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Kulmala, Meri

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9 Planning for the future

Future orientation, agency and self-efficacy of young adults leaving care in the Russian Arctic

Meri Kulmala and Anna Fomina

Introduction

What goals and expectations do young adults leaving alternative care[1] have for the future in the Russian Arctic? Do they plan? If so, how far does their thinking extend? How do they see their chances to influence their future? What are the major factors in the social context that influence future planning? This chapter explores the expectations of young people who transition from different forms of alternative care into independent adult life (see also Lähde and Mölkänen in this volume).

According to Nurmi (1991, p. 1), thinking and planning for the future are particularly important for young people for several reasons. Firstly, young adults are faced with a number of normative age-specific tasks, most of which concern expected life span development and which require thinking about the future. Secondly, young adults' future-oriented decisions, such as those related to career, lifestyle, and family, have a crucial influence on their later adult life. Thirdly, how young adults see their future plays an important part in their identity formation. Moreover, if young people have experienced challenges and hardships in their life, this also affects how they see their future (also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume).

As Massey et al. (2008, pp. 424–442; 445–445) write in their review article, a number of studies shows that family context has a great influence on adolescents' future-oriented planning. It does so in terms of parents and children having similar life goals and aspirations, for instance, on education. Maternal support is shown to be related to educational expectations and self-efficacy. Findings concerning the influence of parental socio-economic status or the ethnicity or gender of an adolescent seem to be ambiguous (see Massey et al. 2008, pp. 424–442). One can yet assume that (the lack of a stable) family context has a particular influence on the planning of young adults who have lived in alternative care and whose journey to adulthood, thus, is undertaken against a backdrop of difficult life experiences and sometimes amidst unsupportive family relationships (Hiles et al. 2014, p. 1). Research has indicated that among the young adults who have had such severe adverse experiences as alternative care placement or maltreatment in their lives 'future orientation' and 'planning' promote ability to cope with hardships (Appleton 2019,

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p. 4). Thus, imagining one's future with a sense of control over one's life can be considered as a resource its own right: developing such a mastery over one's life provides one with resilience (Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson 2015).

We examined the plans and aspirations of 43 care leavers in two regions of North-West Russia where we, together with young peer-researchers, conducted biographical interviews from December 2018 to October 2019.[2] We analyse how these young adults orientate themselves to the future and their perceptions of how far they control their own future. Our main concept is "subjective agency" involving: (a) perceived capacities; and (b) perceived expectations of what life holds in store. We understand agency as the ability to plan and make related decisions, while a sense of agentic ability refers to young adults' own perception of their ability to master their lives (i.e. self-efficacy). Agency is embedded, on the one hand, in the past; on the other, it is orientated towards the future and the present (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Building on this conceptual framework, our central question lies in the self-understanding of a young person about her/his ability *at a given moment* to influence *their future*. This present self-perception is obviously informed by *past life experience*, as also Lähde and Mölkänen show in their chapter in this volume.

In addition to our investigation on (future) orientation and agentic ability, we ask what factors the observed orientations interconnect. Through our investigation, we aim to understand the conditions that could facilitate the development of self-efficacy which could contribute further to the resilience of these young adults to cope with various challenges. In our understanding, young adults who make plans exercise their agency and they do this within both enabling and constraining structures and in relationship to other people and in the context of their personal histories (cf. Viuhko 2020, pp. 45–46; also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume).

In this chapter, we first shortly introduce how support systems for young adults leaving care work in the Russian context. Then we present our theoretical framework and methodology. The empirical analysis that follows is structured by two modes of future orientation found in our study: those who plan and dream ahead and those who show little future orientation or refuse to plan. The analysis is connected to different modes of agency and is followed by a discussion of the external factors that affect these modes of agency.

Russian care leavers and aftercare support

Russia is undergoing massive child welfare reform in line with global trends to dismantle residential care and develop community-based services for families and children and alternative care in foster families. The reform stems from the common understanding that residential care leads to weak social adaptation and social exclusion. One of the priorities of the reform is to develop aftercare support services for young people who transition into their independent life. In Russia, young adults are eligible for such support

until the age of 23. A critical moment was in 2014, when the Decree #481 (Decree #481 2014) came into force and transformed the residential children's homes into family support centres that were assigned with new tasks, including preventive and support services for birth and foster families and aftercare services for care leavers. Care in an institutional setting can be provided only as a last resort and on a short and temporary basis. (Kulmala et al. 2021b)

Care reform changed drastically in terms of where children deprived of parental care could be placed. Between 2005 and 2019, the number of residential care institutions decreased by two-thirds (Tarasenko, 2021, p. 102). Instead, children are increasingly placed in foster families: if in 2000 only 1% were placed in foster families, by 2017 the share had risen to 28%. Meanwhile, the share of residential care dropped from 27% to 8% (Biryukova and Makarentseva 2021, p. 32). Additionally, there are a number of children villages in which several foster families often live together (Kulmala et al. 2021b). Thus, the family context—or alternative care placement—might have a significant influence on the future orientation of a young person. In our analysis, we view individual context as a micro-level external factor.

According to Decree #481 each family support centre has to have a specific department working with care leavers. This work ideally includes providing informational, legal, psychological services and personal support. Yet, in reality the centres are often able to provide only minimal support and NGOs provide many kinds of significant supplementary and complementary support (Kulmala et al. 2021d; also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume, for the Finnish context). NGOs are often forerunners in terms of developing new working practices and approaches as well as services (Kulmala et al. 2021d). For instance, NGOs do valuable work in terms of different aftercare programmes from the so-called 'youth houses' (*dom molodezhi*) to practice independent living to psychological and juridical counselling. NGO-run (and often state-funded) programmes with volunteers act as individual mentors for young people in alternative care and are also currently spread widely throughout the country. There are, however, vast regional differences in Russia in how the public aftercare services function in practice and how developed the non-state provision of services is. Some regions are, for instance, more open to NGOs than others (Skokova et al. 2018; Tarasenko 2021). In our analysis the regional infrastructure we considered to be a meso level external factor.

