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**A CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY OF THE FAMILY PRESERVATION
PROGRAM IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

**A Project
Presented to the
faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino**

**In Partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Social Work**

**By
Jaime Antonio Crisanto**

June 1995

A CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY OF THE FAMILY PRESERVATION

PROGRAM IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA


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By
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June 1994

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ABSTRACT

Family preservation, a program designed to keep families intact and away from the court, is a popular form of service delivery in many Child Protective Service (CPS) agencies. However, controversy exists as to the efficacy, implementation and coordination of this program. Using a constructivist approach this study observes, records, and categorizes emergent themes that appear within the Family Preservation program in the Arlington CPS office in Riverside County, California. Special attention is given to the experiential exchanges and reciprocity formulated between social workers and their client families. This research explores family preservation from the Arlington CPS workers' and clients' points of view. It brings a general understanding of service delivery and program application, and highlights specific issues regarding assessment, client-worker relationships, family functioning and environmental factors. This project identifies why controversies exist regarding Family Preservation and offers suggestions and recommendations that may help dispel some of the misconception about the program.

In loving memory of

my parents

Fernando and Alicia Crisanto.

In spite of adversity, they preserved
our family.

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FOCUS OF THE INQUIRY

Using a constructivist approach, this study addresses the issues surrounding direct service delivery of the Family Preservation program in Riverside County California. Focusing on the challenges faced by the workers and the client families as they are involved in the process of Family Preservation program services and intervention. These "high risk" families have been referred to the Family Preservation program by the Emergency Response worker or the Court Dependency investigator. There are numerous factors that influence some of the families referred to the program. These include substance abuse, and the likely probability of intergenerational histories which affect their current level of functioning.

These families are in need of direct preventive intervention to keep them from becoming involved with the court system. Parents in these families usually are neglectful with their children and, when they are substance abusers, they are not able to provide proper care for their children.

Riverside County's Family Preservation has a narrow criteria for intervening with each case and there are

guidelines for the worker to follow before they can assess cases for program services. The bulk of the services include referrals for parenting education, drug rehabilitation, psychological counseling or testing, and some concrete services such as transportation, home cleanliness education, financial assistance for car or home repairs are also offered as necessary.

The Family Preservation program in Riverside County has been in existence for the past 3 years. This program is a conglomerate of various other projects which include inter-agency and community based models. According to Russ Eldrige (1995), Riverside County's Family Preservation supervisor, the program follows state guidelines and its funding is outcome based according to state regulations and guidelines. It must show at least 60% success rate in order to continue to be funded. This type of funding base is problematic because of the limited 5 year period set for funding. There is no provision for growth or caseload increase, furthermore, the amount of service delivery is less than 5% in relation to other CPS programs and it is conveniently used to justify mandated pre-preventive services.

THE CONTROVERSY

Current Family Preservation programs use a range of intervention models; they vary in intensity and in approach. According to Kaplan and Girard (1994) the history of Family Preservation dates back to the late 1880's settlement houses: These were established in response to the cultural and social confusion brought on by the convergence of industrialization, urbanization and immigration. Since then various other projects have been established. These include: The St. Paul family center in 1947, and the Homebuilders model, which has the most wide appeal. Homebuilders is the most intensive with claims that, between 1974 and 1987, 97% of 3497 cases served avoided placement of children 3 months after termination. (Kinney et al. 1990).

Family Preservation Programs have a direct approach to service delivery, however, these programs are not without controversy. Berliner (1993) believes there are many factors involved that influence abusive families. In addition to isolation, abusive families experience environmental, economic, psychological, and substance abuse problems. Berliner argues that unless a comprehensive policy is formulated, Family Preservation programs miss the mark.

Schuerman, Rzepnicki, and Littell (1994), show that when the choice between substitute care and in-home services is made, it is difficult to balance the values of keeping children safe from harm and maintaining the integrity of the family. According to Schuerman and his colleagues, three principles dominate the assessment in Child Welfare over the past fifteen years. These are: Permanency planning, reasonable efforts, and least restrictive alternatives for placement.

