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Brenda L. Cole
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF FIVE MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH
EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES AND PRESCHOOL CHOICES FOR THEIR
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Brenda L. Cole

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Brenda L. Cole

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

DeAnna M. Laverick, D.Ed.
Associate Professor of Education, Advisor

Mary Renck Jalongo, Ph.D.
Professor of Education

JoAnn Migyanka, D.Ed.
Associate Professor, Special Education and Clinical
Services

ACCEPTED

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: A Qualitative Case Study of Five Mothers' Experiences with Early Intervention Services and Preschool Choices for Their Children with Disabilities

Author: Brenda L. Cole

Dissertation Chair: Dr. DeAnna M. Laverick

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Mary Renck Jalongo
Dr. JoAnn Migyanka

This qualitative research study examines the preschool choices made by five mothers of children with disabilities who had interacted with early intervention professionals in the year prior to their children's transition to preschool. The purpose of this study was to examine the understanding parents created of their children's disability through their interactions with early intervention professionals and how those understandings aligned with the preschool settings the parents chose for their children.

The adapted decision-making framework (Beresford & Sloper, 2008) was used to examine the associations among the (a) alignment of the helpgiving styles used by early intervention professionals to family-centered methods, (b) environmental contexts in which the helpgiving services were provided, and (c) parents' understanding of disability, to the selected preschool settings. The problem this study sought to address was that the helpgiving style used by early intervention professionals when they interacted with parents may have influenced the extent to which these services met the intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Specifically, this study addressed whether the parents' perceived abilities of their children, developed through interactions with early intervention professionals, influenced the parents' choices for inclusive or segregated preschool settings for their children.

Ecomaps and guided interviews were the research tools used to collect the data. *NVivo 10* (QSR, 2013) was used to support the findings of this research project. A constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) was used to analyze the data and to arrive at a mid-range theory. The findings of this study suggest that a likely theory with regard to the association among the elements of the decision-making framework and parents' selection of preschools for their children with disabilities is that the parents' understandings of disability may serve to influence the interactions they have with early intervention professionals and ultimately the decisions they make about preschool.