

JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS

“Let Me Just Tell You What I Do All Day. . .”:

The Family Story at the Center of Intervention Research and Practice

Journal article by Lucinda P. Bernheimer, Ph.D. and Thomas S. Weisner, Ph.D.

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Summary by Arianna Keil, Birth to 3 Professional Development Specialist

Full text article: http://depts.washington.edu/isei/iyc/20.3_bernheimer.pdf

Early intervention researchers in California followed 102 families with children with disabilities over 15 years. Their research examines family functioning and child outcomes when children were aged 3, 7, 11, 13, and 16 years. This article focuses on their findings from interviews conducted in 1987-1988 when the children were age 3.

Each family was visited by trained field workers. The field workers spent 2-3 hours interviewing the primary caregiver in each family (nearly all mothers) and encouraged her to tell her family's story about what they do from the moment they get up in the morning to the time they go to bed. These stories revealed much information about children and families' daily routines and accommodations. The authors defined accommodations as usual adaptations to everyday routines.

“No intervention will have an impact if it cannot find a slot in the daily routines of an organization, family, or individual.”

After each interview, field workers scored family stories according to 10 different accommodation domains: family subsistence, services, home/neighborhood safety and convenience, domestic workload, childcare tasks, child playgroups, marital roles, social support, father's role and parent information. Families reporting making more accommodations often had children with significant medical or behavioral conditions requiring special monitoring and care. Accommodations were responsive to how children impact parents' daily routines

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Family-Centered Beliefs and Practices (Dunst, 2002)

1. Treat families with dignity and respect;
2. Include individualized, flexible, and responsive practices;
3. Encourage family choice regarding multiple aspects of program practices and intervention options;
4. Consider parent-professional partnerships and collaboration as the context for family-program relations; and
5. Provide resources and supports necessary for families to raise their children in ways that produce optimal parent, child, and family outcomes.

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and predicted sustainability of daily routines. Conversely, accommodations were not considered a response to stress.

The authors emphasized that accommodations were correlated with child “hassle” (behavioral, medical, communicative, social appropriacy, activity rate, and responsiveness) or caregiver strain, rather than child test scores. Parents reporting more child-related hassle also reported more accommodations. Accommodations varied across families, and more accommodations did not directly relate to improved child outcomes. Other studies have documented the relationship between family accommodation and life satisfaction, family well-being, and sustainability of family routine.

Family stories focused on accommodations allow interventionists to identify portions of daily routines containing embedded learning opportunities.

Three key points:

1. Family stories are a natural way for parents to share information on daily routines and accommodations.
2. Families of children with significant medical and behavioral needs often have more accommodations to their daily routines as compared with families of children with less significant needs.
3. Interventionists can focus on family accommodations during daily routines and target these times as opportunities for intervention. 🌐



“Knowledge of family accommodations and their impact on the daily routine allows the early interventionist to locate and capitalize upon those learning opportunities.”

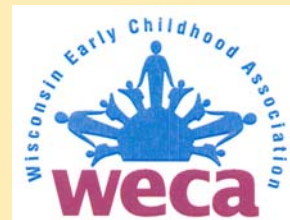
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