Gelles (1993) also criticizes Family Preservation programs because they are vulnerable to exploitation by politically motivated interest. They appeal to conservatives because these programs are consistent with family values and because they limit government intervention. Liberals, on the other hand, favor Family Preservation because they believe society should support needy and disadvantaged individuals, families and children. Gelles thus question whether it is in the best interest of children to maintain Family Preservation Programs solely on the basis of their political expediency, and because they save the government a substantial amount of money.

According to Flaherty (1993), placement costs range from ten thousand dollars per child per year to one hundred thousand dollars per child per year for special residential care facilities. In comparison, Family Preservation offers a chance for families to stay together more economically. The cost ranges between two to six thousand dollars annually per family. Family Preservation is preferred because of its potential for saving enormous amounts in Foster Care. The impetus behind the preservation of the family is driven by economics and not a social ideal or child protection concern.

Other social scientists, (Fraser, Pecola, Haalapa, 1991), believe intensive programs like the Home builders promote self-sufficiency and self-maintenance for families. They keep keep children from being placed in out-of-home care. Nelson (1990), questions this program's documented success. Homebuilders claim 80% and 95% of the families served remain intact after one year. Nelson views the evidence as testimonial, anecdotal, and self-reported, and therefore biased. Nevertheless, Nelson believes that inferences can be made about Family Preservation Programs' effectiveness.

Scannapieco (1993), points to the lack of research on Family Preservation. She stresses the importance of healthy family functioning as a factor in the prevention of out-of-home placement of children. According to Scannapieco, healthy family function is associated with higher degrees of success in those families that have been referred to the program. However, there are also environmental influences that affect family functioning. She concludes that Families must be empowered and that Family Preservation success must be broaden to include improvement on family function in the areas of parent-child interaction, problem solving, parenting skills and communication.

Maluccio (1986) has done extensive studies on the effects of out-of home placement, permanency planning, and children in foster care. In his research, he focuses on parent and child bonding. Using an ecological perspective, he delineates the primary conditions that affect parent/child attachment and child growth. They include:

Continuity: The parents consistent, constant, and predictable availability in the child's life.

Stability: A nutritive environment that supports the parent/child relationship and the capacities of

both parents and children to engage in the bonding process.

Mutuality: Parent/child interactions that are mutually rewarding and that reinforce the importance of one to the other.

Maluccio also stresses the importance of keeping the biological ties within families because he believes it is crucial to the development of the child's identity. In contrast, Bernard (1992) strongly criticizes Family Preservation on the premise that an abusive home is the most dangerous place for the child. Thus, he believes that the safety of the child should take precedence above everything else.

Apparently, there is a delicate balance between child protection and family preservation. According to McGowan (1990), Family Preservation is subject to the problems of poorly designed and implemented social policies. Family Preservation evolved with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 and its reformed sequel, the Adoption Assistance and child Welfare Act of 1980. Problems exists over the question of what constitutes minimally acceptable levels of parenting, and how social workers balance child protection and the family's right to privacy and autonomy.

As can be seen, family preservation programs are not without controversy and scrutiny from academicians, administrators, policy makers and social workers. More information is needed to help delineate the problems and find solutions; Therefore, the present study probes the dynamics of the process of intervention and interchanges between social workers and the client families.

Using a constructivist approach, this study concerns itself with the constructed realities and perceptions of the circle of stakeholders. These are specific participant interviewees who have a stake in the program. The participants are four social workers and their client families.

The research design is built on the information gathered using ethnographic interviews. Spradley (1979), defines ethnographic interviews as those that are based on ordinary people with ordinary knowledge and the researcher constructs on their experience using their views about their culture setting.

A "Domain Analysis" is assembled with the use of the language bringing concepts, meanings, and the participant's description of their experiences about the Family

Preservation program. The goal is to identify emergent and expedient terms that are used when the interviewer asks "structural questions" (Spradley 1979). These are open-ended questions that elicit responses about persistent themes, concerns, and issues.

The construction of reality is based on the interactive nature and experiential interchanges as they occur or have occurred during or after service delivery of the Family Preservation. Hoffman (1990), has described Constructivism as a process affected by second order views which allow participants to examine issues from a reflective stance. Culture, language, gender and personal biases are all inclusive in the process of reconstruction of a "Constructivist Reality".

