

National Quality Improvement Center

QIC • AG

Adoption & Guardianship
Support and Preservation

A Program funded through a five-year cooperative agreement with
Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau in partnership with:
Spaulding for Children
The University of Texas at Austin,
The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Updated June 2017

ALL Site Quarterly Meeting

- Welcome
- Roll call
- Learning opportunity will be recorded
- Questions will be taken at the end of the presentations
- Survey at conclusion of webinar

PRESENTER

Dr. Mark Testa

Sandra Reeves Spears and John B. Turner

Distinguished Professor

School of Social Work

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



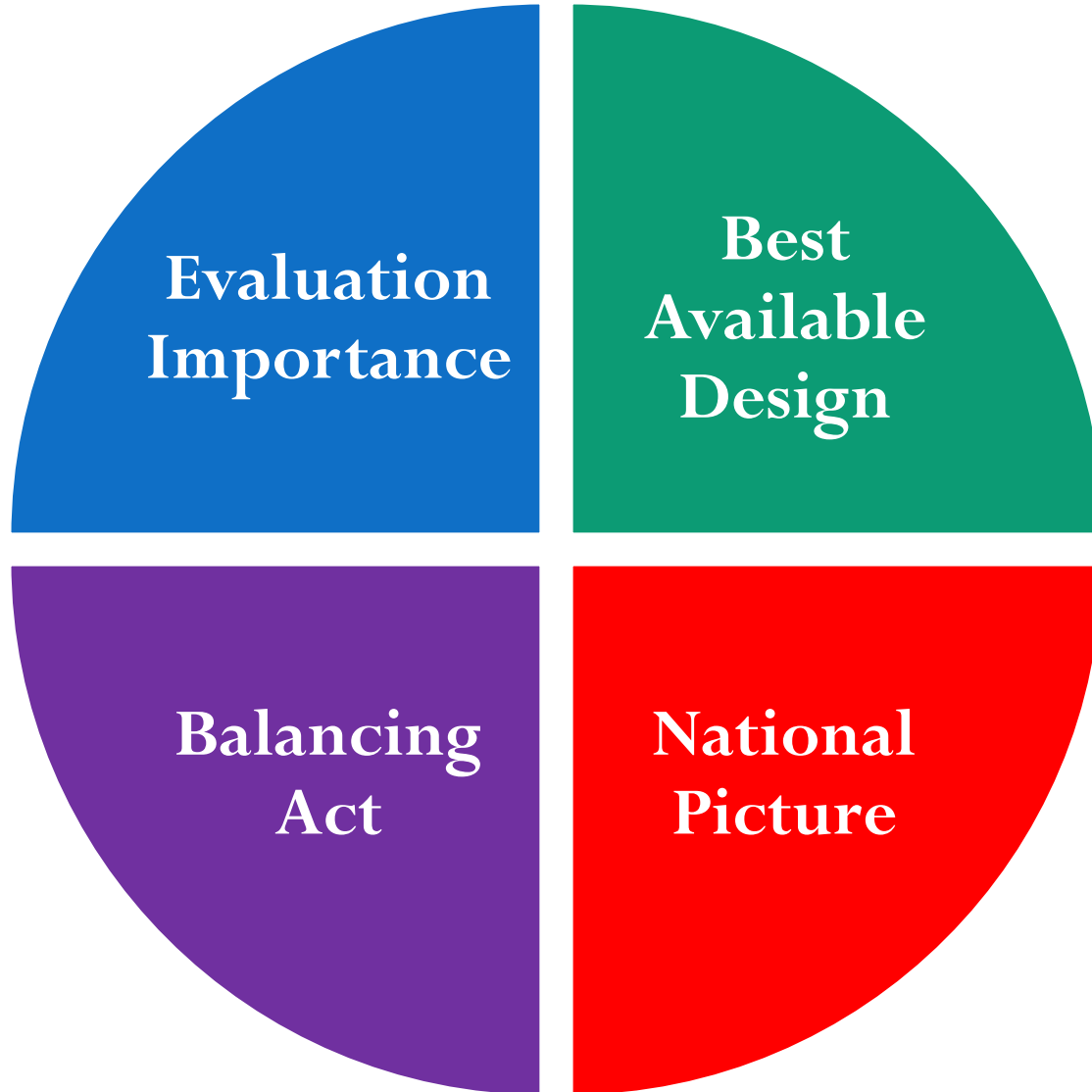
THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Understanding Evaluation Challenges in the Context of Child Welfare Practice

Mark Testa
Spears-Turner Distinguished Professor
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
June 23, 2017

School of Social Work

Four Parts



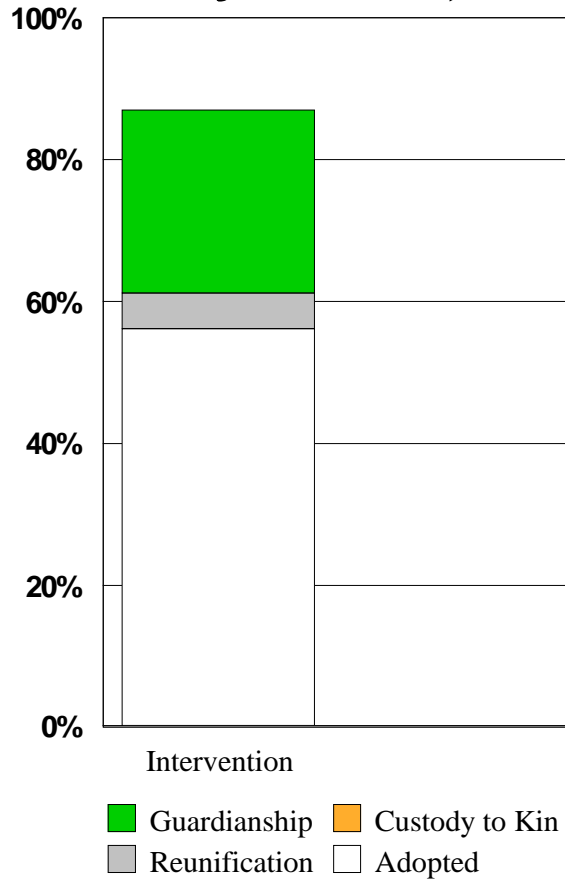
Importance of Evaluation

What Works?