Care leavers in Russia are supported in many ways by the federal-level social policy, which we view as a macro-level external factor. Generally, the benefits that young people leaving care receive from the state include one-off and monthly payments, as well as subsidies for housing and communal services. In case a care leaver inherited no real estate from their birth parents, (s)he has the right to get a state-sponsored apartment, which, in five years, becomes her/his own property. The apartment is usually located in the municipality where the care leaver officially resides (registration). This is sometimes problematic if a care leaver has built her/his independent adult life in one

place, due to studies for instance, but is registered in another place, for instance due to the place of residence of her/his birth. There are some regions where these state-sponsored apartments are all located in certain residential districts, or even in certain buildings, where all the care leavers are then settled (Abramov et al. 2016).

In the sphere of education, care leavers have the right to obtain two secondary vocational degrees and one university degree free-of-charge before they turn 23 years old. While they study, young care leavers receive financial and material support (such as a bursary, money for public transportation and personal hygiene products and clothes) and a place in a dormitory. State policy heavily encourages care leavers to study. Consequently, most of them choose to study but the regional educational infrastructure, societal stigma and lack of individual counselling largely shape this choice. Too often these young adults are "sent" to study in certain less distinguished schools, learning skills related to certain low-paid professions due to a sense that they are unable to do anything better. (Kulmala et al. 2021a). In some regions of Russia there are quotas in certain educational institutions for care leavers (Abramov et al. 2016). After their graduation and up to the age of 23 years, care leavers have the right for six months to receive a targeted unemployment benefit equal to the average salary in the given region, which is higher than ordinary unemployment benefits. At the same time, there is very little support for finding work.

Despite generous state benefits, care leavers face a wide range of problems, many of which are structural in their nature, as discussed in this chapter. One serious obstacle in their life is that children left without parental care carry pretty strong societal stigma in Russian society. As Iarskaia-Smirnova et al. (2021) showed, care leavers are regularly presented in the Russian press as "hopeless criminals" with addictions and unable to adjust to "normal" adult life (see also Khlinovskaya-Rockhill 2010). They are often depicted as "bad learners" and because of that recommended to go "less demanding" schools and professions (Kulmala et al. 2021a) and as viewed as "scroungers" upon the above-described state benefits (Abramov et al. 2016).

Theoretical framework: agency, projectivity, and self-efficacy

In this chapter, we focus on the future orientation and plans of the young adults leaving care to see how they perceive their own ability to make choices and have control over their future. We conceptualize this as subjective agency. What matters to us in our empirical investigation is to what extent and under what conditions young adults exercise their agency when making their future plans and what circumstances enable or restrict this ability. Each individual exercise agency to a certain extent (cf. Hitlin and Elder Jr 2007, p. 185), but some people have more, some less (individual) capabilities or (structural) possibilities to (not to) act or exercise power (Viuhko 2020, p. 44; Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson 2015). Vulnerability somewhat limits agency, but "even those without power have the ability to make decisions though they face

severe consequences for those choices" (Hitlin and Elder Jr 2007, p. 185). This ability may vary in different spheres of life.

Even if planning for the future might be an issue of individual decision, as Lähde and Mölkänen also show clearly in this volume, it is structured by state policies and other societal context and individual life histories, which all contribute to a set of repertoires of possible choices. Importantly, planning is structured by social norms: young adults' transition to independent life is heavily directed by normative expectations of a certain kind of path, deviations from which are often seen as somewhat alarming (Furlong 2012; also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume). Agency is also exercised in relation to other social actors (Viuhko 2020, p. 46): it is a dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organized contexts of action (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, pp. 973–974).

In our analysis special attention is paid to care leavers' own perceptions of their agentic ability. Our central concept is self-efficacy: the sense of control over one's life and the ability to see the causal influence of one's own decisions and choices. Developing such a mastery connects with resilience and wellbeing (Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson 2015; Massey et al. 2008, p. 422). With the explicit focus on the future orientation of young adults, relevant to us is what Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998, p. 970) conceptualized as "projectivity", which involved the ability to imagine alternative future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors. To understand this creative reconstructive dimension of agency, we must focus upon how agentic processes give shape and direction to *future* possibilities (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 984). Yet all forms of agency have a simultaneous internal orientation towards the past, present and future, and thus are temporally embedded in the flow of time. The ways in which people understand their own relationship to the flow of time *make a difference* to their actions (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 973). In this way, we might expect that the past hardships that young adults leaving care have experienced in the process of losing their parents, inform their future orientations and the sense of their own ability to control their lives. Tied together, they might have important life-course consequences.

We build on our previous analysis of the educational choice of young adults leaving care for which we applied (through some modifications) the conceptualization of agency by Hitlin and Elder Jr 2007; see Kulmala et al. 2021a). Two dominant strategies of among young adults in our research to orientate themselves to their future career were found: (1) "long-term planning" connected with "life course agency"; and (2) "not-to-plan" connected with "pragmatic agency" and associated temporally proximate decisions. The life course mode was combined with a sense of control over one's life and the ability to see the causal influence of one's own decisions and choices, while those young adults engaged with the pragmatic mode saw little chance of influencing their educational trajectory. The authors concluded that

providing support and care that would promote the development of such an agency is highly important since strong control feelings accumulate in many spheres of life and thereby contribute to overall wellbeing. Yet, as in research by Appleton (2019), Barratt et al. (2019) and Hung and Appleton (2016) on young adults transitioning from alternative care, several young adults in our study expressed their intentions not to plan for the future from the career perspective. In this chapter, we focus more widely than education, turning to expectations and aspirations for the future. We also add one more case study region and re-conceptualize the above-mentioned two strategies as two different orientation categories.

Orientation to the future in accordance with certain expectations, aspirations and goals is what Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson (2015) labelled as the "power of looking ahead". Following the authors, we assume that believing in one's ability to influence one's life is crucial in building a long-term life strategy. Similarly, as for Lähde and Mölkänen in the Finnish context in this volume, one goal of our work is to understand what types of support are most significant and in demand by young people themselves in their transition to adulthood and might carry a positive impact on the formation of the sense of agentic ability. Additionally, we try to think further about not planning as an actual type of planning strategy. As Peter Appleton (2019, p. 2) noted, young adults may or may not wish to plan in an explicit goal-oriented manner. First, emerging adulthood is regarded as an experimental period of life, characterized by exploration and instability (Arnett 2014). Second, for young people leaving care, multiple barriers may frustrate attempts to "get a life" (Pryce et al. 2017). Third, there is preliminary evidence that at least some young adults who are leaving care may be sceptical about future-oriented planning (Hung and Appleton 2016; Barratt et al. 2019). In comparison to other young adults—especially to those transitioning from ordinary family life—research has pointed out that the transition to adulthood of young adults transitioning from the care system is faster and more straightforward (Stein, 2006, p. 274). If more generally the literature on youth–adult transitions now speaks about yo-yo transitions, meaning that these transitions have become less linear, more complex and also reversible (Biggart and Walther 2006), these young adults usually need to transition to their independent life more rapidly and often with no place to return (Hiles et al. 2014, p. 1; also Lähde and Mölkänen 2021), i.e. with fewer chances to "make mistakes" in making decisions and choices concerning their later life (Kulmala et al. 2021a, p. 198).

