a disability may be viewed as impossible (Katsiyannis & Maag, 2001). Determining causation is subject to the interpretations of team members conducting the manifestation determination, including the assessment tools and techniques used to provide information.

Administrators in McCarthy and Soodak's (2007) research reported that teams were able to use their own discretion when determining whether or not a behavior was related to a disability. The researchers interviewed nine administrators to understand how secondary school administrators implement and perceive disciplinary procedures in their schools and found that school leaders expressed frustrations with these decisions as they attempted to establish the timing of the meetings and the necessary personnel involved in the decision-making process. Further, they felt pressured and judged by other teachers, students, and the community and some administrators admitted to making decisions based on the team's vulnerability to litigation.

Teachers on disciplinary teams for students with disabilities also experienced a great deal of confusion and conflict as they attempted to decipher the guidelines for disciplining students with disabilities (Bon, Faircloth, & LeTendre, 2006). Using focus groups to explore perceptions of school violence, Bon, Faircloth, and LeTendre (2006) found that without a clear cut and valid method to determine if a behavior is a manifestation of a disability, school leaders and teams must arbitrarily make these very important decisions. The lack of guidance in determining whether a behavior is a manifestation of a disability is disturbing because of the very serious nature of protecting the rights of students with disabilities, particularly with having access to a free and appropriate education (Zilz, 2006).

From these studies, the reasons for existing perceptions and behaviors surrounding MD meetings may be multi-faceted. Although the underlying processes may happen unknowingly and without malicious intent, much of the aforementioned research on special education group decision-making did not meet the goals of MDTs or guard against bias and protect the student (Esquivel, Ryan, & Bonner, 2008; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003; Ochoa, Gottschall, & Stuart, 2004). While existing research provides insight into the perceptions of group team members, it does not examine the inner-workings of the group process in an effort to better understand how members interact. Despite the fact that team members recognized limitations within team meetings, the causes and interactions between members were not studied. The issue of "professionals" and "experts" and their roles in meetings was also not explored beyond member perceptions and a limited number of ethnographic studies in pre-referral

processes (Fish, 2008; 2009; Huebner & Gould, 1991; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic 2000; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003; Martin, Marshall & Sale 2004).

Inequity and Dual Discipline

One of the most controversial reasons for the resistance to the MD process is the topic of equity or fairness. Not only is the use of a MD with students in special education viewed as a dual standard of discipline, but is viewed an unfair and unjust for teachers and students alike (Bon, Faircloth, & LeTendre, 2006; Frick & Faircloth, 2007; Koch, 2000; McCarthy & Soodak, 2007).

Critics of dual disciplinary measures, including the MD process, believe that a student with disabilities cannot be treated the same as a general education peer due to disciplinary mandates (Koch, 2000). Specifically, administrators believe that because of IDEA, less options for discipline are available for students with disabilities (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Consequently, administrators deem that students in special education must receive differential treatment and must be treated with more leniencies, even if behaviors are the same as non-disabled peers.

In studies conducted by Frick and Faircloth (2007) and McCarthy and Soodak (2007), administrators reported that they felt students in special education were protected and could not be treated like a student in general education. These principals went on to express moral conflict and personal integrity issues while attempting to treat all students fairly, since they felt they could not treat all students equally due to legal mandates (Frick & Faircloth, 2007). Principals in McCarthy and Soodak's (2007) research stated that IDEA's disciplinary provisions hindered their ability to maintain order for the common

good of the student body. Although educators and administrators alike may be able to justify the fairness of academic accommodations and modifications that may result in differential treatment of general and special education students, dealing with disciplinary differences is viewed as troubling and morally objectionable (Frick & Faircloth, 2007).

Some critics perceive that the biggest faults with the disciplinary provisions of manifestation determinations are lowered behavioral expectations and unfairness of disciplinary procedures, while others believe that maintaining a balance of safety between individuals versus groups while maintaining political harmony is a larger burden (Zilz, 2006). While the purpose of the manifestation determination process is to protect students' rights to a free and appropriate education, it is also viewed as a political tool by opponents (Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998). Since schools rely on the public and the community for some financial support, they must precariously balance internal disciplinary decisions with the community's image of the school. Using manifestation determinations, schools can manage the number of students who are excluded through disciplinary measures and place themselves in a no-fault situation (Katsiyannis & Maag, 2001). Schools are able to show evidence of control over students' behaviors while also demonstrating that behaviors are dealt with effectively without excluding students.

Not only are administrators conscientious about the political purposes that manifestation determinations serve, but they are also aware of the need to find a way to balance disciplinary decisions with their leadership roles. They feel that making decisions under IDEA's disciplinary provisions puts them in vulnerable positions for litigation and judgment from staff, students and the community (McCarthy & Soodak,

2007). Principals are keenly aware that they must frequently defend their disciplinary decisions with their school division, the state, parents, and faculty, so they avoid engaging in a MD to suit their own interests (Frick & Faircloth, 2007). Although the provisions set forth by IDEA are to protect students from a change in placement, administrators in McCarthy and Soodak's (2007) research admit that they negotiate with parents in order to change a student's placement prior to manifestation determinations, suspensions, or expulsions. They stressed that because of the political nature of disciplinary provisions, administrators encourage parents to accept alternative placements to avoid the potential of criminal charges or lengthy suspensions. Clearly, the politics of disciplining students with disabilities and holding manifestation determination meetings is a very real area of contention among supporters and opponents of the process.

Advantages of the Manifestation Determination Review Process

Although the amount of research on the benefits of manifestation determination is extremely limited, especially in recent years, the advantages of this process do exist. Supporters stress that arguments claiming that manifestation determinations are guided by a dual disciplinary approach are misinformed and only focus on definitions of discipline that include exclusionary processes. Other supporters stress the need for protecting the rights of students with disabilities through the manifestation determination process, regardless of the challenges it may present.

While opponents believe that the provisions set forth by IDEA create a dual system of discipline, it is important to note that prior to the manifestation determination hearing, which is held after a student has been suspended for 10 days, there are no special

guidelines or requirements for special education students. Students in special education may be treated the same as general education peers for any behavior, and differences only occur when a student's change in placement is being jeopardized through exclusionary discipline. If administrators feel restricted with disciplining students with disabilities, Lashley and Tate (2009) assert it is because they are unknowledgeable about the MD process and not because of problems with due process laws and policies. If the primary argument against the due process provision is that it limits suspensions and expulsions for students with disabilities, then it may be possible that the disciplinary options of a school are too limited. Conflict over manifestation determinations as a dual disciplinary model only exists when discipline is defined as suspension and expulsion (Skiba, 2002).

In schools across the country, exclusionary discipline continues to be an issue, as evident by research conducted by Spaulding et al. (2010). In an analysis of over 1,500 school databases, of 14 possible means of disciplining students, exclusionary disciplinary practices such as suspensions and expulsions still rank in the top three administrative decisions for handling discipline. More specifically, for students in secondary settings, the major consequences were detention and suspension for adult-directed behaviors such as defiance and disruption. The opposition to manifestation determination's dual disciplinary model would be irrelevant if discipline was accomplished without exclusionary practices.

Exclusionary discipline continues to be widely used, and is used at a higher rate with students with disabilities; therefore, it is important to remember the reasons that the manifestation determination provisions exist (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). The

purpose of these laws for special education students is to serve as a gatekeeper, and to keep schools from denying a free and appropriate education to all students (Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998). Without these provisions, schools can use suspensions as a tool to push out students labeled as troublemakers, ridding the building of students who persistently challenge school personnel (Bowditch, 1993). Administrators in McCarthy and Soodak's (2007) research on discipline suggested that without the legal accountability, they would have superseded the rights of students with disabilities in order to rid their schools of problematic students. Without the safeguards outlined in IDEA, students with disabilities could easily be excluded and denied a free and appropriate education.

Although manifestation determinations may be viewed as using different disciplinary actions for different populations, the process should be viewed as equitable. When schools accept the responsibility to educate and discipline students based on their needs, they will recognize that the MD process is an equitable one (Lashley & Tate, 2009). While the process is not necessarily considered an efficient one, it is an important process that is designed to determine a student's right to an education.

Summary

Based on research from multidisciplinary team meetings and hidden profiles, decision-making teams struggle with issues of power, status, and information sharing. Further, when faced with the complex task of balancing the safety of students and the rights of students with disabilities, team members must carefully discuss and share information during MD meetings. While the MD process may only be viewed as a political mandate, protecting the rights of students with disabilities assures that these

students are not excluded from their right to an education. If the terminology of the manifestation determination is removed, schools are charged with discussing students' behaviors as a team, determining the causes of behaviors, and establishing the needs of the student in the school setting (Lashley & Tate, 2009). After all terminology is stripped away, the MD is nothing more than good practice, encompassing collaboration, support, and collective problem solving. To better understand the problem solving that should occur during MD meetings, this study will attempt to understand the decision-making process by exploring the decisions made by individuals and groups and the reasons why such decisions are made.

3. METHODS

This chapter covers the methodological strategies employed in this study. The chapter outlines the rationale for the methods, the purpose of the research, a detailed overview of the study design, and a description of the study's procedure. Data analysis is addressed, followed by the procedural integrity, reliability, and validity.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to explore how team members make manifestation determination (MD) decisions based on hidden profiles of student information and to explore the differences between general and special educators when making a manifestation determination. The research questions are as follows:

1. What information do general and special educators elect to mention in their discussions when making a manifestation determination and holding unique student information?

2. Do special and general educators differ in the extent to which they discuss unique facts when given unique information about a manifestation determination?

3. If pre-discussion determinations change after team discussions about manifestation determinations, what information influences these changes?

4. What information do team members deem important or unimportant in making a manifestation determination decision?

5. How do general and special educators perceive the discussion process in the manifestation determination meeting?

In research questions one, two, and five, the differences between general and special educators during manifestation determinations were explored. In research questions three and four, pre-discussion versus post-discussion determination changes were explored as well as information deemed important in making manifestation determination decisions.

This study is an extension of research conducted by Jakubecy (2002) on manifestation determination in which she discussed the impact of the provisions set forth by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and its impact on group decision-making.

Research Rationale

To address the research questions, a mixed methods design was used. The phases of this research provided frequency data, mean scores, case study transcriptions, and interview transcriptions, providing multiple and diverse perspectives. The primary purpose for using a mixed methods approach was to develop a better understanding of the complex issues surrounding manifestation determination meetings. Using a mixed methods approach provided a better understanding of the research questions and goals of the study than either type of data by itself (Creswell, 2008) and focused on the convergence and corroboration of two types of data (Greene, 2007). This involved

"generating understandings that are broader, deeper, more inclusive, and that more centrally honor the complexity and contingency of human phenomena" (Greene, 2007, p. 21). More specifically, a complementarity mixed methods design was used as a way "to tap into different facets or dimensions of the *same complex phenomenon*" (Greene, 2007, p.101). This multifaceted data collection included collecting both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously during pre- and post-questionnaires and mock manifestation meetings and analyzing both sources concurrently. To illustrate the research design and provide the logic behind methods decisions, a matrix was developed, covering the research questions, sampling, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and validity threats (Maxwell, 2005) (see Appendix A).

Quantitative data were collected primarily in the form of frequency and mean data scores. Using data from the qualitative portion of this research, data were quantified and scored for frequency (Creswell, 2008) and means were calculated. To answer the research questions, quantitative data sources included frequency of unique, shared, and thematic information discussed during mock meetings, open ended questionnaires, and Likert scales.

Qualitative data were collected from case studies through the use of hidden profiles. In these case studies, mock meetings were held and compared to provide insight and an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative data sources included transcriptions from meetings, open ended questionnaires, and interview transcriptions.

To conduct mock manifestation determination meetings, hidden profiles were used to design student case information and collect data. While researchers may never

have all the data that arises in the very unique and varied circumstances that occur in special education decision-making, research can be conducted by finding a middle ground between available data and theoretical situations. Although there may be resistance to using simulated data to draw conclusions, analog research does offer a supplement to empirical research (Stasser, 1992), particularly when research scenarios are impractical, unethical or unreasonable.

Because many of the decisions faced by special education teams are both weighty and emotionally charged, the inner workings of meetings and roles of group members are difficult to research. Researching the decision-making process with special education teams, particularly with such litigious meetings as a MD, may be impractical, unethical, and unreasonable. Practicality implies knowing what does and does not work, based on personal experiences (Datta, 1997). From a practical standpoint, obtaining Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) approval becomes difficult when attempting to conduct research during meetings that are conducted within a short time frame. Frequently, a MD is scheduled and conducted within a time frame that is both impractical and unreasonable for HSRB approval. Unless a school and their administration directly contact the researcher to participate in these meetings, the researcher must rely on the chance that such meetings will be held upon contacting a school team.

From an ethical perspective, the presence of a researcher or outside observer may impact the interactions of group members and potentially negatively impact the decision-making processes of the group. In the end, it may be unethical to expect established teams to permit a researcher into such a controversial and potentially emotional meeting,

especially if the team's discussions and decisions are impacted by the researcher's presence. With the weightiness of such important decisions, chancing the potential influence of a researcher, or even an audio or video recording, is a risky proposition, especially with the implications of potentially altering the educational future of a child.

From a contextual standpoint, the constraints and demands of a potential research situation must be considered (Datta, 1997). In order to conduct research, a researcher would need for school personnel to gain parent permission for the researcher to attend team meetings and then consent must be granted from all team members, parents, and potentially, students, to participate in the research. Considering that issues of confidentiality abound with students with disabilities, there would also need to be additional precautionary safeguard measures to take into consideration. It seems unreasonable to expect that school personnel would go to the lengths necessary to allow a researcher access to MD meetings.

To address the potential biases, influence of experts, and unequal participation among group members, hidden profiles and information sampling were used to explore how group decisions were made and to better understand the general nature of decision-making in MD meetings. The hidden profile methodology focuses on how effective sharing promotes the discussion of unique, or unshared, information and how this information encourages groups to use this knowledge for decision-making.

Research Design and Methods

As shown in Figure 1, this study included three phases, a case study development phase, a MD hidden profile meeting phase, and an interview phase. During Phase I, two

hypothetical case studies and eight hidden profiles were developed for the MD meetings. During Phase II, four groups used the aforementioned hidden profiles to make a MD. In Phase III, two interviews were conducted with participants from the MD meetings.

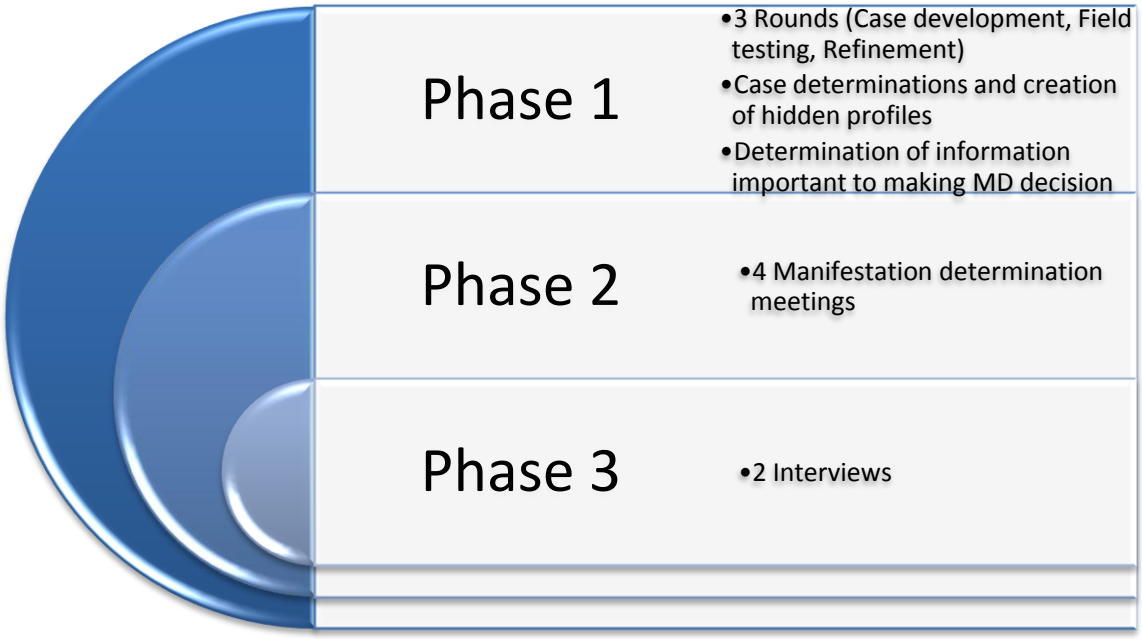

Figure 1. Study phases.
Note. The study included three phases, including case development, manifestation determination meetings, and interviews. Within the first phase, three rounds were completed to refine each case and determine specific components of the case studies that led to a relationship or no relationship decision.

Phase I. Based on the methods of hidden profile case study research conducted by Jakubecy (2002), Phase I included several rounds of field testing to ensure that the hypothetical case studies of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD) were realistic and created the intended "no relationship" or "relationship" manifestation determination preference. Both fully informed case studies were developed by the researcher. In the first case study, "Seth," the information led to the preferred determination that the behavior in question was a manifestation of the student's disability, or a relationship. In the second case study, "Lucas," the information led to the preferred determination that the behavior in question was not a manifestation of the disability, or no relationship. Facts related and unrelated to the student's disability were included and initially, participants were asked to determine which facts influenced decision-making as it related to the manifestation of a behavior. Upon completion of each round of field tests, the information gleaned from participant feedback was used to revise and refine the fully informed case studies and hidden profiles.

Participants. During Phase I, participant inclusionary criteria included knowledge of MD as self reported by participants. The initial phase of case development included 129 participants and three experts for both the "Seth" and "Lucas" case study. Approximately 1,100 educators and administrators were surveyed through a market data retrieval service, purposeful sampling of special educators, and snowballing. A total of 131 respondents started the survey and 107 respondents completed the survey. Seven respondents indicated they did not have knowledge of manifestation determinations, therefore terminating their participation. Each participant was offered the opportunity to

enter their name into a drawing for an online gift card totaling $25.00 for completing the survey.

Participants included professionals within elementary settings (15.2%), secondary settings (53%), both elementary and secondary settings (24.2%), or neither setting (7.6%). The mean years of educational experience were 12.91 years and 81.8% of participants were females, 18.2% males. The majority of participants had attended 1-3 manifestation determinations in their career (30.3%), followed by 13 or more manifestations (24.2%). Field testing of cases in Phase I also included three experts for the initial case study development and one of the three experts for every revision thereafter. As established in Hollingshead's (1996) study, which field tested fully informed case studies, an 80% level of agreement among participants, in addition to an expert, was established as the acceptable level of agreement for each round of case development. During each round of field tests, each fully informed case study was reviewed by at least 10 teachers, increasing incrementally by five participants. This continued until the acceptable level of agreement of 80% was achieved with the preferred manifestation determination case. In an effort to refine the non-manifestation determination case study, a focus group was added to further develop and better understand the case development. Twenty-two participants including 8 males and 14 females, with a mean of 3.59 years of educational experience, participated in this phase. All but two participants had never been part of a manifestation determination meeting.

Procedure. Manifestation determination case development included three rounds of development and refinement. Each round required at least ten participants and an expert to establish agreement on the preferred determination.

Case Development Round. The purpose of the initial round of development was to determine what pieces of information in each fully informed case study was important when making a manifestation determination. Three experts from the field of special education were purposefully sampled to provide feedback on the case studies. Expert A is a female doctoral candidate and coordinator of special education services in a local school division, Expert B is a female doctoral candidate and graduate assistant with twenty years of experience in special education, Expert C is a female professor of Special Education, with a focus on students with EBD. In the initial case development, the experts suggested several revisions to better indicate the "relationship" or "no relationship" determination. Each case was revised three times and included minor suggestions such as changing some descriptors of behavior from "very emotional" to "emotional" and "always" to "occasionally." On both cases, the students' difficulties with controlling emotions were changed from the beginning of the school year to an undetermined time in the past and an FBA/BIP component was added. In the no relationship case study, the aggression between the student and his father within the home was deleted.

After all revisions were completed, the experts were asked to read each case study and identify all pieces of information they found important in determining the cause of the student's misconduct (see Appendix B and C for complete case studies). In total, the

experts mentioned 54 pieces of information for the relationship case, "Seth" and 46 pieces of information for the no relationship case, "Lucas." Based on this information, overlapping causes among the experts was identified for each case. In some situations, items were merged when they covered the same overarching topic (i.e. administrator asking a question, administration repeating questions, and administrator opening the door were labeled as "administrator's actions during the incident"). In the no relationship case, "Lucas," 19 information items were common among all three experts, and 21 pieces of information were found to be in common in the relationship case, "Seth." Refer to Figures 2, 3, and 4 for complete lists of important decision-making information and overlapping information among experts.