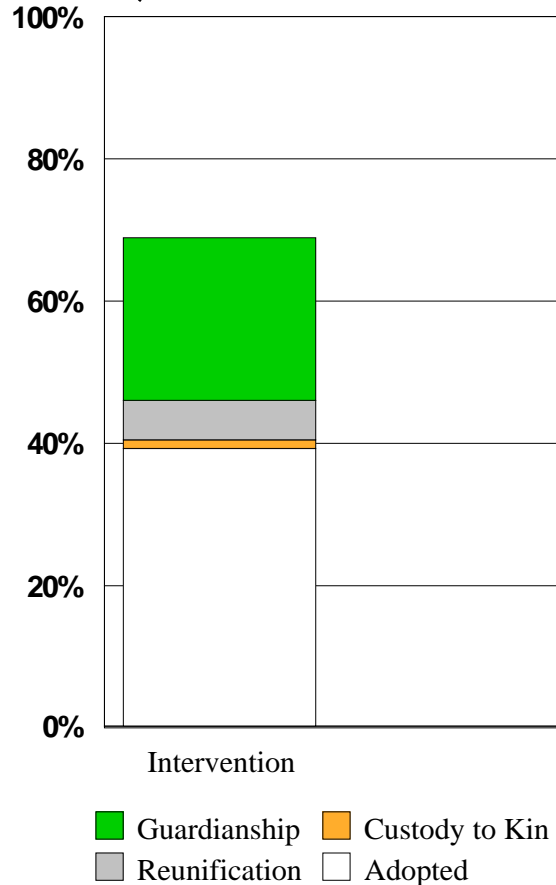
- Does eating ice-cream increase child vocabulary?
- Does attending a top-ranked university increase lifetime earnings?
- Does the availability of subsidized guardianship for kin decrease reunification rates?

Outcomes of Subsidized Guardianship Interventions

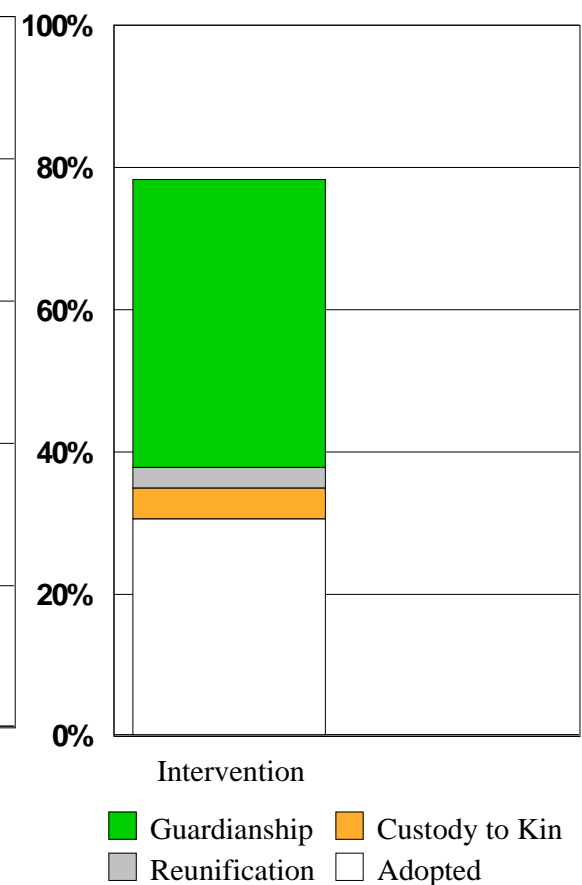
Illinois
(June, 2007)



Wisconsin
(September, 2009)

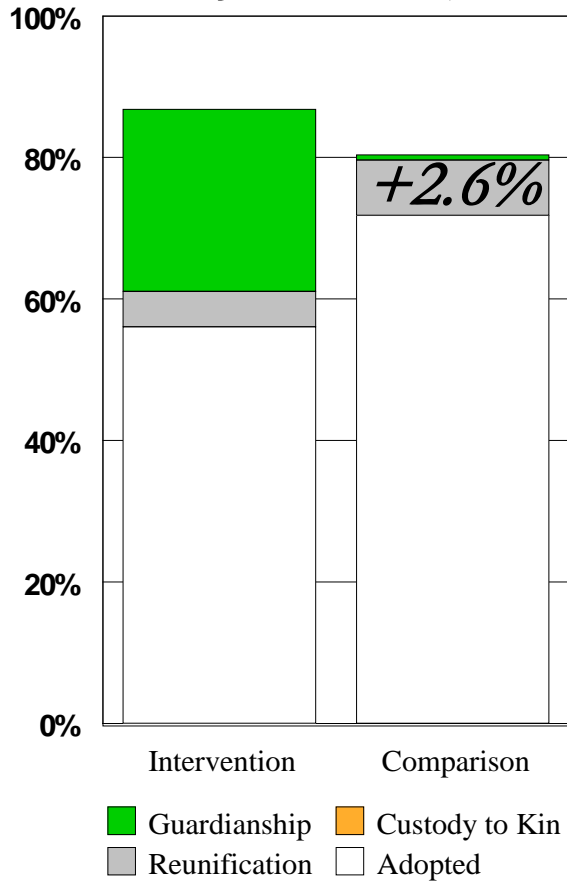


Tennessee
(October, 2009)