Data and analysis

Our empirical data set consists of 43 biographical interviews with young care leavers, aged 17 to 31 (21.7 years on average) and either transitioning or having transitioned to independent living, in two regions of the Russian Federation of whom 26 are females and 17 males; respectively 26 live in our case study Region 1 and 17 in Region 2, as Table 9.1 illustrates.

Table 9.1 Studied care leavers, according to gender and region

	Region 1	*Region 2*	*Total*
Female	16	10	26
Male	10	7	17
Total	26	17	**43**

Both regions are located in the North-Western Federal District and they are of similar size in terms of population (500,000–1,000,000) and territory with around 80 per cent of urban population. In both regions around half of the people live in the capital. Young adults whom we interviewed in our study live in different places, including the capitals, small towns or villages. Both regions are industrial; at the same time, however, they are different in economic terms: Region 1 has significant natural resources and is significantly more developed than Region 2. According to the *Rosstat* data, Region 1 belongs to the first quarter of all Russian regions in terms of gross regional product per capita, while Region 2 is in the middle of the ranking. The average salary in Region 1 is 1.5 times higher than in Region 2.

All the interviewed young adults had lived in one or more forms of alternative care (children's home, foster family, children's village or a combination of these). Of our group, 15 grew up in an NGO-run children's village (*detskaya derevnya*), in which several foster families often live together with many children; 15 in residential institutions; and the rest had first been in residential institutions before being relocated to foster and guardianship families. Some of them had also been returned from foster family placements to residential institutions. For the sake of sensitivity, we do not name the studied Russian regions here, since in each of the studied regions, there is, for instance, only one children village per region. Moreover, all the people and organizations referred to and cited in this chapter have been anonymized.

We partly implemented our research through participatory research methods. Our academic research team interviewed 15 care leavers who were found through our collaboration with local child welfare NGOs.[3] Altogether six of the interviewed young care leavers, three in both case study regions, were recruited through consultation with the NGOs with whom we collaborated to peer-interview their fellows. These co-researchers conducted 28 interviews with their peers whom they contacted independently by themselves. These peer-interviewed young adults thus remained anonymous to us; as did their selection mechanisms. All interviews were conducted between December 2018 and October 2019 and they were recorded and transcribed. Additionally, after the peer-interviewing process, we arranged a study excursion to Finnish youth services for our co-researchers from Region 1, during which time we held a focus group discussion with them on their experiences in our project and what they learned most from the process and interviews they conducted. They were also welcomed to share their recommendations for the service system in question and decision-makers. We were in the middle of the

arrangement of a similar excursion and focus group discussion to our co-researchers in Region 2, but unfortunately this was interrupted by the global COVID-19 crisis.

Since the topic is very sensitive and the interviewees and interviewers involved have most likely experienced severe hardships in their lives, we considered it of the utmost importance that the young people—both interviewers and interviewees—had a local focal point that they trusted and with which we have a confidential relationship. The local coordinator, employed by an NGO in both of the regions, assisted the interviewers. Her contact information was delivered to each of the interviewed persons, indicating that informants can turn to her with any issues or feelings related to the interviews. Any research with children or young adults involves ethical issues that need to be addressed, including concerns about possible exploitation, child protection, informed consent and gatekeeper issues (Törrönen et al. 2018). We have tried to be sensitive and reflective to any issues raised by the young adults involved in the process and spent time going through our research design and providing, alongside the needed research skills, training on numerous ethical issues, such as principles of confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation. These principles needed to be shared with everyone they interviewed and verbal consent was recorded at the beginning of the interview.

As our research focused on young people's agency, we found it impossible to carry out the research without the involvement of young people in the research process. As is usual with participatory research methods (e.g. Kilpatrick et al. 2007; Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015), we wanted to involve young people as active agents in our knowledge production and hopefully thus support their sense of agency. Our purpose has been to highlight young people as experts in their own life and the alternative care system in question through their personal experience, while providing some tools that can be useful in their work and study life: we, for instance, trained peer interviewers in qualitative interview and interaction skills at various points of the process[4] and gave certificates for their participation (Kulmala and Fomina 2019). We wanted to give young people a voice in understanding the forms of support that have been useful to them during and when leaving alternative care. Ultimately, we hope our research will bring improvements to these forms of support, which is why we emphasize the importance of collaboration with practitioners.

However, as self-reflected elsewhere (Kulmala and Fomina 2019), overall, our research design remained highly adult-led and could have obviously been more involving and participatory at the very first and final stages of the process. In other words, these young adults were not involved in designing our research questions, yet the used interview guide was elaborated with them. They have not been either involved in the empirical analysis, for instance, of this particular article. In the above-discussed focus group discussion, these young adults reported many kinds of benefits and learning processes they had gained during the process (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015, pp. 163–165; Kilpatrick et al. 2007, pp. 367–368).

We have sought to overcome the asymmetric power relationships between the researchers and the researched (Kilpatrick et al. 2007; Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015). Anyone can recognize multilayered asymmetries in the situation where we, middle-class (and partly middle-aged) academically educated women, interview 20-year-old young people who have experienced situations leading to alternative care replacements. Through peer-to-peer talk, we have hoped to also open new perspectives on the studied issues. For example, similar experiences bring mutual understanding and language to interviews that perhaps allow for better communication and a more accurate reflection of young people's own thinking in our research materials (Törrönen et al. 2018; Kulmala and Fomina 2019).