Decision-Making Information	Expert A	Expert B	Expert C
7th grade small group setting	X		X
Becomes frustrated	X		X
Overwhelmed with requests	X		X
Agitated with written assignments	X		X
Has FBA/BIP	X		
Has BIP with cool down when frustrated	X		
Parents not actively involved	X		
Asked question three times	X	X	
Not missing lunch	X	X	
Prompt to talk about missing homework	X	X	
Teacher's response to him leaving	X		
Opening of cafeteria door	X		
Administrator's questions	X		
End of lunch service	X	X	
Students watching exchange	X	X	
Told to go to the office	X		
Teacher moved on to other students	X		
Minute before bell rang	X		
Bell rang	X		
Administrator said he was acting like a kid	X	X	
Called a temper tantrum	X	X	
House is chaotic		X	
Locked cafeteria doors		X	
Put head on arms		X	
Remained silent when asked about homework		X	
Below in reading and writing			X
Struggled to control emotions			X
Explosive			X
Yelling at staff and students			X
Out of seat			X
Pacing			X
Balling his fists			X
Grumbling			X
Leaves room			X
Pushed a peer for name calling			X

Figure 2 Decision-making information for Lucas.

Note. Important decision-making information as identified by the three experts for the "Lucas" case study (Non-manifestation, no relationship).

Decision-Making Information	Expert A	Expert B	Expert C
7th grade small group	X		
Becomes frustrated	X		X
Overwhelmed with requests	X		X
Agitated with written assignments	X		
Has FBA/BIP	X		X
Has BIP with cool down when frustrated	X		X
Parents not actively involved	X		
Asked question three times	X	X	
Not missing lunch	X	X	
Prompt to talk about missing homework	X	X	
Teacher moved on to other student	X	X	
Minute before bell ran	X		
Bell rang	X		
Mother depressed	X		
Father anger issues	X		
Father drinks	X		
Police break up fights at home	X		
House is chaotic	X	X	
Special education teacher's arrival	X		
Locked doors at cafeteria	X	X	
Yelling obscenities	X		X
Refusal to open cafeteria doors	X		
Special education teacher's request to talk	X		
Special education teacher offering choices	X		
Questions from administrator	X		
Administrator raising his voice	X		
Told he was acting like a kid	X	X	
Told he was having a tantrum	X	X	
Told to go to the office	X	X	
Struggled to control emotions			X
Explosive			X
Out of seat			X
Pacing			X
Balling his fists			X
Grumbling			X
Leaves room without permission			X
Walking into the hall to compose himself			X
Physical aggression towards staff			X
Physical aggression towards peer			X
Pushed peer for name calling			X

Figure 3. Decision-making information for Seth.

Note. Important decision-making information as identified by the three experts for the "Seth" case study (Manifestation, relationship).

Overlapping Important Decision-Making Information as Identified by Experts	
Seth (Manifestation, relationship)	Lucas (Non-manifestation, no relationship)
• missing lunch • FBA/BIP was developed • FBA/BIP included cool down time • locked cafeteria doors • staff refused to open cafeteria doors • identified as ED • academic strength in math • chaotic home life • history of physical aggression with adults • history of physical aggression with peers • general education teacher's actions during the incident • special education teacher's actions during the incident • administrator's actions during the incident • history of explosive behavior • history of becoming frustrated • history of struggling to control emotions • agitation with written assignments • low achievement in reading and writing • lack of parental involvement • students were watching exchange outside of cafeteria • change in academic setting from small group to general education	• missing lunch • FBA/BIP was developed • FBA/BIP included cool down time • locked cafeteria doors • staff refused to open cafeteria doors • identified as ED • academic strength in math • chaotic home life • general education teacher's actions during the incident • special education teacher's actions during the incident • administrator's actions during the incident • history of threatening peers • history of becoming frustrated • history of struggling to control emotions • agitation with written assignments • low achievement in reading and writing • lack of parental involvement • students were watching exchange outside of cafeteria • change in academic setting from small group to general education

Figure 4. Overlapping decision-making information.
Note. Overlapping important decision-making information as identified by the three experts for both the "Seth" case study (manifestation, relationship) and the "Lucas" case study (non-manifestation, no relationship).

Field Testing Round. Based on the findings from Round 1, two revised fully informed case studies were field tested with participants and one expert through an electronic survey. The purpose of this round of field tests was to determine whether

participants found the misconduct in each case to be related to the student's disability, to establish the items within the case study which supported these decisions, and to determine the importance, or weight, of each piece of information in the determination process. The goal for Round 2 case development was 80% agreement (Hollingshead, 1996), or 8 out of 10 participants who determined the misconduct was as a manifestation ("Lucas") or not a manifestation of the students' disability ("Seth").

Participants were recruited through purposeful and snowball sampling and were asked to indicate self-reported knowledge of MD. After signing an electronic consent form and indicating knowledge of MD, participants were asked to provide background information including gender, age, years of experience in education, area of expertise or certification, and agreement with suspension and exclusion as a means of discipline (see Appendix D for questionnaire).

Prior to reading a case study, each participant was provided with the IDEA guidelines for making a manifestation determination (see Appendix E). One of the two fully informed case studies was then provided to each participant to read. Upon completing a reading of the case study, each participant made a determination as to whether or not the student's misconduct was a manifestation of the disability and participants were asked to provide the evidence that supported this decision. Lastly, each participant was provided with a list of facts that were established as important during the experts' feedback in Round 1. As outlined in Stasser and Titus (1987), the participants were asked to place each important fact in one of three columns: No relationship between student behavior and disability, relationship between student behavior and

disability, and neutral information (Appendix F for questionnaire). In addition, participants were also asked to add any additional information they deemed important in any of the three categories.

As shown in Table 2, the preferred manifestation case study, "Seth" was unanimously found to be a manifestation of the student's disability. A total of 13 participants responded to the survey, and all participants found that a relationship existed. The information participants categorized into each of the three categories were ranked in order for additional analysis during the next round. Because so many information items were found to be influential in decision-making, some information items, such as "FBA was developed" and "FBA/BIP included cool down time" were combined into one statement and rewritten into the case study as one information item. As a result of the feedback provided in this round, minor revisions were made to the manifestation case study.

Table 2

Participant Responses by Cases

Case	Total Participants	Total Agreement	Percentage Agreement
Seth Round 2	13	13	100%
Lucas Round 2	5	0	0%
Lucas Round 2B	11	3	27%
Lucas Round 2C	26	13	50%
Lucas Round 2D*	11	10	91%
Lucas Focus Group	11	5	45%
Seth Round 3**	34	30	88%

Note. * Indicates the removal of the disability label EBD during field testing.
**Includes focus group for Seth

The non-manifestation case study, "Lucas" also went through an initial round of field testing (Lucas Round 2) yielding no participants who agreed with the non-manifestation determination. This round of field testing was terminated after five participants and one of the experts was consulted to provide feedback on case revision. Upon revision, the case study Lucas Round 2B was field tested again through an electronic survey. A total of 11 participants responded with only 27% agreement on a non-manifestation determination. In each of the rounds, respondents cited the disability label EBD in their open-ended responses as one of the determining factors for their decision. After another round of revisions with feedback from the researcher's advisor

and two of the three experts, the case was field tested again. During the third field test of the case (Lucas Round 2C), 26 participants responded and 50% agreed with the preferred non-manifestation determination. As seen in previous rounds, the EBD label was found to be a determining factor in decision-making. In an effort to better understand the non-manifestation case study and as an attempt to achieve 80% agreement, a fourth round of field testing was conducted (Lucas Round 2D), with one major change. In this round, all facts stayed the same except the label EBD was changed to "Child with a Disability." In this round, 11 participants responded and 10 found the case to be a non-manifestation, the preferred determination. A list of information items categorized by participants into each of the three categories; relationship to the disability, no a relationship to the disability, and neutral, were ranked in order for additional analysis during the next round. Only the information reported by participants who found the case to be a non-manifestation during rounds 2B, 2C, and 2D, was analyzed.

Refinement Round. Based on the results of Round 2, revised versions of the fully informed case studies were field tested. The purpose of this round of field tests was to determine whether participants found each revised case to be a manifestation of the student's disability, to establish the items within the case study which supported these decisions, and to verify which pieces of information were viewed as important in the determination process. Whereas in Round 2 participants were provided with a list of information to categorize as related, not related, or neutral in relationship to the student's disability, in this round participants were asked to recall influential information. Round 3 continued until feedback reached 80% agreement, or 8 out of 10 participants who

determined that the misbehavior was or was not a manifestation of the student's disability. Participants were asked to provide feedback through an electronic survey and through a focus group.

After discussion with the researcher's advisor regarding the non-manifestation case study, "Lucas," a focus group was established to address the challenge of establishing 80% agreement on the manifestation determination. During this focus group, participants provided feedback on the case study and identified information which influenced their decision-making. Further, participants were queried about the reasons for decision-making. From the results of rounds 2C and 2D, as well as the feedback from the focus group, the researcher and advisor concluded that the label EBD was a major decision-making factor and in the subsequent hidden profile cases, would become one of the information items in the hidden profiles. After further discussion with the researcher's advising committee, this round of case development was concluded, despite less than 80% agreement in the case development of the non-manifestation determination case.

The information participants categorized into each of the three categories in Round 2 were ranked in order of importance and verified with influential information provided by participants during the focus group. Next, the top eight items listed as having a relationship to the student's disability, the top four items listed as not having a relationship to the student's disability, and the top four items listed as neutral in the decision-making process were identified. These items became the key to hidden profiles, as seen in Figure 5. The eight relationship items were divided among four participants,

with two participants holding three information items and the other two participants holding one piece of information each. The four information items not related to the student's disability and four neutral items were equally distributed among each participant. Two pieces of information had no bearing on any decision-making and were deleted from the case study (student missed lunch and student's agitation with written assignments).

Manifestation Information		Non-Manifestation Information	Neutral Information
M1 = ED Label		N1 = Locked cafeteria doors	T = Chaotic home life
M2 = History of physical aggression with adults		N2 = Low achievement in reading and writing	T = Lack of parental involvement
M3 = Agitation with written assignments	⇨ Shared	N3 = General education teacher's actions during incident	T = Academic strength in math
M4 = History of physical aggression with peers		N4 = Special education teacher's actions during incident	T = Change in academic setting from small group
M5 = History of becoming frustrated and not controlling emotions	Unique ⇦		
M6 = History of explosive behavior			
M7 = FBA/BIP development with "cool down"			
M8 = Administrator's actions during incident			

Meeting 1 Distribution of Manifestation, Non-manifestation, and Neutral Information

	General Education 1	General Education 2	Special Education 1	Special Education 2
Unique	M1, M2, M3	M4, M5, M6	M7	M8
Shared	N1, N2, N3, N4	N1, N2, N3, N4	N1, N2, N3, N4	N1, N2, N3, N4
Neutral	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4

Meeting 2 Distribution of Manifestation, Non-manifestation, and Neutral Information

	General Education 1	General Education 2	Special Education 1	Special Education 2
Unique	M8	M7	M4, M5, M6	M1, M2, M3
Shared	N1, N2, N3, N4	N1, N2, N3, N4	N1, N2, N3, N4	N1, N2, N3, N4
Neutral	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4

Figure 5. Distribution of Manifestation, Non-manifestation, and Neutral Information Items for Phase II Manifestation Case.

For the non-manifestation case, a total of 23 participants were recruited through mass e-mails, convenience, and snowball sampling and 11 participants were recruited through a focus group. The inclusionary criteria included knowledge of the purpose of a manifestation determination. As in the previous round, each participant was given the IDEA guidelines for making a manifestation determination. Before reviewing the case study, participants were asked to provide the same background information as requested in Round 2. Focus group participants who responded to the manifestation case study followed identical procedures as those who participated by electronic survey and the results of both the electronic and focus group were combined.

Participants were provided with the case study and asked to make a determination as to whether or not the student's behavior was a manifestation of their disability. Participants were also asked to provide the rationale for their decision and to recall and list the most important facts in making their decision (Appendix G for questionnaire). In this round, participants who responded by electronic survey and in the focus group reached an 88% agreement on a manifestation determination decision.

The information items participants categorized into each of the three categories in Round 2 were ranked in order of importance and verified with influential information provided by participants during this round. Next, the top eight items listed as not having a relationship to the student's disability, the top four items listed as having a relationship to the student's disability, and the top four items listed as neutral in the decision-making process were identified. These items became the key to hidden profiles, as seen in Figure 6. The eight non-relationship items were divided among four participants, with two

participants holding three information items and the other two participants holding one piece of information each. The four information items related to the student's disability and four neutral items were equally distributed among each participant. Three pieces of information had no bearing on any decision-making and were deleted from the case study (student missed lunch, staff refused to open the cafeteria door, and students were watching the exchange outside the cafeteria).

Non- Manifestation Information		Manifestation Information	Neutral Information
N1 = General education teacher's actions during incident	Shared ⇨	M1 = ED Label	T1 = Locked cafeteria doors
N2 = History of becoming frustrated and not controlling emotions		M2 = Chaotic home life	T2 = Staff refused to open cafeteria doors
N3 = Students watching exchange outside cafeteria	Unique ⇦	M3 = History of threatening peers	T3 = Low achievement in reading and writing
N4 = Special education teacher's actions during incident		M4 = Lack of parental involvement	T4 = Academic strength in math
N5 = Change in academic setting from small group			
N6 = Possible gang involvement			
N7 = FBA/BIP development with "cool down"			
N8 = Administrator's actions during the incident			

Meeting 1 Distribution of Manifestation, Non-manifestation, and Neutral Information

	General Education 1	General Education 2	Special Education 1	Special Education 2
Unique	N1, N2, N3	N4, N5, N6	N7	N8
Shared	M1, M2, M3, M4	M1, M2, M3, M4	M1, M2, M3, M4	M1, M2, M3, M4
Neutral	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4

Meeting 2 Distribution of Manifestation, Non-manifestation, and Neutral Information

	General Education 1	General Education 2	Special Education 1	Special Education 2
Unique	N8	N7	N4, N5, N6	N1, N2, N3
Shared	M1, M2, M3, M4	M1, M2, M3, M4	M1, M2, M3, M4	M1, M2, M3, M4
Neutral	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4	T1, T2, T3, T4

Figure 6. Distribution of Manifestation, Non-manifestation, and Neutral Information Items for Phase II Non-Manifestation Case.

Phase II. In Phase II of this research, the field tested hidden profiles from the first round of research were used for manifestation determination team decision-making. Participants were assigned to one of the two case study scenarios and provided with a hidden profile in either the manifestation (Seth) or non-manifestation case (Lucas). After a pre-questionnaire, participants discussed student cases during a mock manifestation meeting and came to a consensus decision. Once a group decision had been reached, participants individually completed a questionnaire on their individual determinations and the decision-making process.

Participants. The participant sample for the manifestation determination meeting portion of the study included both general and special educators from local school district. A total of eight special educators and eight general educators were identified through purposeful and snowball sampling. Participants included six males and 10 females from a large suburban school district in Virginia. Ten teachers reported working in middle school settings, four teachers in high school settings, one teacher in a preschool through 12^{th} grade setting, and one teacher in a 7^{th} through 12^{th} grade setting. In all, participants had a mean 14.81 years of experience, ranging from two to 28 years. Of the special educators, seven had an endorsement in the area of EBD, eight in the disability area LD, and three in mental retardation (MR) or intellectually disabled (ID). One general educator each reported an endorsement in art education, sociology, and language arts. Four general educators had an endorsement in science and three an endorsement in social studies.

Inclusionary criteria included full licensure in the state of Virginia to teach in a secondary setting. Administrators, who maintained a teaching license but are currently in a supervisory role, were not included. Participants were not excluded based on their experiences and knowledge, or lack of experiences and knowledge, about MD or disciplinary procedures in special education. Participants were compensated $50 for their participation in this round of research. Participant demographics are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Teacher	Gender	Years in Education	Subject area/ Disability area	Current grade level
Mtg1 Sped1	F	16	ED/ LD	7th & 8th
Mtg1 Sped2	F	16	SLD	7th & 8th
Mtg1 Gen1	F	13	Science	6th
Mtg1 Gen2	F	27	Social Studies	6th
Mtg2 Sped1	M	11	ED/ LD	9th
Mtg2 Sped2	M	2	ED/ LD	9th – 12th
Mtg2 Gen1	M	10	Art Education	9th – 12th
Mtg2 Gen2	M	20	Earth Science/ Sociology	9th – 12th
Mtg3 Sped1	F	18	ED/ LD/ MR	6th – 8th
Mtg3 Sped2	F	10	ED/ LD	6th – 8th
Mtg3 Gen1	M	28	Science	8th
Mtg3 Gen2	F	15	Lang Arts/ Social Studies	6th
Mtg4 Sped1	F	17	ED/ LD/ MR	PK – 12th
Mtg4 Sped2	F	13	ED/ LD/ MR	7th – 12th
Mtg4 Gen1	F	12	Science	8th
Mtg4 Gen2	M	9	Social Studies	6th & 7th

Note. Mtg = Meeting, Sped = Special Education Teacher, Gen = General Education Teacher

Procedure. Three mock manifestation determination meetings were held in conference rooms on a university campus, and the fourth was held in a meeting room in a public library. Participants were assigned to one of four meeting sessions, consisting of teams of two special educators and two general educators. Each participant was asked to provide their current work assignment in order to prevent the assignment of participants who have established relationships to the same group. This assignment was designed to alleviate any potential pre-existing levels of influence among participants who may work together on a day to day basis. Although some participants were familiar with one another, none had direct day to day working relationships.

Two of the mock meetings contained hidden profiles in which the behavior in question led to a preferred manifestation determination (Seth). The other two meetings used a hidden profile that led to the preferred non-manifestation decision, or not a result of the student's disability (Lucas). In each of these scenarios, either the general or special educators held the majority of the unique pieces of information. This unique information was distributed among special and general educators across case scenarios in a matched format with three pieces of unique information going to one group of educators and one piece of unique information going to the other, and vice versa. Table 4 shows this distribution in further detail. In addition to unique pieces of information, every participant was also given the same four pieces of shared information that countered the preferred manifestation determination and four pieces of neutral information. Each of these shared and neutral items were identified by participants

during the previous rounds of research and used to create hidden profiles and provide filler information in the case studies.

Table 4

Manifestation Determination Meeting Schedule

	Meetings 1 and 2			
	Participant General Ed 1	Participant General Ed	Participant Special Ed 1	Participant Special Ed 2
Case A Manifestation	M1, M2, M3 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4	M4, M5, M6 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4	M7 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4	M8 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4
	Meetings 3 and 4			
	Participant General Ed 1	Participant General Ed 2	Participant Special Ed 1	Participant Special Ed 2
Case A Manifestation	M8 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4	M7 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4	M4, M5, M6 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3 N1, N2, N3, N4 T1, T2, T3, T4
	Meetings 5 and 6			
	Participant General Ed 1	Participant General Ed 2	Participant Special Ed 1	Participant Special Ed 2
Case B Not Manifestation	M1, M2, M3, M4 N1, N2, N3 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4 N4, N5, N6 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4 N7 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4 N8 T1, T2, T3, T4
	Meetings 7 and 8			
	Participant General Ed 1	Participant General Ed 2	Participant Special Ed 1	Participant Special Ed 2
Case B Not Manifestation	M1, M2, M3, M4 N8 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4 N7 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4 N4, N5, N6 T1, T2, T3, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4 N1, N2, N3 T1, T2, T3, T4

Note. M = manifestation information. N = Non manifestation information. T = Neutral.

Participants were given a brief welcome and an overview of the requirements as participants of the study. Specifically, each participant was asked to make a manifestation determination in a group setting based on student case information. Each participant was informed that the meeting would be both audio and video taped and consent forms were distributed. All participants agreed to continue and consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher.

Throughout all eight meetings, the procedures remained constant as outlined by a meeting protocol (see Appendix H). This protocol was established by Jakubecy (2002) in her research on MD meetings. Prior to each mock team meeting, each participant was asked to complete a pre-meeting questionnaire including demographic information (see Appendix I for the demographic questionnaire). Participants were provided with a brief overview of the manifestation determination process as scripted in the protocol. In addition, all team members were given a written overview of IDEA guidelines and the requirements for completion of a MD (see Appendix J for IDEA guidelines). During each meeting, participants were permitted to reference the IDEA guidelines and requirements throughout the decision-making process.

Following the demographic questionnaire and overview of IDEA legislation, each participant received a profile about a student and the student's behavior. Two profiles contained one piece of unique information each and the remaining two profiles contained three pieces of unique information each. The number of pieces of unique information profiles alternated between general and special educators in each team meeting. Participants were asked to read their assigned case study and individually make a

decision about the manifestation of the student's behaviors. Additionally, participants were asked to rate the certainty of their decision on a Likert scale from 1 to 10, where 1 was not certain and 10 was certain. Lastly, participants were asked to include the rationale for their decisions through open ended questions (see Appendix K for questionnaire).