FAMILY PRESERVATION CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM FIT

The families involved in the Family Preservation program are at risk for child abuse and the removal of children from their homes. The ongoing risk is that abuse may reoccur. The Family Preservation program strives to involve the clients in the helping process, to participate in identifying the main problems, and to explore with the worker specific solutions for keeping their families intact.

Aderman and Russell (1990) propose that in addition to the isolation that is evident in abusive and neglectful parents, such families engage in distancing behavior to detach themselves from the mainstream of societal demands to conform. Families in trouble see others as untrustworthy, intrusive and controlling.

The authors view the constructive approach as useful for abusive and neglectful families. They propose an alternative model for intervention, maintaining two major principles found in Constructivism. First, each individual observes the world from a personal perspective and, thus, generates his or her own view of reality. No one's beliefs are any more real or valid than anyone else's. Second, individuals are autonomous and cannot be controlled from the outside.

Hoffman (1985 and 1988) applies constructivist principles in clinical settings maintaining that respect for the clients's views is a must. According to Hoffman, therapist create a context in which clients can begin to observe their own interactional patterns, challenge their own premises, and develop their own solutions. Furthermore, the constructivist therapist views himself or herself as

part of the system, rather than "interacting upon the system".

Accordingly, there is no power differential between the therapist and the client. Both therapist and client go through a journey of discovery and rediscovery of constructive realities. These form a basis for the deeper understanding of the issues affecting those involved. It is the exchange of views that allows the enhancement of what Earlandson (1993) calls the consistent and compatible constructions of the reality of the settings's inhabitants.

How Family Preservation programs are implemented is that workers accentuate the positive and help the client family formulate the service plan that is tailored made to the particular issues that the family is faced with. The goals are short-term, realistic and concrete. The involvement of the social worker with the family can be intense and can take from three to eight hours a week per family.

The focus of this study:

The main focus of inquiry for this research is to gather all the relevant information and record it in order to formulate a constructed reality of challenges faced by

the circle of stakeholders; the social workers and their client families, as they are involved with the Family Preservation program.

A constructivist paradigm research is ideal for the program because Family Preservation incorporates the family in the process of regaining control and stability. Communication patterns, parenting education, crisis intervention, and basic education for maintaining a clean home environment are types of interventions that take precedence.

A Constructivism paradigm lets research participants engage in their own reconstruction of reality; it allows for the opportunity to bring perceptions, ideals, and concerns to the study. Family Preservation is also an innovative program in that it allows the family to engage in creating solutions to the problems that they may face.

Family Preservation requires that the social worker be flexible, creative, a competent communicator, knowledgeable and resourceful. The worker employs Crisis Intervention, Family Systems theory, cultural awareness, and social environmental theories as a practice guide. In addition, the worker observes for family substance abuse, while

focusing on the overall functioning of the family.

Family Preservation is an alternative approach that focuses entirely on the family. It is a supportive program that considers the client families' capacity to change and to gain insight to problems they face. The worker is a non-judgmental advocate whose objective is to intervene with only limited disruption to the family system. Working with families in the Family Preservation program calls for a fair amount of latitude and balance as workers subject themselves to the process of helping the family.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CONSTRUCTIVISM

Considering the nature of the process of a constructivist approach, this research project combines ethnographic interviewing techniques with the practical application of a constructivist research model. Having interviews with social workers and client families, allowed the researcher to gain valuable and relevant insight into differing points of view about Family Preservation. Specifically, the researcher gained from the participants' ideas, perceptions and concerns that emerged in the process. Environmental influences were considered relevant in all the clients families.

Research Experience:

This research carried an open-ended approach and it was an alternative exploration into the culture of the Family Preservation setting in Riverside County. Use of the Constructivist paradigm allowed for information to be circular and interactive. This researcher shared in the differing points of views while workers disclosed the problems they encountered with their client families and vice versa. That opinions vary amongst workers and clients had little impact. This was probably due to established relationships between workers and their client families. When negative or controversial information surfaced it was not a problem because all the client families were open and honest in their research interviews.