Both groups of interviewers used the same interview guide. The interview questions followed a life-cyclic logic, including topics of birth family, placement in alternative, school and studies, work, housing, leisure time, close relationships, satisfaction with one's life and future plans. At all stages of life, we have tried to understand the involvement of the young person in the decision-making over their life and the kinds of support they have received around this (see Lähde and Mölkänen in this volume for a similar approach). Similarly, as Lähde and Mölkänen (this volume), we take a stance on what the authors call critical realism: we do understand that life is different as "lived" and "told" with which we acknowledge that "told" is a subjective interpretation by both, us and the interviewed young adults.

Analysis of the interviews was theory-led. Based on previous research on the planning strategies (long-term planning and not-to-plan) and modes of agency (life course and pragmatic agency) in the field of education (Kulmala et al. 2021a), we divided all the interviewed young adults into two (future) orientations (combined with information on gender, age, place of residence and experienced forms of alternative care) and then engaged in in-depth analysis of the factors interconnected with the orientations. Conceptually, this stage of the analysis was informed by the various theorizations on agency, while explanations concerning the observed orientations built on the analysis of the external contextual factors at the micro, meso and macro levels. The macro-level structural conditions include systems of social support, while the meso scale refers to local and regional infrastructures, including the availability of different forms of alternative care and support services. The micro level is more connected to individual life histories and relationships.

Planners, dreamers, copers, cynical "non-believers": future orientations among the studied young adults

We roughly divided all the interviewed young adults into two different dominant orientations to the future. In the first group, there are those oriented towards the future, those who planned and dreamed ahead, while the young adults in the second group did show no or little future orientation or even refused to plan.

Seventeen (five male, twelve female) of the 43 young adults belonged to the first group. Six grew up in a children's village, six in a residential children's home and five in a foster family. Nine lived in Region 1 and eight in Region 2. For the second group, we identified twenty (eleven male, nine female) young adults. Seven lived in a children's village, six grew up in a foster family and seven most of the time in a children's home. Fifteen of them lived in Region 1 and five in Region 2. With six young adults (five females, one male) it was difficult to name the dominant orientation but they somehow combined both two and are thus left out from the mentioned categories. Four of them grew up in foster families, the other two in children's homes; two lived in Region 1, while the rest four in Region 2. (See Tables 9.2 and 9.3.)

In both of the groups we identified four different—but obviously overlapping—subcategories: "long-term planning with strong self-efficacy", "dreaming-like planning", "unfeasible dreams", "planning with obstacles" in the first group. Under the second group there are: "no plans but current life satisfaction", "planning is not worth it", "no plans with survivalist self-reliance" and "no big plans but damn ordinary life".

Mostly planning took place around four main spheres, including education, work and family life and place of residence (cf. Massey et al. 2008). Almost all of the young people studied at the time of the interviews and accordingly made short-term plans for the graduation and postgraduation life, including taking advantage of the above-described right of the second free-of-charge educational programmes and unemployment benefit guaranteed for care leavers by the law. As the system heavily directs care leavers to study (also Kulmala et al. 2021a), it is no surprise that only two young men had decided not to continue in education: one of them had never liked school, while the other one had a life situation that required him to find a job instead of a school. Almost all of them thought that studying would help them find a job, but six interviewed young adults did not quite know what job that

Table 9.2 Studied care leavers, according to orientation group (OG) and region

	OG 1	*OG 2*	*N/A*
Region 1	9	15	2
Region 2	8	5	4
Total	**17**	**20**	**6**

Table 9.3 Studied care leavers, according to orientation group (OG) and gender

	OG 1	*OG 2*	*N/A*
Male	5	11	1
Female	12	9	5
Total	**17**	**20**	**6**

would be and how to find it. Three young adults saw it as important to finish their studies in order to have education, but at the same time they did not necessarily believe that it would help them in finding a good job; two thought that the skills they are learning will not be useful in the future. At the same time, 13 could name the sphere where they would like to work. The rest were not only able to envisage their future job but had also concrete and detailed plans on how to get there. In regards to longer-term plans, five young adults wanted to have a well-paid job in the future, while others connected wellbeing with "finding a good place" more generally in their lives.

One of the key topics was family making. Two of the young women, who had a relatively long and stable partnership, were planning to get married in the nearest future. 24 planned children (12 female, 12 male), 14 (5 female, 9 male) of them in a more distant future, when they have become independent and had stable life (in terms of job and income). Most of the young women clearly postponed the decision about having a child by explaining the decision—not only as a rational planning related to the stability and career—but also as an aspiration to focus on oneself to find and better understand their partners. In Region 1, three women had a child at the moment of interview and one young man was expecting one with his partner. In Region 2, four women had children and none of the male participants had children.

Our interview guide specifically included a question about how the interviewees see their life within the next five to ten years. Most imagined their life positively: having a well-paid job with family and friends. Besides, they talked about some individual plans, such as starting to do sports, and learning languages. Several wanted to move to another city, usually St Petersburg or Moscow, or even abroad, mainly to Scandinavia or the USA. Moving to other parts of Russia was connected to better possibilities in the labour market, while emigrating to Finland and Norway was associated with societal security. Next, we turn to a more detailed analysis of these two categories to understand what kinds of other elements they interconnect with.

Young adults with future orientation

Long-term planning with strong self-efficacy

We identified eight young adults (seven female, one male) who engaged in strong future orientation, including long-term, life-course-type planning with strong beliefs on one's own ability to influence one's life course (self-efficacy). This mode was typically related to the fact that these young adults had someone who believed in them, with whom they could talk about their plans and who supported their choices. In other words, they had a trusted adult with whom they could discuss choices, as one young woman described the process with her foster mom concerning her education:

> Let's say I wanted to become a designer. Mom would tell me: "In XXX [the name of the town], you'd better become a cook". I would say to her:

> “Mom, here [the town] every third person is a cook, there is no development in that field”. She says: "Well, right, yes, good. Go to XXX [the capital city of the region], only you need to be careful” [...] Let’s say I want to get higher education. I say: "Mom, I want to be a social worker to work with youngsters ... She would say: "Well, yes, social work with the youth is your [field], it definitely suits you." She offers some ideas of hers, but she is receptive to mine as well.
>
> (F, 21, #18, R1)

Or, as a young man explained his high-level trust to close people if things would not go as planned: “If I really did bad, I could turn to my friends, I could turn to my [foster] parents, I could turn to my godmother or someone else. I always have had people I could turn to ...” (M, 21, #4, R1). In terms of agency, such future orientation combined with the ability to plan ahead can obviously be connected to life course agency, but it can be also conceptualized as “shared agency” with acting and making decisions jointly together and getting support for one’s choices.