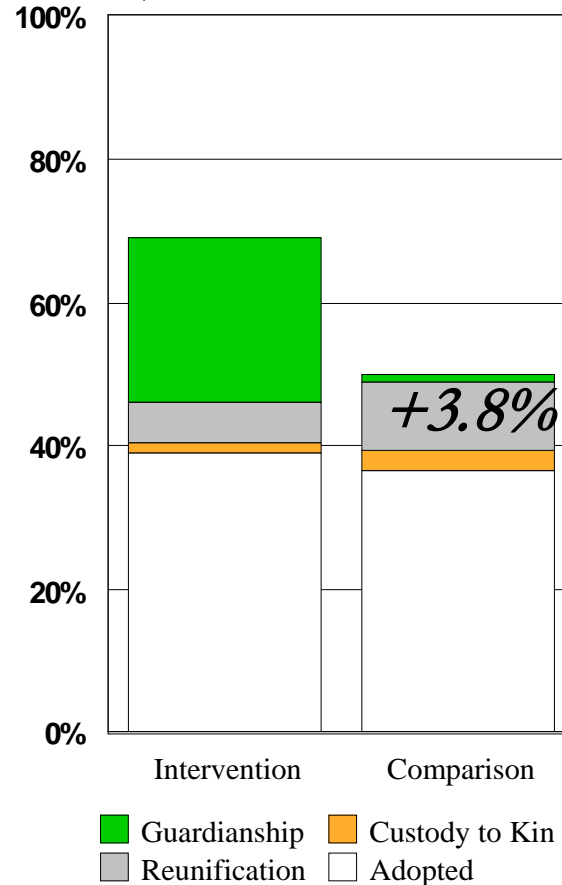


Outcomes of Subsidized Guardianship Interventions

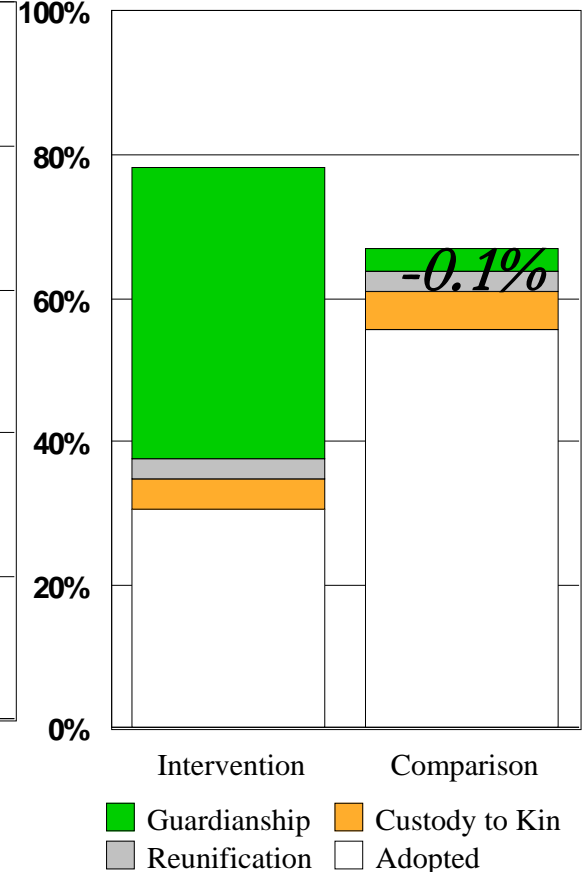
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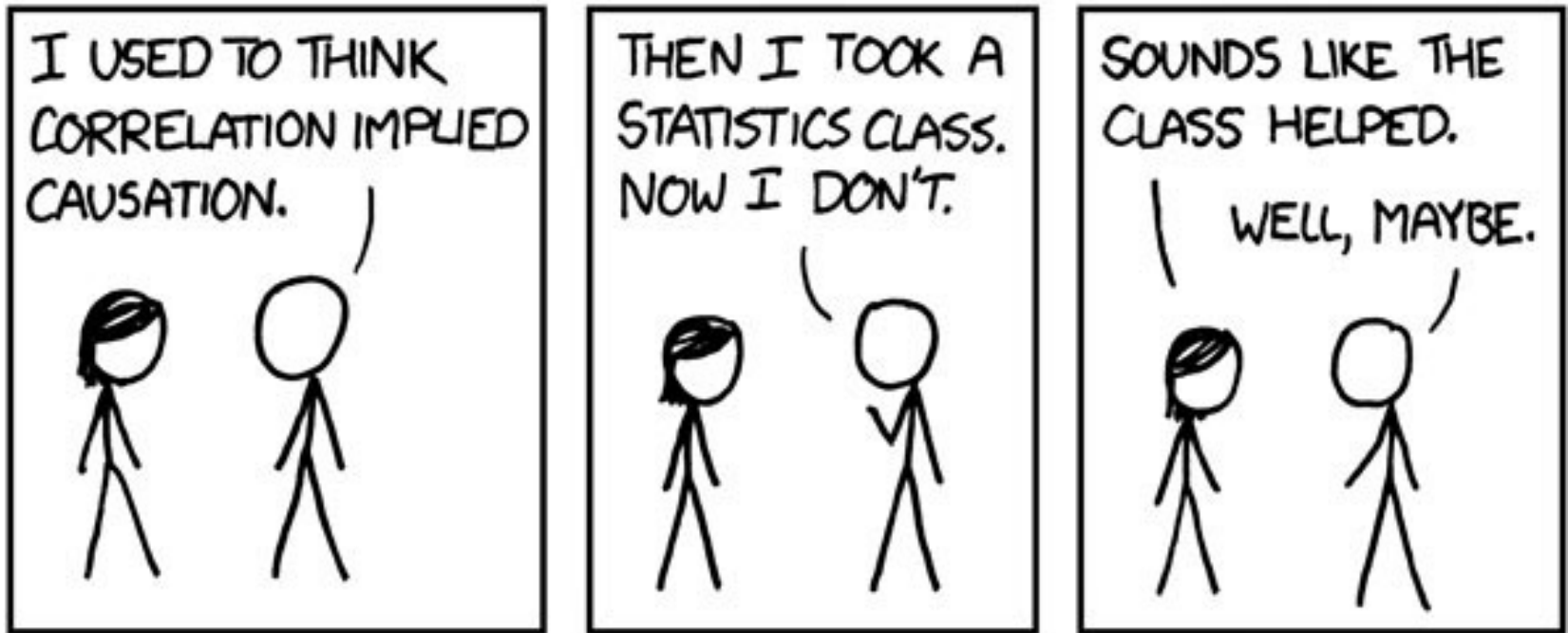


Tennessee
(October, 2009)



Best Available Design

The Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference



*In the 1998 film,
Sliding Doors, the
audience gets to
observe two potential
outcomes after the plot
splits into parallel
universes...*



SLIDING DOORS
SLIDING DOORS

*that show what could
happen depending on
whether Gwyneth
Paltrow's character
catches a London
underground train or
not.*

Parallel Universes



Factual



In the top timeline (let's call it the factual), she misses the train and is hospitalized. While she is in the hospital, a man attempts to steal her handbag.

Counterfactual



*Alpha counterfactual timeline, sketches her boyfriend and
with his ex-girlfriend. She dumps him and moves out
of the apartment.*

Counterfactual Game

- What if the identical group of children could be simultaneously observed under the intervention and comparison conditions?



vs.