This study addressed the practical aspects of applying a Constructivist paradigm to research, it was done on the premise that much of the success of the client family is based on the relationship that is made with their worker. It is in the interchange or the transition between workers and clients that brings about understanding, then the gap between values and action is bridged through reciprocity.

Throughout, the researcher made an effort to maintain

accuracy on the information as it emerged. In Constructivism, the challenge is to become subjectively involved. Constructivists call this phenomena "going native" (Earlandson et al. 1993), and it is similar to "over identification" by the worker to his or her client family. The paradigm fit of a Constructivist model helped the researcher bring a coherent synthesis of issues that affect the Family Preservation service delivery.

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher presented a proposal for this study at the February 2, 1995 monthly unit meeting of the Arlington office's Family Preservation program in Riverside County. One male and three female social workers volunteered. Introductory interviews with each social worker were held during March of 1995. These four workers were in Family Preservation work for at least two years and had experience working with families in the Services to Adjudicated Children (SAC) unit. They were able to make comparisons between Family Preservation and SAC service orientation of CPS service delivery. The workers had first hand knowledge of the differences between voluntary and court intervention and how this affected their relationship client families.

Time involvement and energy expenditure were considerably greater for Family Preservation than for SAC.

These participant social workers expressed positive feelings about their involvement with the Family Preservation program and preferred this approach over court driven cases. During initial interviews, Social workers were asked to refer client families that would be able to participate in this study.

Four families were referred; two were active open cases and two had recently completed the program. One of the families had problems with substance abuse the other three had problems with physical abuse. One of the families also experience domestic violence perpetrated by the husband who was no longer at the home. Within two weeks after referrals were given, the researcher was able to meet with each of the client families.

All participants were given an inform consent form outlining the phases of the study as well as the philosophy behind the Constructivist approach. The Hermeneutic Dialectic Circle was formed at the first interview with all the participants. According Guba and Lincoln (1989), the Hermeneutic Dialectic process is the synthesis and

connection of divergent views that allow for mutual exploration and reality construction. The rationale for limiting the study to workers and their client families was to maintain the focus on the interactive elements of the Family Preservation program.

The global picture that emerged was that all the social workers and their client families had very strong alliances. As was expected, the relationships that were formed were instrumental in the success of the family's involvement with the program. Client family's cooperation was a major indicator on whether the family was amenable to Family Preservation services.

All social workers used established referral services but expressed concern with the lack of coordination with the homemaker services that were available to them. The most important emergent theme was the lack of uniformity in the assessment process. Since many referrals came from the Court Dependency Unit (CDU) and Emergency Response (ER) unit, there were discrepancies between units as to what cases were appropriate for Family Preservation service delivery.

Social workers were interviewed at different times and

flexible scheduling was established. All interviews with social workers were done at the Arlington CPS office, interviews with the families were done at their homes. Phone contacts were made with all participant stakeholders between interviews thus a level of continuity was maintained.

INQUIRY PHASE

PHASE I:

An orientation and overview was held at the Arlington office of CPS on March 7th, 1995. The rationale for using an alternative Constructivist approach to this study was explained. A short outline was prepared emphasizing the philosophy behind Constructivism and the benefits of its application to the inquiry. A forty-five minute discussion was held to explain the commonalities between Constructivism and the Family Preservation program mainly. These were: The subjective nature of the Constructivist approach and how it relates to the dynamics of Family Preservation, the concept of taking different perspectives, and how stakeholder's responses bring a Constructed Reality about the program.

Four social workers volunteered as participant stakeholders, and four client families were referred and

also participated. The researcher interviewed three of the mothers in the client families who were also the main caretakers and in one family both husband and wife were interviewed.

Questions were addressed using Spradley's (1979) structural question format. Topics ranged from each participants views about the Family Preservation program to the tasks at hand. The clients were asked how the program was presented to them and their perception of the program and their workers. Workers were asked about their client families and what their strategy was for working with them and their overall sense of the client family.

Four computer files were kept on the workers and their client families using the Word Perfect 6.0 software. The files contained entries on the progress and the process recordings of all interviews and contacts. The researcher was available to the volunteers on an on-going basis to help answer questions and help with particular concerns. A series of categories were maintained brought the units of information together according to themes.

