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# Family Reunification

R2P compiles, on an ongoing basis, annotated bibliographies on various child welfare topics and related fields. The bibliographies are as inclusive and detailed as possible. Most entries include the following sections:

**The Study:** describes the project or program, location, number served, and purpose of the program.

**The Methods:** details how the study was conducted, who was involved, what instruments were used, and the rates of and reasons for attrition.

**The Findings:** lists outcomes of the study and possible implications for the field.

**R2P Evaluation:** helps the reader to evaluate the usefulness of the full publication. This section highlights, for instance, readability, the significance for practice, and the applicability of the results.

Not every article, book, or other publication in the annotated bibliography fits the above format. Some publications are not research driven but are nonetheless useful to the field. These entries may have only two sections: The Study and R2P Evaluation.

**Ahart, A., Bruer, R., Rutsch, C., & Zaro, S. (1992). *Final Report: Intensive Foster Care Reunification Programs, Contract No. HHS-100-91-0016. Macro International, Inc.***

- *In 1991, Macro International, Inc. was contracted by HHS to study several family reunification programs. The goal of the study was to identify what was working in family reunification. Macro identified few resources available for reunification; a backlog often created delayed reunification; and many children tended to be caught in foster care drift.*

**The Study**

- The study goal was to fill knowledge gaps in the field of family reunification by:
  - Identifying and describing a range of family reunification programs.
  - Defining the role of family reunification in child welfare.
  - Identifying how individual programs measure success.
  - Describing lessons learned by each agency.

**The Methods**

- Macro International, Inc. set up the study with three distinct parts:
  - A thorough literature review on family reunification,
  - Meetings and consultations with experts in the field, and
  - A series of site visits to nine innovative family reunification programs in CA, CT, MI, OR, and WA (3 public and 6 private agencies.)

**The Findings**

- Macro International, Inc. found several factors contributing to successful programs including:
  - The programs tended to be newer and small.
  - They drew heavily from family preservation models.
  - They tended to serve younger children.
  - Visitation with biological family played a role in outcomes.
  - The focus was on the whole family and not just the children.
  - The programs were very intensive.
  - A key to success was the quality of the staff and team staffing.
  - Foster parent participation with family helped success rates.
  - Overall, it is harder to ascertain the quality of family reunification programs because family preservation programs obtain good results easier.

**R2P Evaluation**

- Background information and literature review was helpful.
- It was hard for researchers to determine one guiding “what works” principle to describe family reunification.
- The final report had a clear format and all critical information was easy to find.

**Barth, R. P. (1997). Family reunification. In J. D. Berrick, R. P. Barth, & N. Gilbert, *Child Welfare Research Review, Vol. 2*. New York: Columbia University Press.**

- *This article combined several research studies on family reunification and gave a quick overview of each. It focused on examining the accepted definitions of family reunification. The author believed that the current definitions do not adequately encompass all of the issues that comprise family reunification programs and processes.*

### **The Study**

- The author noted that only one in four family reunifications end successfully for both the child and the parents. The numbers were even worse for children who only stay in foster care a short time and for infants, growing numbers of whom will experience foster care before their first birthday.

### **The Methods**

- Family reunification was difficult to measure statistically. Traditional definitions did not lend themselves well to mathematical procedures. The author suggested that the definition of family reunification needed to be reexamined. The definition needed to include kinship care, which had become a large part of foster care and a first step in family reunification.

### **The Findings**

- Studies showed that children reunified with their family after being in kinship care were 33% less likely to reenter care than children placed in more traditional foster care settings.
- Young children, if removed from the home, should be placed with foster parents who are willing to adopt them if family reunification is deemed impossible to attain.
- At the time this article was written, demonstration projects were underway to examine family reunification programs. However, there was a gap in the research in studying children who reentered the foster care system after reunification had taken place.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article provided an introduction to some of the theoretical concepts behind family reunification, offered suggestions for why family reunification sometimes fails, and identified gaps in the current research.

**Carlo, P., & Shennum, W. A., 1989. Family reunification efforts that work: A three-year follow-up study of children in residential treatment. *Child and Adolescent Social Work, 6(3), 211-216.***

- *This study was a three-year follow-up to an earlier study that assessed parent-involvement programs for families with a child who had been removed from the home. Results showed that parents who were involved in a combination of experiential and didactic interventions had more successful reunifications than parents who received one intervention or the other.*

### **The Study**

- Today, it is unrealistic to assume that children who are removed from the home will go into foster care temporarily. Many children have severe problems that require stepping up into residential care.
- Residential care programs have begun to offer programs that allow families to interact with their children in a neutral setting.
- This study was a three-year follow-up to a parental-involvement program that showed positive short-term effects.

### **The Methods**

- The original study and follow-up were with Five Acres, an agency in Los Angeles County, CA. The original study had 31 family units in and used three treatment types: 1. Experimental and didactic, 2. Experimental only, and 3. Didactic only. The results from the original study showed that a combination of both types of treatment led to positive results (Chi-square 4.2,  $p < .05$ )
- A new set of researchers conducted a follow-up study. They found 24 of the original 31 families.

### **The Findings**

- Of the original families who received the combined treatment, 78% were still together.
- Of the families who received only one type of treatment 27% were still reunified.
- The difference between the two was statistically significant ( $p < .02$ )

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article explained in a very precise manner, the original study, the follow-up, and the results. It was a good example of positive outcomes in family reunification.
- These findings suggested the need for further research into specific interventions used in family reunification.

**Casey Family Services. (1998). *Family Reunification Program*. Available online at: [www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org).**

- *Starting in 1989, Casey Family Services offered a family reunification program at its Hartford, CT, and Maine divisions. The program was discontinued and was in the process of being re-conceptualized.*

### **The Study**

- The target for the Casey Family Services family reunification program were families who had children in out-of-home-care, and had expressed a desire to be reunified with their child or children.
- The criteria for entry into the program was:
  - Birth-family participation must be voluntary,
  - Children must be under 15 years of age,
  - Placement must be for less than 18 months, and
  - Parents, if substance abusers, must be drug-free for the last four months.

### **The Methods**

- Data were gathered from January 1994 through December 1997 for an evaluation.
- Initially, 111 families were referred for services. The final sample included 87 families.
- Families who completed the program received, on average, 17.3 months of services. This included before reunification, during reunification, and 7 months of aftercare.
- For the 66 families who finished the program, the family reunification rate was 42%.

### **The Findings**

- After conducting this study, many issues arose for Casey to consider including:
  - How to address substance abuse in the family,
  - How to aid parents with enormous financial stress,
  - How to address dependency needs, and
  - What types of aftercare services are best used for this particular population.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- Casey Families provided succinct information on a previous family reunification program.
- The article contained good identification of issues critical to successful reunification.

**Courtney, M. E. (1994). Factors associated with the reunification of foster children with their families, *Social Service Review*, 68(1), 81-108.**

- *This article described a study conducted on a sample of families with children placed in foster care in California, from January 1988 through May 1991. The purpose of the study was to look for particular variables that could potentially predict length-in-stay and when reunification occurs, if at all. A Cox proportional-hazards model was created to explore the different variables that lead to reunification or other permanency options for children in foster care.*

**The Study**

- Kinship care has grown dramatically in the past decade. This study examined what effect kinship care has on family reunification.
- The study also examined the variables that contributed to foster care and family reunification. If particular variables were found to be significant, they could potentially lead to better outcomes for children and families.
- The study included children placed in-out-of-home care between January 1988 and May 1991.
- The sample was eventually drawn from a population of 8,748 children in out-of-home-care. Administrative data were used for the survey and organized for longitudinal analysis.

**The Methods**

- Event-history analysis allowed the researchers to use incomplete data to predict future events.

**The Findings**

- Two-thirds of children were in foster care because of neglect, not abuse.
- Less than one-half of the children would experience family reunification within three years.
- For those who leave, one-half would go home within six months, 70% within one year. The greatest probability for reunification was within one year.
- Children placed with kin tended to go home more slowly. The researchers could only hypothesize why this occurred. Perhaps the children were not as closely observed by social workers.
- There was concern because the greatest numbers of children going into foster care were infants and young children who had little chance of reunification. This implied that family services must be strengthened or that a greater number of adoptive parents were needed.

**R2P Evaluation**

- This paper added to the body of research which showed that more support services were needed for families with very young children. If this support cannot improve the life of the child, then adoptive parents must be found quickly.
- The study was well designed, and the conclusions were consistent with those of other studies.

**Davis, I. P., & Ellis-MacLeod, E. (1994). Temporary foster care: Separating and reunifying families. In J. Blancher (Ed.), *When There's No Place Like Home: Options for Children Living Apart from Their Natural Families*. (pp. 123-161) Baltimore, MD: Brookes.**

- *This chapter in a book on children in foster care, examined the options available for children who were removed from their home. The authors pointed out that, in theory, temporary foster care allowed the familial relationship to heal or the living conditions to improve.*

### **The Study**

- Foster care children are likely to come from poorer families. More than 40% of children in foster care come from households below the poverty line.
- These poorest families are the least likely to receive the services needed to keep their families intact.
- Racial and ethnic minorities are likely to be placed in care which has direct links to socioeconomic status.
- An erroneous belief is that short-term foster care stays equals successful family reunifications.
- Frequent, positive contact with biological parents during foster care helps limit the time in care.
- The mandated preferences for children in care are:
  - Family reunification,
  - Adoption,
  - Guardianship,
  - Long-term foster care, or
  - Emancipation, if age appropriate.

### **The Findings**

- More research and policies devoted to family reunification were needed. Conducting research on the relationships between variables that can lead to successful reunifications would be helpful.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was a good historical chapter on foster care in the United States.
- The chapter concluded with solid research and policy recommendations aimed at aiding children in foster care.