- This is the ideal (but impossible) comparison

Unbiased Allocation

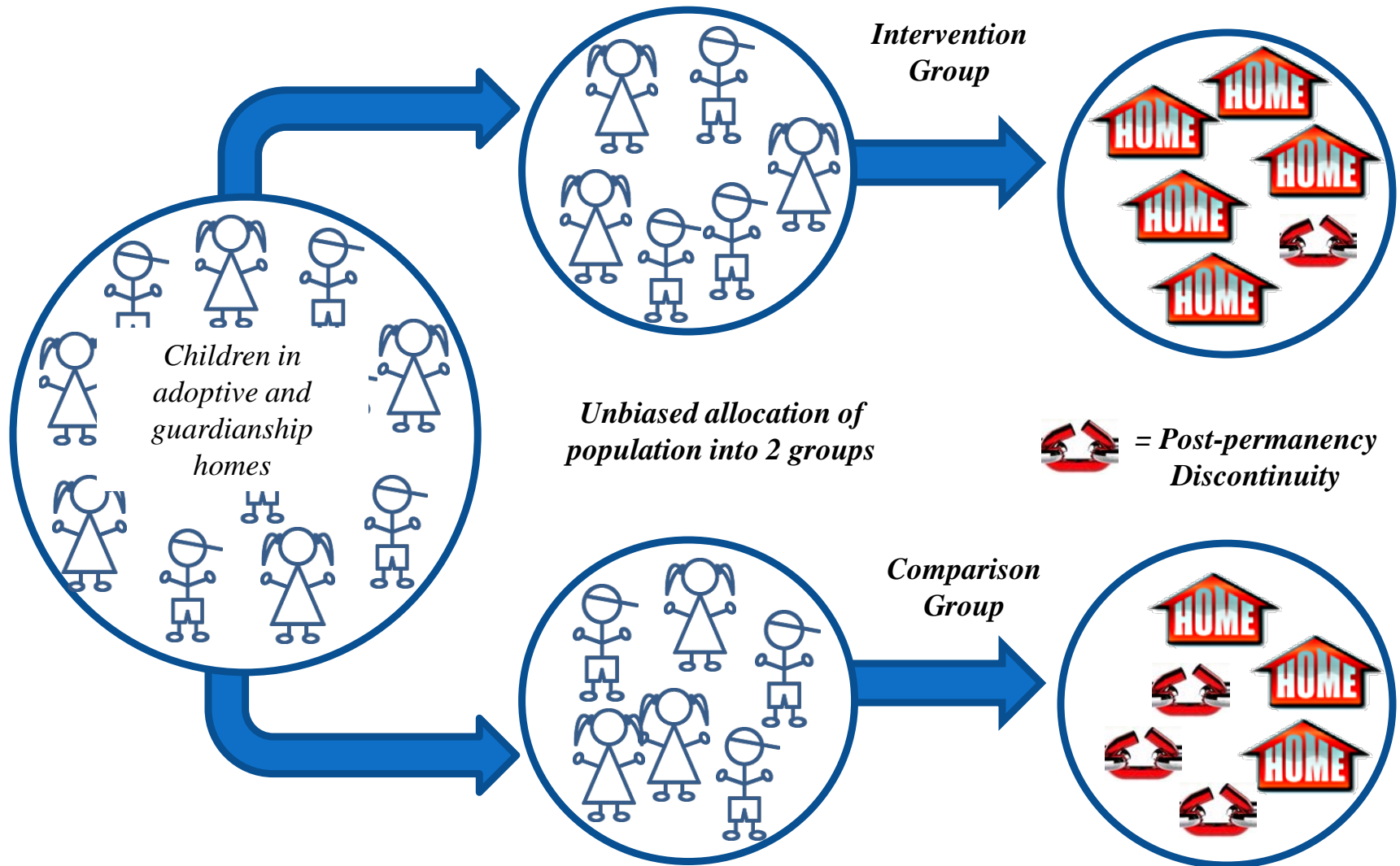
- Unbiased allocation to intervention & comparison groups (e.g. alternation, rotation, randomization) offers the best approximation to the ideal (but impossible) comparison.



vs.



Logic of Experimental Design



Casual Effect is Average of Unobservable Individual Differences in Length of Stay

Subject _j	Potential Outcomes		Causal Effect	
	SG = O _j ^I	Usual = O _j ^C	$\sigma = O_j^I - O_j^C$	% Change
1	100	100	0	
2	300	650	-350	
3	530	1100	-570	
4	700	1200	-500	
5	900	770	130	
6	500	470	30	
Unobservable True Average	505	715	-210	-29.4%

Unknown Potentials

“Human life occurs only once, and the reason we cannot determine which of our decisions are good and which bad is that in a given situation we can make only one decision; we are not granted a second, third or fourth life in which to compare various decisions.”

Milan Kundera

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

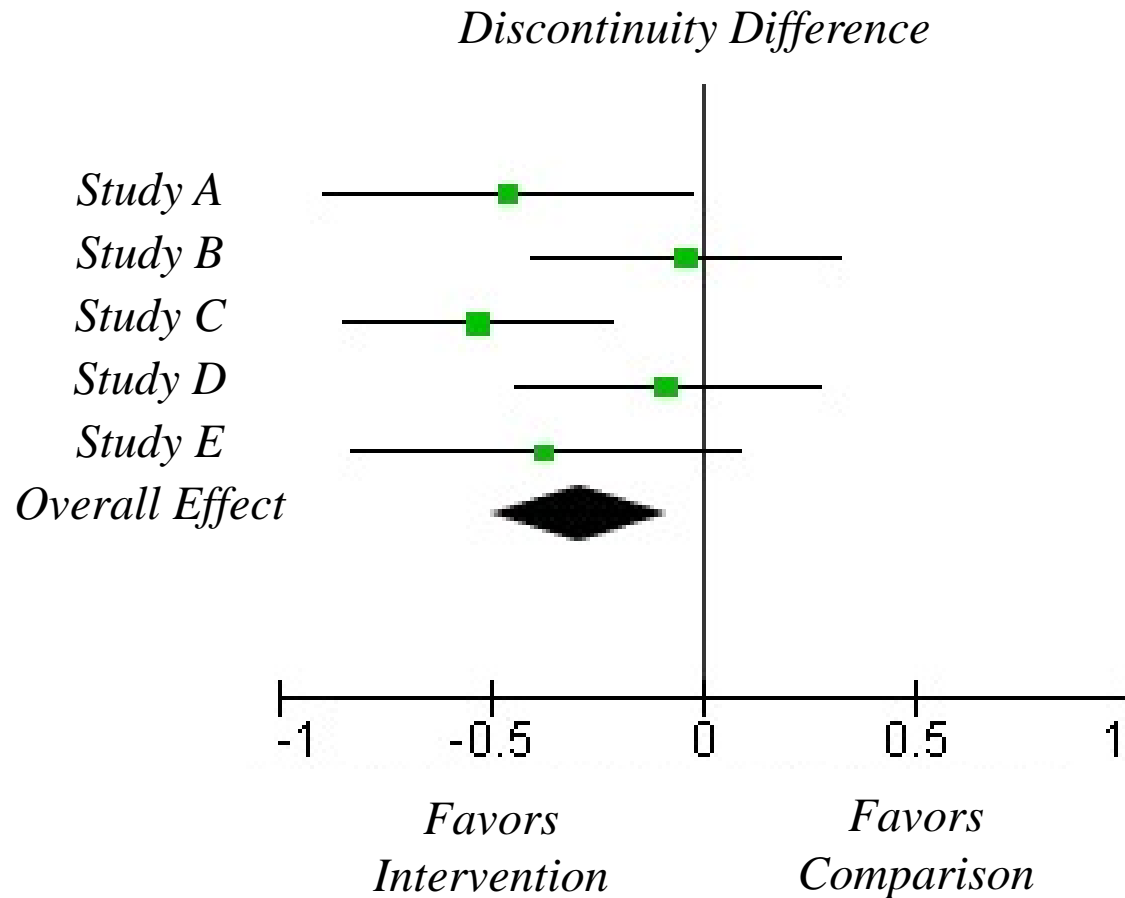
Average Causal Effect (ACE) Can Be Approximated with Flip of the Coin