PHASE II

After two weeks the researcher followed up with a

telephone call to get a status report of both workers and families. All the client families were cordial, cooperative and open enough to be as candid as they could. Two of the families were able to successfully complete the program, and two were in the process of completion. One family expressed a problem with substance abuse. Questions regarding challenges and perceived obstacles were discussed. The researcher had some concern that the social workers in this study may have been biased. The client-families were not randomly selected and the workers may have referred families that represent the best of the program. However, these families provided sufficient information to formulate a constructivist depiction of the Riverside County Family Preservation program.

PHASE III

Due to concerns regarding confidentiality, a member check status report was done with the social workers only. Families were called individually by the researcher at this phase in order to check for accuracy on the information given. At each interview, the researcher followed the same basic agenda. Information was gathered on:

1. Current status checks. What has happened so far in the

process?

2. Reassessed terms or remarks that may not have been understood in the first phase.

3. The families were asked what was the most difficult problems that were challenging their progress.

4. Workers were asked what were the most helpful resources available to them.

INSTRUMENTATION

The researcher's involvement with the recording and gathering of information represents the instrumentation for this study. The researcher used Ethnographic interviews techniques outlined by Spradley (1979) for collecting pertinent information from social workers and client families. Most of the questions formulated by the second phase of this study were based on the reflective feedback obtained by the workers and their families in phase one, rendering particular attention to themes, difficult problems, and major concerns. Family needs such as, counseling, appropriate child discipline, building of support systems, and the overall adjustment to living life drug free are examples of some concerns.

ACTIVE CLIENT FAMILY CASES AND SOCIAL WORKER DYADS

Findings: The following excerpts are grouped according to active cases observed in this study.

Dyad number 1:

Social Worker:

A 39 year old Caucasian male social worker with two years of experience in the Family Preservation program and about five years experience in CPS services. He has done SAC work in the past and is familiar with direct approach to service delivery. In his understanding of "high risk", he primarily considers imminent danger as the center of focus when assessing cases. He tries to get at the "underlining" issues that brought the matter to the court. Sometimes due to the difficulty all he can do is "put out the fires". Ideally he would like to get to underlining issue, to which he means: The intergenerational history of abuse in the family, the severity and type of injury involved, and to try to correct the cause not just the problem.

Client Family:

The social worker referred a family that had been in the program for three months. The allegation was that the youngest child in this family, a 9 month old baby, had been born with a positive drug screen. The worker had referred the mother to the Moms drug rehabilitation program.

She has three other children living with her: A 21 year old male son who is also battling drug abuse, a fourteen year old girl who, according to the worker, "Gets high on anything she can get her hands on", a six year old male child that was just starting school, and the 9 month on which the allegations were based.

The mother, a 36 year old caucasian woman who had been using speed since she was 13 years old,

refused to attend drug rehab because she felt that is was too much temptation being in the same room with other "druggies" as she put it. She had given birth to her last child in October '94. This was the second child born drug exposed, her first was a 6 year old but, according to the mother, there was no CPS intervention with that child. The worker felt that the mother was cooperative because she was compliant with his recommendation that she continue random drug testing and she had remained sober since her last child was born.

Impressions:

The worker and this mother had a positive relationship but the worker had felt that the mother was in denial, however, there were concrete indications that she was maintaining her sobriety and there was no danger in the home. She maintained strong ties with a local church and the worker was focusing on her children by providing referrals for counseling and encouraging them to continue with their schooling.

This was a single parent home, but the mother did have some ties with a former husband. She had disclosed to the researcher that she had a history of physical abuse by her father and that she did not want to follow the cycle with her own children. Her major concern was to get her children to listen. She expressed that she had very little control over them, especially her 14 year old daughter. She wants to regain control without becoming abusive.

Dyad number 2:

Social Worker:

A 48 year old female African American worker, gregarious and friendly with a positive attitude. She has worked in the Family Preservation program since its inception in

1993. She has also been involved with court adjudicated cases for three years but prefers Family Preservation over the court mandated cases. She firmly believes that Family Preservation does what it is designed to do, to help keep families intact. When asked what she does when it doesn't work out, she readily replies that either she submits a petition to the court for adjudication or tries to find relative placement for the children. She states that: "once in a blue moon we fail, well not we, the parents fail". Failing to this, worker means that the court has to intervene. She approaches her cases individually and relates to them as human beings without being punitive or judgmental. She tries to be as supportive as she can especially if the parents are making a concerted effort to change their behavior.