**Davis, I. P., English, D. J., & Landsverk, J. A. (1993). *Going Home and Returning to Care: A Study of Foster Care Reunification*. San Diego, CA: San Diego State University.**

- *The aim of this study was to do three things:*
  - *Classify sample into successful family reunification, borderline successful, and unsuccessful reunification groupings,*
  - *Look for associations between children and family services and the family reunification outcomes, and*
  - *Determine the value of case variables in predicting family reunification outcomes*

### **The Study**

- This descriptive study examined 625 children who had been in kinship and foster care between 72 hours and 12 months. The study followed the sample for up to nine months following family reunification.
- The sample was drawn from CPS records of children placed in out-of-home care-between May 1990 and February 1991 in CA and WA.
- The primary source of data was CPS records.

### **The Methods**

- Conclusions were primarily based on archival data. These data occasionally have reliability and validity problems.
- The study defined successful family reunification as “an absence of re-referrals into CPS.” This meant that abuse and neglect may reoccur but was not reported.
- Inter-rater reliability was established and frequently monitored.
- Descriptive and correctional statistics were used.
- Bivariate and discriminate function analyses were used to compare the variables.

### **The Findings**

- Within the first nine months of family reunification, 68% received no re-referral, 19% were re-referred at least once, and 13% reentered care. (Variation occurred between the sites.)
- One-half of the children in the study were under age of 3. The mean age was 4.3.
- Many children with health problems experience reentry.
- Children in kinship care were less likely to reenter care.
- Reentry into out-of-home care was more likely to occur in the first three months after reunification.
- Demographics and problem characteristics were one-half of the predictor variables. This means that certain types of demographics and problem behaviors would more likely predict a child’s removal from the home in one-half of all cases.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The article included a good study design and clearly reported the information.

**Davis, I. P., Landsverk, J. A., & Newton, R. R. (1997). Duration of foster care for children reunified within the first year of care. In J. D. Berrick, R. P. Barth, & N. Gilbert, *Child Welfare Research Review, Vol. 2*. New York: Columbia University Press.**

- *This study gave detailed comparisons between a larger California study on children in foster care with a smaller, similar study in San Diego. Both studies evaluated the length of stay for children in foster care.*

### **The Study**

- This article described findings in length of stay of less than one year in foster care.
- The study examined children who entered care between May 1990 and February 1991. The sample consisted of 445 children in the San Diego area.
- The author stated that few comparisons could actually be made between many of these studies because length of stay was often defined in very different ways.

### **The Methods**

- The objective of this article was twofold:
  - To create a picture of length of stay based on the above sample; and
  - To study the effects of child, family, and CPS variables in explaining length of stay in foster care.
- The sample was 445 children, 0-12 years of age, in foster care from 72 hrs to 12 mns.
- The children were followed up to 12 months after family reunification.

### **The Findings**

- The samples of the two studies had slightly different demographics.
- The primary reason for removal from the home in both studies was neglect.
- Mean length of stay was 87.8 days (SD 97.8 days).
- Family reunification was achieved for 60% of children within one month and for 80% by six months.
- In the follow-up study:
  - 21.8% were re-referred,
  - 13.3% reentered foster care (within three months of family reunification),
  - Children in kinship care returned home at slower rates,
  - A correlation was found between length of stay and single parent households,
  - A correlation was also found between length of stay and ethnicity,
  - Single mothers were more likely to visit while the child was in care, and
  - Contrary to findings in other studies, African American children had shorter lengths of stay.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This chapter contained good background and references.
- Most of the findings were consistent with other studies; the anomalous finding regarding length of stay for African American children bears further exploration.

**Davis, I. P., Landsverk, J., Newton, R., & Ganger, W. (1996). Parental visiting and foster care reunification. *Children and Youth Services Review, 18(4/5), 363-382.***

- *Parental visitation was believed to be critical to achieving successful family reunifications. This article examined parental visitation to ascertain its impact on reunification success.*

### **The Study**

- Visitation by the mother during foster care placement more likely predicted successful reunification than any other variable.
- Parental visitation may be essential to children in foster care to:
  - Preserve the relationship with the family, and
  - Help children cope with stress of separation.
- The author reviewed data from the Permanency Planning Outcome Study (children ages 0-12 years, in care up to 18 months, followed for 12 months after reunification).

### **The Methods**

- The study included 865 children who entered care between May 1990 and February 1991 in San Diego, CA.

### **The Findings**

- Of the parents involved in the study, 84% of mothers and 76% of fathers had permanency plans
- Reunification was strongly associated with parental visits at the recommended level.
- Family reunification was just as likely to occur without parental visitation (One possible reason is that children were in care for such a short time that visitation was deemed unnecessary).
- At times, parental visits were used to assess whether parental rights should be terminated.
- In this study, 44% of mothers who visited their children were not reunified and 30% of fathers were not reunified.
- Future research was needed to address more complicated issues, such as parental incarceration and visiting.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article raised questions as to why parental visitation was sometimes successful and sometimes not. More research was needed on parental visitation during out-of-home care.

**Dougherty, S. (2001). *Toolbox Number 2: Expanding the Role of Foster Parents in Achieving Permanency*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.**

- *This toolbox, part of a series of publications, identified the best ways to incorporate professional child welfare practice into recruiting, training, and supporting foster parents.*

### **The Study**

- The book stated that successful foster care should be:
  - Family-focused,
  - Child-centered,
  - Community-based,
  - Developmentally appropriate, and
  - Culturally competent.
- This publication examines the roles of foster parents as:
  - Nurturers and caregivers,
  - Child development specialists,
  - Disciplinarians,
  - Supporters and advocates in school issues,
  - Mentors to the birthparents,
  - Facilitators of the relationship between child and birthparents,
  - Potential adoptive parents, and
  - Team members.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This publication included guide questions for practitioners, as well as suggested curricula and trainings. It was very comprehensive, with the goal of including foster parents in a highly proactive role for foster children in their care.

**Farmer, E. (1996). Family reunification with high risk children: Lessons from research. *Children and Youth Services Review, 18(4/5), 403-424.***

- *This article reported on reunification efforts in the United Kingdom. The aims of the study were threefold: 1. To provide a profile of reunited children and families, 2. To identify social work practices in family reunification, and 3. To determine developments and outcomes after family reunification.*

**The Study**

- The study examined 321 children experiencing family reunification as of March 1984.
- Two distinct groups of children emerged in this study:
  - Those who were in foster care because of statutory violations (often older youth); and
  - Those who were in foster care because abuse or neglect (often younger children).
- The families in the study had to have been reunified for at least two years thus enabling the researchers to look at long-term outcomes after initial reunification.

**The Methods**

- The researchers looked at case records and interviewed parents and social workers.

**The Findings**

- Long-term family reunification did not always equal success.
- For older youth:
  - No significant changes in behavior occurred after reunification.
  - Significance was found in:
    - Family visitation did help with successful reunifications.
    - More than one experience with reunification worked against the family.
  - Many older youth had other living options.
  - Educational aid helped with successful reunifications.
- For younger youth:
  - More foster care placements occurred.
  - Many children found that the family unit changed while they were in care (e.g. a new baby, or boyfriend). This led to less successful reunifications.

**R2P Evaluation**

- This was an interesting international case to compare with U.S. cases.
- The article highlighted many problems similar to those of reunification services in the United States.

**Fein E. (1993). Last best chance: Findings from a reunification services program.**  
*Child Welfare, 72(1) 25-40.*

- *This article examined the outcomes from the Casey Family Services family reunification program. This program worked with families that needed intensive services so that family reunification could occur.*

**The Study**

- This article looked at the results and outcomes of the Casey Family Services family reunification program.
- The families referred to the Casey family reunification program needed intensive services.
- An upfront goal was reunification within six months and an additional 18 months of follow-up services.
- To be accepted into the program, the children had to be in foster care less than 18 months.

**The Methods**

- The original population of children was 110, of whom 30 were sibling groups and 12 were in care for too short a time to qualify. Therefore, n=68 children.
- Of the 68 children in the sample:
  - 38% had successful a family reunification,
  - 19% still were successfully reunified at the end of year 2 and still receiving services,
  - 9% successfully closed cases, and
  - 10% returned to care.

**The Findings**

- Caution was urged against weighing heavily on family reunification based on achievement of goals, because other factors must come into play.
- A typical parent in program was:
  - Single mother,
  - Several children,
  - Unemployed or underemployed,
  - No financial resources,
  - Homeless,
  - Substance abuser, and
  - Victim of abuse.

**R2P Evaluation**

- These findings suggested that the Casey family reunification program provided useful services. The program ceased operation and was being reevaluated.

**Fein, E., & Staff, I. (1991). Implementing reunification services. *Families in Society*, 72(6), 335-343.**

- *This article examined the Casey Family Services family reunification program.*

### **The Study**

- Many family reunification programs are thinly disguised family preservation programs.
- Family preservation programs have motivation and mandate, whereas family reunification programs do not. Therefore, implementing family reunification programs is sometimes more difficult.
- Casey Family Services developed a family reunification program in August 1989.
- The program provides families with long-term family reunification services for up to two years.
- The goal is for family reunification within 6 months.
- The program works with clients' strengths.

### **The Findings**

- Concerns about implementation of the Casey Family Reunification program included:
  - Confusion in defining goals for the family;
  - General goals vs. reunification goals vs. mission statements;
  - Concern that having too many goals will discourage a family from participating in reunification; and
  - Concern that starting with a few goals and adding more may lead to families believing that they will never reach success.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The Casey Family Services family reunification program ceased and was being reevaluated.

