



Challenges in Understanding Child Care Decision-making for Populations of Interest

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Overview

- Use the experiences of parents of children with special needs as an example of the complexity of child care decision-making for populations of interest
- Relate two vignettes from focus groups to bring these challenges to life.
- Share a few “lessons learned” about the challenges for researchers in studying these issues in relation to parents of ELL children.



Special Needs

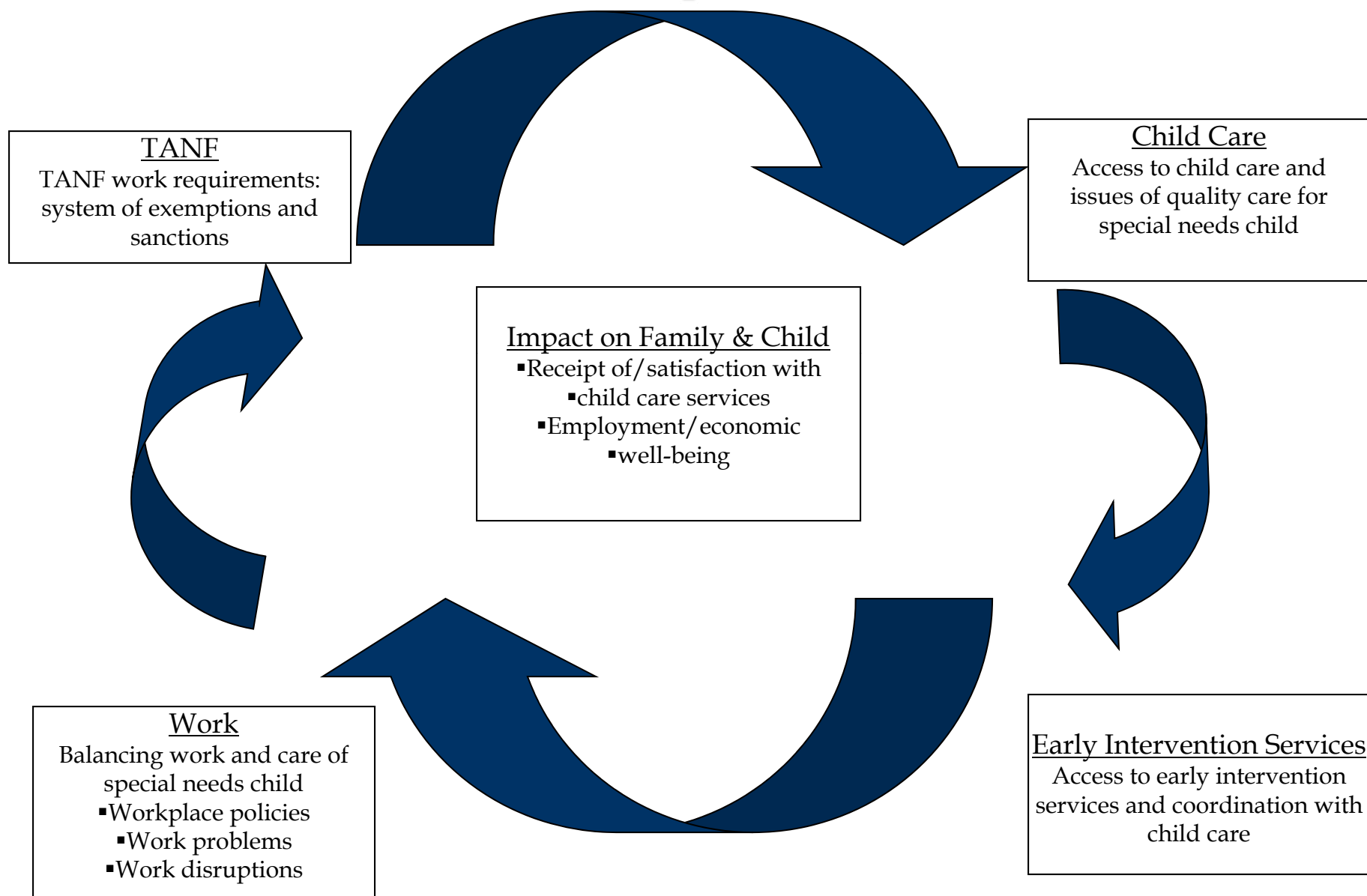
- Child care and work challenges of parents of children with special needs
 - Analysis of national data from the NSAF
 - Case study in Maine
 - Parent focus groups/interviews (n=41), service provider interviews (n=60)
 - Survey of parents of children with diagnosed special needs (N=441)
 - Survey of licensed child care providers (N=189)



Broad themes

- Cascading issues:
 - Challenges accessing child care
 - Child care instability/concerns about quality
 - Lack of coordination of child care with IDEA Early Intervention/Preschool Special Education
 - Lack of workplace flexibility
 - Range of work problems, lower rates of labor force participation, more job instability, more financial insecurity

Child Care and Work Challenges for Parents of Children with Special Needs





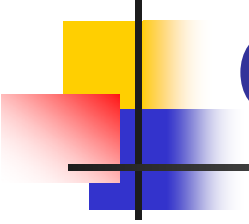
Challenges for Researchers and Policymakers:

- Term “decision-making” implies that parents have a choice! Constraints on choice may be greater for some populations of interest.
- Discomfort, stigma, cultural, access issues may make parents reluctant to express concerns.