Client Family:

A middle class Mormon family consisting of two married parents and four children ranging in age from a 5 year old to 9 year year old. The case has been open for about six weeks. The allegation was that the mother had pushed her five year old daughter causing her to lose her balance which resulted in an injury to the child's face. According to the worker, the mother is extremely depressed. The family has had no support systems as they just moved in from Utah, they have no relatives or friends here in California. Ordinarily this case may have been referred to the voluntary maintenance program, but because of the mother's chronic depression the children would have been at risk. The worker gave referrals for counseling and parenting classes. The worker states that this family has been cooperative.

The researcher met with the family and they expressed very positive feelings about their worker. The mother had been honest and

open enough to admit to researcher that She had really pushed her daughter to the floor, but that she had begun her counseling and was now becoming aware of how her own history of abuse has played a part in her depression and her anger. Her husband was not as open but also states that his family has been under a great deal of stress.

Impressions:

The worker had referred the mother in this case for a psychological evaluation. The parents had been cooperative but the worker felt that the parents were not doing very well handling finances. The parents will be involved in parenting classes and they denied drug use. This case typified the kinds of cases found in the Family Preservation Program. Many of the cases that are assessed for the program are one time incidences of physical abuse with few prior CPS contacts.

DATA ANALYSIS

Riverside County's Family Preservation program serves a small but significant amount of client families. The program provides continuity of care, and opportunities for client/worker interaction. The relationship between the social worker and the client-families is crucial to Family Preservation. Cooperation by the parents in these families is a strong indicator of whether the family is amenable to Family Preservation intervention. Due to discrepancies between emergency response and court dependency units,

assessment is not consistent. The categories that were evident by the data collected are the following:

1. Assessment concerns: In this category the discrepancies between units were compared. The researcher used the information that was discussed at phases II and III. Reasons given for this discrepancy between emergency response (ER) workers assessment and the court dependency (CDU) cases was that the set of priorities were different for each of the units. The term "dumping" was used by two of the Family Preservation workers what this meant was that: Some ER workers, in their haste to meet the mandated 72 hour requirement to either file or close the case, tend to sometimes refer some marginal cases to the Family Preservation without adequate assessment.

2. Concrete services applications: This contained information pertaining to families needs that varied, depending on the worker's priority. These included: Transportation, house repairs, car repairs, basic necessities such as beds and furniture, lastly home maker services. At the membercheck status with the social workers, a discussion ensued regarding the lack of practicality in the service delivery of the homemaker

services. The workers felt that the approach was too "educational" and not a "hands on" learning by modeling. These services are contracted to the Health Department and originally the service was specifically established for the Family Preservation program but has now been expanded to the Volunteer Family Maintenance services. This has diminished the availability of staff coverage.

The workers have at their disposal 3000 dollars that they can use for each of their client families. In the cases interviewed for this research; Two social workers used this money for home repairs, one of them used this money to help pay for a monthly electric bill and another for counseling and a psychological evaluation. The workers varied in their responses as to whether they would let the families know that this money was available. All of the workers in this study were discrete and used appropriate judgement in the use of these funds. One worker stated that "If I know that they are bullshiting me and are trying to use me I just hold back right away". It was evident that the workers had to balance between empowering and enabling particularly when there were predominant substance abuse issues.

3. Relational: This category contained information pertaining to the workers and their families perceptions of each other. All families expressed favorable remarks about their workers comments like: "She understood my culture and where I came from, I was able to relate to her" and "She was there with me for support when I had to go to Family court", as well as "The worker has been another adult that my children were able to relate to" and "He has been able to talk to my teen age daughter to convince her to get back to school", exemplified this relational category.

4. Environmental: This category pertained to environmental factors that affected these families. Case number one above had much of the negative influence from the environment due to drug use that had been a problem for the mother and her older children.