**Fraser, M. W., Walton, E., Lewis, R. E., Pecora, P. J., & Walton, W. K. (1996). An experiment in family reunification: Correlates of outcomes at one-year follow-up, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 18(4/5), 335-361.**

- *This article described the results of a study that used an experimental family reunification treatment versus standard family reunification services. The initial outcomes showed that the experimental service worked successfully. In an attempt to find out why some reunifications worked and others did not, the study also examined the reunifications that failed.*

### **The Study**

- The study took place in Utah (no date cited).
- Experimental family reunification program was initiated.
- Each caseworker had, assigned to them, only six cases.
- The services provided included:
  - Building collaborative relationships with parents,
  - Strengthening family communication, problem-solving, and parenting skills,
  - Addressing concrete needs such as food, shelter, etc., and
  - Providing in-home support during/after family reunification.

### **The Methods**

- The study was posttest only randomized experimental design.
- The sample n=57 children and a control group n=53 participated in the study.
- Data were collected based on the 90-day intervention and for 1 year afterwards.

### **The Findings**

- The treatment group experienced 96.5% of full reentry into the family within 90 days of start of treatment.
- The control group experienced 32.1% full reentry into the family.
- Older children were more likely to return home.
- Any outside services, needed for the child or family, will slow down reunification.
- Parental training shows significant affect on success
- Successful follow-up with both groups was about the same in terms of number of days at home since release into their care.
- 27.3% of experimental group returning to care.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article provided background on family reunification.

**Goerge, R. M. (1990). The reunification process in substitute care. *Social Service Review*, 64(3), 422-457.**

- *The hypothesis of this study was that the longer a child remained in out-of-home-care, the less likely the child was to experience successful family reunification.*

### **The Study**

- The research questions for this study included:
  - Does the probability of family reunification decrease as time in foster care rises?
  - Do certain characteristics of children affect the probability of reunification?
  - What types of children are more likely to remain in out-of-home-care?
- Participants (n=1,196) were children who were experiencing their first out-of-home-care placement.

### **The Methods**

- Hazard rate and survivor function tools were used.
- Two analyses were determined:
  - Time in foster care, and
  - Control for probability of family reunification decreasing

### **The Findings**

- This study showed, through events-history analysis:
  - Decreasing probability of successful family reunification after multiple transitions to home as duration in out-of-home-care increased.
  - Decline in probability of family reunification after first few weeks in placement.
  - Greatest decrease in probability of family reunification was for abused and neglected children.
  - Kinship care was the most stable placement.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article provided a detailed description of the research supported by graphic depictions of the data.
- Because the article was very long and discussed intricate statistical methods, it is not recommended for a quick reference on family reunification.

**Greenblatt, S. B., & Day, P. (2000). *Renewing Our Commitment to Permanency for Children: Wingspread Conference Summary Report*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.**

- *This booklet was the summary brief of the Wingspread Conference which took place in 1998 at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin. The conference brought together professionals who work in child welfare, attorneys, judges, parents, and advocates.*

### **The Study**

- In the early 1980s permanency planning was emerging as the philosophy in response to the growing number of children who were drifting in out-of-home care.
- Those who subscribed to the theory of permanency planning believed that children would either be reunified with their birth family or, when that is not possible, be adopted into another family.
- Currently, the numbers of children in foster care are climbing again.

### **The Findings**

- Positive outcomes could be achieved if agencies:
  - Were comprehensive and flexible in pursuing permanency;
  - Viewed children in context of their family and viewed the family in context of their neighborhoods;
  - Had long-term and preventative priorities;
  - Were well managed;
  - Had well-trained staff; and
  - Encouraged practitioners to build strong relationships.
- Permanency planning was guided by three principles:
  - The importance of continuity on family relationship;
  - The effect of separation, loss, and unresolved grief; and
  - The benefits of family support services.
- Most practitioners preferred family reunification, but if that was not possible, they helped each child on a case-by-case basis.
- The workshop group discussed permanency-planning strategies for families, organizations, and communities.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This booklet was a good summary of a larger discussion between practitioners, advocates, lawyers, judges, and others.
- The recommendations at the end should direct future research on family reunification, family preservation, permanency planning, and adoption.

**Harris, M. S. (1999). Comparing mothers of children in kinship foster care: reunification vs. remaining in care. In J. P. Gleeson & C. F. Hairston, *Kinship Care: Improving Practice Through Research* (pp. 145-166). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This article examined research on the differences between African American mothers who experienced successful family reunification and those whose children remained in kinship care.*

### **The Study**

- The sample consisted of:
  - Mothers and their children who experienced family reunification (n=10).
  - Mothers whose children are still in kinship care (n=10).
- The study examined the similarities and differences in the two groups based on demographics, involvement of the child welfare system, and problems and strengths in mothers caring for their children
- The author also looked at the two groups using three constructs: object relations, severity of abuse of alcohol and other drugs (AOD), and extended family supports.

### **The Methods**

- Twenty African American mothers were interviewed between December, 1995 and March, 1996. The sample was small because it was difficult to track the mothers, obtain the needed permissions, and schedule interviews.
- The sample was drawn from three private agencies in Chicago.
- Inter-rater reliability was established.

### **The Findings**

- Family reunification was more successful for mothers with higher incomes.
- A slight significance was found in the association between the mother's relationship with her own mother and that with her child.
- Higher AOD was found in the group whose children were still in kinship care.
- Employment concerns were greater in the group who had experienced reunification.
- Other contributing factors:
  - Failed reunification may be associated with race, poverty, AOD, length of time in care.
  - African American children had the highest placements in kinship care, remain in care longer, and are less likely to return home.
  - A connection may exist between placement and IV-E payments.
  - The majority of children in kinship care were neglected.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was a good study, despite the limited sample size.
- This research addressed a timely issue given the increased use of kinship care and its association with longer lengths of stay.

**Hess, P. M., Folaron, G., & Jefferson, A. B. (1992). Effectiveness of family reunification services: An innovative evaluative model. *Social Work*, 37(4), 304-311.**

- *The Professional Review Action Group (PRAG) model was used to review several unsuccessful family reunifications and identify common elements that contributed to their failures. In 1987 PRAG was developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in response to the high number of failed family reunifications nationally.*

### **The Study**

- The PRAG model was used in eight counties in Indiana to study failed family reunifications. The PRAG model provided for:
  - Care reviews;
  - Periodic reporting of review findings; and
  - Recommendations and documentation of corrective action.
- This study looked at failed reunifications in the state of Indiana from February 1, 1989 to February 1, 1991 (n=62 children).
- PRAG analyzed the findings both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- For each case, several interviews were conducted with: case workers, foster parents, biological parents, children, and others.

### **The Methods**

- PRAG issued recommendations to counties and tracked whether the agencies implemented the changes.
- PRAG based its exemplary family reunification services on the following criteria:
  - Identifying and assessing with the family their problems and needs,
  - Developing quality case plan,
  - Engaging family members,
  - Coordinating multiple services,
  - Monitoring and assessing the family's adherence to the plan,
  - Assessing when family reunification should occur,
  - Preparing the family for transition,
  - Coordinating for continued services, and
  - Monitoring each child's safety.

### **The Findings**

- Family and service delivery problems directly contributed to placement reentry.
- The most frequent problem was non-resolution of parental problems.
- Service delivery problems included: high caseloads, staff turnover, and insufficient regulation of family reunification practice.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- More study was needed to determine whether PRAG is a good model to use in assessing family reunification programs.
- Description of the quantitative and qualitative methods used was insufficient.

**Hohman, M. M., & Butt, R. L. (2001). How soon is too soon? Addiction recovery and family reunification. *Child Welfare*, 80(1), 53-67.**

- *This article reviewed two models of addiction recovery and discussed the effects of family reunification for parents who were recovering from addiction. This study primarily focused on women.*

**The Study**

- The article evaluated two models: one for alcoholism and one for cocaine addiction.
- The study asked the question: How much time is needed in treatment before a successful family reunification can take place?
- The article found that courts wanted quick reunifications.
- According to Brown (1985), alcohol addiction recovery has three stages:
  - Acceptance of ongoing role of addiction,
  - Adjustment to environmental changes, and
  - Interpretation of one's self and others.
- According to Rawson (1991), cocaine addiction treatment requires at least six months of continued therapy and intervention. The treatment stages included:
  - Withdrawal (0-15 days),
  - Honeymoon (16-45 days),
  - Wall (46-120 days),
  - Adjustment (121-180 days), and
  - Resolution (181+ days)

**The Findings**

- Treatment for addiction was often geared towards men and did not address the special and/or different needs of women.
- Mothers had a more difficult time in recovery, because many of them experienced guilt over their past behaviors. They also had a harder time adjusting to their family as a sober person. They felt that they did not really know who their children were.
- It was crucial that the social worker understood all steps of addiction recovery and made family reunification plans accordingly.

**R2P Evaluation**

- This article focused more on the dynamics and treatment of addiction to alcohol and other drugs (AOD) than on family reunification.
- The discussion of reunification issues included the element of gender differences.

**Jones, L. (1998). The social and family correlates of successful reunification of children in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 20(4), 305-323.***

- *This study examines the social and environmental characteristics of children who have and have not had successful family reunifications.*

### **The Study**

- The research hoped to pinpoint certain variables that contribute to unsuccessful family reunifications.
- Variables for this study included: income, economic situation, housing, social support, and family structure.

### **The Methods**

- The researcher used case record reviews and computerized data files from the Department of Social Services.
- Data were collected from April, 1990 to October 1991 on children, ages 0-12, in San Diego who had spent more than 72 hours in out-of-home care.
- Follow up continued for 9 months.
- Sample sizes were: 445 children and 245 families.