Challenges:

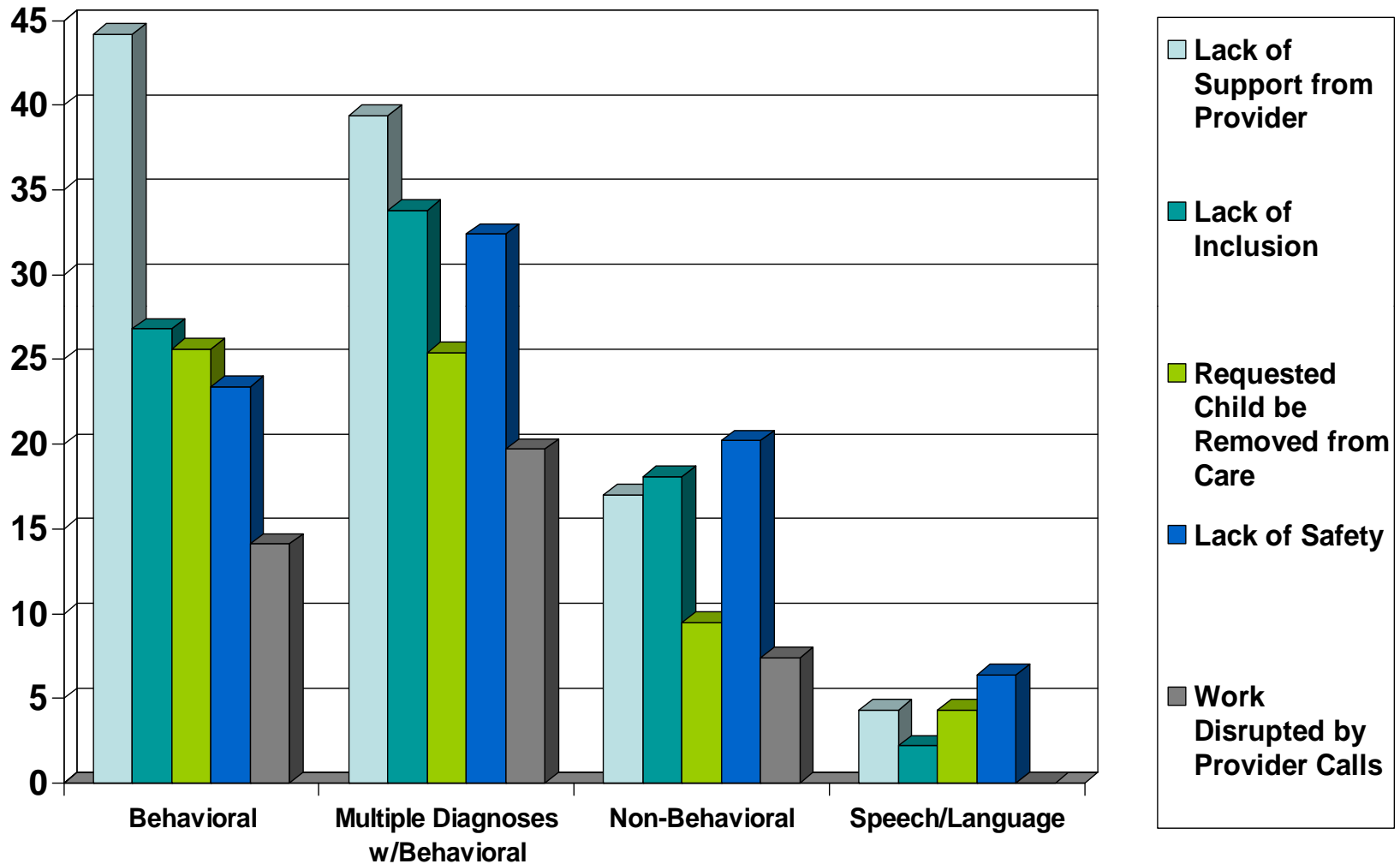
- The “Devil’s in the Details!” Cross systems issues can cause significant problems for parents and create challenges for researchers and policymakers.
- Need to take into account wide diversity within populations of interest so important distinctions aren’t lost.



Special Needs: Reported Child Care Problems (N=441 All types of S.N.)

	Percent
■ Lack of provider support/knowledge	30.2
■ Lack of inclusion in activities	22.5
■ Lack of safety	22.1
■ Expulsion	18.9
■ Lack of physical accessibility	16.7
■ Wouldn't administer medications	13.7
■ Frequent calls to parent at work	11.4

Parents of Children with Behavioral Problems Much More Likely to Report Child Care Problems (n=441)





ELL Study: Cautionary Tales

- Because of constraints on choice, recruitment and grouping of parents for focus groups can be a challenge.
- Watch out for tendency to automatically attribute child care use/decisions to cultural factors.



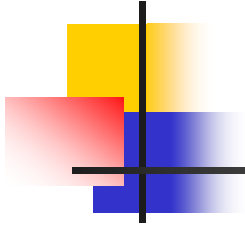
Cautionary Tales Cont.

- Avoid “opinion” questions and instead let these come out naturally in a narrative.
- Community leaders of the populations you’re studying can help you develop questions to get at more subtle factors influencing parental decision-making.



Final Thoughts:

- Importance of a diverse advisory committee
 - Preview of the issues
 - Credibility/trust
 - Mechanism for staying abreast of changes
 - Disseminating Findings
 - Sparks collaborative efforts
- Employ mixed methods and do qualitative research with parents first!
- Include parents who work and those who don't.



- “Can you explain for me this child care system? I don’t understand it...”

...Cambodian refugee parent in Portland



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URL: Special Needs Study

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/specialneeds>

URL: Child Welfare Study <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/promotingschoolreadiness>

URL: ELL Study

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/newamericans>

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