5. Client's perceived needs: These are units of information that the families expressed during the interview process. The active cases the perceived needs were different than what the social worker had perceived. In dyad number one, the mother did not see the need for drug rehab and in dyad number 2, the parents were unable to

identify their inability to manage their finances.

6. Worker's perceptions of the families needs: These are units of information about the needs that about what social workers felt was a priority for the families. The worker tended to steer the service plan according to what was important for the worker. Unlike other types of Family Preservation, The families were not actively involved in the decision making process and what they thought was important.

7. Substance abuse: One of the cases involved substance abuse. The mother refused to seek treatment but had maintained her sobriety, The worker felt that the mother's drug use did not impinge the functioning of this family. However, given the history of the mother in this case, there was a sense of precariousness about this particular family.

8. Resource attainment: This category accommodates the units of information that are related to the availability or lack of resources that are in place for the worker and their client family. This information pertains to how the client family avails itself in using those resources. Most of the client families were complaint and followed the

suggestion of their worker as to the use of their resources. One worker explained that she would let her client family learn to get resources on their own before she would tap into the resources that were available to her, especially when it came to the use of hard cash.

PLANNING LOGISTICS

Data recording:

In a series of two interviews with each stakeholder not more than 45 minutes to an hour long. The interviews were conducted by the writer of this study. The setting was the Department of Social Services (DPSS) Arlington office of Riverside County, California. The Strauss and Corbin (1992) Data coding was applied for the journal recordings of each of the participants.

Written process recording were kept with entries reflecting all the interviews. During actual interviews, the researcher kept notes on a legal pad, keeping the focus on the respondents' answers, maintaining a record of the relevant themes or issues that came up.

With consent of the workers and their families, audio recordings were made only as a back up to the researcher's notes. At the end of each interview, the researcher had a

ten to fifteen minute period, asking for corrections and/or clarification of each respondent's units of information.

Due to time constraints, the research sample was small. The researcher closely examined the reasons for the referral and compared this information to the worker and family perception of the problems at the member check status phase. Major themes and categories were compared using the Constant Comparative Method outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which is a method whereby a grounding is set forth in order to arrive at a theory or a construction. At Phase III, data were coded and filed on computer disk according to each unit of information as to its source, its type, the site where it was conducted and episode.

Closure and termination was done on the third interview. The families and their workers were given feedback about the general themes of what the researcher gathered. A brief time was set aside to answer any questions that the respondents had. At the end of this study, the findings will be presented at the June monthly unit meeting.

QUALITY CONTROL

Because of the small sample in this study, the researcher concentrated on the qualitative nature of the Constructivism paradigm. Attention was given to the underlying themes that were consistently presented. The researcher maintained a constant comparative analysis, using the techniques outlined by Spradley (1979), ethnographic interview techniques which involves the use of the nuances of the language as it applies to the culture of the respondents. According to Erlandson (1993), this applies to the search for deeper meaning in the communication interchange.

The researcher compared the findings with the literature reviews. A Reflective Journal was maintained that includes memoranda recordings of construction evolution.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In formulating a constructivist picture for this study it became evident that the emergent issues that were discussed were related to the overview of the function of service delivery. Riverside County's Family preservation program workers have expressed that they are satisfied with

the service delivery. The families that were studied for this project all have benefited in some degree from the services that were provided to them.

It was clear that motivation, cooperation and willingness to deal with issues on a deeper level were reasons that were given for the success of the program. All the social workers in this study were genuine and direct with their clients which is consistent with social work practice theory.

Hartman and Laird (1985) have defined a "working relationship" as collaborative, based on trust, mutuality, and acceptance. This definition was applicable to the dyads in the open cases of this study.

The Family Preservation program workers do try to keep within the narrow window of criteria for service delivery. Some may argue, (ER, SAC, and CDU Workers), that the reason why there is a measure of success in this program is precisely because of its narrow focus in their criteria for service delivery, however, there is a consensus among Family Preservation workers that their services augment mandated pre-preventive services. As Schuerman and others (1994) have discussed, these are some of the values that

guide CPS attempts at preserving the families they serve. In Riverside County, The same dilemma is evident as with other Preservation program nation wide, mainly: Who are the clients they serve, what is the working definition and the practical definition of Family Preservation, and last the continual problem with what Kaplan and Girad, (1993), call the "Lack of assessment tools". These educators recommend that reports include determination of concrete needs including medical and dental, substance abuse assessment, identification of disabilities, family strengths and resources, family success at probem resolution, recognition of formal and informal support systems including those that are potential for being positive or problematic, characteristics such as; Culture, intergenerational histories and difficuties within the family such as the risk for child abuse and/or domestic violence should also be considered (Kaplan and Girard 1994, p.33).