### **The Findings**

- Poverty and economic deprivation (i.e., inadequate housing) were key indicators in failed family reunifications.
- The strongest indicator of failed reunifications was inadequate housing.
- Children with mental or behavioral problems were more likely to reenter out-of-home-care.
- Non-white children were more likely to reenter foster care.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This study contained good research and literature review.
- The interesting results addressed the larger issues of welfare and housing.

**Landsverk, J., Davis, I., Ganger, W., Newton, R., & Johnson, I. (1996). Impact of child psychosocial functioning on reunification from out-of-home placement. *Children and Youth Services Review, 18(4/5), 447-462.***

- *This study examined the psychosocial behaviors of children and tried to determine the probability of family reunification based on these behaviors.*

### **The Study**

- The study sought to determine the effect of a child's psychosocial functioning on the probability of family reunification.
- The researchers looked at poor functioning of the child in relation to reduced chances of family reunification.
- The study also tried to determine any differences in the behavior or functioning of these children in relation to their placement in foster care or kinship care.

### **The Methods**

- Data were collected on children that entered care during an 18-month period between May, 1990 and October, 1991.
- The N=1,221; the final sample was n=669 with children, ages 2-16.
- Psychosocial behavior was measured through two means:
  - Standardized measure of behavioral problems.
  - Information from case files.

### **The Findings**

- Children with psychosocial problems were one-half as likely to be reunified with their families as were children without psychosocial problems.
- Effects of externalizing behavior problems were observed in children in foster care but not in those in kinship care.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The San Diego files had been used for many family reunification studies. This one was unique in examining psychosocial problems to see if there was a link with family reunification.
- The study findings were useful, and the researchers listed other hypotheses for further research.

**Landy, S., & Munro, S. (1998). Shared parenting: assessing the success of a foster parent program aimed at family reunification. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 22(4), 305-318.**

- *This study examined the outcomes of a Shared Parenting Project in Ontario, Canada. This program, despite intensive partnering and services, was not as successful as the researchers hoped.*

### **The Study**

- The objectives of this study included:
  - Assessment of the effectiveness of a model of family reunification that unified the role of parent aide and foster parent.
  - Determination of which characteristics of families with children in care were associated with successful reunifications.

### **The Methods**

- This was a multi-site project entitled the Shared Parenting Project.
- Families were recruited from five child protection agencies in Ontario, Canada.
- Foster parents were to act as an extended family rather than as a substitute family.
- Families were tested on socio-demographic, psychological, and family measures.
- Success was pronounced if a family experienced successful reunification or established permanency planning.
- Because of strict criteria, only 13 families were eligible to participate (final n=13).

### **The Findings**

- Very few families who met program criteria could be reunited.
- Only 31% completed the entire program.
- Permanency planning was successful for 50% of other cases.
- The program would not work for many families because of their number of risk factors.
- More stable families were more likely to have success.
- Parents were reluctant to participate in the study.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The sample was only 13 families of which only four families were actually successfully reunified.
- The literature review was thorough and listed many good sources on studies of parental involvement while children are in out-of-home-care.

**Lee, R. E., & Lynch, M. T. (1998). Combating foster care drift: An ecosystemic treatment model for neglect cases. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 20(3), 351-370.**

- *This article discussed a new approach an agency used to work with families whose children had been placed in out-of-home care.*

### **The Study**

- The agency featured in the article attempted to develop innovative ways to address and eliminate foster care drift within their own agency.
- First, the agency tried providing marital and family therapy to families with a child in out-of-home care. The families, however, did not want to be forced into therapy. This approach failed.
- The agency then developed an ecosystemic model that involved foster families, biological families, and agency staff working in conjunction for the child's or children's best interests. This system also enhanced the parent-child visits.

### **The Methods**

- The ecosystemic model used the weekly court-ordered, supervised visits to bring all the players together at one table, in addition to the family's working with the foster family and the agency. This program made social workers, marital and family therapists, and child psychologists available to the families.
- The steps involved in the ecosystemic program included:
  - Making sure the child and biological family are in secure places;
  - Stabilizing the family;
  - Addressing the long-term reality needs of the family; and
  - Referring the parents to appropriate classes and approaching them about using psycho-educational interventions.

### **The Findings**

- Overcoming resistance to the program by biological families, foster families, and agency staff was an ongoing struggle. The agency, however, was dedicated to seeing this program succeed and trained staff and foster families accordingly.
- According to anecdotal evidence, the partnerships between foster families, biological families, and the agency seemed to have positive outcomes for the children and their families.
- Program evaluation would be conducted in the future.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The program had some interesting components that may be worth sharing with other service providers.

**Lewis, R. E., Walton, E., & Fraser, M. W. (1995). Examining family reunification services: A process analysis of a successful experiment. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 5(3), 259-282.**

- *This study examined an experimental family reunification program developed in Utah by the Department of Human Services. The reunification program was based on an already successful family preservation program.*

### **The Study**

- In 1983, the Utah Department of Human Services developed an Intensive Family Preservation Services model (IFPS) based on Homebuilders.
- A follow-up experiment was created in 1989 called the Family Reunification Project (FRP)
- FRP evaluated a comparison of randomly assigned treatment and control groups of children in foster care.
- The treatment group received family strengthening reunification services for 90-days. This program was based on the Family-based Intensive Services (FIT) family preservation model.

### **The Methods**

- The Social Research Institute at the University of Utah in conjunction with the Utah Department of Human Services evaluated the project.
- The treatment group was n=57 and the Control group was n=53.
- The cases were drawn from July 1989 through November 1991
- This study had three major treatment/practice approaches:
  - Relationship-building,
  - Behavioral interventions, and
  - Use of concrete (money, transportation) services (substantial part of program).

### **The Findings**

- In the treatment group, 92.9% of the children were reunified after 90 days. In the control group, 28.3 % of the children experienced reunification in the first 90 days.
- At the six-month follow up: 70.1% of the treatment group were reunified, and 41.5% of the control group were reunified.
- At the 12-month follow up: 77.2 of the treatment group were reunified, and 49.1% of the control group were reunified.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The study showed promising effects for the treatment group.

**Littell, J. H., & Schuerman, J. R. (1995). *Synthesis of Research on Family Preservation and Family Reunification Programs*. (24 pp.) Rockville, MD: Westat.**

- *This article reviewed programs and studies in family preservation and family reunification services. The conclusions suggested little success in studies of both types of programs.*
- *This annotated summary referred only to family reunification programs.*

### **The Study**

- Family preservation programs' success has been the subject of little scientific inquiry. The success is mostly anecdotal.
- Family reunification programs are still in their infancy, so few studies have been done.
  - Available evidence is mixed.
  - It is not clear whether intensive service programs increase the rates of children returning home.
- Children and families who experience family reunification are usually least well-served.
- One of the biggest questions derived from this review related to the fact that most children are returned home within 2 years; do family reunification programs, therefore, really make an impact?
- Many evaluated programs showed little or no difference between those in treatment and control groups.
- Even strong empirical studies ultimately did not show stronger outcomes for treatment groups.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article raised very good points:
  - Not enough empirical research on family reunification exists.
  - One cannot say with certainty that family reunification programs positively affect the rate and consistency of reunification for children in out-of-home care.

**Loar, L. (1998). Making visits work. *Child Welfare*, 77(1), 41-58.**

- *This article described common misperceptions about what happens when agencies and families attempt to set up family visits when a child is in out-of-home-care. The article used case examples of how to create family visits that are meaningful and could potentially lead to successful reunifications.*

### **The Study**

- Visits between parents and their children in out-of-home-care are a key to successful reunifications.
- Often overestimations occur about parental capacity to participate in meaningful visits with their children, from knowing what to say and how to speak to their children to understanding why their child was taken from them in the first place.
- Effective components to visitation include:
  - Formulating ideas for visits around the child's age and interests,
  - Assessing parental capabilities,
  - Finding areas of overlapping common interests,
  - Picking safe and public places to meet; DHS is often depressing,
  - Structuring the visit with activities, and
  - Providing for review of the visit and making modifications if necessary.
- Most of the CPS focus on visiting is logistical (the when and where) and does not adequately address what should or could actually happen at the visit.
- Parental visits do not automatically mean that reunification is the best place for a child, even though judges and agencies on efforts to push reunification often overrate it.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This study had good examples of case studies, and the author walked the reader through each study to demonstrate good visiting practices.
- The article also provided additional support for visiting as a key component to reunification.
- The author gave good suggestions for agency workers to consider when working to set up family visitations.

**Maluccio, A. N. (1999). Foster care and family reunification. In P. A. Curtis, G. Dale, & J. C. Kendall, *The Foster Care Crisis: Translating Research into Policy and Practice* (pp. 211-224). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This article examined research on various topics surrounding family reunification and discussed the policy implications in each area.*

### **The Study**

- This article focused on recent studies in:
  - Patterns of exit from foster care;
  - Follow-up services and supports;
  - Parent/child visiting;
  - Recidivism and reentry of children into care; and
  - The relationship between child's psychosocial functioning and reunification outcomes.
- Concern was shown about the widely divergent numbers that come out of family reunification studies. A common problem was the attempt to compare and aggregate findings of many different studies

### **The Findings**

- Exit from foster care:
  - Successful outcomes depended on identifying and treating parental problems and needs on an individual basis.
  - Parents needed to be partners in the family reunification process.
- Follow-up services and supports; studies showed the value of intensive aftercare services.
- Parent/child visiting:
  - Studies were hard to find that had significance in long-term family reunification.
  - Visiting was important in maintaining familial ties.
- Recidivism and reentry:
  - More time in out-of-home-care, the less likely that a child would experience family reunification.
- Psychosocial functioning:
  - Individualized permanency plans were needed for each child.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was a good summary of many child welfare studies, including their policy implications.