After pre-discussion questionnaires were collected, participants were asked to form a group to discuss the manifestation determination of the student case study. In an attempt to replicate real life situations, each participant was permitted to use their individual case studies for reference during the meeting, but discussion was stressed as the focus of the meeting. Using IDEA regulations, members were asked to discuss the student's behavior and determine whether the behavior in question was a manifestation of the student's disability. Participants were not told about the hidden profiles, but the researcher stressed the discussion of the cases and the way the team interacted, thought, and discussed manifestation determinations.

Before the meeting began, the researcher asked for a volunteer to act as a scribe to record the group's final decisions and a time keeper to keep the meeting discussion at under an hour. Each meeting was audio and video taped and once the group was ready to begin their discussion, the researcher left the room in order to avoid any undue influence on the discussion or decision-making. Upon coming to a consensus, but not necessarily a unanimous decision, the scribe recorded the group's MD decision and the group's certainty about the decision on the same 1 to 10 Likert scale as utilized in the pre-questionnaire (see Appendix L for group decision-making form). Once the group

decision and certainty were recorded, the researcher was informed, and the group process was concluded and case studies collected.

On an individual level, members were again asked to record their individual decision, independent of the group's consensus, about the relationship between the behavior in question and the student's disability. Participants were again asked to rate their individual certainty. In addition, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the group consensus decision on a Likert scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being agree and 1, disagree. From recall, each participant was asked to record the facts that influenced the group decision-making and place each fact into one of two columns, "Manifestation of student's disability" or "Not a manifestation of student's disability." Finally, participants were asked to respond in writing to prompts about the MD decision-making process and how the group decisions were made (see Appendix M for post questionnaire). At the conclusion of the questionnaire, participants were queried about their interest in participating in a follow up interview, were compensated for their time, and dismissed.

Phase III. One special educator and one general educator were contacted for a follow up interview based on their interest and depth of post-questionnaire responses. Interviews followed a semi-structured format and questions were developed in response to participant answers in post-questionnaires (see Appendix N for interview questions). Participant 1 was a general education teacher from Meeting 2. He currently teaches science and has 20 years of experience in education. He offered the perspective of both a general education teacher and a parent who has been part of the manifestation determination process. The second interview was with a special education teacher who

participated in Meeting 3. She is currently a middle school teacher of 6th through 8th graders and has 10 years of experience. Both interviews took place over the phone within a week of the mock manifestation meeting and were audio taped.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected from questionnaire rating scales, unique and hidden information discussed during mock manifestation meetings, and participants' identification of important and unimportant facts leading to manifestation determination decisions. Qualitative data were collected from transcriptions of manifestation determination meetings, open ended participant responses, and interviews. The research questions and analysis are presented in the following section.

Data Analysis. Across all research questions, data from each method were used to expand the scope of the study, assessing different types of data (Greene, 2007). Data from both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study were synthesized to enrich the data collection. Transcriptions and participant responses were analyzed, coded, and themes were identified. Data from unique and shared information items was coded and quantified, and frequencies and means were calculated. Quantitative and qualitative data were compared and data sources were used to support or refute analysis (Creswell, 2008). Lastly, exemplars were identified during the analysis of each research question. Exemplars were purposely selected based on their clarification of the research questions (Polkinghorne, 2005). These exemplars stood out because they supported the synthesized quantitative and qualitative findings. Quotes from participants are presented in the next section.

To answer research question 1, what information do general and special educators elect to mention in their discussions when making a manifestation determination and holding unique student information, meetings were transcribed and coded. For each meeting, unique, neutral, and shared information items were assigned a color code. As each piece of information appeared in the transcriptions, items were color coded. After all meeting transcriptions were initially coded, a second reading was completed and frequencies were tallied. Transcriptions were reread again and topics of discussion were coded in columns on the transcriptions. Examples of initial codes included threat assessments, EBD definition, impressing someone, justification, character traits, student bravado, storytelling, and assumptions. Lists of discussion themes were developed for each meeting and then across meeting types by combining discussion points and codes (i.e. threat assessment and re-evaluation became special education procedures). Once a complete list of discussion themes were identified, color codes were assigned to each theme and transcripts were color coded accordingly. Frequencies and means were collected across all four meetings on shared, unique, and thematic discussion items. Lastly, exemplars supporting both the qualitative and quantitative findings were identified in the qualitative data.

To answer research question 2, do special and general educators differ in the extent to which they discuss unique facts when given unique information about a manifestation determination, meetings were transcribed and transcriptions and open-ended responses to questionnaires were coded. Unique information, as identified in the data analysis for research question 1, was counted for frequency and means were

calculated and compared. Exemplars supporting both the qualitative and quantitative findings were identified in the qualitative data.

To answer research question 3, if pre-discussion determinations change after team discussions about manifestation determinations, what information influences these changes, transcriptions, open-ended questionnaires, and interviews were coded and themes were developed both within and across meetings. The frequency and mean data on information shared during meetings was compared. Meeting transcriptions were analyzed for patterns in the discussion of items which supported and opposed initial manifestations decisions. Open-ended responses were analyzed for information items and themes. Lastly, all frequencies, means, transcriptions, and themes among participants who indicated a change in determination decisions were compared.

To answer question 4, what information do team members deem important or unimportant in making a manifestation determination decision, transcriptions, open-ended questionnaires, and interviews were coded and themes were developed both within and across meetings. The frequency and mean data on information shared during meetings were tallied and compared. Within each meeting, pre-discussion questionnaires were compared to information mentioned during meetings, post-discussion questionnaires, and interviews for similarities and discrepancies.

To answer question 5, how do general and special educators perceive the discussion process in the manifestation determination meeting, interviews were transcribed and open-ended questions were coded and themes were developed within meetings, types of teachers, and across meetings. Examples of initial codes included

perspective, expertise, background, unique information, shared information, and hypothesis. Lists of discussion themes were developed for each meeting and then across meeting types by combining discussion points and codes.

Procedural Integrity, Reliability and Validity

Procedural integrity was established through a scripted meeting protocol. Only the researcher conducted each of the manifestation meetings and read directly from the meeting protocol script. The transcriptions of the meeting and the script were established at 100% agreement.

To address reliability issues, codes used to complete frequency counts of shared and unique data were defined and constantly compared with the data (Creswell, 2009). Further, a graduate student cross-checked all codes for inter-coder agreement. As outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), the acceptable level of consistency with coding qualitative data was established at 80% agreement between the researcher and graduate student. Initial interrater agreement was 82% for manifestation determination meeting transcription codes for unique, shared, and thematic information. Differences in coding were resolved through discussion between the researcher and graduate student.

Reliability procedures for frequency counts of identified codes in transcriptions and interviews were also completed. Transcriptions of the cases were reviewed by a graduate student to establish reliability of frequency data. There was a 100% agreement between the researcher and graduate student on frequency counts.

Validity is also referred to as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility and is used to make sure findings and interpretations are accurate (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In

this study, validity was addressed through member checks, triangulation of data, and peer debriefing.

Member checks involved talking with participants to access the accuracy of the findings of the data. Member checks are the "single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). Through member checks, select participants were contacted at approximately seven to ten days after their initial participation in the manifestation determination meetings, and a smaller sample at approximately six weeks after the meetings. These discussions were used to validate participant discussion and responses and to allow participants the opportunity to comment on the case analyses and overall findings.

Triangulation included examining and converging multiple sources and types of data, from different individuals to build themes (Creswell, 2008). Triangulation of information was achieved through meeting transcripts, open-ended questionnaires, and individual interviews within a group of sixteen educators. Data collection sources included transcriptions of meetings, transcriptions of interviews, Likert scales, and open and closed-ended questionnaires. Each data source and method of data collection was used as evidence to support the credibility of the overall results.

Peer debriefing involved using a peer to review and engage in discussion about the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2009). As the interpretation of the data evolved, debriefing occurred on two occasions with a university professor with extensive experience with the manifestation determination review process. These discussions

focused on the implications of the frequency counts of unique and shared information, the development of themes in the manifestation determination meetings, patterns and trends across and within meetings and educators, and overall conclusions.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed summary of the procedures, participants, procedures, and data collection measures used to conduct this research and analyze the results. Mixed methods were used to evaluate both quantitative and qualitative results from Likert-scales, open-ended questionnaires, transcriptions of manifestation determination meetings, and interviews. The results of this study will be presented in the next chapter.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of a mixed methods design utilizing hidden profiles to explore how team members make manifestation determination decisions while exploring the differences between general and special educators. Answering each of these goals is important when trying to understand how decisions are made within multidisciplinary teams when team members do not share all pertinent information about a student's case. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses for each of the following questions are presented:

1. What information do general and special educators elect to mention in their discussions when making a manifestation determination and holding unique student information?
2. Do special and general educators differ in the extent to which they discuss unique facts when given unique information about a manifestation determination?
3. If pre-discussion determinations change after team discussions about manifestation determinations, what information influences these changes?
4. What information do team members deem important or unimportant in making a manifestation determination decision?
5. How do general and special educators perceive the discussion process in the manifestation determination meeting?

Research Question 1

What information do general and special educators elect to mention in their discussions when making a manifestation determination and holding unique student information?

The first question investigated how student information within case studies was shared by general and special educators. Data collection measures included transcriptions of mock manifestation determination meetings, Likert questionnaires, open ended questionnaires, and semi-structured follow up interviews. Each meeting was transcribed and frequency data were collected on each of the unique and shared information items provided to participants in the case studies. Codes were also derived deductively from the research questions and inductively as themes developed. Based on these codes, categories were established and coded. In each mock meeting, eight unique items were hidden in case studies and distributed among special and general educators. Cases also contained shared pieces of information that were held by all group members.

Non-manifestation meetings. In meetings 1 and 3, the preferred manifestation decision was a non-manifestation. In meeting 1, the special educators held the majority of the unique, or hidden, information and in meeting 3, the general educators held the majority of the information.

Meeting 1. In Meeting 1, the special educators held the weight of the unique information, with each special educator holding three pieces of information. Each general education teacher held 1 piece of unique information. Prior to the meeting, one special education teacher and one general education teacher indicated a manifestation decision and one special education teacher and one general education teacher indicated a

non-manifestation decision. After the discussion, the group made a non-manifestation decision, which was the preferred determination. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most certain, the group as a whole scored the certainty of their non-manifestation decision an 8. As shown in Table 5, after the discussion, each participant indicated that they independently believed the student's behavior was not a manifestation of his disability. All but one participant's individual certainty of their decision increased by at least a 1 point, including the two participants who changed their determination decisions as a result of the meeting.

Table 5

Meeting 1 Team Decision-making Summary: Non-Manifestation

Summaries	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
Hidden Profile	M1,M2, M3	M4,M5,M6	M7	M8
Pre-meeting decision	Non- Man	Man	Non-Man	Man
Total times facts mentioned supporting pre-meeting decision	47	7	25	15
Total times facts mentioned not supporting pre-meeting decision	4	34	3	9
Individual post meeting decision	Non-Man	Non-Man	Non-Man	Non-Man
Agreement with group decision	10	8	10	8
Change between pre and post meeting certainty	+1	+2	0	+1

All but one participant mentioned more facts from the case study that supported their pre-meeting decision than those supporting the opposing determination. For example, Special Education Teacher 1 (Sped1) mentioned facts on 47 instances that supported the non-manifestation determination and only four facts that supported the opposing determination. General Education Teacher 2 (Gen2) mentioned facts on 15 instances supporting the manifestation determination while only mentioning facts

supporting the counter argument nine times. This did not hold true for Special Education Teacher 2 (Sped2) who mentioned facts on seven occasions that supported the original manifestation determination, but mentioned facts 34 times countering her original decision. This participant did change her determination from the pre to post questionnaire as a result of the discussion.

When rating their individual agreement with the group's final decision on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "agree" and 1 being "disagree," the participants whose individual decisions of non-manifestation did not change as a result of the meeting (Sped1 and Gen1) rated their agreement with the group decision as a 10. The participants whose decisions changed as a result of the meeting (Sped 2 and Gen2) rated their agreement with the group decision as an 8.

During Meeting 1, participants mentioned more pieces of shared information (100%) than pieces of unique information (75%), as listed in Tables 6 and 7. The most commonly mentioned shared pieces of information were the student's recent success in school (39 mentions), the student's exchange with the special education teacher (22 mentions), the ED label (15 mentions), and students going to the restroom during the incident (15 mentions). The special educators mentioned slightly more shared facts (12 and 18) than the general educators (17 and 10), and repeated this information more often (M = 4.06) than general educators (M = 3.18).

Table 6

Meeting 1: Non-Manifestation, Shared Information

Shared Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
ED label (M1)	15	4	4	2	5
Chaotic home life (M2)	8	0	2	6	0
History of threatening peers (M3)	3	0	2	1	0
Lack of parental involvement (M4)	3	0	1	2	0
Locked cafeteria doors (T1)	10	1	7	1	1
Staff refused to open cafeteria doors (T2)	3	0	3	0	0
Low achievement reading and writing (T3)	3	0	1	2	0
Academic strength in mathematics (T4)	8	2	5	1	0
Disruptive/ defiant behaviors	14	2	0	7	5
Change in placement	10	5	2	3	0
Coping Skills	8	3	2	2	1
Problematic academic behaviors	12	3	0	4	5
Eye contact with special education teacher	10	1	7	0	2
LD label	4	1	2	1	0
Possible gang activity	7	2	5	0	0
Background information	7	0	5	2	0
Students going to the restroom from cafeteria	15	3	9	2	1
Exchange between Lucas and special education teacher	22	0	13	6	3
Reaction to general education teacher	5	0	3	0	2
Recent success	39	19	4	11	5
Total Shared	206	46	77	53	30

Table 7

Meeting 1: Non-Manifestation, Unique Information

Unique Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
General education teacher repeated requests	0	0	0	0	0
History of emotionality/ frustration	8	4	2	2	0
Students watching exchange/ Lucas watching students	11	7	1	0	3
Special education teacher following FBA/BIP	20	2	12	3	3
Change from small group to general education	12	2	9	1	0
Possible gang involvement	10	3	5	1	1
FBA/BIP development and provisions	21	2	13	6	0
Administrator follows BIP	0	0	0	0	0
Total Unique	82	20	42	13	7

Of the eight possible unique pieces of information that could be shared, six items were mentioned at least once in Meeting 1. The most commonly repeated piece of information was the development of the FBA/BIP (21 mentions) and the special education teacher's actions during the incident (20 mentions), which included following the FBA/BIP. Of the shared information, both special educators repeated 100% of

other's shared information at least once while the general education teachers repeated 80% (Gen1) and 50% (Gen2) of other's shared information. Both a general education teacher (Gen2) and special education teacher (Sped1) held pieces of unique information that were not shared during the discussion. The facts not mentioned included the general education teacher's requests and the administrator's actions during the incident.

Meeting 3. In Meeting 3, the general educators held the weight of the unique information, with each general educator holding three pieces of information. Each special education teacher held one piece of unique information. Prior to the meeting, one general education teacher indicated a non-manifestation decision and the remaining team members (Gen1, Sped1, and Sped2) indicated a manifestation decision. After the discussion, the group made a manifestation decision, which was not the preferred determination. On a scale of 1 to 10, which 10 being the most certain, the group as a whole scored the certainty of their non-manifestation decision a 7.5. As shown in Table 8, after the discussion, each participant individually maintained their original decision. In other words, despite the group decision of manifestation, one participant (Gen2) still believed her original determination of non-manifestation was the correct decision. Of those participants whose individual decisions did not change as a result of the meeting, individual certainty increased by one point (Sped1 and Sped2) and remained the same (Gen1). The participant who maintained her individual determination of non-manifestation, which was different from the group decision, rated her individual certainty six points higher after the meeting.

Table 8

Meeting 3 Team Decision-making Summary: Non-Manifestation

Summaries	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
Hidden Profile	M8	M7	M1,M2,M3	M4,M5,M6
Pre-meeting decision	Man	Man	Man	Non-Man
Total times facts mentioned supporting pre-meeting decision	15	29	14	13
Total times facts mentioned not supporting pre-meeting decision	4	1	0	3
Individual post meeting decision	Man	Man	Man	Non-Man
Agreement with group decision	9	8	10	7
Change between pre and post meeting certainty	+1	+1	0	+6

All participants mentioned more facts from the case study that supported their pre-meeting decision than those supporting the opposing determination. Combined, special educators mentioned facts on 44 instances that supported the manifestation determination and five instances supporting the non-manifestation decision. General Education Teacher 1 (Gen1) mentioned facts on 14 instances supporting the

manifestation determination and did not discuss any facts that supported the counter argument. The participant (Gen2) who maintained the non-manifestation decision from the pre-meeting decision mentioned facts on 13 occasions that supported the non-manifestation determination and mentioned three facts that countered her original decision.

When rating their individual agreement with the group's final decision on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "agree" and 1 being "disagree," the participants whose individual decisions of non-manifestation did not change as a result of the meeting (Sped1, Sped2, and Gen1) rated their agreement with the group decision as a 9, 8, and 10, respectively. The participant who maintained her individual decision of non-manifestation after the meeting (Gen2) still rated her agreement with the group decision as a 7.

During Meeting 3, participants mentioned more pieces of shared information (60%) than unique information (38%), as listed in Tables 9 and 10. The most commonly mentioned shared pieces of information were the ED label (15 mentions), the student's reaction to the general education teacher (14 mentions), and the student's chaotic home life (9 mentions). The special educators mentioned slightly more shared facts (9 each) than the general educators (7 and 6), and repeated this information more often (M = 2.78) than general educators (M = 1.65).

Table 9

Meeting 3: Manifestation, Shared Information

Shared Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
ED label (M1)	15	3	4	3	5
Chaotic home life (M2)	9	3	4	0	2
History of threatening peers (M3)	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of parental involvement (M4)	6	2	1	1	2
Locked cafeteria doors (T1)	0	0	0	0	0
Staff refused to open cafeteria doors (T2)	0	0	0	0	0
Low achievement reading and writing (T3)	1	0	1	0	0
Academic strength in mathematics (T4)	2	0	1	1	0
Disruptive/ defiant behaviors	0	0	0	0	0
Change in placement	4	1	2	1	0
Coping Skills	0	0	0	0	0
Problematic academic behaviors	0	0	0	0	0
Eye contact with special education teacher	0	0	0	0	0
LD label	3	1	2	0	0
Possible gang activity	0	0	0	0	0
Background information	7	5	1	0	1
Students going to the restroom from cafeteria	1	0	0	1	0
Exchange between Lucas and special education teacher	3	1	0	1	1
Reaction to general education teacher	14	2	11	1	0
Recent success	6	5	0	0	1
Total	71	23	27	9	12

Table 10

Meeting 3: Manifestation, Unique Information

Unique Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
General education teacher repeated requests	0	0	0	0	0
History of emotionality/ frustration	0	0	0	0	0
Students watching exchange/ Lucas watching students	0	0	0	0	0
Special education teacher following FBA/BIP	3	0	0	3	0
Change from small group to general education	0	0	0	0	0
Possible gang involvement	0	0	0	0	0
FBA/BIP development and provisions	19	3	11	1	4
Administrator follows BIP	3	3	0	0	0
Total	26	6	11	4	4

Of the eight possible unique pieces of information that could be shared, only three items were mentioned at least once in Meeting 3. These items were the FBA/BIP (19 mentions), the special education teacher's actions during the incident (3 mentions), and the administrator's actions during the incident (3 mentions). Only the FBA/BIP information was repeated by other participants after it was first mentioned by the special education teacher (Sped2). The unique pieces of information held by the special

education teachers were both shared, but only one general education teacher (Gen1) shared unique information (special education teacher's actions during the incident) and it was not repeated by any other participants.

Summary of non-manifestation meetings. In both Meetings 1 and 3, the FBA and BIP provisions and the special education teacher's actions during the incident were the most frequently discussed unique facts in making the manifestation determinations, despite the fact that participants in Meeting 1 came to the preferred determination and participants in Meeting 3 made the non-preferred determination. Of the facts in the cases, when making the preferred determination, participants in Meeting 1 most frequently discussed the student's recent success in a general education setting. Conversely, participants in Meeting 3 discussed the student's ED label most often and did not come to the preferred consensus, a non-manifestation determination.

Manifestation meetings. In meetings 2 and 4, the preferred manifestation decision was a manifestation. In meeting 2, the special educators held the majority of the unique, or hidden, information and in meeting 4, the general educators held the majority of information.