Often such life course agency is connected with strong identity construction in terms of future profession. These young adults often knew well what they want to be and made logical educational and related decisions, as in Kulmala et al. (2021a). One young woman (F, 22, #39, R1) had considered all the options in a branching plan “development of my life” that she had drawn; another (F, 21, #23, R1) had a foster mother who had supported her education since her early childhood and, as a result, ended up making several strategic choices in order to become a social worker.

As above, identity agency—a more or less conscious act to make use of one’s identity in compliance to social norms typically related to this identity—can be positive in that one has a clear image of what (s)he wants to be as a ‘grown up’. Yet, this mode more than once was connected with what we label as ‘negative identity agency’: that which a young adult does not want to become, as described by a young woman concerning upbringing children:

> I don’t say I don’t want children, I just want them not to have the kind of childhood I had ... if my child asks me: “Mom, I want an iPhone 6, for 25,000 thousand”. I don’t want to answer: “Sorry, we don’t have money, we can only eat buckwheat”. Instead [I want that] I'll go and buy that phone. Well, I want to stand on my own feet, I want to have of stability in my job, not just any job, but a prestigious job, or I want to start my own business...
>
> (F, 21, #24, R1)

Negative identity agency is usually connected with dysfunctional behaviour on the part of birth parents (e.g. alcohol/drug abuse) and/or a constant lack of material things (see also Shpakovskaya and Chernova, 2021). In both ways, identity agency can serve for a certain degree of strategic resistance (cf. Lister 2004, pp. 140–141) and thus as a resource to build plans.

Dreaming-like planning

Other respondents were future-oriented but without identifying concrete plans, let alone efforts to make them happen. These young adults engaged in planning in a more dream-like manner. They had in common a positive tone when talking about the present and future and showed more or less self-confidence in terms of having an impact over their own life, but it remained unclear for us what has been or is to be done to make those dreams come through. One young man who had succeeded in many of his aspirations thought his plans to move might become real:

> Listen, we want to get the hell out of here. Shit, to somewhere. Well Anya [the name of his wife changed] wants to go to the USA. I don't know how to get there, of course, but we simply have a goal to move away from here. Simply to get away. In any case, we just need to move somewhere from here ... Hell. I think that a chance will open quite soon. I mean some kind of a purpose [of life]. Because, with shit like this, one can't continue ... to do things that don't please you. I want [to live] maximally. To do what one wants to do … I don't know. I don't have any strateg[y] … I am not any [strategic] planner. It is Anya who plans.
>
> (M, 29, #43, R1)

Or as expressed in the words of one young woman, who showed neither strategic planning nor a strong sense of agentic ability but who, alongside her expectation for many positive things "to happen", seemed to have much trust in the future when she dreamed about her future family:

> [I will live] with a baby doll, a little baby doll who has a dark blue baby carriage made from organic leather with a price of 30,000 [Roubles; equivalent to 385 euro] which I really want! The baby's dad works will have a permanent job." (...) I will work with my daughter! My workplace is maternity leave. I will give birth to another baby girl. (...) We will live, I hope, in our own apartment, well, in a new one.
>
> (F, 25, #5, R2)

Similarly, as future orientation and planning contribute to resilience (Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson 2015; Appleton 2019), we assume that a positive life attitude combined with daydreaming is a resource to a certain extent, especially when compared to the young adults discussed below, who regarded their future with cynicism. .

Unfeasible dreams

We also witnessed dreams that, in the context of the rest of the talk, had no realistic prospect of coming true. For example, in one interview a young mother spoke of her plans to move with her new boyfriend to St Petersburg, or even the USA:

> I met my boyfriend quite recently … He will come to take up me and the baby to St Petersburg. (...) I will move to live in St Petersburg. I will most likely study there. I haven't chosen my profession yet but I would really like to [study]. I don't know [why St Petersburg], I like the city. Or another big city ... Well, I have a dream, simply a dream to study in the US. (...) In five to ten years, we will be on vacation in the US. My child is already grown-up. Well, we will live in St Petersburg, everything is fine with us.
>
> (F, 19, #22, R1)

There were many inconsistencies in her talk about the present and the future. As in her case, this type of dreaming seemed typically to be connected to a rather low level of overall life management and self-regulation. As in her case, she had hardly finalized anything she had started. "Unfeasible plans" is obviously our interpretation; the young adults did not use such terms. Our interpretation of unfeasibility is based on the overall context of their narratives and intonations and how they spoke about their future and plans (sometimes even with irony and cynicism, as below). In this orientation subcategory, their narrations were typically characterized with inconsistencies (e.g. a new-born baby soon grows up, as above) and obviously unrelated issues turned out to be related in these narratives. Moreover, these young adults narrated little ability to consciously control the circumstances on which their future depends. As we discuss below, such orientation is not considered as any individual failure, but it logically interconnects with many past experiences and structural constraints.

Planning with constant obstacles

We identified several young adults who made plans and engaged with efforts to make those plans happen, yet the external circumstances repeatedly thwarted those plans. One young man (M, 21, #17, R2) wanted to enrol in higher education as a computer programmer, but "*likely, nothing will work out because of the [required] high scores and paid education*", which is why he decided to go to a college in a small town instead of the capital of the region where he really wanted to go: "*I didn't have a good enough diploma so I had to go to X [name of the small town].*" Yet, again, he wanted to have an apartment in the capital; but due to state policy, however, he will receive one in another small town. Yet, he kept planning. Another example was that of a young woman (F, 21, #21, R1) who wanted to become an animal attendant, but could not do so as there were no such schools in her region. She changed her plan, now aiming to become a car mechanic, but could not do that either because girls were not accepted onto that programme.

Such situations are ideal-typical cases of restricted, or constrained agency. These young adults are by no means passive objects without agency, but they cannot act freely either (cf. Viuhko 2020, 45): they are constrained by the external circumstances within which they act. Some people are more resilient and stay optimistic enough to make another plan, while others quite logically lose their faith in any planning.

Young care leavers with no or little future orientation

As in other studies (Hung and Appleton 2016; Appleton 2019; Barratt et al. 2019), a number of the care leavers in our study, twenty out of 43 (nine female, eleven male), expressed strong intentions not to plan for the future.