**Maluccio, A. N. (2000). What works in family reunification. In M. P. Kluger, G. Alexander, & P. A. Curtis, *What Works in Child Welfare* (pp. 163-171). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This article described some studies in family reunification and listed several factors that seemed to be important indicators of successful family reunification.*

### **The Study**

- Reunification should be viewed on a continuum:
  - Visiting or other occasional contact,
  - Partial reunification, and
  - Full reunification.
- Reunification is becoming harder, because many issues are harder to change:
  - Unemployment,
  - Poverty,
  - Family violence,
  - Substance abuse, and
  - Homelessness.

### **The Findings**

- The following services/ideas had positive results for family reunification:
  - Intensive, time-limited services,
  - Services for parents (i.e. transportation),
  - Maintenance of parental visitation,
  - Consideration of racial and ethnic dimensions,
  - Improvement psychosocial functioning of child,
  - Availability of adequate housing and income, and
  - Involvement of the extended family in reunification process.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article provided a basic overview of family reunification and also contained good references to studies that have been completed in the last 10 years.

**Maluccio, A. N., Abramczyk, L. W., & Thomlison, B. (1996). Family reunification of children in out-of-home care: Research perspectives. *Children and Youth Services Review, 18*(4/5), 287-305.**

- *This article defined family reunification and described its history and context within family preservation services. The article then reviewed key research themes and emerging issues.*

### **The Study**

- The article defined family reunification as the planned process of reconnecting children in out-of-home care with their families.
- The history of family reunification:
  - In the 1960s and 1970s there was a push to remove children from abusive or neglectful homes. By the end of the 1970s, many children were languishing in foster care.
  - The 1980s emphasized permanency planning, with more options for families in the child welfare system as well as more research and evaluation of child welfare programs.
  - The 1990s saw federal law provide for sweeping changes in how agencies provided preservation and reunification services.

### **The Findings**

- Policy and practice implications from the research:
  - Work with the family,
  - Maintain family contact,
  - Provide brief, intensive services, and
  - Understand each child's emotional and behavioral problems.
- Research agenda suggestions:
  - Quality data,
  - Outcome measures and evaluation, and
  - Suggestions for research:
    - For whom does family reunification work best?
    - What are effective services for special populations?
    - How intensive should reunification services be?

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article provided a good background and history of family reunification.
- Many studies in reunification, were cited, as well as a good bibliography.

**Maluccio, A. N., Ainsworth, F., & Thoburn, J. (2000). *Child Welfare Outcome Research in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This book examined traditional child welfare services, as well as more recent initiatives in child welfare in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.*

### **The Study**

- This annotated bibliographical entry pertained only to the section on family reunification.

### **The Findings**

- U.S. findings showed:
  - Wide variance in family reunification rates (from 13% to 90%).
  - Many factors affected family reunification, making it very complex.
  - Intensive and brief services for reunifying families seemed to have a positive outcome.
  - Successful family reunification was more likely if visits between child and family occurred, as ordered by the court.
  - Lower levels of parental skills and social supports led to reentry into out-of-home care.
  - Children with emotional and/or behavioral problems were only one-half as likely to return home.
  - There were still gaps in the research.
- U.K. findings showed:
  - Children who returned home often received fewer services than children who were placed with substitute families.
  - Emphasis was placed on maintaining contact with families during a child's placement in out-of-home care.
- Australian findings showed:
  - Little or no empirical research on family reunification.
  - Reunification was not referred to in the Australian text on child welfare.
  - Anecdotal evidence showed that family reunification did occur.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This book compared child welfare program areas in three different countries.
- Thorough references were given to evaluated programs and studies on different program areas in all three countries.

**Maluccio, A. N., Fein, E., & Davis, I. P. (1994). Family reunification: Research findings, issues, and directions. *Child Welfare*, 73(5), 489-504.**

- *This article reviewed research findings in family reunification, explored knowledge gaps and issues with research, and identified emerging research priorities.*

**The Study**

- Reunification can include either full reintegration back into a family or as much integration as a parent and child are capable of at a given time, including partial integration and parental visiting.
- Many children who have been reunified may experience:
  - Reentry into foster care;
  - Variations on the intensity of reunification services;
  - Variations on the length of stay in foster care; and
  - Different experiences according to race or ethnicity.
- The authors stressed that researchers and practitioners cannot rely on comparisons of aggregate data. The data were not similar enough for comparison.

**The Findings**

- Gaps in knowledge found were:
  - Determining how the nature of child-caring environments influenced child functioning and development;
  - Determining how family development pertained to reunification success or failure;
  - Studying service delivery and its impact on children and families; and
  - Determining how change occurred in the child welfare system.

**R2P Evaluation**

- This was a good article to use for determining policy and programming for family reunification, as well as for developing needed research and evaluation projects.

**Maluccio, A. N., Krieger, R., & Pine, B. A. (1991). Preserving families through reunification. In E. M. Tracy, D. A. Haapala, J. Kinney, & P. J. Pecora, *Intensive Family Preservation Services: An Instructional Sourcebook* (pp. 215-235). West Hartford, CT: Connecticut University.**

- *Family reunification services are similar to family preservation services: the shared purpose is to strengthen and enhance families. This book chapter described the similarities and differences between family reunification and family preservation, as well as the key components of good family reunification programs.*

### **The Study**

- Similarities between family reunification and family preservation services included:
  - Providing concrete and tangible services and supports, and
  - Viewing the family as a system.
- Differences included:
  - The family is separated.
  - Different challenges occur in teaching parenting skills when the children are out of the home.
  - The family is not facing an imminent crisis.
  - The family members perceive themselves as failures.
  - A potential bond between child and foster caregiver is developing.
  - Services may be needed in a long-term capacity.

### **The Findings**

- Key components of good family reunification programs included:
  - Family-centered orientation;
  - Partnership with parents and other family members;
  - Empowerment of social workers;
  - Comprehensive services and supports;
  - Collaboration and case management;
  - Therapeutic use of foster care placement; and
  - Specialized training.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was a good reference piece. It described the key components of good family reunification programs.

**Peckham, V. C. (1999). Family school: Twenty years as an innovative model demonstration project (pp. 399-410). In J. A. Silver, B. J. Amster, & T. Haecker. *Young Children and Foster Care: a Guide for Professionals*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.**

- *The Family School was a multi-disciplinary, family-oriented, community-based organization that focused on:*
  - *Preventing and treating child abuse and neglect,*
  - *Working to alleviate developmental delays, and*
  - *Supporting young families.*

### **The Study**

- The Family School started in 1976 in Philadelphia, PA, to offer:
  - Social work supports,
  - Parenting lessons, and
  - Early child education for 0-5 years.
- The Philadelphia DHS used Family School instead of foster care if it appears that parents can improve.
- Since 1996, the Family School has been used for family reunification services. Biological parents whose children are in out-of-home placement attend school together before full family reunification is attempted.
- Families attend the school two days each week for approximately six to nine months.
- The program does offer in-home services for families who would have difficulty socializing with others. The goal is to have the family attend the school eventually.

### **The Methods**

- An outcome evaluation of 83 families with 130 preschool children was completed

### **The Findings**

- For families that attended the Family School, evidence suggested:
  - Family stresses were reduced;
  - Family interaction and conditions improved;
  - Developmental delays were reduced;
  - Fewer children were maltreated; and
  - The program saved money compared with more traditional out-of-home placements and in-home services.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was an interesting and innovative program.

**Pecora, P. J., Whittaker, J. K., & Maluccio, A. N. (1992). *The Child Welfare Challenge: Policy, Practice, and Research*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.**

- *This annotation was on a small section of a larger work on child welfare. It was a background and educational piece on family reunification.*

### **The Study**

- Family reunification was defined as aiming to help children and families achieve and maintain optimal levels of reconnection, from full re-entry to other forms of contact, such as visiting.
- This definition expanded the idea of family reunification beyond full reunification to encompass other types of familial bonds.
- Family reunification should be viewed as a continuum.

### **The Findings**

- The authors suggested that families should be assessed to determine what type of family reunification best fits their situation. Assessment should include:
  - Willingness and readiness of family.
  - Willingness and readiness of child.
  - Strengths and resources of parents and child.
  - Parent-child and family-child interaction.
  - Availability of resources.
  - Qualities of the family's home.
  - Obstacles to the child's reunification.
  - Obstacles between biological and foster families.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was a basic educational piece on family reunification.
- A short overview of an expanded definition of reunification included other options in addition to full reunification.

**Petr, C. G., & Enriken, C. (1995). Service system barriers to reunification. *Families in Society*, 76(9) 523-533.**

- *This article detailed a report on five major obstacles to family reunification that were identified during a pilot case management project in Kansas.*

### **The Study**

- Agency inattention to conducting family reunification studies or implementing family reunification programs occurs because family reunification involves more people and systems than family preservation services. Basically, family preservation programs and services are easier to implement.
- This project explored factors for achieving successful family reunifications, including:
  - Lighter caseloads,
  - Intensive training and supervision for caseworkers, and
  - Models that are family-centered and strengths-focused.
- The population for this pilot project was a random sample of 20 youth.