Subject _j	Randomized	Potential Outcomes		Causal Effect	
	I _j vs. C _j	O ^I _i	O ^C _j	$\sigma = O^I_i - O^C_i$	% Change
1	C		100		
2	I	300			
3	C		1100		
4	C		1200		
5	I	900			
6	I	500			
Unobservable True Average		505	715	-210	-29.4%
Randomized Observed Average		567	800	-233	-29.2%

How Experiments Work

- Randomly assigning children delinks services from individual characteristics
- We expect the intervention and comparison groups to look the same (e.g. placement type, age, kin, race)
- Therefore, if differences in outcomes emerge, we can be reasonably confident that the intervention caused the differences rather than
 - Preexisting differences at baseline (selection)
 - Changes that would have occurred in any event (maturation)
 - Happenings that unfold over time (history)
 - Differences in how things are measured (instrumentation)

Meta-Analysis Forest Plot



Evidence Hierarchy

Meta-analyses &
Systematic
Research Reviews
of Multiple RCDs

Randomized
Controlled (TOT)
Designs

Randomized Encouragement
(ITT) Designs

Quasi-Experimental Designs

Observational & Case Studies

Expert Judgment

BMN Quiz

A psychiatric hospital is developing and testing a pilot program to serve fifty (50) youth whose severity and intensity of service needs no longer meet the evidence standard to justify their continued stay in the facility. Youth whose stay in the psychiatric hospital is beyond medical necessity (BMN) will be assigned a BMN Consultant to work with the child's family and medical case management (MCM) team. The MCM team is responsible for implementing the child's clinical treatment plan. Each BMN consultant is assigned up to ten child cases. The theory is that the provision of intensive and clinically knowledgeable BMN consultation will enable the MCM team to resolve problems that otherwise would impede the youth from transitioning to a less-restrictive, family-like setting. The pilot program will be evaluated with a comparison group of another 50 BMN youth who will receive MCM services as usual. It will include youth who meet the criteria for the pilot but for whom: 1) the youth is unwilling or chooses not to participate in the pilot; 2) the youth's MCM team is not willing to receive coaching support and guidance to develop and provide individualized services; or 3) the MCM team is not willing to commit to implementing the child's clinical treatment plan beyond the time it takes to discharge the youth from the hospital.

Evaluation Design

a. Which type of evaluation design best describes what is being proposed here?

(CHOOSE ONE)

Pre-test/post-test design..... 1


Randomized controlled experimental design..... 2

Case study design..... 3

Quasi-experimental design..... 4

Policy Inferences

c. Summarize the policy implications you feel you can confidently draw from the results of the evaluation for rolling-out the intervention statewide if 55% of youth assigned a BMN Consultant were able to transition to a less-restrictive, family-like setting and maintain placement stability for at least 12 months compared to 25% of children assigned to MCM services as usual?



Policy Inferences

c. Summarize the policy implications you feel you can confidently draw from the results of the evaluation for rolling-out the intervention statewide if 55% of youth assigned a BMN Consultant were able to transition to a less-restrictive, family-like setting and maintain placement stability for at least 12 months compared to 25% of children assigned to MCM services as usual?

The difference seems significant, but I have trouble with the comparison group that included students who were unwilling or chose not to participate in the pilot. Doesn't this suggest that, while they are beyond medical necessity, their problems may be more severe than those who agree to participate. Is the trial truly randomized if the comparison group is created based on the unwillingness of youth or staff to participate? If the MCM team is not willing to commit to implementing the treatment plan, doesn't that say something about the quality of the comparison staff compared to the treatment staff? I'm not sure there are confident conclusions to be drawn.

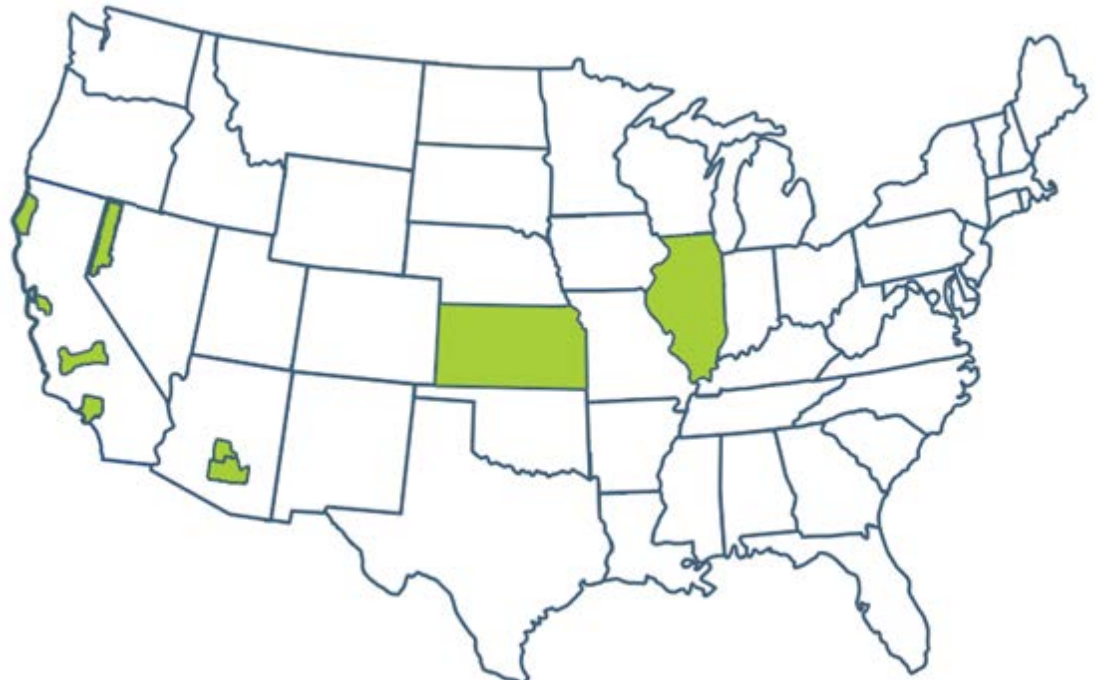
National Picture

Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII)

In 2010, the CB launched PII, a five-year, \$100 million, multi-site initiative to support the implementation of permanency innovations and to evaluate their effectiveness in improving outcomes for foster children who face the most serious barriers to family permanence.