No plans but current life satisfaction

Unwillingness to plan was sometimes connected to more or less satisfied and optimistic attitude over one's life: "*Everything will be fine*" (M, 21, #8, R1), as one young man saw his future life. What these young adults shared in common was low future orientation; at the same time, however, they engaged with a somewhat optimistic mode of life. They often saw that one cannot plan too much for the future, but that anyhow things tend to go well in the end. They did not express strong self-efficacy in terms of being able to have an impact on their life course but since they were pretty satisfied with their current life, they had no reason to think that something will go wrong. Similarly, as above, such an optimistic attitude can be a sign of a certain level of resourcefulness and resilience.

Planning is not worth it

However, more typically unwillingness to plan was expressed through a rejection of future planning due to a disbelief in having control over one's life. There is no sense in planning because everything can just change, as several young adults stated: "Who knows how life will turn out?" (F, 22 #20, R1); "I don't know about my plans so I don't start guessing for the future" (F, 25, #6, R2); "I don't plan that much ahead, I can't respond to this question [concerning the future plans]" (F, 21, #33, R1).

These people share in common is a weak sense of mastery over things in their lives. As the above-discussed "unfeasible plans", this orientation was often connected with little life management and self-regulation more generally, as the quotation from one young woman illustrates well:

> I went to a grocery store to buy toilet paper. I came out with a full shopping bag with (a price of) 1,500 [Roubles, equivalent to 20€) ... I came home and unpacked the bag. No food. I was like an autopilot. And I thought, this is exactly what life will [continue to] be.
>
> (F, 25, #12, R2)

The rejection of planning was sometimes tightly connected with irony or cynicism to talk about the future, as one male care leaver said:

> [I would like to be able to do] programming, speak ten languages, uh, to be able to fly, construct computer networks … Within five years, excellent. This is the plan ... Let's say in, uh, I will live somewhere ... close to

> the equator ... Somewhere in Madagascar. There. Friends, family, there. A child ... [laughs]
>
> (M, 22, #9, R2)

Cynicism can be interpreted though as an expression of everyday resistance (Lister 2004, 144): it again shows agency; instead of passivity, it is an active act of the rejection of planning, which is perhaps a more logical act if one has not experienced any positive worth of planning. It is thus more about one doing what one has most reason to do (cf. Appleton 2019, pp. 7–8).

No plans with survivalist self-reliance

In line with the findings of Appleton (2019) and Pryce et al. (2017), we witnessed "survivalist self-reliance" among those who refused to plan. These people felt responsible for their own development and safety and expressed mistrust towards others as potential sources of support (Pryce et al. 2017). Such a lack of trust in anyone's help and one being on his own is well illustrated by a young man describing his experience of being in a children's home: "I understood it all at once … if you don't do anything by yourself, nobody will give you anything" (M, 31, #2, R2). As Hung and Appleton found (2016, p. 43), these young adults see life being a day-to-day survival in which self-reliance was essential. As in Pryce et al. (2017, p. 318), this pairs with negative associations of the help from the "system" and obviously connects with earlier experiences of untrustworthy parents. With early unmet needs for help, ambivalence about asking for help is a logical choice.

No big plans but "damn, ordinary life"

Several young adults refused to plan but 'just' wanted some stability. We could sense fatigue in the face of many kinds of challenges that they had encountered. They did not ask much, they did not plan big; they just wanted a quiet, ordinary life. As one male put it: "Well, probably regular work where I will go every day ... My own apartment. Well, damn it, ordinary life" (M, 21, #1, R2). In contrast to those with optimism that life will go well whatever happens, what is common to this subgroup is a somewhat pessimistic attitude: they wanted "just a normal life" without faith that it will come. These people, are not completely lacking agency. This kind of coping, at a very minimum, is "an active process of juggling, piecing together and going without" (Lister 2004, p. 133).

The future orientation of the young adults in our research varied from the complete refusal to plan to systematic planning and judgement of the different options. The observed stances varied from no trust in one's own agentic ability to a strong sense of mastery. As David McCrone (1994, pp. 70–80) emphasized, the distinction between "non-planners" who "get by" on a day-to-day basis and "planners" who "make out" through the deployment of longer-term strategies is a very thin line. Also getting by might require lots of

competence to run through daily routines, which might be so burdening that it makes it difficult to think or act strategically (cf. Chamberlayne and Rustin 1999). As concluded by Kulmala et al. (2021a), the (in)ability to make long-term plans is not a "success" or "failure" of the young adult themselves, as there are external factors that affect the modes and orientation.

Facilitations and constraints of future-oriented agency at the macro, meso and micro levels

There are various levels of constraints that challenge the transition to adulthood for this particular group of young people (also Pryce et al. 2017). Next, we aim to understand the factors at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels that either facilitate or constrain the future-orientated agency.

The macro level

Russian state policy supports this specific group of young adults with a wide spectrum of benefits, which shape their plans. Of these measures, the right of secondary vocational and university degrees up to the age of 23 is the most significant. As a result of this policy, most care leavers choose to study (Kulmala et al. 2021a). Our analysis here also shows that this right determines the direction of the short-term plans of the care leavers in our research, who apparently and understandably want to take the advantage of the benefits provided by the state:

> I want to study because up to 23 years old I can enter [school] free-of-charge. I have such a chance. I don't want to waste it. Why would one go studying later and have to pay? If there is such opportunity, I don't understand why would someone who is 21 years old want to sit in the office somewhere, I don't know, to work (...)
>
> (F, 21, #18, R1)

Generally, the opportunity to study and the fact that most care leavers study, which is not anything obvious in the international comparison, can be considered as an enabling macro-level factor. As shown by Kulmala et al. (2021a), however, there are also many constraints. One cannot speak about free choice, but societal norms (e.g. stigma), regional-local infrastructure (labour market, availability of educational institutions) and the lack of information and individual counselling and support might heavily limit this choice (also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume). Young adults also tend to take the advantage of the earlier-discussed unemployment benefit. It seems that there is much less support and guidance to navigate the job market to find a place to study (also Kulmala et al. 2021a).