Meeting 2. In Meeting 2, the special educators held the weight of the unique information, with each special educator holding three pieces of information. Each general education teacher held one piece of unique information. Prior to the meeting, one special education teacher and both general education teachers indicated a non-manifestation decision and one special education teacher indicated a manifestation decision. After the discussion, the group made a manifestation decision, which was the

preferred determination. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most certain, the group as a whole scored the certainty of their manifestation decision a 5. As shown in Table 11, after the discussion, one special education teacher and one general education teacher changed their individual determination from non-manifestation to manifestation. The other special education teacher (Sped2) and general education teacher (Gen1) participant individually maintained their original decision. Despite the group consensus of a manifestation determination, Gen1 found the case to be a non-manifestation both before and after the meeting. The two educators who did not change their individual decision (Sped2 and Gen1) did not indicate an increase of their certainty of this decision as a result of the meeting. Both the special education teacher (Sped1) and general education teacher (Gen2) who changed their individual decisions to a manifestation as a result of the meeting indicated a decrease in the certainty of their decisions by 3 points (Sped1) and 2 points (Gen2).

Table 11

Meeting 2 Team Decision-making Summary: Manifestation

Summaries	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
Hidden Profile	M1,M2, M3	M4,M5,M6	M7	M8
Pre-meeting decision	Non- Man	Man	Non-Man	Non-Man
Total times facts mentioned supporting pre-meeting decision	44	45	11	17
Total times facts mentioned not supporting pre-meeting decision	6	0	0	17
Individual post meeting decision	Man	Man	Non-Man	Man
Agreement with group decision	5	10	1	9
Change between pre and post meeting certainty	-3	0	0	-2

All participants, except Gen2 mentioned more facts from the case study supporting their pre-meeting decision than those supporting the opposing determination. General education teacher 2 mentioned an equal number of facts supporting and countering the initial individual manifestation decision. Combined, special educators mentioned facts on 89 instances, supporting their individual manifestation decision and

six instances supporting the non-manifestation decision. The general education teachers mentioned facts on 28 instances supporting the non-manifestation determination and 17 instances supporting a manifestation decision.

When rating their individual agreement with the group's final decision on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "agree" and 1 being "disagree," the special education teacher whose individual decision of manifestation did not change as a result of the meeting (Sped2) rated their agreement with the group decision as a 10. The general education teacher (Gen2) and special education teacher (Sped1) who changed their minds as a result of the meeting rated their agreement with the group decision as a 9 and 5. The general education teacher (Gen1) who maintained his individual decision of non-manifestation after the meeting rated his agreement with the group decision as a 1.

During Meeting 2, participants mentioned more pieces of shared information (100%) than pieces of unique information (75%), as listed in Tables 12 and 13. The most commonly mentioned shared pieces of information were the interaction between the student and the general education teacher (27 mentions), the student's change in setting (27 mentions), and the student's low achievement in reading and writing (21 mentions). The special educators mentioned more shared facts (20 and 13 each) than the general educators (9 each), and repeated this information more often (M = 4.31) than general educators (M = 2.84).

Table 12

Meeting 2: Manifestation, Shared Information

Shared Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
Locked cafeteria doors (N1)	5	3	1	1	0
Low achievement in (N2) reading and writing	21	11	1	1	8
Interaction between Seth and general education (N3) teacher	27	15	3	1	8
Interaction between Seth and special education (N4) teacher	11	8	2	1	0
Chaotic home life (T1)	12	4	0	2	6
Lack of parental (T2) involvement	2	2	0	0	0
Academic strength in (T3) mathematics	2	2	0	0	0
Change in settings (T4)	27	16	6	2	3
Disruptive/ defiant behaviors	16	14	1	0	1
Coping Skills	15	12	1	0	2
Problematic academic behaviors	7	2	5	0	0
Eye contact with special education teacher	2	2	0	0	0
Background information	9	8	0	0	1
Overwhelmed with requests	5	3	1	0	1
Time lapse in general education setting	7	3	1	3	0
Reaction to general education teacher's requests	6	6	0	0	0
Elementary school onset	6	1	4	0	1
Pushing principal details	10	4	3	2	1
Administrator opened cafeteria doors	9	3	3	0	3
Recent success	7	4	0	3	0
Total	206	123	32	16	35

Table 13

Meeting 2: Manifestation, Unique Information

Unique Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
ED diagnosis	35	23	6	6	0
History of physical aggression with adults	28	23	5	0	0
Agitation with written assignments	4	4	0	0	0
History of physical aggression with peers	18	3	15	0	0
History of frustration and controlling emotions	1	0	1	0	0
History of explosive behavior	0	0	0	0	0
FBA/BIP development and provisions	0	0	0	0	0
Administrator follows BIP	8	0	2	6	0
Total	94	53	29	12	0

Of the eight possible unique pieces of information that could be shared, six items were mentioned at least once in Meeting 2. The most frequently mentioned items were the ED diagnosis (35 mentions), the history of physical aggression with adults (28 mentions), and the history of physical aggression with peers (18 mentions). The ED label information was repeated by the most participants after it was first mentioned by the

special education teacher (Sped1). Five of the six unique pieces of information held by the special education teachers were shared, and only one of the general education teachers (Gen1) shared a piece of unique information (administrator followed the BIP).

Meeting 4. In Meeting 4, the general educators held the weight of the unique information, with each general educator holding three pieces of information. Each special education teacher held one piece of unique information. Prior to the meeting, all four teachers indicated a manifestation decision. After the discussion, the group made a manifestation decision, which was the preferred determination. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most certain, the group as a whole scored the certainty of their manifestation decision an 8.5. As shown in Table 14, after the discussion, all four teachers maintained their individual determination of a manifestation decision. Both general education teachers indicated a 2 point increase in the certainty of their decisions, one special education teacher (Sped2) did not indicate a change in certainty and the other special education teacher (Sped1) indicated a 1 point increase in certainty after the meeting.

Table 14

Meeting 4 Team Decision-making Summary: Manifestation

Summaries	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
Hidden Profile	M8	M7	M1,M2,M3	M4,M5,M6
Pre-meeting decision	Man	Man	Man	Man
Total times facts mentioned supporting pre-meeting decision	14	6	28	3
Total times facts mentioned not supporting pre-meeting decision	3	0	2	3
Individual post meeting decision	Man	Man	Man	Man
Agreement with group decision	10	10	10	8
Change between pre and post meeting certainty	+1	0	+2	+2

All participants mentioned more facts from the case study that supported their pre-meeting decision than those supporting the opposing determination. Combined, special educators mentioned facts on 20 instances that supported the manifestation determination and three instances supporting the non-manifestation decision. The general education teachers mentioned facts on 31 instances supporting the manifestation determination and discussed facts supporting the counter argument on three instances.

During Meeting 4, participants mentioned an equal amount of shared information (50%) and unique information (50%), as listed in Tables 15 and 16. The general educators mentioned more, or the same amount of shared facts (21 and 2 each) as the special educators (10 and 2), and repeated this information slightly more often (M = 1.67) than special educators (M = 1.5). Of the eight possible unique pieces of information that could be shared, four items were mentioned at least once in Meeting 4. The most frequently mentioned items were the history of physical aggression with peers (3 mentions), the history of frustration and controlling emotions (3 mentions), and the FBA/BIP development and provisions (3 mentions). Once information was first shared by a participant, it was not mentioned by any other participants. One unique piece of information held by the special education teachers was shared, and three pieces of information were shared by the general education teachers.

Table 15

Meeting 4: Manifestation, Shared Information

Shared Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
Locked cafeteria doors (N1)	3	0	0	3	0
Low achievement in (N2) reading and writing	2	0	1	1	0
Interaction between Seth (N3) and general education teacher	4	2	0	2	0
Interaction between Seth and special education (N4) teacher	5	1	1	3	0
Chaotic home life (T1)	1	0	0	0	1
Lack of parental (T2) involvement	0	0	0	0	0
Academic strength in (T3) mathematics	0	0	0	0	0
Change in settings (T4)	5	3	0	2	0
Disruptive/ defiant behaviors	4	0	0	4	0
Coping Skills	2	0	0	2	0
Problematic academic behaviors	0	0	0	0	0
Eye contact with special education teacher	0	0	0	0	0
Background information	0	0	0	0	0
Overwhelmed with requests	4	2	0	1	1
Time lapse in general education setting	0	0	0	0	0
Reaction to general education teacher's requests	0	0	0	0	0
Elementary school onset	0	0	0	0	0
Pushing principal details	0	0	0	0	0
Administrator opened cafeteria doors	0	0	0	0	0
Recent success	3	0	0	3	0
Total	33	8	2	21	2

Table 16

Meeting 4: Manifestation, Unique Information

Unique Information	All	Sped1	Sped2	Gen1	Gen2
ED diagnosis	0	0	0	0	0
History of physical aggression with adults	2	0	0	0	2
Agitation with written assignments	0	0	0	0	0
History of physical aggression with peers	3	0	0	3	0
History of frustration and controlling emotions	3	0	0	3	0
History of explosive behavior	0	0	0	0	0
FBA/BIP development and provisions	3	3	0	0	0
Administrator follows BIP	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	3	0	6	2

Summary of manifestation meetings. While in Meeting 2, the ED label was the most frequently mentioned piece of unique information, participants in Meeting 4 did not share this piece of information. The next most frequently mentioned piece of unique information in Meeting 2 and one that was also mentioned in Meeting 4 was the student's history of physical aggression with adults. With a consensus of a manifestation determination, participants in Meeting 4 discussed very few unique pieces of information,

but those mentioned the most were the student's history of physical aggression with peers, the student's history of being frustrated and controlling his emotions, and the FBA/BIP development. The change in the student's setting from small group to general education was the most frequently discussed shared fact in making a manifestation determination in both Meeting 2 and 4.

Discussion themes across all meetings. In addition to shared and unique information items, all meetings were coded for discussion themes. Codes were derived deductively from the research questions and inductively as themes developed. Based on these codes, categories were established and coded. As shown in Table 17, the most commonly discussed themes across all meetings were the comparison of facts, the declaration of personal preferences, and the causes of the student's misbehavior. Participants spent the most time comparing information and attempting to determine if information items were shared by all participants. Next, participants discussed their personal preferences and their beliefs about the manifestation determination of the case study.

Table 17

Team Decision-making Themes

Themes	All	Meeting1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting4
Comparison of facts	134	64	44	26	0
Declaration of personal preferences	116	10	54	40	12
Causes of the student's misbehavior	80	16	29	32	3
Defining and understanding the ED label	67	28	19	20	0
Desire for additional information	59	26	16	14	3
Relationship to personal experiences	58	17	23	16	2
Least restrictive environment and placement	53	14	27	12	2
Adult/ staff antagonistic behavior	52	8	28	8	8
Expertise of individual group members	37	2	33	1	1
MDR guidelines/ procedure	27	6	9	12	0
Special education procedures	22	18	3	1	1
IEP implementation	22	0	20	0	2
Consequences for student	12	4	7	0	1
Comparison to real MDR	7	1	3	0	0
Total	746	214	315	182	35

While trying to understand the student's behaviors, participants in both the manifestation and non-manifestation cases discussed how the student's emotional disability might manifest itself, the impact of the general education teacher's and administrator's actions on the student's behavior, and hypothesized on antecedents and triggers. Participants suggested that the student's home life may have been a factor in his actions, suggesting that "maybe he's just upset about something at home, he's upset about something in the class beforehand" and "maybe it's the stress of that night, maybe the parents." The student's behaviors were also categorized as typical or normal behavior. Participants suggested that "this kid is not going to eat. I mean, what other poor kid wouldn't get pissed about that… every kid would", and "who's happy when you're hungry?" and "part of 14 year olds, especially boys, is to be impulsive but there is bravado, those boys have bravado, look at me, I'm tougher than you." Other causes included the academic tasks or a combination of all the events, as suggested by Gen1 in Meeting 4, "he gets to the cafeteria and he's already mad about math or whatever happened the night before and then he can't eat lunch and that's a further thing that's going to make him even more mad." Assumptions about the student which were based on other facts, included statements such as "you know, his mother is depressed, his father has anger issues, it's pretty safe to say that Seth is depressed and has anger issues" and that the student was "a ticking time bomb."

Pre-discussion decision rationale and discussions. When comparing participant's pre-discussion rationale for decision-making with what they elected to mention during discussions, patterns emerged by meetings as opposed to type of

educator. In Meetings 1 and 2, all pre-discussion items listed by participants were consequently mentioned during the group discussion. During these meetings the special educators held the majority of the unique information items. In Meetings 3 and 4, general educators held the majority of the unique information items and participants did not share all of the information recorded as important in making the manifestation determination decision prior to the group discussion.

In Meeting 3, Gen1 listed 10 items as evidence supporting his manifestation determination decision. Of these 10 items, only three items were discussed by Gen1 in support of his decision. This information included two pieces of shared information (poor home life and the student's attempt to get composed outside of the cafeteria) and an assumption about the student's behavior (the student had to "stand up" to the teacher because of the gang member). In Meeting 4, of the 47 reasons cited by both general and special educators as influential in decision-making prior to the meeting, only 22 of those items were discussed during the meetings. Of those items discussed, all but three items, which were uniquely held, were either shared information items or assumptions made by individual participants.

Summary. When discussing information used to make a manifestation determination, participants mentioned almost 4 times as many facts supporting pre-meeting decisions (333 mentions) than opposing pre-meeting decisions (89 mentions). Of this information, shared items were discussed more frequently than unique items, with the exception of Meeting 4 where both shared and unique information were equally discussed.

Overall, when examining shared information items, more information was discussed during the non-manifestation meetings (M = 35.13, SD = 23.32) than manifestation meetings (M = 29.87, SD = 39.65). Special education teachers discussed a mean 42.25 (SD = 40.08) items, while general educators discussed a mean 22.75 (SD = 17.56) information items. Even when special educators held the majority of the unique information items, they discussed more shared information items (M = 52.00, SD = 34.22) than when general educators held more unique items (M = 13.0, SD = 9.60). Like the shared information items, when examining unique information items, more unique information was discussed during the non-manifestation meetings (M = 13.38, SD = 12.76) than manifestation meetings (M = 2.38, SD = 2.50). Special education teachers (M = 10.50, SD = 14.40) discussed twice as much unique information as general education teachers (M = 5.25, SD = 3.88). When special educators held the majority of the unique information items, they discussed more of these information items (M = 11.25, SD = 14.19) than when general educators held more unique items (M = 4.50, SD = 3.30).

In addition to shared and unique facts, both general and special educators discussed and compared individual cases, stated their personal preferences about the case studies, and made assumptions about the causes of the student's behavior. During meetings where special educators held the majority of the unique information, team decision-making themes were identified a total of 529 instances. Team decision-making themes were identified on 217 instances during meetings where general educators held the majority of the unique information.

During recall of the non-manifestation determination meeting decisions, the only overlapping fact in the top three reported pieces of information which influenced decision-making was the FBA and BIP development and provisions. In the recall of the manifestation determination meeting decisions, the overlapping information included the student's interaction with the general education teacher and the change in setting from small group to general education. Across all types of meetings, overlapping information included the student's interaction with the special education teacher and the EBD disability label. When examining the information left unshared, no patterns emerged in either the manifestation or non-manifestation case studies.

When special educators held the majority of the unique information, all information listed by both general and special educators in pre-discussion decision-making was discussed during their team discussions. Conversely, when general educators held the majority of the unique information, a total of 32 information items were never discussed during team meetings despite being identified as important in pre-discussion questionnaires.

Research Question 2

Do special and general educators differ in the extent to which they discuss unique facts when given unique information about a manifestation determination?

The second question investigated how unique student information within case studies was shared differently by general and special educators. Data collection measures included transcriptions of mock manifestation determination meetings, open ended questionnaires, and semi-structured follow up interviews. Each meeting was transcribed

and frequency data were collected on each of the unique information items provided to participants in the case studies. In each case study, eight unique items were hidden in case studies and distributed among special and general educators.

Non-manifestation meetings. In Meeting 1, special educators were provided with six unique pieces of information, divided equally among two teachers. Of these six items, the special educators mentioned five items, or 83.3% of the hidden information. General educators were provided with two unique pieces of information, divided equally among the two teachers. Of these two items, the general educators mentioned one item, or 50% of the hidden information. Once unique information was introduced, special educators repeated their hidden information seven times and general educators repeated their hidden information six times.

The same case study was used again in Meeting 3, with the weight of the unique information given to general educators. Each general education teacher was given three pieces of unique information, for a total of six pieces of unique information hidden within the case study. Special education teachers received one piece of information each, for a total of two pieces of information. Of the six unique items held by the general educators, only one piece, or 16.7% of information was shared. This particular item was repeated 3 times. Special educators shared both pieces of their unique information, or 100%, and repeated the items seven times during the mock manifestation meeting.

Summary of non-manifestation meetings. During Meetings 1 and 3, both general and special educators mentioned the special education teacher's actions during the incident and the creation of the FBA and BIP when it was held as unique information.

General educators did not mention any additional unique items, but special educators also referenced the emotionality and frustration issues, the students watching the exchange, the change in placement, the possible gang involvement, and the administrator's actions during the incident.

Manifestation meetings. In Meeting 2, special educators were provided with six unique pieces of information, divided equally among two teachers. Of these six items, the special educators mentioned five items, or 83.3% of the hidden information. General educators were provided with two unique pieces of information, divided equally among the two teachers. Of these two items, the general educators mentioned one item, or 50% of the hidden information. Once unique information was introduced, special educators repeated their hidden information 13 times and general educators repeated their hidden information six times.

The same case study used in Meeting 2 was used again in Meeting 4, with the weight of the unique information given to general educators. Each general education teacher was given three pieces of unique information, for a total of six pieces of unique information hidden within the case study. Special education teachers received one piece of information each, for a total of two pieces of information. Of the six unique items held by the general educators, three pieces (50%) of information were shared and they were repeated three times. Special educators shared one piece (50%) of their unique information and repeated the item three times during the mock manifestation meeting.

Summary of manifestation meetings. During Meetings 2 and 4, both general and special educators mentioned the history of physical aggression with both peers and

adults, and the student's difficulty with becoming frustrated and controlling his emotions. General educators also mentioned the administrator's actions during the incident and special educators referenced the emotional disability label, the student's frustration with writing, and the FBA and BIP development.

General versus special educators. In all, general education teachers mentioned unique information items a mean of 5.25 times (SD = 3.88) while special education teachers mentioned unique facts a mean of 10.50 (SD-14.40) as shown in Table 18. This total was based on both initial mentions of information as well as repeated information.

Table 18
Mean unique information discussed by general and special educators

Teacher	Mean	SD
General educators	5.25	3.88
Special educators	10.50	14.40
Total	7.87	10.54

When general educators held the majority of the unique information, they mentioned unique items fewer times (M = 4.50, SD = 3.30) than when special educators held the majority of the unique items (M = 11.25, SD = 14.19) as shown in Table 19. This includes both initial mentions of information as well as repeated information.

Table 19

Mean unique information discussed by holder of unique information

Teacher	Mean	SD
General educators	4.50	3.30
Special educators	11.25	14.19
Total	7.87	10.54

Summary. In all, special educators mentioned 13 of the 16 pieces of unique information (81.3%) and general educators shared 6 of 16 pieces of information (37.5%), which is less than half the amount of their counterparts. In addition, once unique information was shared, information held by general educators was repeated by other participants 17 times versus 52 times when a special educator shared a piece of unique information.

When examining the total number of times unique information were discussed, on average, special educators discussed these facts twice as much as general educators (M = 10.50 and M = 5.25). When general educators held the majority of unique information, on average, they discussed even less of these facts (M = 4.5). Despite general educators knowing more information than special educators in these meetings, the mean amount of shared and discussed information was less than half of what was shared by special educators.

Although educators varied in the amount of information they shared and discussed, there was overlap on the information both groups of educators discussed. In

the preferred manifestation determination meeting, all educators mentioned the special educator's actions during the incident as well as the FBA and BIP development in the meeting discussion. In the preferred non-manifestation meeting, all participants mentioned the history of aggression with peers and adults and the student's frustration and difficulty with controlling his emotions. The reasons these particular information items were discussed is not known, but it is interesting to note that in the manifestation case study, the unique information items shared were behaviors of adults and the procedural aspects of the FBA and BIP, while in the non-manifestation determination case, the information items were student behaviors, specifically negative behaviors.

Research Question 3

If pre-discussion determinations change after team discussions about manifestation determinations, what information influences these changes?

The third question investigated what information influenced participants to change their pre-discussion determinations after a team discussion. Data collection measures included transcriptions of mock manifestation determination meetings, open ended questionnaires, and semi-structured follow up interviews. Each meeting was transcribed and frequency data were collected on each of the information items provided to participants in the case studies. Across all 16 participants, one special education teacher and one general education teacher initially made a non-manifestation determination and after discussion, changed their decision to a manifestation and one special education teacher and one general education teacher initially made a

manifestation determination and after discussion, changed their decision to a non-manifestation.