PII Sites

- Arizona Fostering Readiness and Permanency Project (FRP)
- California Partners for Permanency
- Illinois: Trauma Focus Model for Reducing Long-Term Foster Care
- Kansas Intensive Permanency Project
- Los Angeles GLC: Recognize. Intervene. Support. Empower. (RISE)
- Washoe County: Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care

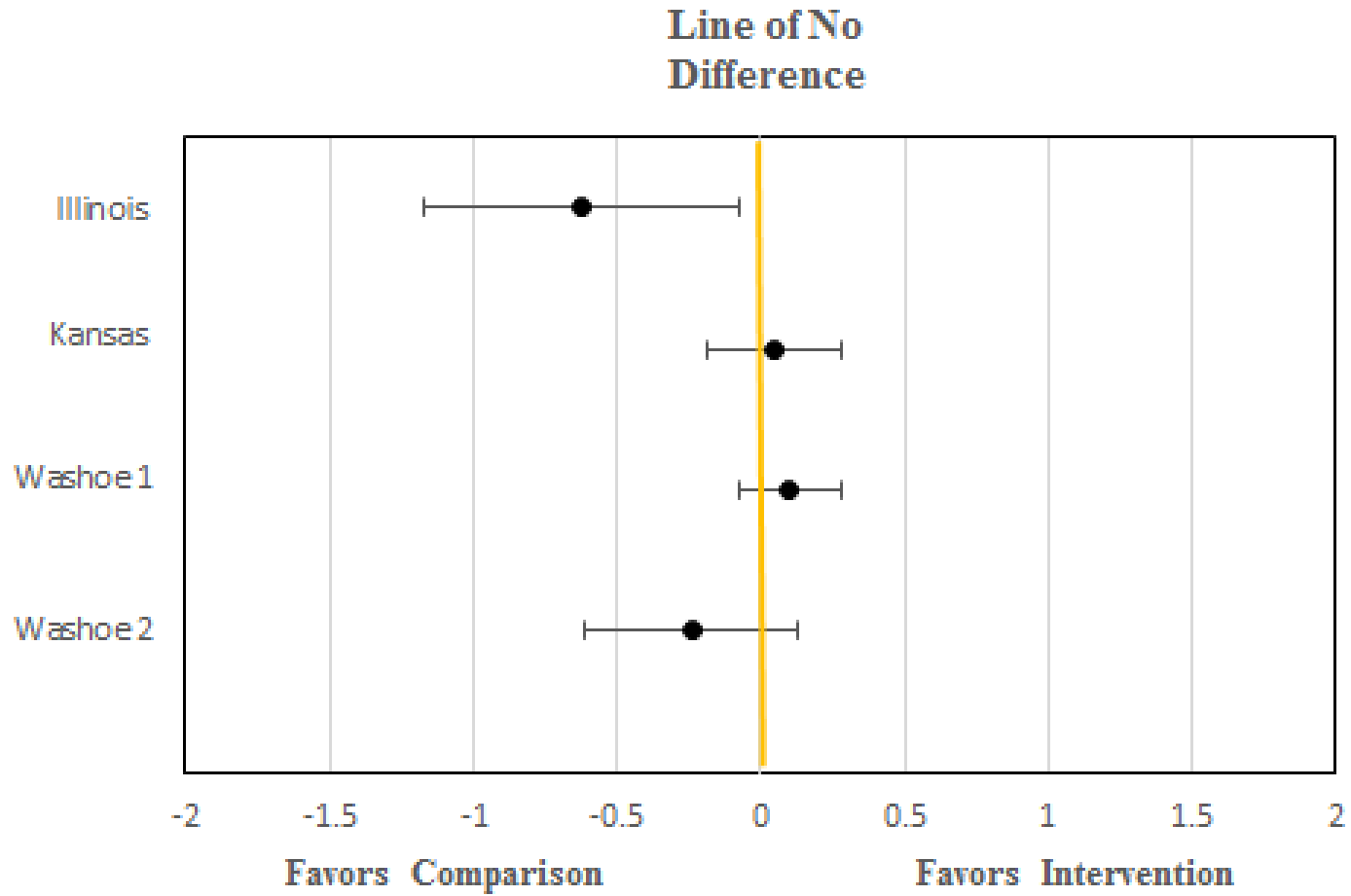


Sites That Progressed to Compare and Learn

- Illinois: Trauma Focus Model for Reducing Long-Term Foster Care
- Kansas Intensive Permanency Project
- Washoe County: Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care



PII Forest Plot



Balancing Act

Formula for Success

*Strong
Intervention
Validity*



*High
Implementation
Integrity*



*Supportive
Enabling
Context*



Capacity of the intervention to produce desired results under conditions of strong implementation integrity in a supportive enabling context.

Faithful implementation of the intervention as planned or as previously tested in support of its effectiveness.