### **The Methods**

- The project studied youth in the most restrictive and costly environments:
  - Group homes,
  - Youth correctional facilities, and
  - Institutions.
- Reunification services were delivered between April 1992 and March 1993

### **The Findings**

- The barriers to reunification were identified as:
  - Agency lack of attention to reunification goals and principles,
  - Geographic distance between the child and family,
  - Policies of youth correctional facilities emphasize punishment and rehabilitation not reunification,
  - Lack of community-based programs and coordination, and
  - Barriers to family involvement; families felt discouraged or ignored.
- Recommendations based on the study included:
  - Keeping kids in their community,
  - Promoting family-centered professional practice,
  - Providing training and incentives for family reunification planning,
  - Reforming the system of care for juvenile offenders, and
  - Ensuring that community-based programs are available.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- A different view of family reunification was presented.
- An explanation for each barrier and recommendation was included.

**Pine, B. A., Warsh, R., & Maluccio, A. N. (Eds.). (1993). *Together Again: Family Reunification in Foster Care*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This book had multiple authors who discussed many different aspects of family reunification. The book was intended for agencies, students of social work, and others interested in family reunification work.*

### **The Study**

- This book was a guide for agencies that work in family reunification. The book is:
  - An aid for establishing and implementing family reunification programs at child welfare agencies; and
- Part I examined the structures needed to support family reunification.
  - Chapter 1 described a conceptual framework for rethinking family reunification.
  - Chapter 2 described the relationship between court systems and child welfare agencies in a collaborative approach to family reunification.
  - Chapter 3 described training agency staff in family reunification and tying the programs to the overall agency goals.
  - Chapter 4 illustrated how community mental health centers can be key facilities in creating successful family reunifications.
- Part II examined the range of practice methods and approaches in family reunification work.
  - Chapter 5 examined guidelines for family reunification goal-setting for biological families, tools for agency staff, and practice and policy implications of a goal-oriented approach.
  - Chapter 6 described successful parental involvement with children in residential treatment settings.
  - Chapter 7 offered tips for successful biological family visitation with children in out-of-home care.
  - Chapter 8 looked at the holistic needs of the child throughout the family reunification process.
  - Chapter 9 examined the belief that all families have the potential to care for their children.
- Part III examined evaluation and research of family reunification programs.
  - Chapter 10 detailed program evaluation efforts in family reunification.
  - Chapter 11 discussed potential benefits of conducting research in family reunification programs.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- Unfortunately, because the text was published in 1993, some of the highlighted programs are no longer in effect.
- This continues to be a helpful reference for those starting out in family reunification services or re-examining their existing services in school or in the agency.

**Rzepnicki, T. L., Schuerman, J. R., & Johnson, P. (1997). Facing uncertainty: Reuniting high-risk families. In J. D. Berrick, R. P. Barth, & N. Gilbert, *Child Welfare Research Review, Vol. 2*. New York: Columbia University Press.**

- *The Illinois family reunification program was established in 1988 as a response to the growing number of children entering foster care without a similar trend in the number of children leaving care.*

### **The Study**

- In 1988, the state of Illinois developed a family reunification program, because the number of children in out-of-home-care was increasing without a comparable number of children leaving care.
- It was thought that many agency staff were unwilling to risk family reunification.
- This article presents the major findings from 24 sites throughout Illinois.
- Families were eligible to participate in family reunification services if they were newer to the child welfare system and had a child under age 13 who had been in placement for six months or less.
- The families received: cash assistance, help with housing problems, counseling of various types, and case management services.

### **The Methods**

- The program was time limited and intensive, with visitation between children and their birth families.
- Caseworkers had four to six cases with services for approximately six months.
- This program often was overshadowed by the state's larger family preservation program.
- The family reunification program, started in 1990, analyzed 1,014 families through November 1993.
- All but 68 cases (70% total) were closed at the end of data collection.

### **The Findings**

- Overall, approximately 50% of family reunifications occurred in the first year.
- Child-centered problem cases were more likely to be reunified.
- Many reunified families needed and used concrete (money, transportation) services.
- Family reunification could not succeed without parents working with the agency.
- A dilemma was wanting families to succeed, but that could mean the child remained in foster care longer.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The article described a family reunification program which was less intensive and of longer duration than those modeled after traditional family preservation-type services.
- The authors suggested potential pitfalls in planning, implementation.

**Seidl, T. (1995). Is family preservation, reunification, and successful treatment a possibility? A roundtable. In A. V. Levin & M. S. Sheridan (Eds.), *Munchausen Syndrome By Proxy: Issues in Diagnosis and Treatment*, (pp. 411-421). New York: Lexington Books.**

- *This article looked at issues surrounding family reunification when Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (MBP) had been diagnosed. The article reflected the opinions of a roundtable of practitioners.*

### **The Study**

- To accomplish family reunification in a MBP family, agencies must consider:
  - Precise identification of MBP;
  - Psychological and social assessment of the family member who has been diagnosed;
  - Family recognition and recognition of problem by the person diagnosed with MBP;
  - Collaboration to end the MBP issue.
- The model used to evaluate the issue was the Professional Review Action Group (PRAG).

### **The Findings**

- The non-affected parent must be willing to protect the child in preference to saving the relationship with the affected spouse.
- If reunited with the family, the child needs a surrounding safety network,
- The community must be involved and act as a support to the family.
- Some researchers believe that family preservation or family reunification is not advisable for MBP families; the danger is too great.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article addresses a unique situation in family reunification.

**Simms, M. D., & Bolden, B. J. (1991). The family reunification project: Facilitating regular contact among foster children, biological families, and foster families. *Child Welfare, 70(6), 679-690.***

- *This article described a 16-week pilot program carried out by mental health practitioners for biological parents, foster parents, and children in placement.*

### **The Study**

- Neutral settings were created where biological parents, foster parents, and the children in placement could come together to work towards family reunification.
- The staff that developed this program understood that visiting between birth parents and their children who are in placement can be very stressful.
- Children can sense the conflict that sometimes arises between their birth parents and their foster parents. Children feel as if their loyalties are being tested.

### **The Methods**

- The pilot program took place in 1987. The Connecticut DCYS funded a 16-week pilot project, the Family Reunification Project (FRP), in Westbury, CT.
- The goals included:
  - Providing neutral, nurturing, and educational environments for all three participating groups,
  - Helping birth parents and children maintain their relationships,
  - Helping birth parents to learn more positive parenting skills,
  - Assisting foster parents in understanding role as temporary caregivers,
  - Providing education for foster parents for stability in their homes,
  - Providing access to services for reunified families after children are brought back to the homes, and
  - Accumulation of data to be used for future research.
- The program served children ages 0-12 years between the months of March 1989 and June 1989. Eight foster children received services.
- The FRP project offered support groups for birth parents and foster parents.

### **The Findings**

- This was a flexible model and was easily replicable.
- It was difficult to get birth parents to open up to their caseworker.
- In the end, the birth parents had very positive feels about this project.
- The staff believed that 9 to 12 months of services were necessary to have a long-term impact on family reunification.
- Cost of FRP was \$2,000 per child, per year, compared to \$4,000 for foster care.
- The authors wanted to conduct a larger evaluative study based on this pilot.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The model included the often-overlooked role of foster parents in facilitating permanency planning and family reunification.
- This pilot study merited further exploration.

**Staff, I., & Fein, E. (1994). Inside the black box: An exploration of service delivery in a family reunification program. *Child Welfare*, 73(3), 195-211.**

- *This article discussed the importance of conducting research on family reunification programs. Research on the process of family reunification can have a major impact on the field.*

**The Study**

- This study explored service delivery in family reunification.
- Casey Family Services commissioned the study at sites in CT, ME, and VT.
- The study examined:
  - 30 days of assessment of the family;
  - 6 months of family reunification discussion;
  - 24 months for case closing; and
  - 18 months of follow-up services.

**The Methods**

- Staff completed daily assessment sheets with 462 possible activity-purpose combinations.

**The Findings**

- Sites varied as to how family support staff and social workers spent their time. Overall, staff spent: (activities could occur simultaneously)
  - 24% of time in contact with client families;
  - 12% of time in contact with other professional in the child welfare system;
  - 20% of time in providing concrete services;
  - 16% of time preparing for visits;
  - 8% of time providing direct counseling;
  - 18% of time traveling;
  - 14% of time working with parent/child education and support groups;
  - 23% of time spent with clients and collateral professionals; and
  - 22% of time meeting with other staff.
- Family support staff spent more time than social workers in direct contact with families.
- No two family reunification programs, even within different sites of the same agency, are ever exactly the same.
- Differences in the opinions and education of staff can affect the design and outcome of a program.

**R2P Evaluation**

- This article delineated the specific activities and interventions essential to family reunification services. These programs ceased operation as Casey was in the process of re-evaluating or revising the services.

**Taussig, H. N., Clyman, R. B., & Landsverk, J. (2001). Children who return home from foster care: A 6-year prospective study of behavioral health outcomes in adolescence. *Pediatrics*, 108(1).**

- *This article examined outcomes for youth who experienced family reunification. This was the first study of its kind to examine outcomes for reunified youth.*

**The Study**

- This study in San Diego, CA, evaluated children who had been in foster care for at least five months.
- The initial sample was 200 children (n=200), ages 7-12 who entered care between May 1990 and October 1991. The youth were interviewed at study inception and six years later. Seventy-five percent (n=149) were interviewed at the 6-year follow-up point, of these, 63 had experienced family reunification and 86 had not.

**The Methods**

- The researchers evaluated: risk behaviors, life-course outcomes, and current symptomatology.

**The Findings**

- Children who had experienced family reunification were more likely to:
  - Be more self-destructive,
  - Experience substance use,
  - Have higher total-risk behavior problem standardized scores,
  - Receive a ticket or experience arrest,
  - Drop out of school,
  - Achieve lower grades,
  - Continue to experience internalizing behaviors, and
  - Show overall lower competence.
- No significant difference was found in the following areas between children who did or did not experience reunification:
  - Delinquency,
  - Sexual behaviors,
  - Pregnancy,
  - Suspension, and
  - Externalizing behaviors.
- Possible reasons for the findings include:
  - Factors that led to the youth's removal are still present.
  - Stressors associated with family reunification were not addressed.
  - Issues exist relating to differences between birth and foster parents

**R2P Evaluation**

- Good study but limitations included small sample and reliance on self-reports.
- The study underscored the importance of follow-up services and research.