In Meeting 1, participants Sped2 and Gen2 individually made a manifestation determination. After the group discussion, both participants made a non-manifestation determination, which was also the consensus of the group and the preferred determination. Both participants stated they changed their decisions based on "additional information" from other participants. In the post questionnaire, both teachers mentioned the development of the FBA/BIP, teachers following the BIP, and the gang member's presence during the incident as factors that influenced their group decision and post-discussion decisions. The general education teacher also mentioned the student's recent success with managing his emotions. During member checks approximately a week after Meeting 1, Sped2 reflected that "all the missing puzzle pieces from each of the other participants" was the primary reason for her determination, rather than specific reasons as mentioned after the discussion. The general education teacher reported that prior to the discussion "he had a history of emotional issues" and "when the teacher pressed him for homework, and then he could not get into the cafeteria, that he was unable to handle the situation and had an emotional breakdown." Afterwards, she stated the main evidence for changing her view was during the meeting was when she learned that "he had in fact had a period of cooling down and even responded that he was ready to talk before he pushed the teacher." While both teachers initially mentioned the FBA/BIP and gang member's presence during the incident as reasons for changing their determinations, after more reflection, the special education teacher reported that generally, just having more

information was influential. The general education teacher specifically pinpointed aspects of the FBA/BIP that were followed.

In Meeting 2, participants Sped1 and Gen1 individually made a non-manifestation determination. After the group discussion, both participants made a manifestation determination, which was also the consensus of the group and the preferred determination. General Education Teacher 1 cited the unique information held by Sped1 as the reason his decision changed. After learning about the student's ED label he stated, "well, that changes everything." Afterwards, the primary reason he cited for changing his decision was "that he [the student] was actually found eligible for ED in 3rd grade." When asked for more specifics during an interview, he reiterated, "the actual label of being ED" as the turning point in his decision-making. Special Education Teacher 1 specifically referenced the student's physical aggression and violence towards staff and peers as well Sped2's opinion that in the past the student had exhibited similar behaviors and returned to school, implying a manifestation of the disability, therefore making this incident a manifestation as well. In a follow up discussion, this participant felt this was the "wrong decision to make because each decision should have been made independent of the previous decisions and it was something we shouldn't have done as a group." In retrospect he believed this influenced the entire group. He felt that he should not have changed his determination to a manifestation, even though the group was not at a consensus.

Summary. In total, 4 participants, equally divided among general and special educators, changed their initial manifestation determination after a group discussion. The initial

determinations and resulting decisions were also equally split between manifestation and non-manifestation decisions. The participants who changed their initial determination were split between Meeting 1 and Meeting 2, with Meeting 1 being a preferred non-manifestation determination decision and Meeting 2 a preferred manifestation determination. All participants who changed their decisions ultimately made the correct preferred determination and were part of the group decision consensus.

In the preferred non-manifestation case, having a more complete picture of the student was most important to those participants who changed their decisions. Both the special and general educator focused on the development and subsequent adherence to the student's FBA and BIP, as well as the presence of a gang member during the student's misbehavior. While a combination of factors reportedly influenced the participants in the non-manifestation case, only two facts from the case study were reportedly influential in the preferred manifestation case. In Meeting 2, the manifestation case, the EBD label and the student's past physical aggression were found to influence determination decisions. In addition to the facts of the cases, the special educator also reported he was influenced by the idea that the student had a history of behavioral difficulties and still attended public school, implying a manifestation of behaviors in the past.

Given the types and amount of information reported as influential to changing determination decisions, moving from a manifestation to a non-manifestation decision appeared to require more shared factual case information than moving from a non-manifestation to a manifestation decision. In fact, in Meeting 2, the EBD label was

reported to be the unequivocal reason for the change from the non-manifestation to the manifestation determination decision. This raises concerns about the impact and importance of information-sharing on decision-making when considering what little influence the majority of student information had on some participants in their final determinations.

Research Question 4

What information do team members deem important or unimportant in making a manifestation determination decision?

The fourth question investigated what information participants reported as important to their decision-making during team discussions. Data collection measures included open ended questionnaires and semi-structured follow up interviews. Frequency data were collected on open ended questionnaire responses and interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and coded.

After each team discussion, participants individually recalled and recorded pieces of information that influenced their decision-making. As shown in Table 20, participants listed a total of 40 pieces of information influencing their decision-making. Of the reported information, 12 pieces of information were opinions or based on assumptions. These included items such as classifying the student's behavior as impulsive, disagreeing with the student's current placement, concluding that the student was provoked by the teacher, and asserting that the student acted out because he was showing off in front of peers.

Table 20

Information Reported by Participants as Important for Decision-making

Information Item	All	Meeting1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4
Chaotic home life	7	1	2	1	3
History of physicality	7	2	4	0	1
Success controlling emotions	7	4	0	0	3
FBA/BIP	7	2	2	2	1
ED label	6	2	3	0	1
Student was not given wait time	6	0	1	4	1
Current IEP and Placement	6	1	0	3	2
Given repeated requests	4	0	2	0	2
Impulsivity	4	2	0	2	0
Student responded “ready”	4	2	0	2	0
Lack of home support	4	1	0	3	0
Student needs IEP goals	4	0	2	0	2
Student showing off in front of gang	4	2	0	2	0
Student given wait time	4	2	0	1	1
History of ignoring directions	4	2	1	0	1
Success in general education	4	2	0	0	2
History of frustration with multiple requests	3	0	0	0	3
Teacher provoked student	3	1	2	0	0
Poor work habits	3	2	1	0	0
Student demonstrated bravado	3	0	0	3	0

Student in special education since 3rd grade	3	0	3	0	0
Possible gang connection	3	3	0	0	0
Student was hungry	3	0	1	1	1
Student had coping strategies	2	0	1	0	1
Needs a resource class	2	0	0	2	0
Yelling/ Outbursts	2	0	0	0	2
On grade level for math	2	2	0	0	0
Other students exhibited similar behaviors	2	1	0	1	0
Student was calm	2	1	0	1	0
Student was angry about the locked cafeteria doors	2	2	0	0	0
Below grade level in reading and writing	2	0	1	1	0
Teacher asked if student was ready	1	1	0	0	0
Eye contact was made	1	1	0	0	0
Student's relationship with math teacher	1	0	0	1	0
Signs of grumbling	1	1	0	0	0
More emotionality than other students	1	1	0	0	0
Threatened peer	1	1	0	0	0
Completes classwork	1	1	0	0	0
Student was overwhelmed	1	0	0	0	1
Time lapse from class to incident	1	0	1	0	0
Total	128	43	27	30	28

Across all meetings, the most commonly mentioned items influencing decision-making included the student's chaotic home life, history of physicality, the student's recent success controlling his emotions, and a current FBA/BIP. All four of these pieces of information were based on facts from the cases and not a result of an assumption or an opinion. The student's chaotic home life and history of physicality were recorded as the most important pieces of information in decision-making in Meetings 2 and 4, the manifestation case study.

Non-manifestation meetings. In Meetings 1 and 3, the non-manifestation case study, six items were reported as the most common factors influencing decision-making. Participants in Meeting 1 most commonly mentioned the student's recent success with controlling his emotions (4 participants) and the possible gang connection (3 participants). One of the special education teachers shared:

> I think he was doing it, this whole thing, to me the whole thing has to do with the gang … he looked at the gang member and that triggered him to think, well maybe to get into the gang he has to show he's a big, tough dude and that he had to push the teacher, or something they told him to do.

Later, she reiterated several times that the student "can pull it together, he can pull it together, he knows how to pull it together" and she believed that "the actual action of pushing was in order to impress or to make it look like he's the big guy and [he doesn't] care if [he's] in trouble or not." Throughout the meeting, the general education teachers also reinforced the importance of the student's success by mentioning that "he could pull it together and be successful" and "he was doing fine."

In Meeting 3, the student's frustration and the need for a "cool down" (4 participants), the student acting out of "bravado" (3 participants), the student's current

IEP and placement (3 participants), and the lack of support at home (3 participants) were all noted as the most important pieces of information in decision-making. One of the general education teachers from Meeting 3 expanded upon her reason for placing so much weight on the aspect of "bravado" by sharing:

> Having dealt with SPED kids for years, all behaviors are often considered to be part of a disability and often aren't analyzed separately. An ED label doesn't forgive or excuse all behaviors nor is it cause of all behaviors. All behaviors need to be considered separately before they can truly be identified as caused by a disability. Pushing a teacher can be caused by an ED behavior. But when it's overshadowed or influenced by a desire to impress a group of "tough" students (gang members), the behavior needs to be considered to be within the norm of adolescent male behavior and should be punished. The true motivator was a desire to impress, which is normal for teens.

Further, Sped2 explained why the label ED was less important to her decision-making than the chaotic home life by suggesting that since the parents weren't involved, the student's diagnosis wasn't a pressured one and therefore the home life really did impact the student's behavior. She shared:

> This child does have ED and so I do feel that that should be a big part of… (trails off)… some of the times our students are diagnosed because, you know, we do, well, I know they're trying not to, but a lot of times with some pressure, well, this is going to happen, let's put my kid under this [ED label]. I truly feel that, to me, this was a good, a non-pressured diagnosis, if you will. If you're not having a lot, not that you don't want parents input, but you don't want the pressure if you know what I mean, when you're going through that eligibility, so I feel that the ED is a good scenario, the background is a good scenario to give me ideas of exactly why Lucas is acting out like this and some of the times, our kids could have a really horrible night with the parents, it's okay for a week, and then all of a sudden it just comes out.

Manifestation meetings. In Meetings 2 and 4, the non-manifestation case study, six items were reported as the most common factors influencing decision-making. From Meeting 2, participants mentioned the student's physicality with peers (4 participants),

the ED label (3 participants), and the duration of the student's disability (3 participants) as the most important pieces of information in their decision-making. At one point in the discussion, when referring to the behavior of concern, Gen2 stated, "an ED kid is going to act that way." Later when asked by another participant if he believed the student's reaction to the teacher was caused "because he's ED" Gen2 confirmed, "I do." When one of the special educators refused to change his determination, he was asked by another participant about what he was "hung up on." He responded, "I just think this has been documented for so long…since 3rd grade…since elementary school, in elementary school Seth was frequently physically aggressive towards peers and last year he pushed a peer at the bus stop after being called fat." The duration of the student's disability was an important factor for several participants during Meeting 2.

Participants in Meeting 4 most commonly mentioned the student's ability to recently manage his emotions (3 participants), the chaotic household (3 participants), and the student's history with frustration with multiple requests (3 participants) as the most important pieces of information influencing their decisions. Early in the discussion, Gen1 summarized her manifestation determination by sharing,

> I don't know about you guys but it looks like there is a long history of this emotional thing and what kind of threw it for me was, was they said, oh well we are going to move him into math because he has been successful because he has been managing his emotions.

Although Gen2 did not focus on the student's recent success, he did mention the student's home life numerous times throughout the meeting and explained the student's behaviors could have happened "because his dad had made him mad the night before" or "him and his dad had a fight the night before." The special educators in Meeting 4 both

discussed the student's frustration with multiple requests and Sped1 quantified the general education teacher's behaviors by sharing "she gave him like 9, 9 requests for the work, that's a lot when it clearly states in his background information…it says he gets, he becomes overwhelmed with requests."

Discussion across all meetings. All unique information mentioned during meeting discussions, except one, was listed by at least one participant as important in making a determination. No participants felt that the student's agitation with written assignments (shared in Meeting 2) was a deciding factor in making a manifestation determination decision. Of the shared information items identified during research question 1, four items were not mentioned by any participant as important in manifestation determination decision-making. These items were the student's problematic academic behaviors, making eye contact with his teacher before pushing staff, the amount of time the student was in the general education setting, and the administrator's action of opening the cafeteria doors.

Differing approaches in decision-making. Although team members found specific information important in their decision-making, two of the general educators (Meetings 2 and 3) treated the information collecting process with a non-causal approach, while 2 of the special educators (Meeting 2 and 3) took on a causal approach. In meetings 2 and 3, each of the general educators believed the student's behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability and did not make the consensus determination. These educators believed that finding the behaviors to be a manifestation of the student's behaviors required supporting documentation. In other words, the behavior was not a

manifestation of the student's disability until proven otherwise. In Meeting 3, while discussing the implementation of BIP and the manifestation of the student's behavior Gen1 stated, "I can't determine that, that's a correlation, not causation. I don't have the documentation in front of me." She went on to say that she was "sticking to" her determination of a non-manifestation because the information to convince her otherwise was "not in there." She believed that in order to be considered a manifestation, the evidence must be present and she added, "to me, it's not clear cut, one hundred percent this happened because of the disability." One of the special educators who believed the case was a manifestation rebutted by stating "the background is a good scenario to give me ideas of exactly why Lucas is acting like this."

Similarly, in Meeting 2, Gen1 stated, "I wanted to say yes, and I think yes, but there is absolutely nothing here that substantially says that to me." Later, when referring to the general educator's need for more information to make the situation a manifestation determination, one of the special education teachers stated, "I think what we're doing is we're trying to create ways it would be caused by his disability." The general educator agreed "totally, we want that," but he also believed there was not enough information to persuade him to make a manifestation determination. While the general educators were looking for evidence to prove a relationship between the behavior and disability, the special educators were looking for information against a relationship or manifestation.

Summary. In total, 128 reasons were listed by participants when queried about important information in their manifestation determination decision-making. In all, when reviewing the top two reasons for determinations in each meeting, only one piece of

information, the student's success controlling emotions, overlapped. This overlap was between a non-manifestation and manifestation meeting where in one meeting the special educators held the majority of the information and in the other, the general educators held the weight of the unique information. The reasons for making determinations varied greatly across all meeting types, final manifestation determinations, and educators.

In Meetings 1 and 3, the non-manifestation case studies, the most frequently reported information influencing decision-making included two major assumptions, the student's possible gang involvement and the attribution of the student's behavior to "bravado." This is interesting when considering that the participants in Meeting 3 did not make the preferred non-manifestation determination, but instead found the case to be a manifestation of the student's disability. During Meetings 2 and 4, the manifestation case studies, the most frequently reported information influencing decision-making only included factual information as reported in the case studies. It appears that making assumptions in an effort to explain student behavior is important to making determinations, despite the ultimate manifestation determination decision.

In making determinations, four participants openly expressed their approach to using information to influence decisions. Two general educators believed the student's behavior was not a manifestation unless evidence and information was provided to support a manifestation decision. On the other hand, two special educators believed the student's behavior was a manifestation unless evidence and information was provided to support a non-manifestation decision. These differing approaches to information seeking

may point towards opposing agendas of special and general educators during manifestation determination meetings.

Research Question 5

How do general and special educators perceive the discussion process in the manifestation determination meeting?

The fifth question investigated how general and special educators perceived the mock manifestation determination meeting discussion. Data collection measures included transcriptions of mock manifestation determination meetings, open ended questionnaires, and semi-structured follow up interviews. Each open ended questionnaire and interview was transcribed and coded for themes. Participants were asked how they contributed to the discussions, how other group members influenced their decision-making, and to discuss their overall impression of the manifestation determination process. Additionally, follow up interviews further explored these topics and more detailed responses were provided.

Discussion contributions. When participants were asked how they contributed to the discussion, a number of themes emerged from participants' responses to an open ended questionnaire. Participants across all four meetings reported that they contributed facts, expertise, perspective, and assumptions about the student's behaviors. Of these themes, the most commonly reported contribution were facts about the case studies.

Facts included both unique and shared information that participants felt were important to the discussion. This included "the piece about being overwhelmed with requests, the teacher had made nine requests and continued requests occurred over a 30

minute period" and "that the student had time to cool down and this was followed per the FBA."

At least one special educator from each meeting reported that they contributed their expertise in the form of a "special education background and leadership," "knowledge of behavior patterns and known outcomes," and "information about the student's disability." In all, five of the eight special educators mentioned their background in special education as an area of expertise. While special educators most often cited their expertise as their main contribution to discussion, half of the general educators mentioned their perspective as a general education teacher as one of their contributions.

In three of the meetings, participants reported specific examples of assumptions they had made throughout the case studies as their contribution to the discussions. These contributions included the assertion that the student "was just being a pseudo normal 14-year-old" and "there was probably an emotional component in Seth's IEP" and "the situation was probably dealt with incorrectly." One general education teacher reported that he didn't believe he "contributed anything unique or novel." Although this participant held one piece of unique information (FBA/BIP), he did not share it during the meeting. He did report that he was the only participant in his meeting to stand by his opinion and felt that this was a contribution to the discussion.

Participants reported that either they were not persuaded in any way by other group members or that other group members influenced their decision-making by validating their beliefs, sharing information, or serving as experts. Two of the three

participants who recorded that they were not persuaded by other members of the group were part of Meeting 3, where the group consensus was not the preferred determination. In this group, one participant suggested that even though "each member had different snapshots" she was "never persuaded" to change her initial pre-meeting determination.

The participants who felt validated were both part of Meeting 4, the only group coming into the manifestation determination discussion with a consensus decision. These participants reported that other group members made them feel "a little more confident" and increased the "level of certainty" with pre-discussion decisions.

The most commonly reported way participants were influenced was through information sharing. Half the participants mentioned hearing or incorporating new information from other members of the group into their final decision-making.

Finally, the expertise of special educators was reported by three general educators as a contributing factor in influencing decision-making. This expertise was broad in terms of "knowledge of special education" and often also served as validation for participant's beliefs about the determination. In particular, one special educator shared that "having a team discussion was beneficial in helping me feel that my determination was justified. Other's evidence (multiple requests, IEP accommodations) helped me see that I had similar thoughts and made a similar determination."

Manifestation determination guidelines. When discussing the MD guidelines used for their decision-making, participants reported that the provisions as outlined were relatively straightforward, but the language in the two prong test wasn't always clear, in particular because of the double negatives. During Meeting 3, as the group struggled to

make a determination, Gen2 suggested the group only focus on one of the two prong questions. Since the manifestation determination requires a yes response to only one question, he suggested that "unless you said yes, then, you know, the other one really doesn't matter." He asserted that once a "yes" answer was determined, it was unnecessary to continue debating the second question.

While some participants in Meeting 3 felt answering both questions wasn't necessary, participants in Meeting 2 repeatedly scrutinized the MD questions, discussing the verbiage "direct" and "substantial" as outlined in the two prong questions. Although the group was unable to come to a consensus on whether the behaviors were directly related to the disability, they were able to agree on a substantial relationship. From a procedural standpoint, a general education teacher reported that the manifestation determination process "does a good job allowing decisions to be made more fairly when dealing with special education students." This is an important perspective when considered with a special education teacher's belief that "staff personalities and personal feelings about the student often cloud this process."

Overall perceptions of the manifestation determination meeting. Participants' overall impression with the meeting was a positive one, but teachers were left wanting more information. Teachers stated they "liked it," and "enjoyed it," and the meeting was "informative," "very good," "excellent," and "productive." Several participants found the process challenging because of missing or incomplete information and wanted more details. Other participants struggled with making connections between the disability and a behavior when making a manifestation determination. One general education teacher

reported, “It was a difficult decision choosing yes or no because really, only Seth knows if his actions were uncontrollable because of the disability or if he acted out of anger, passion.” Another general education teacher also shared, “It is one thing to identify a student’s disability but another issue entirely proving a valid connection between an action and a disability.”

Comparisons to team meetings. In comparison to actual team meetings, participants in Meeting 4 recognized the ease at which decisions were made and joked about how “nice it would be if every meeting were like [this meeting]” and a participant in Meeting 3 commented that the teachers “were quick and to the point.” Conversely, as participants struggled to reach a consensus in Meeting 2, a general education teacher commented that “this happens in manifestations all the time, except up at the [central office], they tell you what you’re saying.” When participants in Meeting 2 had difficulty reaching a consensus, they joked about pulling out the students “Cat 2” or Category 2 folder which documents all of a student’s special education history and calling in an administrative designee to make a decision.

During interviews, both a general and special educator pointed out the differences among special and general educators in real meetings versus the mock manifestation meetings. From Meeting 3, Sped2 shared:

> In reality, you have a general ed teacher, particularly, and not to pick on them, but, they don’t read the CAT 2 [folder]… when my students have these issues and I like to know more about the student himself, his background, his family life, I make a point of getting to know each of my kids, where I think the general ed teacher doesn’t know all the other layers that happen and they don’t bother to read the CAT 2 and if I don’t point out what their disability is, or what has happened to them in the past, then they could easily be like, oh no. Their attitude is like they have to have consequences and I think a lot of general ed teachers say, “oh,

> because he's special ed he gets away with it." I think that needs to be changed. I mean, I think I find that when there's an incident that happens at school, and there's a regular ed kid and a special ed kid, I always feel the special ed kid gets punished more and the regular ed kid gets away with it. Once you're labeled, it's like a stigma and then you know, he's had this problem before, he's already been in trouble. And sometimes they can't control it because they are impulsive and it's not like it's planned or calculated. I just think that everybody who is on that manifestation needs to know all the details and not just have their opinion, they need to take it a little further and look at the CAT 2 and know more about the student.