State housing policy offering a free apartment of one's own is generous and quite unusual in international comparison. Yet there are many shortages and regional differences in implementing this right. It can be viewed as

significant material capital, but also as shaping long-term plans. For example, having an apartment in a certain town and region, it is more difficult (to plan) to move somewhere else to study or work even if one wished so. The huge differences in income and prices across Russia do not always allow young people to sell apartments profitably in their home region in order to move to another one: for instance, given the price of an apartment in a Karelian municipality one can hardly buy any place to live in Saint Petersburg. Additionally, according to the law, care leavers can sell the apartment only after five years of its receipt. Anyhow, many plan or dream about moving to bigger cities or even abroad. Due to the location of North-West Russia, young adults were familiar with the Scandinavian countries and some showed willingness to move there: "Someday perhaps I will move somewhere … Well, to Norway, Finland ... Scandinavia ... According to the statistics, the happiest people live there ..." (F, 21, #18, R1). These plans were, however, as discussed above, often somewhat presented as unfeasible or accompanied by cynicism.

As Ruth Lister (2004, p. 10) aptly argued, cultural meanings and societal norms create the context within which people exercise their agency. This becomes especially significant when we speak about people in vulnerable situations (cf. Hitlin and Elder Jr 2007, p. 177). As discussed earlier, children deprived of parental care bear strong stigma in Russian society (Khlinovskaya-Rockhill 2010; Iarskaia-Smirnova et al. 2021) which can be considered as a macro-level constraint: for instance, the stereotypical image of these children as bad students obviously affects their educational choice - and advice (cf. Kulmala et al. 2021a). Yet, as we showed in this chapter, sometimes negative identity agency is exercised to resist the stereotypes and expectations of bad outcomes. In a similar way, also stereotypical understanding of gender differences can be viewed as a structural constraint (Kulmala et al. 2021a).

It is important to note that all the benefits are dependent on the status of being "deprived of parental care". Even if much-needed, the benefits—and especially their implementation—might be based on certain stereotypes and thereby reinforce them (Lister 2004, pp. 101–102). Many of the young adults indeed appreciated the benefits but found them stigmatizing at the same time, as well illustrated by a quotation from the focus group discussion conducted by us:

ASYA: I never took any of the social benefits that are offered. I'm so embarrassed to take them. For instance, in college they gave bed sheets … Yes, Olya, what did they give? Olya brought them to me.

OLYA: Yes.

ASYA: Basically, we were not friends then but I said to her: "Jesus, Olya, I won't go there, I won't carry that sack throughout college." And I didn't pick them up for myself, of all those huge bags I only took one blanket. (...)

ANYA (INTERVIEWER): Why?

ASYA: I don't know, it sucks to take help. I never ate in the college cafeteria for free, I always bought food with my own money.

The public image of being a marginalized and stigmatized group limits opportunities generally while also affecting the subjective perception of one's own available opportunities and more widely of mastery over one's own life (cf. Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson 2015). As Lister (2004) argued, some identities are more collectively mobilizable than others: for instance, other people might easily find a common case, while poor people, stigmatized in many contexts, do not. Yet, as our study shows, active resistance to stigma can serve as a resource.

The meso level

Even if the massive child welfare reform uniformed in principle the public alternative care system throughout the country, in practice Russian regions, which are in charge of implementing the child welfare policy (Kulmala et al., 2021c), are obviously very different when it comes to resources (Kainu et al. 2017). The regions vary, for instance, when it comes to the labour and housing market or educational sphere. The available options obviously impact the future plans of young people. We would argue the most significant meso-level factor is the availability and use of different forms of alternative care also outside the public sector in the region in question.

Both of the studied regions have a long history of transnational collaboration with NGOs, including in the sphere of child welfare. Yet Region 1 is clearly more resourced and developed in terms of family forms of alternative care. There is one NGO, in particular, established after transnational collaboration in the early 1990s, which provides family-based alternative care in a children's village and has exceptionally developed aftercare services for the care leavers. There is also another NGO with a well-resourced programme of individual mentors to care leavers. Many of the care leavers in our research had benefited from these. Through cross-sectoral collaboration, such developed expertise on family-based care arrangements and importance of aftercare support also transfers into now developing public services. Also, in Region 2 there are developed child welfare NGOs, but their work has been more focused on material assistance of children in residential care instead of the wider reconstruction of the care system itself. The care leavers in our research from this region reported occasional connections with the NGOs. Especially in this region, it seems that both public and third sector support for care leavers remains unsystematic and even random depending on "lucky circumstances" and "good people". Yet, as the services in Region 1 are mostly provided on a project and grant basis by NGOs, their coverage is limited and their continuity uncertain.

In a study on the educational choice by Kulmala et al. (2021a), it became clear that that young adults who live in residential institutions are less informed about their options, while NGO-run children's villages, in particular, did better through their emphasis on individual support, counselling and encouragement—which brings us to the importance of the micro-level environment.

The micro level

The micro level, the level of everyday interactions, proved to the most significant factor for the development of the future-orientated self-efficacy among the young adults in our research. We found that from those eight who were included in the category of "long term planning with strong self-efficacy", four grew up in children's villages, two in foster families, and only two in children's homes but, essentially, with the support of significant adults, either someone from a children home and/or a birth parent. Seven out of eight care leavers talked about the important influence of their foster parents, or some other significant adults, in the significant choices they made in their life. Thus, they have had someone who has listened to their needs and wishes and in the end believed in them. In other words, they have had a trusted one to negotiate and practice shared agency. This person does not have to be a family member; the important point is that a young person trusts someone to discuss their future plans (Pinkerton and Rooney 2014). This significant finding is very much the same as Lähde and Mölkänen reported in this volume based on their study concerning young adults who have sought support from certain NGO-based services in the Finnish context. This strongly emphasizes the importance to guarantee that also the young people deprived of parental care would have long-standing, robust relationships with adults.

On the other side of the coin, those young adults who refuse to plan come with various backgrounds in alternative care. Many have lived in residential institutions, but some of them also have grown up in foster families or villages. Each of them, obviously, has faced severe hardships with their birth families and even later with foster families. Their social relationships have been disrupted. As Appleton (2019) pointed out, young people with a history of maltreatment and alternative care usually have experienced flouting and violation of rational and planning norms by significant others—a birth parent, sometimes a foster parent, and sometimes a public service provider (also Pryce et al. 2017). Life has most likely brought up endless occasions that one had not planned or even wanted to happen. Perhaps inconsistency is the only stable element. Based on this, rejecting planning and self-reliance can be considered as a consistent, logical continuum striving from the past life history (see also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume). One has perhaps ended up "doing what (s)he has most reason to do" (Appleton 2019, p. 7).