**Teare, J. F., Becker-Wilson, C. Y., & Larzelere, R. E. (2001). Identifying risk factors for disrupted family reunifications following short-term shelter care. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, Summer 9(2), 116-122.**

- *This article reported on a study of children in short-term residential care who were then reunified with their birth families. The families were contacted one to three years after discharge from care to see if there was any subsequent placement.*

### **The Study**

- For this study, the authors defined short-term care as 30-60 days. Long-term care was defined as 18 months or longer.
- The authors attempted to develop a risk assessment tool for this study.
- The purpose of the study was evaluate outcomes for children with short-term stays in care.

### **The Methods**

- The study assessed families with a youth, ages 10-18, who was in short-term residential care.
- While in short-term care, children and their families received intensive services for approximately two weeks, including:
  - Building relationships,
  - Empowering youth,
  - Teaching youth life skills,
  - Group/individual counseling, and
  - Family classes – parent training, mediation between parent/child.
- Data were collected on youth who entered care between June 1993 and June 1994.

### **The Findings**

- The most significant factor found for disrupted family reunifications was personal problems of the youth.
- A marginally significant finding was that youth who have had more numbers of formal placements tended to have disrupted family reunifications.
- Limitations of the study included:
  - Many data were obtained through youth interviews and file reviews, only
  - Low subjects-to-predictors ratio
  - Attrition was larger at follow-up
- At follow-up, 60% of the youth had experienced disrupted family reunifications.
- Working with both the child and the family in this short-term care is imperative.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- Very few studies have evaluated children in very short-term care. This article suggested that short-term care may not give a family enough time to work through problems, especially the problems of the youth who were in care.

**Teare, J. F., Furst, D. W., Peterson, R. W., & Authier K. (1992). Family reunification following shelter placement: Child, family, and program correlates. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 62(1), 142-146.**

- *This article examined youth who were placed in short-term care in shelters for runaway and troubled youth who were then reunified with their families. Analyses were conducted to see what common factors were associated with youth who were reunified and with youth who were not.*

### **The Study**

- Many children who were placed in short-term facilities for runaway or troubled youth were not runaways. Families or agencies sometimes placed their children there because the family was facing a crisis that involved the youth.
- This study attempted to define factors that could help identify children who were more likely to be reunified with their family.

### **The Methods**

- 100 children were interviewed at intake, between January 1 and June 30, 1990.
- The sample was representative of the general population of youth in shelters in Nebraska.
- Most of the youth were not runaways. They were in the shelter temporarily due to family crisis.
- The average length of stay was 16.70 days.
- On average, youth reported:
  - 8.8 types of problem behavior, and
  - 3.32 types of family problems.

### **The Findings**

- In the study,
  - 58 children were reunified with their families,
  - 26 were not, and
  - for 16 family reunification was not an option.
- All analysis was conducted on the 84 who had the option of reunification.
- Children who were not reunified tended to experience more family problems.
- The authors concluded that temporary shelters need to work with the whole family. and not just the youth, because it is very rare that the youth is a runaway.
- Study limitations:
  - Relied heavily on youth self-reports
  - Small sample

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This study added support to the need for a family-centered approach in the treatment of troubled youth.
- There was a need for further research related to specific treatment options for this population.

**Thomlison, B. (Undated). A selective review of family reunification services research. In *A System of Care for Children's Mental Health: Expanding the Research Base: 10th Annual Research Conference Proceedings*. Calgary, AB, Canada: The University of Calgary.**

- *This summary described and collectively examined eight current service research studies in family reunification.*

### **The Study**

- This summary was a starting point for more studies in family reunification.
- The eight studies included:
  1. Family reunification in Great Britain – Biehal and Wade
  2. A longitudinal study of family reunification – Courtney and Wong
  3. Parental visitation and family reunification – Davis, Landsverk, and Newton
  4. Family reunification with high-risk children – Farmer
  5. Reentry into out-of-home care – Festinger
  6. Family reunification and a one-year follow-up – Fraser, Walton, Lewis, Pecora, and Walton
  7. Family reunification's impact on child psychosocial functioning – Landsverk, Davis, Granger, Newton, and Johnson
  8. Canadian family reunification pilot study – Thomlison

### **The Findings**

- The combined results of studies in Canada, Great Britain, and the United States tended to show:
  - Reunification was only the physical return home.
  - Reunification rates varied between 13-90% and reentry rates vary between 10-33%.
  - Family reunification was complex, and the services provided were widely divergent.
  - Intensive and brief services positively affected outcomes.
  - When families utilize court-recommended family visits, reunification was more likely.
  - At 12 months follow-up, there was no association between parent visiting and return to out-of-home care.
  - Reentry increased with low levels of parenting skills social supports.
  - Severity of parent or child problems was a strong predictor of reentry into care.
  - First reunification attempts were more successful than later attempts.
  - Children need psychological support from biological and foster families.
  - Children with behavioral or emotional problems were less likely to experience family reunification.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article was a brief summary of several family reunification research projects.

**Thomlison, B., Maluccio, A. N., & Abramczyk, L. W. (1996). The theory, policy, and practice context of family reunification: An integrated research perspective. *Children and Youth Services Review, 18(4/5), 473-488.***

- *This article reviewed research in three British books with the purpose of recognizing the role of birth parents and examined how to make birth parents partners with child welfare staff.*

### **The Study**

- There is evidence that family poverty and related factors are a persistent barrier to successful family reunifications.
- Family reunification seems to work best when the family and the child acknowledge their problems and concerns, and the agency encourages continued contact.
- The first goal of family reunification should be to reunify the family. If that is not possible, then the agency staff should consider ways to keep the family connected.
- Aftercare services are critically important for family reunification.
- One of the authors believed that different races and ethnicities may receive different services. The author acknowledged that agency staff often does this not purposefully but ignorantly.
- “Protected” children and “disaffected” children differ.
- Return is a process not an event.
- Another author found adolescents in family reunification programs were underserved.
- A program in Ireland “places” children in their birth homes for trial periods. This program did not work because there were not enough services.

### **The Findings**

- Child’s outcomes were directly linked to the outcomes of the birth family.
- Child welfare needed to have a new vision both for family reunification work, specifically, and for child welfare as a whole.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This article was a good reference for international services in family reunification, especially in the U.K.

**University Associates. (1999). *Evaluation of Family Reunification Program: Results of the Family Reunification and Foster Care Comparison Study, Final Report.* Wilson, MI: Author.**

- *This study compared child placement outcomes and potential cost savings in two groups: children who received family reunification services and similar children who returned home from foster care during the same time without services.*

**The Study**

- Three agencies were contracted to provide family reunification services to a 12-county area in Michigan.
- The study included 705 families and 2,299 children and was conducted over a five-year period from November 1992 to October 1997.

**The Methods**

- All the sites administered the same family reunification model:
  - Assessment,
  - Case management,
  - 24-hour service,
  - Flexible funds to meet family needs,
  - In-home services,
  - Transportation services, and
  - Two staff (1 BA and 1 MA) working together with family.
- Families were required to participate in assessment, family and/or individual therapy, parenting skills classes, and family workshops.
- There were two comparison groups:
  - Treatment group (n=474),
  - Statewide comparison group (n=2,528),
  - Twelve county comparison (n=1,122), and
  - All comparison and treatment group children were age 16 or younger.

**The Findings**

- The treatment group had better follow-up outcomes:
  - 14.6% children in the treatment group reentered care.
  - 31.4% of the statewide comparison group reentered care.
  - 31.5% of the 12-county comparison group reentered care.
- There was success both for child abuse and neglect cases and for delinquent cases:
  - 80.9% remained in the home in child abuse & neglect cases.
  - 75.1% remained in the home in delinquency cases.
- Program costs:
  - \$6,000 per family and \$2,000 per child for the treatment.
  - The average cost per child to remain in foster care is \$6,000.

**R2P Evaluation**

- The article reported very promising findings which merited further exploration.

**Walton, E. (1998). In-home family-focused reunification: A six-year follow-up of a successful experiment. *Social Work Research*, 22(4), 205-214.**

- *This article detailed a six-year follow-up to a Utah family reunification study of Intensive Family-Based Services (IFBSs).*

**The Study**

- The original study included an experimental group of 62 and a control group of 58 in a posttest-only, experimental design.
- The treatment group received 90 days of intensive intervention.
- The control group received routine family reunification services.
- At the end of the 90 days, 96.5% of the treatment group were reunified and 32.1% of the control group were reunified.

**The Methods**

- After one year, 75.4% of the treatment group were still reunified and 49% of the control group were reunified.
- Case records were reviewed six years later using USSDS data.

**The Findings**

- At the six-year mark:
  - The median number of days involving Department of Children and Family Services for the experimental group was 821.
  - For the control group the number of days was 724.
  - There was no significant difference between these numbers ( $p=.434$ ).
  - The total number of referrals to DCFS showed no significant difference between the two groups ( $p=.182$ ).
  - The experimental group received more public agency attention after DCFS case closure.
  - After six years more experimental than control group families were stabilized ( $p=.004$ ).

**R2P Evaluation**

- This was an interesting follow-up to a study featured earlier in this bibliography. Some findings showed that the intervention with the families worked.
- The intervention model should be replicated with a more diverse population to evaluate its generalizability.