From a general education perspective, Gen1 from Meeting 2 shared that "in real life, a lot of times the regular teacher doesn't have a voice or opinion as much as we did in our meeting" and Gen2 from Meeting 2 also pointed out in a real meeting "there is going to be information that I'm not going to know if they just pull me out of class because I have the period off."

Summary. While general and special educators viewed special education teachers as being "experts" during the manifestation determination meetings, general education teachers reported that they only offered "perspective." This perception may provide insight into the amount of information shared by each type of educator during the team discussions.

Overall, while all participants spoke favorably about the meeting process, during member check discussions and interviews, participants voiced concerns with the balance between special and general educators and the contributions of each group. Across both groups, special educators didn't feel that general educators were doing enough to prepare for team meetings and general educators didn't feel that they had a voice in meetings or weren't properly prepared to participate. While the concerns of perceived

unpreparedness were the same across both groups of educators, the causes, or reasons for the unpreparedness was different.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the results of a mixed methods study exploring the impact of hidden profiles on information sharing during mock manifestation determination meetings. Results suggest that shared information was discussed and repeated more often than unique information and special education teachers discussed more shared and unique information. Participants reported the manifestation determination process was a positive experience and found that the MD provisions offered sufficient guidance for making decisions. The next chapter will present a discussion of the results as summarized in this chapter as well as limitations and suggestions for further research in special education using hidden profiles.

5. DISCUSSION

The chapter presents a discussion of the findings from a mixed methods study that attempted to accomplish two goals. First, this study explored how team members made manifestation determination decisions based on hidden profiles of student information. Secondly, this study explored the differences between general and special educators when making a manifestation determination. Despite the absence of research in education utilizing the hidden profile method, the results of this research support existing research in hidden profiles and multi-disciplinary meetings.

Hidden Profiles and Information Sharing

Stasser and Titus (1985), hypothesized that during group meetings, participants should be particularly interested in hearing unique information held by other group members, should be persuaded by that information, and consequently, should uncover hidden or unique information leading to a more informed group decision. However, after conducting their research on hidden profiles, this was not the case and most groups failed to uncover the uniquely held information and make the optimal, preferred, or correct decision.

In this research, three of the four group meetings made the optimal or preferred manifestation determination, despite limited information sharing among participants. Although each case study went through several rounds of development, refinement, and

feedback, all four case studies were considered weak, meaning group members made different determinations, or choices, prior to the group discussion instead of making the same non-preferred determination (Lu, Yuan, & McLeod, 2012). The non-preferred determinations were made by two participants in Meeting 1, two participants in Meeting 2, one participant in Meeting 3, and no participants in Meeting 4. On the one hand, this is problematic because the hidden profiles did not accomplish what they were designed to do, which is to lead the group away from the correct determination prior to group discussion (Lu, Yuan, & McLeod). However, dissent among participants may have actually led to more information pooling (Schulz-Hardt, Brodbeck, Mojzisch, Kerschreiter, & Frey, 2006), greater discussion of unique information, and more quality decisions (Brodbeck, et al., 2002).

Schulz-Hardt et al. (2006) suggest that dissent promotes more in-depth discussion by motivating group members to search for unique, or unknown information. The impact of dissent could explain the information sharing in Meetings 1 and 2 where pre-meeting determinations were split equally between manifestation and non-manifestation decisions. In each of these meetings, six out of eight unique information items were discussed cumulatively 176 times. In addition, 20 out of 20 shared information items were discussed 416 times in both Meetings 1 and 2. The initial dissent among group members led to in-depth discussions among participants in both Meeting 1 and Meeting 2.

In Meetings 3 and 4, only one group member came to a manifestation determination which opposed the remaining group members. In these two meetings,

three out of eight and four out of eight unique information items were discussed cumulatively 37 times. In addition, 10 and 12 shared information items were discussed 104 times in both Meetings 3 and 4. In meetings with dissention, unique information was discussed almost five times more and shared information was discussed four times more than meetings with no disagreement among participants during the pre-discussion. Since group members' pre-discussion decisions guide group discussion, the common knowledge effect (Gigone & Hastie, 1993, 1997) may prevent group members from engaging in an intensive dialogue where all information is discussed (Shulz-Hardt et al., 2006) because the assumption is made that all the members have the same information.

To further understand the limited information sharing in Meetings 3 and 4, the hidden profile research has shown that when members of a group come into a discussion with a preferred outcome, they advocate for their position and promote information that defends this position (Brodbeck et al., 2007; Stasser, 1992). Instead of considering new information, members maintain their original opinions, steering decision-making away from the unshared information that would uncover all of the information to select the best option. In Meeting 3, only one participant disagreed with the group and did not mention any facts that did not support her pre-meeting decision. Overall, the group mentioned 71 items supporting their decisions and only eight which promoted the opposing position. Similarly, in Meeting 4, where all participants came into the group with a consensus, 51 factual items were shared in support of pre-discussion determinations and only three which promoted the opposing view. Three of the participants in Meeting 4 did not mention any opposing information, despite having unique information that no other group

members were aware of. As Mojzisch et al. (2010) suggested, when groups begin with a consensus, they engage in preference negotiation, reinforcing and offering one another positive feedback, instead of delving further into the unique information held by each member.

When analyzing how preferred outcomes impacted groups where dissention took place and participants changed their initial pre-discussion determination, both Meeting 1 and 2 should be examined. In Meeting 1, two members held opposing views and eventually changed their decision from the pre-discussion determination. Participants mentioned 94 factual items supporting their pre-discussion decisions and 50 items opposing their decisions. Meeting 2 yielded 117 information items supporting pre-discussion decisions and 23 items opposing pre-discussion decisions. In this meeting, two participants held opposing views but only one participant changed his initial pre-determination decision based on the group discussion.

There are numerous reasons why information sharing is limited in hidden profile research, one of which focuses on the balance of status and power. In the balance of status and power theory, members with lower status levels reluctantly share or repeat unique, or unshared information, over the course of discussions (Larson, Foster-Fishman, & Keys, 1994). When the member who holds unique information is labeled as the "expert," unique information is repeated more frequently and the group pays more attention to what is shared (Stasser, Stewart, & Wittenbaum, 1995; Stasser & Titus, 2003). Although no "experts" were labeled as such in this research, five special education teachers and five general education teachers referred to special educators as

experts or knowledgeable about the decision-making process. Special educators specifically stated they contributed "special education background and leadership," "knowledge of behavior patterns and known outcomes," and "information about the student's disability." General education teachers were never labeled as experts or knowledgeable, but four general educators referred to their own contribution as "perspective." Further, when comparing the amount of unique information discussed by general and special educators, general education teachers discussed half the amount (M = 5.25) of information than special education teachers (M = 10.50). Additionally, when special educators held the majority of the unique information, they repeated the information (M = 11.25) more often than when general educators held the majority of unique information (M = 4.50). This supports existing research on the balance of status and power theory in hidden profile research. As Brodbeck et al. (2007) suggested, participants, specifically general educators, may have only valued information that other members could corroborate because it was socially validated.

Although experts were not formally established, productivity appeared to be hindered by the perceived status of group members and consequently, participation among group members was unequal and unproductive in making informed decisions (Holen, 2000; Olaniran, 1996). Despite having equal opportunities to access information during discussions, general education teachers mentioned 230 unique and shared facts throughout the discussions while special educators mentioned 502 unique and shared facts. Although credibility wasn't formally established in this research, experience and expertise has been identified as an important layer in group interactions during hidden

profile research (Parks & Cowlin, 1996; Stasser & Titus, 2003). This was true of the manifestation determination meetings where general educators reported that having a special educator present was enough to help guide their decision-making.

The implications of putting special educators in the position of the expert during MD meetings can be troublesome. Although MDs are based on special education law, it is entirely possible that the special educators attending these meetings may lack the experience or knowledge bestowed upon them by general educators. Further, as students spend more time in inclusion with general education teachers, it is possible that general education teachers may know the students at the center of these meetings better than the special educators designated as "experts" and may have more valuable information to share during discussions. On the contrary, it is also possible that the focus on inclusion has resulted in less monitoring of IEP goals and objectives, resulting in a reduction of advocacy for special education students. With a large caseload, general education teachers may not have the time to closely monitor individual students, leaving some special education students in the position where no one educator knows them particularly well and can adequately discuss all aspects of a student's behavior.

Multi-disciplinary Team Meetings

Despite the absence of hidden profile methodology in education research, the conclusions drawn from the impact of hidden profiles in this research also align with multi-disciplinary team meeting research in special education. This is particularly true when examining the research on the contributions of general and special educators during

meetings, hierarchies of power, and existing research on information sharing in team meetings.

The findings from the current study revealed that special educators were the primary contributors of unique, shared, and repeated information items. In addition, general educators deferred to special educators for knowledge and expertise, possibly because general educators came into the meetings with less experience with manifestation determination reviews than their special education peers. One general education teacher even stated that he didn't believe he made any contribution to the meeting. In research conducted on IEP meetings by Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004), researchers found that special educators talk significantly more than any other team member. General educators, on the other hand, believed they were less helpful in making decisions, and reported knowing less about what to do during the meeting than other participants. Just as Martin, Marshall, and Sale found in their research on IEP team meetings, this study demonstrated varied team members' perceptions during meetings and some members, particularly general educators, were not actively involved in the decision-making process.

While recorders and time keepers volunteered to record the group's decision and keep the discussion under an hour's time, no one person was assigned to lead the discussion during this research. However, in three of four meetings, one of the special education teachers emerged as facilitator by redirecting the group discussion, reviewing the manifestation determination guidelines as outlined by IDEA, and repeating and reiterating other participant's comments to check for understanding. Much like Larson et

al. (1996); Stasser, Stewart, and Wittenbaum (1995); and Stasser and Titus (2003) found when examining the impact of "experts" on hidden profile discussions, Ochoa, Gottschall, and Stuart (2004) found that in multi-disciplinary decision-making groups, even though no such role was formally assigned to one member, one person acted as a gatekeeper or facilitator of the discussion.

In addition, both general and special educators believed that during real manifestation determination meetings general educators were either without a voice or unable to provide applicable or helpful information. A special educator stated,

> In reality, you have a general ed teacher, particularly, not to pick on them, but they don't read the CAT 2… I think the general ed teacher doesn't know all the other layers that happen and they don't bother to read the CAT 2… I think the general ed teachers say, 'oh because he's special ed, he gets away with it.'

Yet, a general educator felt that "in real life, a lot of times the regular ed teacher doesn't have a voice or opinion as much as we did in our meeting." Although both groups of educators believed that general education teachers were unprepared for meetings, the reasons for this unpreparedness were different. General educators asserted that they were often pulled out of class during free periods, despite their lack of knowledge about a student, and special educators assumed that general educators were given ample opportunities to examine a student's file even if they did not know the student personally.

Although all special educators mentioned information influencing their pre-discussion decision during the manifestation meeting, general educators left a number of reasons for their pre-discussion decisions unshared. As one general educator shared, perhaps general educators felt insignificant and did not believe they had a voice; therefore they didn't openly share information. Although the causes for the lack of

information sharing can only be speculated on, it is also possible that the general educators did not understand the importance of the unique information they held and did not recognize the weight of their potential contribution. This could be also be a direct result of not fully understanding special education law or procedural information. Just as in existing group decision-making research in special education, group members did not always utilize the opportunity to share information in a productive manner. Therefore, the manifestation determination discussion did not include comprehensive contributions from all group members.

Manifestation Determination Guidelines

Participants did not report specific challenges with deciphering the MD guidelines, but during Meeting 2, an extensive conversation took place about the meaning of the words "direct" and "substantial" in the two prong question. Although participants were unable to agree that the student's behavior was directly related to his disability, they were able to come to a consensus on the word "substantial" when describing the relationship. This supports the research conducted by Bon, Faircloth, and LeTendre (2006) which found that teachers on disciplinary teams for students with disabilities experienced confusion and conflict as they attempted to decipher the guidelines for disciplining students with disabilities. Without a clear cut method to determine if a behavior is a manifestation of a disability, team members in this research were also forced to arbitrarily define language in the guidelines. The lack of guidance in determining whether a behavior is a manifestation of a disability is disturbing because of

the very serious nature of protecting the rights of students with disabilities, particularly with having access to a free and appropriate education (Zilz, 2006).

While the MD guidelines posed some challenges for participants, several teachers and groups struggled more with defining what constituted "normal" behavior for a student with EBD. Teachers claimed that when talking about the student's behavior, "an ED kid is going to act that way" and conversely, the student "was just being a pseudo normal 14-year-old." This relates back to the difficulty of the contextual and social construction of the disability label that can make determining causation a near impossibility (Katsiyannis & Maag, 2001). Determining causation was subject to the interpretations of team members conducting the manifestation determination and as seen in each of the meetings, participants struggled to determine the cause of the behavior. One general education teacher reflected, "it was a difficult decision choosing yes or no because, really, only Seth knows if his actions were uncontrollable because of the disability or if he acted out of anger, passion." Further, another teacher stressed that "it is one thing to identify a student's disability but another issue entirely proving a valid connection between an action and a disability." Without understanding, or knowing for certain how a student was thinking at the moment of the misbehavior in question, educators struggled to make connections between a student's disability and behavior.

Although general and special educators did not differ with speculating on the causes of the behavior of concern, they did differ on the extent to which they verbally shared these assumptions during the meetings. While special educators generally voiced their opinions on the antecedents of the behavior of concern, three of the general

educators did not voice these concerns, but did list them in their post-discussion questionnaire. Two of these general educators also disagreed with the final group consensus, although only one participant shared their dissent with the group. This is important when considering the influence of experts on meetings, and whether this is intentional versus unintentional between educators, particularly in light of one teacher's perception that "staff personalities and personal feelings about the student often cloud this process."

Dual Discipline

Only one participant in this research directly discussed the topic of fairness or equity during manifestation meetings. Specifically, a general education teacher felt the manifestation determination meeting "does a good job allowing decisions to be made more fairly when dealing with special education students." Despite the belief that the meetings were fair, opposing approaches to decision-making were noted during two group discussions. Additionally, during open-ended questionnaires, special educators noted the challenges of working with general education teachers and the consequential issues of equity when dealing with students in special education in general.

While the MD has been viewed as a dual standard of discipline and an unfair and unjust process for teachers and students alike (Bon, Faircloth, & LeTendre, 2006; Frick & Faircloth, 2007; Koch, 2000; McCarthy & Soodak, 2007), the general educators in this research were not challenged by this aspect of the MD provision. Instead, the general educators reported that the process was straightforward and one general educator reported that the meeting seemed to be a fair way of working with students with disabilities during

behavioral incidents. Special educators also reported little frustration with the MD process, but felt that general educators either hindered the discussion process or treated students in special education unfairly in real manifestation and team meetings and decision-making situations. Specifically, a special educator shared that "…when there's an incident that happens at school and there's a regular ed kid and a special ed kid, I always feel the special ed kid gets punished more and the regular ed kid gets away with it." While previous research found that general educators feel disciplinary policies are unfair to general education students, this research found that special educators feel similarly about special education students. As aspects of pre-meeting decision advocacy and the influence of experts are examined, this perception of imbalance between general and special educators and students should also be noted.

Implications for Practitioners, Teacher Education Programs, and Policy-makers

The results of this research suggest that information sharing and team decision-making should be carefully evaluated for effectiveness. Although the interactions among team members may be unintentionally influential, this research supports previous studies that suggest that general educators participate less than special educators in team meetings. At a school level, training models should be developed, including both general and special educators. The focus of this training should include team meeting procedures, special education law and terminology, and empowering general educators to fully participate through information sharing. Further, administrators or school leaders would benefit from making concerted efforts to include general educators who are familiar with students at the center of manifestation determination meetings or, at the

very least, give educators ample opportunities to review the student's background information. In an effort to counter issues of fairness, equity, and the influence of experts, schools should also explore developing a permanent or revolving multi-disciplinary team of general educators, special educators, and other school professionals whose job it would be to review manifestation determination cases through a systematic process. Through training and imposed equality among members, this team could potentially help counter issues of pre-determination and influence from experts.

At the university level, teacher education programs should consider bringing special and general educators together during coursework, particularly as it relates to collaboration on special education decision-making. While many programs focus on academic collaboration from an inclusive, co-teaching perspective, there should also be a focus on ways to effectively share information as a team. General education teachers should be instructed not just on basic special education initiatives, but they should also be empowered with knowledge about each disability area and requirements of general education teachers as it relates to special education law.

Although participants in this research did not report difficulty with understanding the language in manifestation determination procedures, they struggled to understand the connections between disabilities and behaviors. While each state and school district may provide additional guidance in making MD decisions, it is important that these guidelines be as measurable, observable, and objective as possible to assist in decision-making. In addition, the manifestations of disability areas should also be more carefully explored and

outlined to assist teams with understanding the possible connections between disabilities and behaviors.

Overall, there is great potential for the development of training models for team decision-making across all types of special education meetings to include eligibility decisions, IEP creation, and FBA/BIP development. Intervention research could focus on training models for team meetings, professional development that educates and empowers general educators on special education processes, or education courses that create ample opportunities for discussion and practice with both general and special educators in collaborative decision-making scenarios.

Limitations

There are numerous limitations to this research. Limitations include case study development, those related to the methodology, and thoroughness of self-reports.

During the case study development, the non-manifestation case study did not achieve 80% agreement (Hollingshead, 1996) with the disability label EBD. Consequently, this created a weak hidden profile and participants did not always make the non-preferred determination. In addition, the manifestation determination hidden profiles also proved to be weak, despite successful case study development. From the initial case development, it is possible that the experts used in this study did not provide enough information or did not identify components of the case studies which were most important in making a determination. It is also possible that the cases were not written as directly as possible and should have included more information.

Across all meetings, participants reported that they needed more information to make an informed decision. Given the nature of the hidden profile cases, no additional information would have been provided in an IEP, but providing the document may have been helpful to the decision-making for some participants.

While hidden profiles offer a feasible way to examine team decision-making, participants did not have a vested interest in the student discussed in the manifestation determination. The teachers who participated were not emotionally invested nor did they have any preconceived ideas when discussing the student and the student's behavior. The implications of this disconnect between participants and the student is that the findings may not accurately reflect the impact of relationships between students and educators and among educators when making manifestation determinations.

Finally, participants were asked to provide written feedback on aspects of the case study and meeting through open ended-questionnaires. Several participants wrote an extensive amount of information while others included very little documentation. It is possible that the task of writing, particularly after participating in a manifestation meeting was more than participants were willing to complete. Therefore, it is possible that not all of the participants provided complete responses when queried about the manifestation determination process and in their explanations of their decisions.

Future Research

Using hidden profiles to explore team decision-making in special education has not been explored in the literature. Additional research using hidden profiles appears to be a viable way to explore how decisions are made and what information is shared within

teams. However, changes in hidden profile case development should be considered when replicating or expanding this research.

In order to develop case studies, it should be noted that Hollingshead's (1996) precedent 80% agreement on case development of hidden profiles was based on face to face responses. This is important to note because the challenges and differences between face to face responses and survey responses may impact the 80% agreement rate. In this research, concurrence on a preferred non-manifestation decision using a case study in a survey format was unachievable at 80% agreement. However, once the same case study was presented to a focus group, a better understanding of the determinations and important information in the non-manifestation case was established. In future research, when developing case studies, it would be beneficial to either include a face to face component during the initial stages of case development or the agreement on survey case development may need to be lowered from 80% in order to account for misinterpretations, impersonal interactions, and the influence of anonymity through electronic responses.

To expand upon this research, a complete profile to include an IEP, eligibility documentation, and written reports from teachers and parents could be included. The option of using hidden profiles in case studies including other disability areas outside of EBD also seems plausible. Lastly, exploring the roles and impact of hidden profiles on parents, administrators, and educational experts could be explored. The size of teams and weight of hidden profile information across team members could also be investigated as a means of further understanding how information is shared.

With the vast amount of decision-making processes in special education, hidden profiles may be valuable to explore a variety of other decision-making processes including IEPs, FBAs and BIPs, and special education eligibility meetings. Expanding this research to include administrators, parents, students, and other educational professionals also seems warranted. The information gleaned from hidden profile research could be explored in conjunction with the literature base on multi-disciplinary teams and IEP teams to provide a more complete picture of team decision-making in special education.