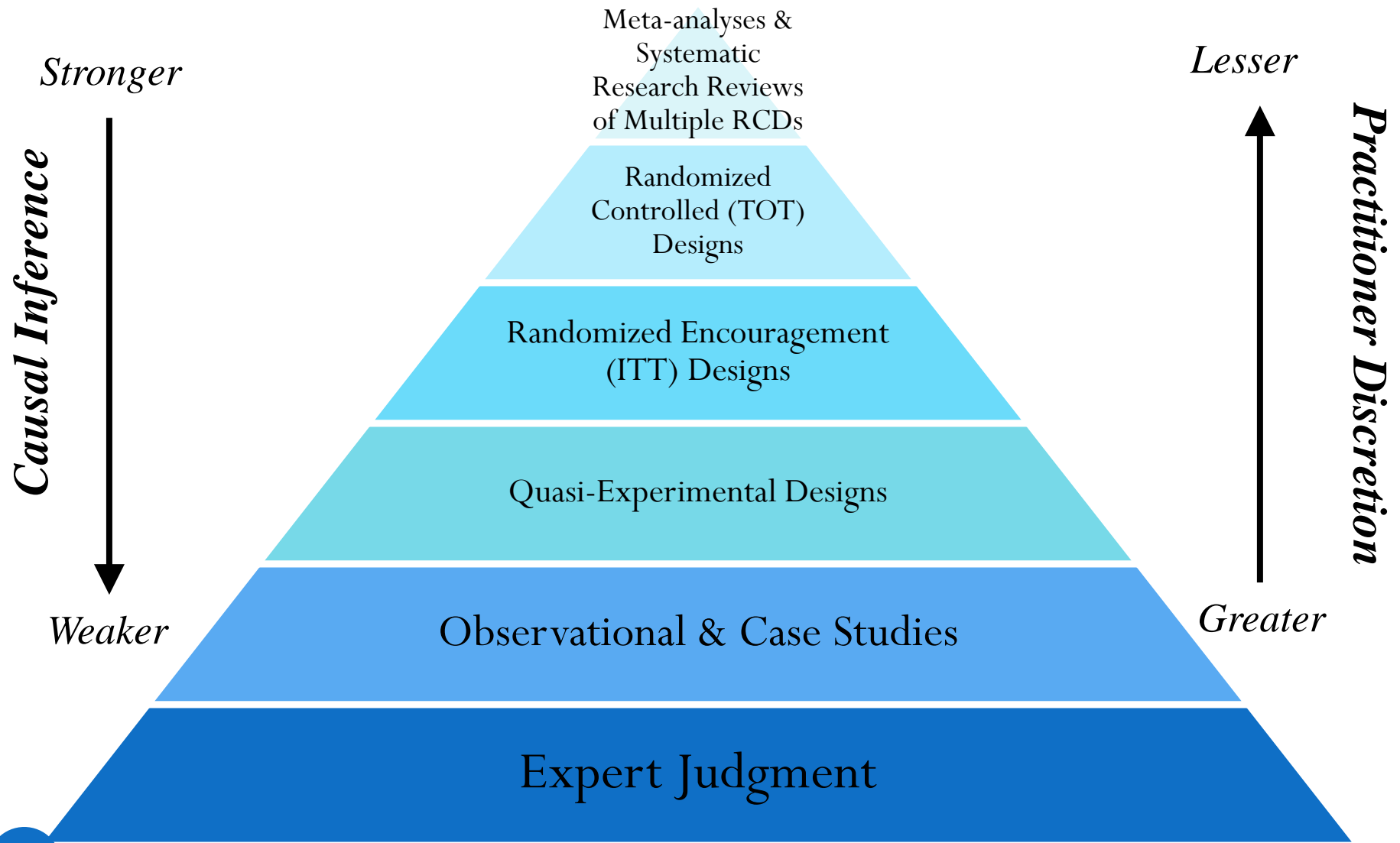
Collaborative leadership that facilitates the explicit and judicious integration of practitioner expertise and judgement with the best available research evidence and due consideration given to the perspectives of the people who might be affected by the actions.

*Improved
Results*

Accountability Matrix

Degree of Confidence		Implementation Integrity	
		High	Low
Intervention Validity	Strong	Improved Results	Sub-Optimal Results
	Weak	Null Results	Possibly Harmful Results

Tensions in Evidence Building



Rossi's Iron Law of Evaluation

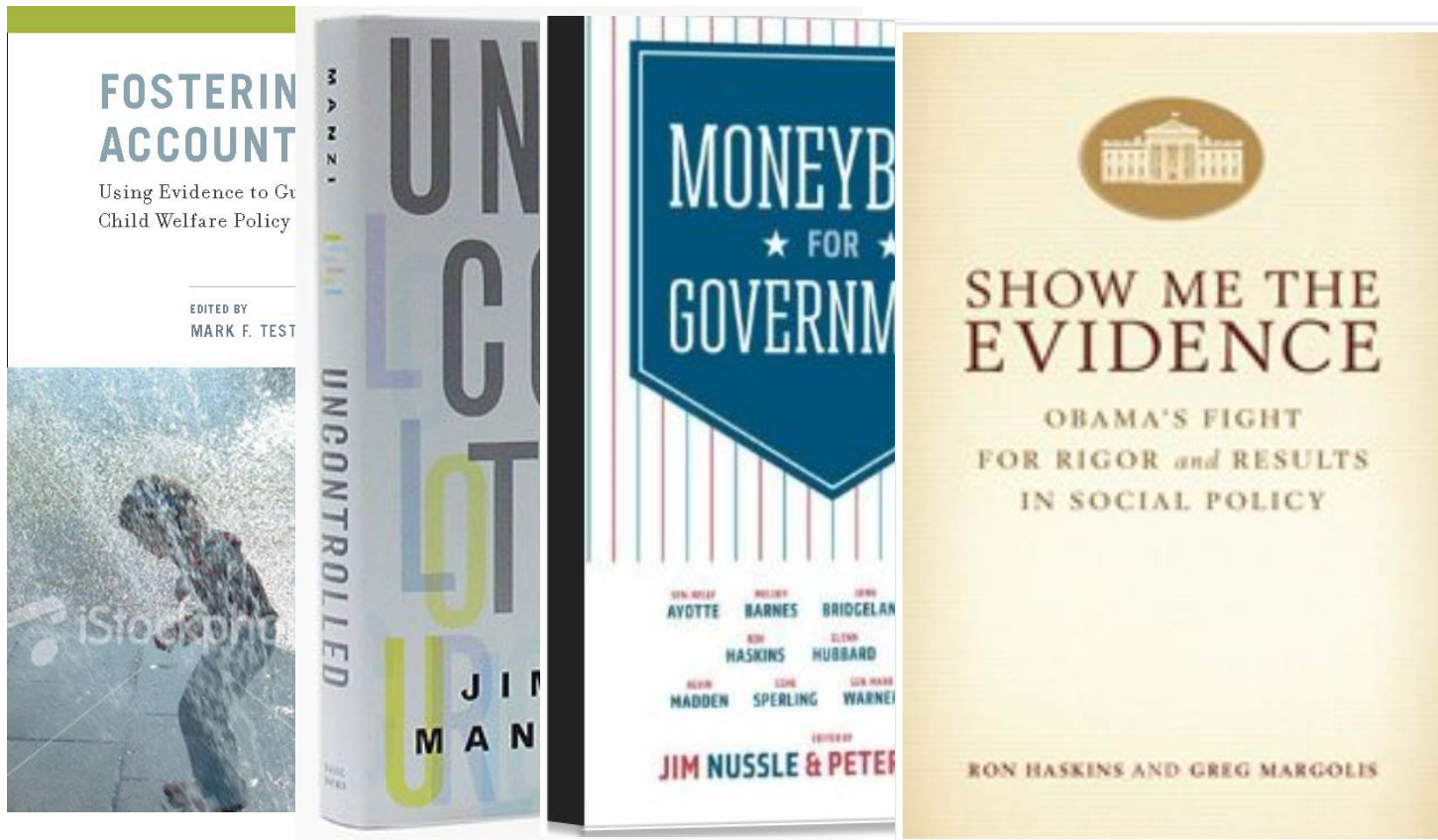
“If there is any empirical law that is emerging from the past decade of widespread evaluation research activities, it is that the expected value for any measured effect of a social program is zero. In short, most programs, when properly evaluated, turn out to be ineffective or at best marginally accomplishing their set aims.”

