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

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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

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Doctor of Education

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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 helping styles used by early intervention professionals to family-centered methods, (b) environmental contexts in which the helping services were provided, and (c) parents' understanding of disability, to the selected preschool settings. The problem this study sought to address was that the helping 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.