Conclusion

In this mixed methods study, hidden profiles were used to construct student case profiles in a mock manifestation determination meeting. Team decision-making was examined utilizing both general and special educators as participants. In addition, the differences between general and special educators when making a manifestation determination were explored. From this study, it is clear that the interactions and behaviors among and between teams when conducting a MD are multi-faceted. Findings suggest that shared information is discussed and repeated more often than unique information and special educators discussed more information than general educators. Although three of four groups made the preferred group decisions, information-sharing was limited.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research Questions *What do I need to know?*	**Sampling** *Where will I find this data?*	**Data Collection Methods** *What kind of data will answer the questions?*	**Analysis Strategies**	**Validity Threats**
What information do general and special educators elect to mention in their discussions when making a manifestation determination and holding unique student information?	8 general education teachers 8 special education teachers Purposeful, snowball sampling Inclusionary criteria: full licensure in the state of Virginia to teach in a secondary setting, currently employed in a secondary setting (grades 6 – 12) Exclusionary criteria: participants who have established working relationships, administrators who hold teaching licenses but are currently in a supervisory role.	Transcriptions of mock meetings Likert questionnaire scales Open ended questionnaires	Coding, thematic analysis Frequency counts Mean scores	Sample size; reactivity of both the mock meetings and the data collection procedures, participant experience in education and with MDRs.
Do special and general educators differ in the extent to which they discuss unique facts when given unique information about a manifestation determination?		Transcriptions of mock meetings	Coding, thematic analysis Frequency counts Mean scores	Sample size, researcher bias, participant experience in education and with MDRs.
If pre-discussion determinations change after team discussions about manifestation determinations, what information influences these changes?		Transcriptions of mock meetings Likert questionnaire scales Open ended questionnaires	Coding, thematic analysis Frequency counts	Sample size, accuracy of self reports.
What information do team members deem important or unimportant in making a manifestation determination decision?		Transcriptions of mock meetings Open ended questionnaires	Coding, thematic analysis Mean scores	Sample size, accuracy of self reports.
How do general and special educators perceive the discussion process in the manifestation determination meeting?		Transcriptions of mock meetings Open ended questionnaires Structured follow up interviews	Coding, thematic analysis	Sample size, researcher bias, time lapse between meetings and follow up interviews resulting in distortion of events or insufficient recall.

APPENDIX B

Background Information

Seth is a 14-year-old 9th grader who initially qualified for special education services under the disability category emotional disability in the third grade. Since 7th grade he has been receiving all of his academics in a small group setting. Academically he is below grade level in both reading and writing. Seth often becomes frustrated when things don't go his way or when he becomes overwhelmed with requests. He becomes particularly agitated when asked to complete written assignments. In middle school, Seth struggled to control his emotions and would become explosive and would begin yelling at staff and other students. At times, he would get out of his seat and begin pacing around the room, balling up his fists, and grumbling. On a few occasions, Seth left the room without permission and would walk into the hallway where he would sit against the lockers until he was able to compose himself again. In elementary school Seth was frequently physically aggressive towards staff and peers but has not had any incidents of physical aggression with staff since the end of his 7th grade year. However, once last year he pushed a peer at his bus stop after being called "fat."

Over the past few months, Seth has been doing significantly better. At his last IEP meeting in November 2011, the team decided that Seth should start attending math, a strength for Seth, in a general education setting. Since Seth is on grade level for math and has been successful with managing his emotions, the IEP team felt that Seth would be able to achieve success in a basic math class. Since he has been enrolled in the general education setting without support, he has been doing well. Although Seth attempts to complete the work in class, he does not volunteer and rarely completes homework. His behavior in class has not been problematic and there have not been any incidents where Seth has become angry or frustrated. Seth does have a Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan that includes allowing Seth time to "cool down" if he does become angry or frustrated.

Seth's parents are not actively involved in his education and rarely attend IEP meetings in person. Seth reports that his mother is "depressed" and that his father has "anger issues" and drinks on a nightly basis. The police have been called to Seth's home several times over the years to break up fights between Seth and his father and Seth and his younger brother. Seth reports that generally, his house is very chaotic.

Incident Report

On January 15, 2012, Seth was in his fourth period general education math class, his last class before lunch. During the last ten minutes of class, Ms. Barney, Seth's general education math teacher, began collecting homework from the night before. As Ms. Barney approached Seth's desk, he put his head down on his arms. When asked about his homework, Seth remained silent. After being asked three times, Ms. Barney let Seth know that she would move on and come back to him after she had checked the rest of the students' work. A minute before the end of the period bell rang, Ms. Barney returned to Seth's desk and again asked him about his homework. He had not moved since she left him and he still had his head down on his arms.

Once the bell rang signaling the end of the period, Seth slid his arms down and without lifting his head, began reaching under his desk, collecting his materials. Ms. Barney said in a neutral tone, "Seth, I need to know if you have the homework and if you don't, why not? You've missed almost all your homework assignments since you started this class." With his head down, Seth replied, "I'm ready to go." Ms. Barney quickly replied, "First, I need you to talk to me about this homework issue. Do you have the homework or not?" Seth continued to sit in silence and Ms. Barney waited for about a minute before repeating her question, "Do you have the homework?" Suddenly Seth jumped out of his seat, slammed his fists on the desk and yelled at Ms. Barney, "Stop asking me about the stupid homework!" Ms. Barney stepped away from Seth's desk as Seth stood up and headed for the classroom door. When it became apparent that Seth was going to leave the class, Ms. Barney said, "Seth, you don't want to do that. I mean it!" Seth turned around, growled at Ms. Barney and slammed the door, leaving the classroom. Ms. Barney called Mrs. Shelby, Seth's special education teacher to let her know what was happening.

The second bell had already rung and most students were in the cafeteria. As Seth approached the cafeteria doors, he found them locked. As a measure to keep students from roaming the halls, the doors to the cafeteria were kept locked and students who were late for lunch were required to present the administrator on duty with a late hall pass. Students who did not have a pass were required to report to the main office with a late slip from the cafeteria administrator on duty. The hall passes would be filed and would result in detention should the student accumulate three late slips.

Just as Seth found himself locked out of the cafeteria, waiting for the administrator, Mr. Tanner, to open the door, Mrs. Shelby, Seth's special education teacher arrived. As soon as Seth saw Mrs. Shelby, he began shaking the locked doors by the handles while kicking the bottom of the doors. His anger began intensifying and Seth began yelling obscenities. "Seth, let's talk and figure out what's going on here," Mrs. Shelby said. Seth ignored her request but stopped pulling on the cafeteria doors. Again, Mrs. Shelby calmly said, "Seth, let's talk. Something is upsetting you. Do you want to sit out here in the hallway and talk or do you want to go to my classroom?" Seth made eye contact with Mrs. Shelby, but still refused to talk.

During the next fifteen minutes, Seth and Mrs. Shelby stood at the cafeteria doors in silence. Just as Mrs. Shelby began to ask Seth where he wanted to talk, Mr. Tanner opened the door to the cafeteria to check on the situation with Seth.

"What's going on out here Seth?" asked Mr. Tanner. Seth refused to answer. Mr. Tanner repeated his question and again, Seth refused to answer. Mr. Tanner addressed Mrs. Shelby and said, "If he can't get himself together, he needs to go to the office, lunch is going to dismiss." Seth growled at Mr. Tanner, and with both hands, pushed him squarely on the chest, causing him to stumble backwards and fall onto the floor.

Seth is now up for long-term suspension for assaulting a staff member.

APPENDIX C

Background Information

Lucas is a 14-year-old 9th grader who initially qualified for special education services under the disability category learning disabled in the third grade and was later switched to emotional disability in the sixth grade. Since 7th grade he has been receiving all of his academics in a small group setting. Academically he is below grade level in both reading and writing. Like many adolescents, Lucas often becomes frustrated when things don't go his way or when he becomes overwhelmed with requests. He also resists written assignments. In middle school, Lucas displayed more emotionality than other boys his age. He would sometimes completely ignore any directions given to him by adults. At times, he would get out of his seat and begin pacing around the room and grumbling. On a few occasions, Lucas left the room without permission and would walk into the hallway where he would sit against the lockers until he was able to compose himself again. At no time in Lucas's history has he ever been physically aggressive towards staff, although once in 7th grade he threatened a peer at the bus stop after being called "fat."

Over the past year, Lucas has been doing significantly better. Lucas is on grade level for math and has been successful with managing his emotions and the IEP team believed Lucas would be able to achieve success in a basic math class. In November 2011, Lucas began attending math in the general education setting. Since then, he has been enrolled in the general education setting without support, and he has been doing very well. Although Lucas usually completes work in class, he does not volunteer and rarely completes homework. His math teacher reports that there are several other students in the class who exhibit the same pattern of behavior. His behavior in class has not been problematic and there have not been any incidents where Lucas has become frustrated. Lucas has a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that includes allowing Lucas time to "cool down" if he does become frustrated. Part of his FBA/ BIP includes waiting for Lucas to tell staff he is "ready" to problem solve.

Lucas's parents are not actively involved in his education and rarely attend IEP meetings in person. Lucas reports that his mother is "depressed" and that his father has "issues." A year ago, the police were called to Lucas's home to break up a fight between his father and Lucas' younger brother. Lucas reports that generally, his house can be chaotic.

Outside of school it is suspected that Lucas is part of a gang, but this has not been confirmed. He has begun socializing with known gang members throughout the school day.

Incident Report

On January 15, 2012, Lucas was in his fourth period general education math class, his last class before lunch. During the last ten minutes of class, Ms. Rossi, Lucas's general education math teacher, began collecting homework from the night before. As Ms. Rossi approached Lucas's desk, he put his head down on his arms. When asked about his homework, Lucas remained silent. After being asked three times, Ms. Rossi let Lucas know that she would move on and come back to him after she had checked the rest of the students' work. A minute before the end of the period bell rang, Ms. Rossi returned to Lucas's desk and again asked him about his homework. He had not moved since she left him and he still had his head down on his arms.

Once the bell rang signaling the end of the period, Lucas slid his arms down and without lifting his head, began reaching under his desk, collecting his materials. Ms. Rossi said in a neutral tone, "Lucas, I need to know if you have the homework and if you don't, why not? You've missed almost all your homework assignments since you started this class." With his head down, Lucas replied, "It's lunch time and I'm not going to miss lunch." Ms. Rossi quickly replied, "I understand it's lunch time, and I promise that you will get there and be able to eat. First, I need you to talk to me about this homework issue. Do you have the homework or not?" Lucas continued to sit in silence and Ms. Rossi waited quietly. Suddenly Lucas jumped out of his seat, slammed his fists on the desk and yelled at Ms. Rossi, "I'm not missing lunch! Stop asking me about the stupid homework!" Ms. Rossi stepped away from Lucas's desk as Lucas stood up and headed for the classroom door. When it became apparent that Lucas was going to leave the class, Ms. Rossi said, "Lucas, let's talk about this. We can work this out!" Lucas turned around, growled at Ms. Rossi and slammed the door, leaving the classroom. Ms. Rossi called Mrs. Barrett, Lucas's special education teacher to let her know what was happening.

The second bell had already rung and most students were in the cafeteria. As Lucas approached the cafeteria doors, he found them locked. As a measure to keep students from roaming the halls, the doors to the cafeteria were kept locked and students who were late for lunch were required to present the administrator on duty with a late hall pass. Students who did not have a pass were required to report to the main office with a late slip from the cafeteria administrator on duty. The hall passes would be filed and would result in detention should the student accumulate three late slips.

Just as Lucas found himself locked out of the cafeteria, waiting for the administrator, Mr. Murray, to open the door, Mrs. Barrett, Lucas's special education teacher arrived. As soon as Lucas saw Mrs. Barrett, he began shaking the locked doors by the handles while kicking the bottom of the doors. Lucas began yelling obscenities and demanded to be let in. As Mr. Murray approached, Mrs. Barrett signaled to him through the cafeteria door windows and shook her head no, signaling that the doors should not be opened. "Lucas, let's talk and figure out what's going on here," Mrs. Barrett said. Lucas ignored her request but stopped pulling on the cafeteria doors. Again, Mrs. Barrett calmly said, "Let me know when you are ready." Lucas made eye contact with Mrs. Barrett, but still refused to talk.

During the next fifteen minutes, Lucas and Mrs. Barrett stood at the cafeteria doors in silence. Once Lucas was calm, Mrs. Barrett again asked Lucas if he was ready. Lucas replied, "Fine. Ready." Just as Lucas answered, Mr. Murray opened the door to the cafeteria to let a group of students go to the restroom across the hall.

Aware of Lucas' BIP, Mr. Murray ignored Lucas and returned to the cafeteria. The group of students exited the restroom and began walking back towards the cafeteria, watching the exchange between Lucas and Mrs. Barrett. One of the students was a known gang member from the community. Mrs. Barrett quietly said, "So let's talk, what's going on." Lucas looked back at the students coming his direction, made very brief eye contact with Mrs. Barrett, and with both hands, pushed Mrs. Barrett squarely on the shoulders, causing her to stumble backwards and fall onto the floor.

Lucas is now up for long-term suspension for assaulting a staff member.

APPENDIX D

Are you familiar with the manifestation determination process?
Yes No (survey terminates)

Please answer each of the following:

Please check _____Male _____Female

If you are a teacher, what teaching certifications do you currently hold? (Include all applicable areas)
____ elementary
____ secondary
____ general education
____special education
____I do not hold a teaching license
____other
Please list:_____

What are your content area certifications?
_____
What are your disability area certifications?
_____

What best describes your current profession and position? (check as many as apply)
____public school
____private school
____full time teacher
____part time teacher
____general education teacher
____special education teacher
____co-teacher
____inclusive teacher
____resource room teacher
____school psychologist
____school counselor
____school administrator
____case worker
____behavior specialist
____itinerant teacher
____instructional assistant
____other

In what state(s) do you hold a professional license? _____

How many years have you been in education?_____

What grade(s) do work with? _____

How many manifestation determination meetings have you participated in during your career?

0 1-3 4-6 7-9 10-12 13 or more

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:
When necessary, and under certain circumstances, suspension is an appropriate consequence for students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree									Agree

When necessary, and under certain circumstances, expulsion is an appropriate consequence for students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree									Agree

APPENDIX E

Directions: Please read and review the following information

The manifestation determination is a provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The manifestation determination mandates that if a student with a disability violates a school system's code of conduct and is recommended for long term suspension or expulsion, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team must determine if the behavior of concern is related to the disability. A manifestation determination must be conducted within 10 days of any decision to change a student's placement.

The purpose of a manifestation determination is to determine whether or not the behavior that led to disciplinary action is linked to a child's disability. In other words, was the behavior a manifestation of the student's disability. If the IEP team determines that no relationship exists between the student's behavior and disability, the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a student without a disability. If the IEP team determines that a relationship between the behavior and disability existed, the student cannot be long term suspended or expelled.

In determining whether a child's behavior was a manifestation of his or her disability, the following questions must be answered:

1. Was the conduct in question caused by, or did it have a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability?
2. Was the conduct in question the direct result of the local education agency's (LEA) failure to implement the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

Directions: Based on realistic case study, you will be asked to answer the following question:

What is the manifestation determination of the student's behavior? You will be asked to provide a yes or no answer and some information about how you came to your conclusion.

APPENDIX F

Please read the following case study:

insert revised case study here

Directions: Based on the case study, what is the manifestation determination of the student's behavior?
Please select one:

___The misbehavior **was related** to, or caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

___The misbehavior **was not related** to, or caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

Please explain as thoroughly and clearly as possible what evidence brought you to this determination.

Please identify each of the following pieces of information as "No relationship between misbehavior and disability," "Relationship between misbehavior and disability," or "Neutral fact." In addition, please add at least three additional pieces of information you found relevant to the decision-making process.

Missing lunch
FBA/ BIP was developed
FBA/ BIP included cool down time
Locked cafeteria doors
Staff refused to open cafeteria doors
Identified as ED
Academic strength in math
Chaotic home life
History of physical aggression with adults
History of physical aggression with peers
General education teacher's actions during the incident
Special education teacher's actions during the incident
Administrator's actions during the incident
History of explosive behavior
History of becoming frustrated
History of struggling to control emotions
Agitation with written assignments

Low achievement in reading and writing
Lack of parental involvement
Students were watching exchange outside of cafeteria
Change in academic setting from small group to general education

APPENDIX G

Directions: Based on realistic case study, you will be asked to answer the following question:

What is the manifestation determination of the student's behavior? You will be asked to provide a yes or no answer and some information about how you came to your conclusion.
Please read the following case study:

insert case study here

Directions: Based on the case study, what is the manifestation determination of the student's behavior?
Please select one:

___The misbehavior **was related** to, or caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

___The misbehavior **was not related** to, or caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

Please explain as thoroughly and clearly as possible what evidence brought you to this determination.

Please list 3 – 5 of the most important pieces of information that supported "No relationship between misbehavior and disability," or "Relationship between misbehavior and disability."

No relationship between misbehavior and disability	No relationship between misbehavior and disability

APPENDIX H

Meeting Protocol

I Introduction and Consent Form

"Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research today. First, let me tell you what, as a participant, you will be asked to do today. First you will be provided with a pre-questionnaire to fill out. Second you will be given a case study to read thoroughly. Then you will be asked to fill out a brief post questionnaire. Next you will participate as a team to make a school based decision. In order to gather data during the team meeting, the meeting will be video and audio taped. Following the meeting, you will again fill out a brief questionnaire. If you would like to continue in the study, please sign and date the consent form which will be handed out now."

II MD Orientation

"To get started, please fill out this pre-questionnaire completely." (Pass out pre-questionnaire. Give participants time to complete. Collect pre-questionnaire.) "The manifestation determination is a provision in the Individuals with Disabilities Act, or the IDEA. The manifestation determination is part of the discipline provisions. It mandates that if a student with a disability misbehaves and is recommended for long-term suspension or expulsion, the Individual Education Plan or IEP team must determine if the misbehavior is related to the disability. In other words, the provision asks if the misbehavior was caused by or was a manifestation of the disability. If the IEP team determines that there is no relationship between the misbehavior and the disability, the student may be disciplined to the same extent that students without disabilities would be disciplined for the same misbehavior. If the team determines that there was a relationship between the misbehavior and the student's disability, then the student cannot be long term suspended or expelled. This determination is critical: On the one hand, it prevents the student from being punished because of the disability. Conversely, it prevents preferential treatment to the student with a disability simply because of the disability. Today, you will make a manifestation determination. The case study you will read will provide you with a realistic scenario of a student with a disability who misbehaves."

III. Manifestation Determination Provisions

"In addition to defining what the manifestation determination is, the IDEA also provides provisions to help guide this decision process. Before making a manifestation determination today, please read through the IDEA provisions. Use these provisions to guide your thinking while making the manifestation determination." (Pass out the provisions.)

IV Case Study and Pre-Discussion Decision

"This is the case study. Please read the case carefully making mental notes of important information you may need in making a determination. You may write on the cases as needed. Please turn to the last page of your case study. This is the pre-team

meeting questionnaire. After you have read the case thoroughly, you will circle your determination at the bottom of the page. Then you will rank your individual certainty of this decision. Please make your decision based on the evidence presented in writing and hold all questions and comments until the team meeting portion of the study begins. Are there any questions? Great. Then you can begin. Please try to complete this stage of the study within 30 minutes. "

V. Team Meeting

"Now that everyone is done you will begin your team meeting. You may refer back to your case if needed, but we are interested in the discussion of these cases and the way that you interact, think, and discuss manifestation determinations. You are now the team that must make the manifestation determination for Seth (Lucas). This means as a team you must discuss Seth's (Lucas's) case, the reasons for your decisions, and come to a consensus agreement. This does not necessarily mean that it will be a unanimous decision. It does mean however, that each team member must agree to proceed with one decision. Once your team has made the manifestation determination, this form must be filled out with the team's decision and certainty. Is there someone who will volunteer to be the scribe for the team? Thank you. Your team meeting should not be longer than one hour. However, you may come to a consensus before this time limit, which is fine. I need a volunteer to be a time keeper. Thank you. After the team has decided and the scribe has recorded the information, I need a volunteer to notify me in the hallway. Thank you. Are there any questions? Ok. You may begin your manifestation determination meeting now."