**Walton, E., Fraser, M. W., Pecora, P., & Walton, W. K. (1993). In-home family-focused reunification: An experimental study. *Child Welfare*, 72(5), 473-487.**

- *This article discussed research on intensive, in-home, family-based services for family reunification.*

### **The Study**

- Enrolled families (n=57) received 90-days of services and 93% were successfully reunited.
- Of 53 families in the control group, 28% were reunited during the same timeframe.
- Follow-up was conducted at six months and at 12 months.

### **The Methods**

- The goal of the study was to try family preservation services for families experiencing reunification.
- The researchers used a posttest only research design, and the study was conducted through Utah Department of Human Services.
- Family reunification services included:
  - In-home family-centered interventions,
  - Client/caseworker relationships,
  - The addressing of primary needs,
  - Treatment of the entire family,
  - Help for family in accessing services, and
  - Family education in relationship skills.
  - Services included 90 days of intensive, home-based aftercare with concrete services provided (money, transportation, etc.), and skills training.

### **The Findings**

- The study was limited because of Utah's unique population.
- At the end of 90 days:
  - In the treatment group of 57 families, 53 families were reunited.
  - Of the 53 families in the control group, 15 were reunified.
  - These findings were statistically significant.
- At six months follow-up:
  - In the treatment group, 40 families were still reunified.
  - In the control group, 22 of the families were still reunified.
- At one-year follow-up:
  - In the treatment group, 43 families were still reunified.
  - In the control group, 26 of the families were still reunified.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The findings looked promising.
- Further research should explore this model's effectiveness with more diverse populations.

**Warsh, R., Maluccio, A. N., Pine, A. (1994). *Teaching Family Reunification: A Sourcebook*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This book was designed to be a resource for training and educating child welfare staff on the issue of family reunification.*

**The Study**

- The book began by discussing the use of family preservation services for family reunification cases. Caseworkers must recognize the differences when applying preservation models to reunification cases. These differences included:
  - The additional trauma associated with separation.
  - The reestablishment of contact between family members usually needs to be accomplished first.
  - The sense of crisis is not eminent in reunification cases.
  - The idea that the family feels they have failed.
  - The child may have formed a relationship with the foster family.
  - Family reunification services may be needed for longer than preservation services.
- Part I: Rethinking Family Reunification included:
  - Definitions of family reunification principles and guidelines,
  - Discussion on competency-based education and training, and
  - Examination of child welfare issues and dilemmas.
- Part II: Family Reunification competencies for social workers included:
  - Commitment to a set of values that guide practice,
  - Evaluation of family readiness,
  - The use of results of assessment to set goals for family,
  - Collaboration with service providers to work directly with family, and
  - Preparation of family to remain connected, end service, and evaluate work.
- Part III: Curriculum modules for teaching family reunification included:
  - Modules 1-3 include definitions and collaborations,
  - Module 4 includes child and family visiting, and
  - Module 5 includes case study.
- Part IV: Selected Readings

**R2P Evaluation**

- This book was a good reference for teaching agency workers family reunification services. Because this was a 1994 publication, it may need to be updated to include any new literature and assessment models.

**Warsh, R., Pine, B. A., & Maluccio, A. N. (1996). *Reconnecting Families: A Guide to Strengthening Family Reunification Services*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.**

- *This book was a guide for agencies in the process of assessing their service delivery systems in relation to family reunification.*

### **The Study**

- This book was a guide for agency self-assessment and self-study.
- It was developed as a teaching tool that includes current thinking on principles and strategies of family reunification policy, programs, and practices.
- Part I: Overview of family reunification included:
  - Redefinition of family reunification, and
  - Guiding principles or beliefs about practice and policy.
- Part II: Step-by-step instructions for carrying out the family reunification project.
- Part III: Framework for assessing strengths and needs included:
  - The child welfare agency as an organization,
  - The agency's family reunification services, and
  - The agency's relationship with other key organizations.
- Part IV: Annotated bibliography for reference.
- Part V: Resource guidelines and forms for self-assessment.
- Part VI: Selected bibliography on family reunification after foster care.
- Part VII: Additional forms

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This was a good guide for agency self-assessment. The bibliography sections were helpful for those who wish to read more on these subjects.

**Wells, K. & Guo, S. (1999). Reunification and reentry of foster children. *Children and Youth Services Review, 21(4) 273-294.***

- This article examined several studies in family reunification to discover commonalities in why children reenter care.

### **The Study**

- The study examined the reentry of children into out-of-home care after reunification.
- The article compared several large family reunification studies, including those by Courtney, Goerge, and Landsverk (all included in this annotated bibliography).

### **The Methods**

- The study evaluated 2,616 children (age 15 and younger) who first entered care in the state of Ohio between 1992 and 1993.
- The longitudinal study ran from January 1992 to March 1996.
- Nine independent variables, included:
  - Age at exit,
  - Gender,
  - Ethnicity,
  - Health status at entry,
  - Home from which child was removed,
  - Reason for first placement,
  - Number of months in first placement, and
  - Type of last placement.

### **The Findings**

- Statistical support was found for many of the nine independent variables:
  - Age by ethnicity = slower reunification,
  - Health status = slower reunification,
  - Single parent = slower reunification,
  - Placed with “others” = slower reunification,
  - Neglect = slower reunification, and
  - Hospital = slower reunification.
- The following variables were associated with a more rapid rate of reentry:
  - Children who were older at exit from foster care;
  - Child who were African American;
  - Children who initially entered foster care due to dependency
  - Large number of moves; and
  - Child was in non-relative care.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This study added to the body of research focusing on the factors associated with reunification and recidivism, and thus provided information which was valuable to agencies in the planning and targeting of service resources.

**Westat, Inc. (1995). *A Review of Family Preservation and Family Reunification Programs*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov>.**

- *This report reviewed family preservation and family reunification services in state agencies. For this annotated bibliography, only the family reunification sections were reviewed.*

### **The Study**

- The report described the “state of the field” and reviewed state and county family reunification programs. Many were small and difficult to find.
- The study criteria for family reunification programs included:
  - Program focus on populations served by child welfare services.
  - Program based on well-articulated theories.
  - Program operating long enough to see expected results.
  - Program consistently implemented within the site.
  - Program serves sufficient number of families.
  - Key stakeholders are willing to allow evaluation.

### **The Methods**

- The researchers contacted state agencies to see if they had family reunification programs. Most of the states had a statewide, family reunification model.
- Researchers initially identified 26 programs in 15 states. Of these, eight programs were part of a placement prevention program, 11 were distinct reunification programs, and 1 was a mixture.
- Most programs were a mix of concrete services and counseling services and were initiated between 1990-1994. Variations occurred in the length of treatment, and many programs served a limited amount of families.

### **The Findings**

- In the report, the researchers detailed 12 programs in 7 states that met the above criteria and served more than 25 families per year. Programs were located in:
  - Montgomery County, AL
  - Los Angeles County, Sacramento County (EVALUATED), and San Diego County, CA
  - Hennepin County, MN
  - Jackson County and St. Louis City and County (EVALUATED), MO
  - New York City, NY (EVALUATED)
  - Allegany County (EVALUATED) and Philadelphia County, PA
  - Bexar County, TX

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The report was a good source of what state agencies were doing in family reunification and family preservation services.

**Wright, L. E. (2001). *Toolbox Number 1: Using Visitation to Support Permanency*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.**

- *This book was designed to assist child welfare staff in designing visiting plans for children and their families with the ultimate goal of achieving permanency.*

### **The Study**

- This book contained tools for practitioners to use to guide their thinking as they worked with families.
- Permanency seemed to have become lost among services provided, because many new child welfare challenges are taking more staff time.
- This guide helped workers think through the concurrent planning that was encouraged through ASFA.
- The publication had chapters on:
  - Defining visitation,
  - Why visitation is important,
  - General experience of visitation,
  - Context for visitation services,
  - Variations and issues in visitation,
  - Strategies for improving visitation, and
  - Promising programs and practices.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- This publication included tools and questions for practitioners to stimulate thinking about the importance of visitation even if reunification may not be a possibility.

**Wulczyn, F., Zeidman, D., & Svirsky, A. (1997). HomeRebuilders: A family reunification demonstration project. In J. D. Berrick, R. P. Barth, & N. Gilbert, *Child Welfare Research Review, Vol. 2*. New York: Columbia University Press.**

- *This chapter described the HomeRebuilders demonstration project. The project was designed as an experiment in family reunification. The concept included giving agencies the freedom to use a fixed amount of money to tailor services to each individual family.*

### **The Study**

- HomeRebuilders was carried out by the New York State Department of Social Services.
- Basically, HomeRebuilders was a wrap-around service tailored for each specific child and family.
- Objectives included:
  - Demonstration of the effectiveness of service continuity, intensified discharge planning, and provision of aftercare services as a means of earlier permanency for children.
  - Testing of an alternative to the per diem method of agency reimbursement.

### **The Methods**

- The target population was New York City families with children in foster care on July 1, 1993.
- The program was tested at several agencies. Some agencies included children age 12 and younger. Other agencies included children age 17 and younger.
- HomeRebuilders used a three-year monetary allocation for care and aftercare.
- Participants were selected from participating agencies. A treatment group and a control group were both randomized.
- Caseworkers had 13-20 cases.
- The caseworker was on call to the family 24 hours a day.
- The program was very demanding of the caseworkers.

### **The Findings**

- Initially, the researchers projected 309 discharges back to the home would occur during the study. The actual number was 380.
- After one year, 79% of the treatment group and 85% of the control group remained in foster care.

### **R2P Evaluation**

- The concept of having an allocation for each family was an innovative idea. Concern arose, though, when examining the burden of the intensity of services placed on the caseworkers.