The social workers in this study are following some of the suggestions presented by these authors and this study validates that withiout family cooperation, the above cannot be done.

Riverside County's Family Preservation can benefit from a comprehensive coordination of services. Since two of the workers are part of the inter-agency school based project, there are settings for a comprehensive model to be in place. A comprehensive service delivery model can include Family Preservation, Family Support and community involvement. This sets a structure for building added support to the Families Services units at all levels. There is the potential for strengthening outside support systems for the families that are in the process of completing or have completed the Family Preservation Program. Lastly, self supportive groups can be facilitated by the workers using 12 step orientation or a Parents United model for families that are at risk.

The families that can be involved with this approach would be volunteer families that have been in the family preservation program and have reached a higher level of functioning.

Based on the findings of this study, a conclusion can be made that in order to dispel controversies, misconceptions, and discrepancies in the efforts to empower, strengthen, and preserve what Kaplan and Girard

(1994) call multi-need families, workers must have the continuous proper training and resources to be positive role models and change agents.

Social workers have to philosophically accept the idea that they can empower others if they themselves accept the total meaning of what the term "empowerment" implies for them. As Hartman (1995) declared at the NASW California Chapter Conference: "Words create worlds". Worker's attitude and vernacular must reflect solutions vs. problems, strengths vs. deficiencies, and empowerment vs. survival.

APPENDICES

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are about to participate is a constructivist study which will consist of a series of interviews. Based on the content of the interviews, the information obtained will be recorded, analysed, and categorized. This information will be used to illustrate a constructed overall view of the Family Preservation program. This study is being conducted by Jaime A. Crisanto. (619) 949-8304. Dr. Lucy Cardona is the academic advisor. (909) 880-5501.

In this study you will take part in a face-to-face interview with Jaime A. Crisanto, a graduate student doing research on the Family Preservation program. There will be two interviews and a follow up phone contact between interviews. Each interview will be approximately forty-five minutes to an hour long. Questions will be asked addressing your perception and understanding of the Family Preservation program. There will be questions on service needs, parenting and child discipline and when appropriate, child sexual or physical abuse. In this study, it is assumed that as you reflect on issues and needs, your perceptions are likely to change. This is why there will be two interviews and a telephone contact. At the conclusion of the study, you will be invited to a meeting with other participants, and discuss the study's findings and decide on any further communication or action in which you or other participants might want to suggest. The information given will be shared with all participants. However, information will be kept separate from the identity of the source.

Please be reassured that your name will not be used but you will be assigned a code and your responses will remain confidential. An outline is available for review. It explains the phases of this study. Audio recordings will be made but only as back up for clarification.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

OUTLINE FOR STUDY

CONSTRUCTIVISM:

An alternative approach to research that brings various point of views, perceptions and experiences of participants into a coherent "Construction" of reality.

ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS:

A technique used in interview process that focuses on the "Culture" and "World view" of the participant. Using this technique, the researcher gathers as much relative information about what the participant understands about his or her cultural and experiential setting.

PHASES OF THIS STUDY:

PHASE I:

At this initial phase there will be a foundational interview with all participants. The researcher will gather basic information about how the participants currently view the Family Preservation program. A follow up telephone call will be done in between phase one and two in order to allow a reflective continuum in the minds of the participants.

PHASE II:

A more in depth interview will be done discussing major themes and areas of concern. As issues begin to emerge, the researcher will attempt to get further clarification on specific topics that may be addressed.

PHASE III:

Participants will be asked to volunteer in what is called "Member check" status group. This group will discuss with the researcher the emergent and pertinent themes of the study and will allow the participant informers give feedback and further clarify all information categorized for the "Construction" of this particular study of the Family Preservation program.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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