Methodological Considerations for Studies Conducting Research with Participants Receiving Integrated or Linked Services: National Early Childhood Transition Research and Training Center

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The NECTC Studies

Preparation Practices
- Early Intervention Providers
- Child Care Setting
- Families

Change in Program or Setting
- Special Education Service Setting
- Child Care Setting
- Families

Adjustment Practices
- Physical/Social Engagement
- Classroom/Cultural Adaptation
- Continued Growth & Development

Outcome

• Physical/Social Engagement
• Classroom/Cultural Adaptation
• Continued Growth & Development
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1
Contextual Factors

- Individual Agencies
- State Interagency Service System
- Broad Social Norms
- State
- Community
- Family
- Child
- Individual Providers
- Individual Programs
- Local Service System

Figure 2
Key Elements of the Transition Process

- Transition Practices & Activities
- Child and Family Preparation
- Child and Family Adjustment

Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick & Jung, 2007
Study Sample

- Children, Families, Programs from 5 states
- Five Study Cohorts
  - Study 1 = Exit from Early Intervention
  - Study 2 = Entry to Preschool
    - Received early intervention services
  - Study 3 = Exit from Preschool
  - Study 4 = Entry to Kindergarten
    - Received Special Education Services
  - Study 5 = Longitudinal Sample (1-4)
Nested HLM Design

Analysis at each level:
- Descriptive
- Hypothesis (t-tests, ANOVA, chi-square, etc)
- Correlation
- Multivariate
Methodological Challenges

- Defining “community” across states
  - County, region, area code

- Documenting the system of services received by the family and child
  - Who to ask?
  - Dosage
  - Intensity
Methodological Challenges

- Defining the intervention
  - Strategies different for program/family
  - Temporal issues based on time of data collection

- Defining the outcomes
  - Differentiation of success based on program goals and philosophy

- Recruitment of family/child participants during times of high stress (sample bias).
Questions

- What are the implications for cross-state, cross-sector studies given differentiation of services systems at the state and/or local levels?
- How can we define the “intervention” so it is both applicable and measurable across populations under study?
- How can we use new and emerging statistical treatments across disciplines to enhance our research designs?