Based on our analysis (also Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume), it is evident that future-oriented agency combined with present understanding of one's own agentic abilities builds on past experiences. Having a trusted someone listening and believing in you most likely positively contributes to self-esteem and positive identity construction and further to self-efficacy. As illustrated, also identity agency matters: the more clearly one knows who (s) he wants—or does not want—to be or become, the better abilities one has in life course planning and enjoying an overall sense of control over one's life (cf. Côté 2016, p. 31).

Conclusion

Our investigation shows that agency, self-efficacy and projectivity are obviously interconnected. Given the fact that these all contribute to resilience to cope with challenges, it is indeed important to reveal the conditions that promote the development of these abilities among this particular group of young adults who have faced severe hardships in their life. We conclude that the agency of young adults in our study is restricted in many ways by external factors. On the other hand, our study shows that future-oriented agency could be supported by individual support by a significant adult (whomever this is).

In Russia, the macro-level social policy substantially supports the children deprived of parental care. At the same time, these policy measures might stigmatize their targets and limit their future choices. It is important indeed that state policy directs these young adults to study, but, for instance, by supporting certain career paths, for instance vocational education for certain professions, which narrows the choice and agency of these young people (Chernova and Shpakovskaia 2020; Kulmala et al. 2021a). Similarly, the (generous) housing policy leads to certain residential pathways. Even if the Russian system can be considered good and generous in terms of material support, it simultaneously fails to provide much-needed individual (emotional) support to young adults, as our study clearly points out (also Kulmala et al. 2021a). As the study by Lähde and Mölkänen (this volume) shows, this can also be the case in other contexts.

Not a surprising but highly important finding of our study (as with Lähde and Mölkänen, this volume) is that micro-level supportive and trustworthy relationships essentially matter to the development of the sense of control and ability to influence one's life course and future orientation. As shown, the young adults in our study were almost equally divided into two orientations of planning (n = 17) and not-planning (n = 20) at various extents, but those who engaged in life course planning with strong self-efficacy reported longer-lasting relationships with a significant, trustworthy adult, be it a foster or birth parent, individual mentor or pedagogue. Moreover, most of them grew up in a foster family in a children's village with many kinds of support programmes and services. This allows us to conclude that a family-like environment with systematic approach to aftercare support is something to be developed further. Ongoing reforms in Russia have taken many steps in the right direction, but with many pitfalls that hamper the formation of individual support. As has been argued elsewhere (Jappinen and Kulmala 2021), the good intentions of these reforms result in many unintended consequences. In the current political environment, quantitative measurements to show good results in numbers become more important than changes in the quality of care, which, in turn, leads to situations when some other rights—for instance those of foster parents—override the rights of children.

Our study suggests that without strong individual support at the micro level, the majority of the care leavers in our study fail to plan and build their

desired future. One can, of course, argue that the "desired future" is heavily directed by expectations of a normative path of becoming a 'proper' citizen, who is integrated to study and work life (Furlong 2012). On the other hand, research has shown that setting and pursuing goals is particularly pertinent during adolescence when establishing identity is of fundamental importance. Planning and goal pursuit serves not only as a self-directing and self-defining process, but is also affiliated—when successful—with positive affect and well-being (Massey et al. 2008, p. 422). This is also the case with the sense of mastery connected to resilience (Hitlin and Kirkpatrick Johnson 2015). This is why we view the ability to plan and the sense of mastery as important resources for care leavers, who often transition to their independent living in a more vulnerable situation than other young people. In our study, we found that the ability to plan goes hand in hand with identity agency and suggest, similarly as Pryce et al. (2017, p. 318), that future research on care leavers should focus on identity and self-concept as central issues to understand resilience in adulthood. Future research on care leavers should focus on identity and self-concept as central issues to understand resilience in adulthood. Moreover, in our study the vast majority of young adults with strong future orientation and self-efficacy were women. Obviously, in the future more focus is needed on this gender difference.

Even if our study concerned the Russian Arctic, its most important argument concerning the importance of individual support by a significant adult is obviously global in scope. As Lähde and Mölkänen showed in their chapter in this volume, this is the case also in Finland and we can assume that it is the case everywhere, regardless of geographical location. We also expect that many other findings are similar in other parts of Russia. Young care leavers in all the Russian regions are supported by similar state social policies, but still may face shortages in individual and emotional support. Nonetheless, some regions are more equipped, for instance, with NGOs, which might have a significant role for the development of more individually oriented alternative and aftercare services for young care leavers.

Notes

1 By alternative care we refer to all forms of out-of-home care for children deprived of parental care such as residential children's homes and different types of foster families (see e.g. Kulmala et al., 2021c)

2 These interviews are a part of the larger data set collected in two separate but interrelated research projects. One was led by Meri Kulmala on 'A Child's Right to a Family: Deinstitutionalization of Child Welfare in Putin's Russia' (2016–2020), funded by the Academy of Finland (No. 295554), University of Helsinki (ref. 412/51/2015) and Kone Foundation (cd276a and df3277). The other focused on youth wellbeing in the Arctic: 'Live, Work or Leave? Youth—wellbeing and the viability of (post) extractive Arctic industrial cities in Finland and Russia (2018–2020)', funded by the Academy of Finland and Russian Academy of Science (AKA No. 314471, RFBR No. 1859–11001).

3 We conducted 43 interviews with representatives of Russian child welfare NGOs in the project led by Dr. Kulmala (see endnote 1). Additionally, we participated in and arranged five research-practice seminars with mainly Russian child welfare street-level practitioners, including NGOs, during which we engaged in close dialogue with these practitioners. (See more e.g. Kulmala et al. 2021d). First interviews in Region 1 were conducted by Zhanna Chernova, Meri Kulmala and Anna Tarasenko, while Anna Fomina took all the non-peer-interviews in Region 2. As the interviews in Region 1 were biased with a particular form of alternative care (Kulmala et al. 2021a), Fomina returned there to conduct a few more interviews with care leavers having background in residential care.

4 We trained them face-to-face before and online after the pilot peer-interviews as well as in the middle of the interviewing process. These methodological issues were also raised in the focus group discussions at the end of the data collection process.

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