VI Post-team Meeting Questionnaire

"Now that you have made a team decision, you are asked again for your personal opinion. Please adjourn the meeting by returning to your separate tables. Thank you. Here is the post-team meeting questionnaire. Please wait for directions before beginning. (Pass out questionnaire). Please look at the questionnaire now. First you are asked for your determination once more. Despite what the group consensus was, you may have a personal opinion. Please circle your decision at the top of this page regardless of whether you agreed with or disagreed with the team decision and regardless of whether this is the same or different decision you provided before the team meeting. After your decision, please circle your certainty of this decision. Despite your individual or group decision, please rank your agreement with the group's final determination. Next, you are asked to recall facts and points of discussion from your team meeting. For each fact or point of discussion you recall, write it down under the heading it supports. Please list all items or points that you recall regardless of whether it supports the team determination or your own determination. In other words, you are encouraged to write down as much as you can remember for both headings, please use the back of the paper as needed. On the questionnaire is a place for you to write the reason for your personal determination and your thoughts about the meeting. Please also provide a rationale for whether this personal determination agreed with or disagreed with the team decision. Last on the questionnaire is a place for you to indicate whether you would be willing to participate in

an interview about this meeting at a later date. If you are not interested in an interview, please do not include any contact information. Are there any questions? Good. When you are finished with this questionnaire, please fill out the payment receipt, and bring both to me in the hallway. I will pay you for your participation in the study and you will be finished. Thank you again for your participation."

APPENDIX I

Please answer each of the following:

Please check _____Male _____Female

If you are a teacher, what teaching certifications do you currently hold? (Include all applicable areas)
____ elementary
____ secondary
____ general education
____special education
____I do not hold a teaching license
____other
Please list:_____

What are your content area certifications?
_____
What are your disability area certifications?
_____

What best describes your current profession and position? (check as many as apply)
____public school
____private school
____full time teacher
____part time teacher
____general education teacher
____special education teacher
____co-teacher
____inclusive teacher
____resource room teacher
____school psychologist
____school counselor
____school administrator
____case worker
____behavior specialist
____itinerant teacher
____instructional assistant
____other

In what state(s) do you hold a professional license? _____

How many years have you been in education?_____

What grade(s) do you currently work with?

_____

What grade(s) have you worked with in the past?

_____

How many manifestation determination meetings have you participated in during your career?

0 1-3 4-6 7-9 10-12 13 or more

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:
When necessary, and under certain circumstances, suspension is an appropriate consequence for students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree									Agree

When necessary, and under certain circumstances, expulsion is an appropriate consequence for students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree									Agree

APPENDIX J

Manifestation Determination Provisions According to IDEA

The manifestation determination is a provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The manifestation determination mandates that if a student with a disability violates a school system's code of conduct and is recommended for long term suspension or expulsion, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team must determine if the behavior of concern is related to the disability. A manifestation determination must be conducted within 10 days of any decision to change a student's placement. The purpose of a manifestation determination is to determine whether or not the behavior that led to disciplinary action is linked to a child's disability or if the conduct in question was a direct result of the Local Education Agency's (LEA) failure to implement the IEP.

A comprehensive problem-solving process should identify why the misconduct occurred. In other words, was the behavior a manifestation of the student's disability? If the IEP team determines that no direct causal relationship exists between the student's behavior and disability, the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a student without a disability. If the IEP team determines that a relationship between the behavior and disability existed, the student cannot receive long-term suspension or expulsion for the incident.

When determining whether the conduct was a result of the LEA's failure to implement the IEP, the team should consider service, goals, positive behavior supports, or the BIP.

In determining whether a child's behavior was a manifestation of his or her disability, the following questions must be answered:

1. Was the conduct in question caused by, or did it have a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability?
2. Was the conduct in question the direct result of the local education agency's (LEA) failure to implement the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

If the answer to ***both*** questions is NO, the student's conduct **is not** a manifestation of his or her disability.

If the answer to ***either*** question is YES, the student's conduct **is** a manifestation of his or her disability.

APPENDIX K

After reading the case study, please answer the following:

In determining whether a child's behavior was a manifestation of his or her disability, the following questions must be answered:

1. Was the conduct in question caused by, or did it have a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability?

   _____ Yes _____ No

2. Was the conduct in question the direct result of the local education agency's (LEA) failure to implement the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

   _____ Yes _____ No

If the answer to ***both*** questions is NO, the student's conduct **is not** a manifestation of his or her disability.

If the answer to ***either*** question is YES, the student's conduct **is** a manifestation of his or her disability.

After making your decision, please circle one:

The student's behavior **is** related to, caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

The student's behavior **is *not*** related to, caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

Rank your certainty, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the least and 10 is the most, of the above determination.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very Uncertain									Very Certain

Please explain as thoroughly and clearly as possible what evidence brought you to this determination.

APPENDIX L

Manifestation Determination Group Decision

As a team, come to a group consensus for the manifestation determination case you have discussed. In determining whether a child's behavior was a manifestation of his or her disability, the following questions must be answered:

1. Was the conduct in question caused by, or did it have a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability?

   _____ Yes _____ No

2. Was the conduct in question the direct result of the local education agency's (LEA) failure to implement the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

   _____ Yes _____ No

If the answer to ***both*** questions is NO, the student's conduct **is not** a manifestation of his or her disability.

If the answer to ***either*** question is YES, the student's conduct **is** a manifestation of his or her disability.

After making your decision, please circle one:

The student's behavior **is** related to, caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

The student's behavior **is *not*** related to, caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

Rank your certainty, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the least and 10 is the most, of the above determination.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very Uncertain									Very Certain

APPENDIX M

Post-Discussion Individual Questionnaire

Independent of the team decision, what is your decision for the manifestation determination:

The student's behavior **was related** to, caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

The student's behavior **was *not* related** to, caused by, or a manifestation of the student's disability.

Rank your certainty, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the least and 10 is the most, of the above determination.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very Uncertain									Very Certain

Rank your personal agreement with the group's determination, on a scale of 1 to 10.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree									Agree

Please recall pieces of information and discussion points that were part of the decision-making process of your team. Please write each item under the corresponding heading. List as many items as you can recall, regardless of whether the item supported your determination or the team's determination. You are encouraged to write down as much information as you can under each heading. Please use the back of this paper as necessary.

No relationship between misbehavior and disability	Relationship between misbehavior and disability

Please explain as thoroughly and clearly as possible what evidence brought you to this determination.

APPENDIX N

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Please answer the following:

1. Did your initial manifestation determination (MD) change as a result of the discussion in your MD meeting? If ***no***, please skip to Question 3. If ***yes***, what prompted you to change your mind (please be as specific as possible)?

2. What pieces of information most influenced you to change your manifestation determination?

3. How did the people in your meeting influence the overall MD decision-making?

4. What do you feel that you contributed to the MD discussion?

5. Please describe your overall impression of the MD meeting process.

6. Is there any additional information you would like to share?

Would you be willing to participate in an interview to discuss this meeting further?

Yes No

What is the best way to contact you? (Include name, phone or email)

REFERENCES

Baker, D. F. (2010). Enhancing group decision-making: An exercise to reduce shared information bias. *Journal of Management Education, 34*, 249-279. doi: 10.1177/1052562909343553

Bon, S.C., Faircloth, S.C., & LeTendre, G.K. (2006). Protecting the rights of students with disabilities while maintaining teachers' sense of safety in schools. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 17,* 148-157. doi: 10.1177/10442073060170030301

Bowditch, C. (1993). Getting rid of troublemakers: High school disciplinary procedures and the production of dropouts. *Social Problems, 40,* 493-507. doi: 10.1525/sp.1993.40.4.03x0094p

Brodbeck, F. C., Kerschreiter, R., Mojzisch, A., Frey, D., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2002). The dissemination of critical, unshared information in decision-making groups: The effects of pre-discussion dissent. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 32,* 35-56. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.74

Brodbeck, F. C., Kerschreiter, R., Mojzisch, A., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2007). Group decision-making under conditions of distributed knowledge: The information asymmetries model. *Academy of Management Review, 32,* 459-479. doi: 10.5465/AMR.2007.24351441

Buck, G. H., Polloway, E. A., Kirkpatrick, M. A., Patton, J. R. & Fad, K. M. (2000). Developing behavior intervention plans: A sequential approach. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *36*(1), 3-9. doi: 10.1177/105345120003600101

Christle, C. A., & Yell, M. L. (2010). Individualized education programs: Legal requirements and research findings. *Exceptionality, 18,* 109-123. doi: 10.1080/09362835.2010.491740

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2009) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-130. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Datta, L. E. (1997). A pragmatic basis for mixed-method designs. *New Directions for Evaluation, 74*, 33-47. doi: 10.1002/ev.1071

Doe v. Koger 480 F. Supp 225 (N.D. Ind 1979).

Doe v. Maher 793 F.2d 1470 (9th Cir. 1986).

Dupper, D. R., & Bosch, L. A. (1996). Reasons for school suspensions: An examination of data from one school district and recommendations for reducing suspensions. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 2*(2), 140-150. Retrieved from http://www.uk.sagepub.com/home.nav

Education for All Handicapped Children Act Pub. L. No 94-142 (1975).

Esquivel, S. L, Ryan, C. S., & Bonner, M. (2008). Involved parents' perceptions of their experiences in school-based team meetings. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 18*, 234-258. doi: 10.1080/10474410802022589

Fish, W. W. (2008). The IEP meeting: Perceptions of parents of students who receive special education services. *Preventing School Failure, 53*, 8-14. doi: 10.3200/PSFL.53.1.8-14

Fish, W. W. (2009). Educator perceptions toward the IEP meeting. *Academic leadership, 7*, 1-17. Retrieved from http://contentcat.fhsu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15732coll4

Fitzgerald v. Fairfax County Sch. Bd., 556 F. Supp. 2d 543(E.D. Va 2008).

Frick, W.C., & Faircloth, S.C. (2007). Acting in the collective and individual "best interests of students." *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 20*, 21-32. Retrieved from http://www.casecec.org/resources/jsel.asp

Gigone, D., & Hastie, R. (1993). The common knowledge effect: Information sampling and group judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 959-974. doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.65.5.959

Gigone, D., & Hastie, R. (1997). The impact of information on small group choice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*, 132-140. doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.72.1.132

Goss v. Lopez 419 U.S. 565 (1975).

Greene, J. C. (2007). Mixed methods in social inquiry. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Boss.

Hartwig, E. P., & Ruesch, G. M. (2000). Disciplining students in special education. *The Journal of Special Education, 33*, 240-247. doi: 10.1177/002246690003300407

Henningsen, D. D., & Henningsen, M. L. M. (2003). Examining social influence in information-sharing contexts. *Small Group Research, 34*, 391-412. doi: 10.1177/1046496403251933

Holen, A. (2000). The PBL group: Self-reflections and feedback for improved learning and growth. *Medical Teacher, 22*, 485-489. doi: 10.1080/01421590050110768

Hollingshead, A. B. (1996). The rank-order effect in group decision-making. *Organizational Behavior and Decision Processes, 68*, 193-219. doi: 10.1006/obhd.1996.0098

Honig v. Doe, 484 U.S. 305 (1988).

Huebner, E. S. & Gould, K. (1991). Multidisciplinary teams revisited: Current perceptions of school psychologists regarding team functioning. *School Psychology Review, 20*, 428-434. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/publications/spr/index-list.aspx

Hunton, J. E. (2001). Mitigating the common information sampling bias inherent in small-group discussion. *Behavioral Research in Accounting, 13*, 171-194. doi: 10.2308/bria.2001.13.1.171

Imich, A.J. (1994). Exclusions from school: Current trends and issues. *Educational Research, 36*(1), 3-11. doi: 10.1080/0013188940360101

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Pub. L. No. 105-17, 111 Stat.37 (1997).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 20 U.S.C. § 1401 *et seq*. (2004).

Institute of Education Sciences (2012). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64 on January 20, 2013.

Jakubecy, J. J. (2002). Group decision-making and information pooling during the manifestation determination (doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia). Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAT 3056836).

Kalyanpur, M., Harry, B., & Skrtic, T. (2000). Equity and advocacy expectations of culturally diverse families' participation in special education. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 47*, 119-136. doi: 10.1080/713671106

Katsiyannis, A., Losinski, M., & Prince, A.M.T. (2012). Litigation and students with disabilities: A persistent concern. *NAASP Bulletin, 96*, 23-43. doi: 10.1177/0192636511431008

Katsiyannis, A., & Maag, J. (1998). Disciplining students with disabilities: Practice consideration for implementing IDEA '97. *Behavioral Disorders, 23*, 276-289. doi: 10.1177/074193259801900504

Katsiyannis, A., & Maag, J. (2001). Manifestation determination as the golden fleece. *Exceptional Children, 68*, 85-96. doi: 10.1080/10459880109603341

Kelly, J. R., & Karau, S. J. (1999). Group decision-making: The effects of initial preferences and time pressure. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*, 1342-1354. doi: 10.1177/0146167299259002

Kim, P. H. (1997). When what you know can hurt you: A study of experiential effects on group discussion and performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 69*, 165-177. doi: 10.1006/obhd.1997.2680

Klingner, J. K., & Harry, B. (2006). The special education referral and decision-making process for English language learners: Child study team meetings and placement conferences. *Teachers College Record, 108*, 2247-2281. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00781.x

Klocke, U. (2007). How to improve decision-making in small groups: Effects of dissent and training interventions. *Small Group Research, 48*, 437-468. doi: 10.1177/1046496407301974

Knotek, S. (2003). Bias in problem solving and the social process of student study teams. *The Journal of Special Education, 37*, 2-14. doi: 10.1177/00224669030370010101

Koch, K. (2000). Zero tolerance: Is mandatory punishment in schools unfair? *Congressional Quarterly Researcher, 10*, 185-208. Retrieved from http://www.cqpress.com/researcher

Krezmien, M.P., Leone, P.E., & Achilles, G.M. (2006). Suspension, race, and disability: Analysis of statewide practices and reporting. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14*, 217-226. doi: 10.1177/10634266060140040501

Lam, S. S., & Schaubroeck, J. (2000). Improving group decisions by better pooling information: A comparative advantage of group decision support systems. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*, 565-573. doi: 10.1037//0021-9010.85.4.565

Larson, J. R., Christensen, C., Abbot, A. S., & Franz, T. M. (1996). Diagnosing groups: Charting the flow of information in medical decision-making team. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*, 315-330. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.315

Larson, J. R., Christensen, C., Abbot, A. S., & Franz, T. M. (1998). Diagnosing groups: The pooling, management, and impact of shared and unshared case information in team-based medical decision-making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*, 93-108. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.75.1.93

Larson, J. R., Foster-Fishman, P. G., & Keys, C. B. (1994). The discussion of shared and unshared information in decision-making groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*, 446-461. doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.67.3.446

Lashley, C., & Tate, A. (2009). A framework for educative, equitable, and empowering disciplinary practice. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 22*, 24-35. Retrieved from http://www.casecec.org/resources/jsel.asp

Lu, L., Yuan, Y., & McLeod, P. (2012). Twenty-five years of hidden profiles in group decision-making: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 16*, 54-75. doi: 10.1177/1088868311417243

Martin, J., Marshall, L. H., & Sale, P. (2004). A 3-Year study of middle, junior high, and high school IEP meetings. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 285-297. doi: 10.1177/088572880402700204

Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCarthy, M.R., & Soodak, L.C. (2007). The politics of discipline: Balancing school safety and rights of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 73*, 456-474. Retrieved from http://journals.cec.sped.org/ec/

Mennecke, B. E., & Valacich, J. S. (1998). Information is what you make of it: The influence of group history and computer support on information sharing, decision quality, and member perceptions. *Journal of Management Information Systems, 15*, 173-197. Retrieved from http://www.jmis-web.org/

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morgan-D'Atrio, C., Northrup, J., LaFleur, L, & Spera, S. (1996). Toward prescriptive alternatives to suspensions: A preliminary evaluation. *Behavioral Disorders, 21*. 190-200. Retrieved from http://www.ccbd.net/?q=node/9#overlay-context=node/2%3Fq%3Dnode/2

Mojzisch, A., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2011). Process gains in group decision-making: A conceptual analysis, preliminary data, and tools for practitioners. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 26*, 235-246. doi: 10.1108/02683941111112668

National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2006). *The social adjustment of elementary and middle school students with disabilities.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Educational Sciences.

Ochoa, T. A., Gottschall, H., & Stuart, S. K. (2004). Group participation and satisfaction: Results from a PBL computer-supported module. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, 13*, 73-91. Retrieved from http://www.aace.org/pubs/jemh/

Olaniran, B. A. (1996). A model of group satisfaction in computer-mediated communication and face-to-face meetings. *Behaviour & Information Technology, 15*, 24-36. doi: 10.1080/014492996120373

Parks, C. D., & Cowlin, R. A. (1996). Acceptance of uncommon information into group discussion when that information is or is not demonstrable. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 66*, 307-315. doi: 10.1006/obhd.1996.0058

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 137-145. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137

Prince William County School Board v. Malone 762 F2d 1210 (25 Ed. 1985)

Public Law 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)

Raffaele-Mendez, L. M., & Knoff, H. M. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. *Education and Treatment of Children, 26*, 30-51. Retrieved from http://www.educationandtreatmentofchildren.net/

Rausch, M.K., & Skiba, R. (2004). Disproportionality in school discipline among minority students in Indiana: Description and analysis. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy. Retrieved from http://www.iub.edu/~safeschl/ChildrenLeftBehind/pdf/2a.pdf

Reimer, T., Kuendig, S., Hoffrage, U., Park, E., & Hinsz, V. (2007). Effects of the information environment on group discussions and decisions in the hidden-profile paradigm. *Communication Paradigm, 74*, 1-28. doi: 10.1080/03637750701209947

Reimer, T., Reimer, A., & Hinsz, V. B. (2011). Naïve groups can solve the hidden-profile problem. *Human Communication Research, 36*, 443-467. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2010.01383.x

S-1 v. Turlington 635 F2d 342 or 454 U.S. 1030 (1982).

Schulz-Hardt, S., Brodbeck, F. C., Mojzisch, A., Kerschreiter, R., & Frey, D. (2006). Group decision-making in hidden profile situations: Dissent as a facilitator for decision quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 1080-1093. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.91.6.1080

Senate Report No. 108-185, at 44 (2003). Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/IDEACommittee.pdf on June 20, 2012

Skiba, R. J., Peterson, R. L., & Williams, T. (1997). Office referrals and suspension: Disciplinary intervention in middle school. *Education and Treatment of Children, 20*, 295-315. Retrieved from http://www.educationandtreatmentofchildren.net/

Skiba, R. J. (2002). Special education and school discipline: A precarious balance. *Behavioral Disorders, 27*, 81-97. Retrieved from http://www.ccbd.net/?q=node/9#overlay-context=node/2%3Fq%3Dnode/2

Spaulding, S., Irvin, L., Horner, R., May, S., Emeldi, M., Tobin, T., & Sugai, G. (2010). Schoolwide social-behavioral climate, student problem behavior, and related administrative decisions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*, 69-85. doi: 10.1177/1098300708329011

Stasser, G. (1992). Information salience and the discovery of hidden profiles by decision-making groups: A "thought experiment." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 52*, 156-181. doi: 10.1016/0749-5978(92)90049-D

Stasser, G., & Titus, W. (1985). Pooling of unshared information in group decision-making: Biased information sampling during discussion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48*, 1467-1478. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.48.6.1467

Stasser, G., & Titus, W. (2003). Hidden profiles: A brief history. *Psychological Inquiry, 14,* 304-313. doi: 10.1080/1047840X.2003.9682897

Stasser, G., Stewart, D. D., & Wittenbaum, G. M. (1995). Expert roles and information exchange during discussion: The importance of knowing who knows what. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 31,* 244-265. doi: 10.1006/jesp.1995.1012

Stuart v. Nappi, 443 F. Supp. 1235 (U.S.D.C. Ct. 1978).

Von Swol, L. M., Savadori, L., & Sniezek, J. A. (2003). Factors that may affect the difficulty of uncovering hidden profiles. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 6,* 285-304. doi: 10.1177/13684302030063005

Wittenbaum, G. M., Hollingshead, A. B., & Botero, I. C. (2004). From cooperative to motivated information sharing in groups: Moving beyond the hidden profile paradigm. *Communication Monographs, 71,* 286-310. doi: 10.1080/0363452042000299894

Zhang, D., Katsiyannis, A., & Herbst, M. (2004). Disciplinary exclusions in special education: A four-year analysis. *Behavioral Disorders, 29,* 337-347. Retrieved from http://www.ccbd.net/?q=node/9#overlay-context=node/2%3Fq%3Dnode/2

Zilz, W.A. (2006). Manifestation determination: Rulings of the courts. *Education and the Law, 18,* 193-206. doi: 10.1080/09539960600919928

Zirkel, P. A. (2010). Manifestation determination under the new individuals with disabilities education act. *Remedial and Special Education, 31,* 378-384. doi: 10.1177/0741932509355993

CURRICULUM VITAE

Jennifer D. Walker has been in education for 19 years. Jennifer graduated from the University of Mary Washington in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. In 2000, she received her Master in Education degree from George Mason University. Jennifer has worked as a special education teacher in elementary through high school settings, served as a behavior specialist, as well as a social skills trainer and coach.

Jennifer's research interests include emotional behavioral disorders, team decision-making, and academic and behavioral tiered interventions.