Rossi, P.H. (1978) Issues in the evaluation of human services delivery. *Evaluation Quarterly*, 2(4), 573-599.

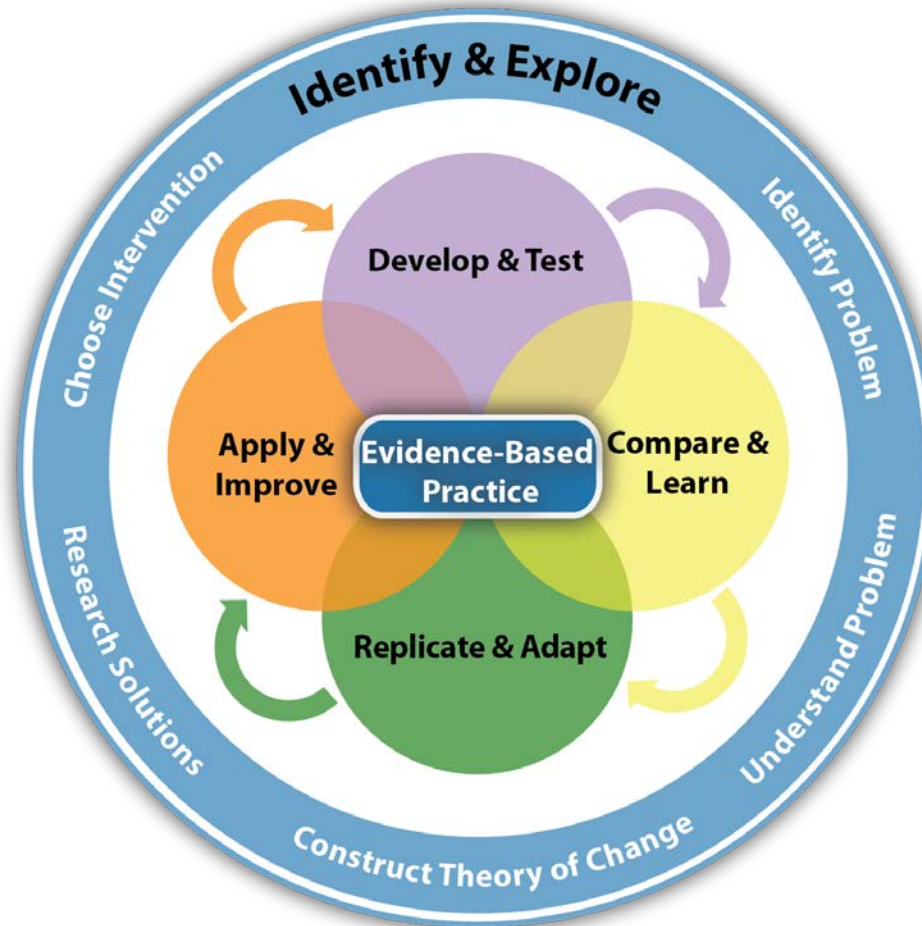
When Prophecy Fails

- Ego involvement in understanding (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, pp. 14-15) leads people to confirm what they already believe, while ignoring contrary data. Also called motivated reasoning, it drives people to develop elaborate rationalizations to justify holding beliefs that logic and evidence have shown to be wrong.
- Motivated reasoning responds defensively to contrary evidence, actively discrediting such evidence or its source without logical or evidentiary justification. Clearly, motivated reasoning is driven by moral intuitions, which motivates people to vehemently defend obvious falsehoods.

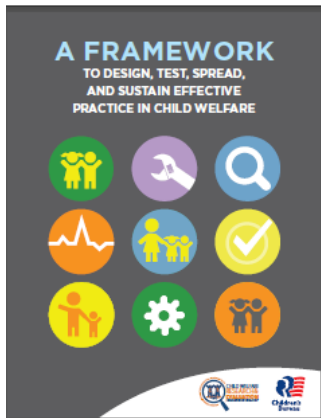
Results-Oriented Accountability



A Framework to Design, Test, Spread, and Sustain Effective Practice in Child Welfare (2013)



Evidence Building in Child Welfare



http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pii_ttap_framework.pdf

Part 1 - Introducing a New Framework (7 min. 54 sec.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qe6gQDYF02o&feature=youtu.be>

Part 2 - Identify & Explore (10 min. 4 sec.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyeHg4aCNN0&feature=youtu.be>

Part 3 – Develop & Test and Compare & Learn (10 min. 5 sec.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10FdTbSEiHc&feature=youtu.be>

Part 4 – Replicate & Adapt and Apply & Improve (12 min. 22 sec.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajbLMlpA2Ok&feature=youtu.be>



Summary

- Fund programs with the best available evidence of intervention validity.
- Lavish attention on implementation integrity.
- Cultivate supportive enabling contexts that promote and sustain evidence-based practice and management.
- Rigorously evaluate outcomes using a randomized control or other comparison group.
- Change or replace programs if evidence shows they don't produce the desired results.

Administrative Update

- Key dates document (QIC-AG Sites/Important Dates)
- End of year close out dates for 2016/2017
 - Last quarterly report and work plan
 - Last financial invoice due October 20th
 - Financial invoices need to be up to date
- Gift cards
 - Documentation due October 20th
 - Don't cross fiscal years

Administrative Update

- Implementation Tools on QIC-AG website
- SIM in-person meeting in TN – September 12-13th
- Annual lessons learned webinar in September

Questions



Please Take Time to Complete the Survey



THANK YOU

Additional Information on the QIC-AG can be found at:

www.qic-ag.org



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